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What is the relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and secondary student wellbeing?

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What is the relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and secondary student wellbeing?

PhD Research Thesis

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Declaration

I, Rachel Riedel, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Signed:
Abstract

This study followed one male secondary school cohort over three years, prior and during a positive education implementation at their school. The purpose of this research was two-fold. Firstly, it investigated the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on the Wellbeing of this cohort. Secondly, it examined whether the whole school approach towards positive education had any effect or impact on the predictors and outcome. This research was conducted as Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life have been proposed as protective factors for adolescent wellbeing in theoretical literature, however, there is a lack of empirical evidence that demonstrates this. Literature that demonstrates Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are concepts which can successfully be taught as part of a positive education program to enhance student wellbeing is also limited. To conduct the research, a longitudinal mixed method research design was chosen. It followed a sequential exploratory mixed method approach, quantitatively measuring Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing via questionnaires at four time points over two years. The quantitative findings were then used to inform the design of three semi-structured focus group interviews with fifteen randomly selected participants. This study found Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to be strong predictors of secondary boys’ Wellbeing, and, each predictor can be taught as part of a whole school approach towards positive education to enhance wellbeing. However, the effectiveness of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education is dependent on the successful implementation of the whole school approach. In the case of this study, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education could be improved by further collaboration with parents/carers/guardians, and, further
teacher training on applying student-centred learning to the positive education based classes. These findings are significant as they empirically demonstrate Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are protective factors for male adolescent Wellbeing, and, these predictors are teachable concepts that can be taught as part of a whole school approach to positive education to enhance male adolescent wellbeing.
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) are responsible for Australia’s national curriculum for children in Kindergarten through to Year Twelve (ACARA, 2013). The national curriculum governs what all young Australians learn throughout their primary and secondary education. Moreover, ACARA coordinates nationwide assessment of students. Their progression is measured against the standardised educational outcomes in the national curriculum (ACARA, 2013). ACARA outlines that they wish for students to achieve the following as a result of their education experience: to be successful learners, to be creative and confident individuals, and to be active and informed citizens (ACARA, 2011). From these goals it is clear that ACARA values the role the Australian education system can play in developing the whole child, desiring to meet educational needs alongside intellectual, social and emotional needs (ACARA, 2011). Indeed, ACARA (2011) outlines that, in order for students to become successful learners, their education needs to provide them with the opportunity to develop personal skills and attributes that will help them achieve academically. These skills and attributes include optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and confidence to achieve goals (ACARA, 2011). By linking the personal development of a student with their academic achievement, ACARA proposes that the national curriculum will
facilitate the growth of citizens who are successful, dynamic, well informed and fulfilled individuals (ACARA, 2011).

Therefore the national curriculum provides every Australian school with guidance on how to support academic achievement alongside the development of the whole child. However, some critics suggest that recent years have seen an increasing emphasis on academic performance at the expense of meeting emotional, social and individual needs, hindering the development of valuable personal skills and attributes. Various reasons for this have been proposed. McClelland and Smyth (2006) believe corporate management and standardised outcomes-based assessment create an educational system increasingly focused on academic performance. They argue that education has moved away from equal access and provision for all – including a high regulation of funding and opportunity – towards corporate management. Schools have become increasingly privatised and commercialised because higher student populations lead to greater access to funding (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). It is proposed that schools, under a corporate management structure, utilise standardised outcomes-based assessment beyond its intended purpose of measuring student performance against others in across Australia (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Student grades become a marketing tool schools can use for attracting new students and increasing their total population and thereby increasing their access to funding (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Utilising student grades as a marketing tool can filter into the school ethos, culture and values. If the school wants to attract more students through advertising the academic achievement of the current students, a high value is placed on student grades (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). This has the potential to create an increasing pressure on
teachers and their pupils; students have to achieve the highest grades possible as it is a numerical representation of the school’s success. The school’s success is advertised, which aims to increase student populations and by extension, increases school funding (McClelland & Smyth, 2006).

The context in which the current adolescent lives has been proposed as another reason for the increasing focus on academic achievement (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Wyn & White, 2000). The current Australian adolescent population (ages 13-18) lives in a society where gaining further tertiary education is viewed as desirable and a standard pathway after graduating high school (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Wyn & White, 2000). Therefore, gaining entrance into university is viewed as an integral component of ‘successfully’ completing high school, and students feel the pressure to achieve a score that will secure them a place (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; Wyn & White, 2000).

Compounding this academic pressure is the effect of the current job market. Since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) there has been a significant decline in suitable full-time jobs for young people in Australia (Burrows, 2010). With fewer jobs available and an increase in university graduates the job market has become very competitive, where young people are forced to compete with one another for places in higher education and paid work (Wyn & White, 2000). It is expected that young people do this on their own, “through public emphasis on being suitably employable” (Wyn & White, 2000, p.173). Subsequently there is an increased pressure felt by the student population to achieve academically; it is viewed as a mechanism to ensure a stable career path that results in successful employment.
The increase in academic pressure coincides with lower levels of adolescent wellbeing, as represented by their current health and wellbeing status. According to *Making Progress: The health, development and wellbeing of Australia’s children and young people*, adolescents (aged 13-19 years) have increased rates of hospitalisation by assault, self harm, and obesity from 1995-2008 (AIHW, 2008). Additionally, 1 in 10 adolescents aged 15-19 report a mental or behavioural problem, and, 1 in 4 are at risk of short-term harm resulting from alcohol and drug use (AIHW, 2008). More recent findings demonstrate an increase in sexually transmitted infections, diabetes, mental disorders, alcohol abuse and alcohol related violence (AIHW, 2011).

One of the solutions to the declining wellbeing status of adolescents is positive education. Positive education is embedded in the principles of positive psychology, and links the skills of academic achievement with the skills of wellbeing, aiming to “develop the skills of wellbeing, flourishing and optimal functioning in children, teenagers and students” (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011, p.210). Introducing a model of education that purposefully provides specific wellbeing education does have a place in the Australian system, as viewed by ACARA’s goals of education. Successful positive education approaches have been shown to increase positive affect, academic success and enhance wellbeing (Waters, 2011). Additionally they extend positive psychology topics into traditional academic disciplines, use a school-wide approach, and use strategic frameworks to guide the role of positive psychology (Waters, 2011). A systemic evaluation of 12 successful school-based interventions revealed current interventions target hope, gratitude, serenity, resilience or building character strengths (Waters, 2011).
Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are two constructs in positive psychology that have been theoretically linked to promoting wellbeing (Burton, Lydon, D’Alessandro & Koestner, 2006; Damon, 2003; Damon, 2008; Damon, Menon & Cotton Bronl, 2003; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Meaning in Life assists people in understanding how they fit into the world beyond themselves (Steger, 2012). People who have a sound Meaning in Life have a solid grounding for all experiences, where what they do with their lives can be adequately reflected upon and explained in relation to the grand scheme of things (Steger, 2012). In essence, they deem their life as one that ‘matters’ because they understand their goals and actions help the world in some way (Steger & Frazier, 2005).

Purpose in Life is how significant or purposeful we deem our lives to be based upon our values, and overarching life goals or missions for ourselves (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). It is defined as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential to the world beyond the self” (Damon, 2008, p.59).

Whilst Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life have been theoretically proposed as protective factors for adolescent wellbeing, there are no studies that show Positive Psychology Interventions targeting these concepts at schools. Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding whether these principles can be taught or whether they are inherent within people, and whether they have an effect on student wellbeing if taught as part of a whole-school approach to positive education.
1.2 Aim of Research

Due to the difficulty in developing, implementing and collecting longitudinal data on a whole-school approach within a PhD timeframe, this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of a current whole-school approach on positive education. A gap in the positive education literature revealed a lack of empirical evidence on the effect that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had on adolescent wellbeing. Therefore, this study chose to evaluate the effectiveness of the positive education implementation in reference to the secondary student population. It specifically examined three positive psychology concepts: Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing.

The positive education implementation at the research site (a private, all boys school located in Northern Sydney) followed a whole-school approach towards wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education. Therefore the aim of this study was three-fold. First, it was to determine what extent Meaning in Life and/or Purpose in Life had on the Wellbeing of the student population, secondly to determine whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life could be taught to enhance wellbeing, and finally to determine the effectiveness of the use of the whole school approach on positive education. Due to the size of the student population, this study conduct a longitudinal study that tracked one year group over three years.

This study was of a longitudinal mixed method design. It focused on two predictors — Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life — and one outcome — Wellbeing. To discover the predictive power that Meaning in Life and Purpose
in Life had on Wellbeing, the primary research question used to guide this study and all the processes of data collection was:

“What is the relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and secondary student Wellbeing?”

The primary research question had six secondary questions:

1. To what extent did Meaning in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?

2. To what extent did Purpose in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?

3. To what extent did Wellbeing change over the course of the positive education implementation?

4. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing?

5. What is the predictive power of the effect of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

6. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?
1.3 Significance

The application of positive psychology to organisations is an emerging research area (Money, Hillenbrand & da Camara, 2008). Over the past ten years studies have emerged on the effectiveness of applying positive psychology principles to schools (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011). This field of research is known as positive education. At present positive education studies have focused on hope, gratitude, serenity, resilience or building character strengths (Waters, 2011). Whilst Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life have theoretically been proposed as protective factors for adolescent wellbeing, there is no empirical evidence to support this theory (Burton, Lydon, D’Alessandro & Koestner, 2006; Damon, 2003; Damon, 2008; Damon, Menon & Cotton Bronk, 2003; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Similarly there are no studies that explore whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are teachable concepts (or a finite resource we have within), nor whether they can be taught as part of a whole school approach to enhance student wellbeing.

Therefore this study is of high significance because it explores theoretical propositions, providing evidence of the effect Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life can have adolescent wellbeing. This evidence can used to inform the ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the Australian national curriculum, specifically providing recommendations on how they can achieve their goal of creating education settings which places students’ wellbeing, personal needs, social needs and emotional needs as central to their ability to achieve academically (ACARA, 2011). Moreover, this study evaluates the effectiveness
of the whole school approach in reference to the education of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. By doing so, this study has been able to provide recommendations on how to effectively promote wellbeing within education settings, providing a scaffold for future studies and schools to use. These recommendations are of high significance as the current statistics outline a decline in the wellbeing status of Australian young people (AIHW, 2008; AIHW, 2011). Schools have been identified as a place where students can learn skills to enhance their wellbeing, improving the overall wellbeing status of young people (Seligman, 2011).

1.4 Definition of Terms

**Authentic Purpose:** where individuals develop life goals that utilise ones gifts, brings a deep sense of worth or value, and provides a significant contribution to the common good.

**Community Wellbeing:** the social capital of the community, which includes skills, goods and resources required to enable individuals to develop adequately in terms of health and wellbeing. If individuals are able to identify and engage with their community, it often serves to enhance their individual wellbeing.

**Family Wellbeing:** a relational wellbeing construct, where family resources such as money, love, information and status influence individual wellbeing.
**Flourish:** is a high state of individual wellbeing and optimal functioning. To flourish individuals must exhibit core features of positive emotion, engagement, interest, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. They must also exhibit at least three of the following: high self-esteem, positive relationships, optimism, resilience, vitality or self-determination.

**Individual Wellbeing:** an individual’s capacity to build, maintain or enhance their wellbeing. It is multi-dimensional, encompassing physical, psychological, social and spiritual wellbeing. Whist individuals are considered active constructors of their wellbeing, it is also acknowledged that external determinants (family, community and society) can help or hinder their level of wellbeing.

**Meaning in Life (cognitive component):** Personal feelings relating to an individual’s perceived significance of their life relating to the world beyond themselves. Meaning in Life has two components: cognitive and motivational. The motivational component is Purpose in Life (see definition).

**Positive Education:** an education model that links the skills of wellbeing with the skills of academic achievement, and aims to develop the skills of wellbeing, flourishing and optimal functioning in children, adolescents and students.

**Positive Psychology:** a branch of psychology that studies strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to flourish.

**Purpose in Life:** A stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential to the world beyond the self. It is a person’s overarching life goals or life missions,
 entrenched in personal values and sense of identity. Purpose in Life is the motivational component of Meaning in Life.

**Societal Wellbeing:** a positive or negative mental state arising not only from the actions of individuals but also from a host of collective goods and relations with other individuals. The society that an individual lives needs to provide for them, meeting their basic needs. Additionally people need to feel integrated into society, which generates a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose.

### 1.5 Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a whole school approach towards positive education, specifically examining how the student population received the implementation of this approach. This evaluation aimed to provide recommendations on how to effectively utilise this approach to promote student wellbeing in secondary schools, as well as provide insight into whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life can be taught to students to enhance their wellbeing. The following chapters will outline and analyse current positive psychology, positive organisations and positive education literature, outline and justify the use of the research model chosen, provide results of the data analysis alongside a critical analysis of why the trends emerged and the implications of these findings. Finally, conclusions of the study will be drawn, and recommendations for future research made.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study investigated the impact a whole school approach to positive education had on the Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing of secondary students. The relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and student Wellbeing was also investigated. Positive education is a relatively new theory of curriculum and pedagogy design, which proposes that skills of wellbeing can be taught alongside traditional academic skills with the aim of enhancing the educational experience and assisting the whole development of the student (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011). Positive education is an applied branch of an emergent field of psychology, known as positive psychology. Positive psychology aims to improve the human condition by exploring what is ‘right’ with a person, helping them improve their life experience by developing positive aspects of their functioning (Faller & College, 2001). As positive psychology and its application to the education system is an emergent applied research area, there are areas of inquiry that require further empirical investigation to assess the potential benefit for staff and students in schools. One of these areas is the role Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education plays in the students’ level of wellbeing. In order to provide context for this area
of inquiry, this literature review will analyse the purpose of modern education, examine the discourses present in wellbeing, explore the emergence of positive psychology and its applications to organisations and education settings, discuss accepted models for educational change, analyse the importance of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life for adult and adolescent populations, and, examine criticisms for positive education.

2.2 What is the Purpose of Modern Education?

Education and the schooling system play a role in shaping the lives of young people. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2011) outlines that, in order to have a positive influence on students, “the intellectual, personal, social and educational needs of young Australians must be addressed” (p.5). The Australian Curriculum has been designed to align with the three goals of education that ACARA committed to in the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young People. These are for “all young Australians to become: i. successful learners ii. confident and creative individuals, and, iii. active and informed citizens” (ACARA, 2011, p.8).

For children to become successful learners is a traditional goal of education, as this outcome acts to prepare students for further education or employment in the workforce (Seligman, 2011). It aims to create young people who have the capacity to be independent learners, who have essential literacy, numeracy and a high level of skill with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs),
who can demonstrate resourcefulness and creative problem solving abilities in a variety of contexts, who are logical and evaluative thinkers, who are effective communicators and valuable members of a team, and are motivated to propel themselves to take appropriate steps to succeed in their chosen career path (ACARA, 2011).

The goal *confident and creative individuals* aims to enhance students’ wellbeing, which also assists them in their academic or workplace pursuits (Seligman, 2011). This goal encompasses teaching students skills to enhance and maintain emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. This goal also aims to enhance optimism, resilience, empathy, respect, relationships with others, and, provide students with the ability to create lives which are healthy, purposeful and satisfying (ACARA, 2011). Furthermore, it aims to foster in students belief in oneself, hope, and the confidence to achieve set goals (ACARA, 2011). Finally, students also gain an understanding of their roles within society. These include family, community and workforce (ACARA, 2011).

The final goal of education outlined by ACARA is *active and informed citizens*. This goal aims to support the development of young Australians, guiding their growth into the types of citizens the Australian government wishes to produce as a result of their experience in the education system (ACARA, 2011). Quintessentially, this goal stipulates that the education system must assist young Australians to become: morally and ethically sound, to have an appreciation for our diverse multicultural society, to understand Australia’s system of governance, to have the ability to relate cross-culturally, and who can improve social and natural environments through selfless actions (ACARA, 2011). Additionally, being such a citizen incorporates knowledge of Indigenous

Government and non-government schools have agreed to these goals, and the roll out of the national curriculum in their respective sectors (ACARA, 2012). It is important to note that the implementation of the national curriculum varies in sectors, states and territories (ACARA, 2012). In New South Wales, all sectors have undergone professional development regarding the implementation of the national curriculum, and have begun teaching in alignment with this curriculum, utilising NSW syllabuses and adaption material (ACARA, 2012).

It is ACARA’s intention that these goals will address the diverse needs of young people, assisting them to flourish into successful, dynamic, well informed, and fulfilled individuals. However, it has been argued that a majority of schools focus primarily on the academic goals (successful learners), at the expense of wellbeing education and helping young people become active, informed citizens (see, for example, McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Some research has suggested that the increased focus on academia is due to a change in political agenda, schools operating as businesses, a standards framework upon which students and teachers are measured, and the characterisation of the millennial adolescent (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007; McLelland & Smyth, 2006; Salt, 2006; Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Wyn & White, 2000).

According to McLelland and Smyth (2006), prior to the mid-1980s, education policy was centred on ensuring that each young Australian received equal access and provision of education, and, there was high regulation of funding and opportunity. Educational equity was considered in the public’s interest, that
is, for the good of the public (Reid, 2005). However, neoliberal economics and corporate management became the main discourses of education policy from the mid-1980s onwards, which resulted in growing privatisation, and schools being managed as a market, as represented by figure 1:

![Figure 1: The Marketing Process In Education (McClelland & Smyth, 2006, p.215)](image)

As a result, schools have become increasingly commercialised, spending money on advertising in an attempt to draw in potential students, whose populace impacts funding both in public and private sectors (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Academic scores are a popular choice of advertisement, made
possible by the universal standards students are measured against in outcomes-based education (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Hence, educators and students feel the pressure placed upon achievement (as opposed to wellbeing), as it is a representation and billboard for the school’s success (McClelland & Smyth, 2006). Put simply, the millennial adolescent is the most pressured, and education-minded generation that has ever been (Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Salt, 2006). There is an intense focus placed upon what students will become after high school completion, with further tertiary education being a desirable outcome (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007). Thus, students in their senior years of study have to consider what subjects will fit their future studies, and, if university attendance is sought, they feel a pressure to achieve a certain ATAR (or final grade) to gain admission (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007).

Furthermore, the increasing marketization of schools, has led to a globally unique Australian education system, where parents have “more choice when it comes to different options to any other comparable OECD country” (Firth & Huntley, 2014, p.14). Private schools make up 34% of the Australian school system, with 21% of Australian children undertaking education in Catholic schools, and 13% in Independent schools (Firth & Huntley, 2014). This is comparatively higher than the average percentage of private schools in the OECD, which currently sits at 10% (Firth & Huntley, 2014). An examination of value added results – where expected student performance is considered alongside socio-economic status (SES) – revealed that public school students perform better than non-government school students (Firth & Huntley, 2014). Therefore, the quality of the education a child receives in non-government schools is no better than that of a public school (Firth & Huntley, 2014).
However, the strongest “determining factor as to how a student will do at school is the SES status of their parents; in other words, the student’s own background and circumstances” (Firth & Huntley, 2014, p.15). Therefore, in choosing non-government education, parents are not purchasing higher education quality, but rather a student cohort that has a higher SES (Firth & Huntley, 2014).

Through purchasing a student cohort of a higher SES, parents are buying a demographic that is linked to better educational performance. This expectation that non-government schools generate better educational outcomes (not value added) has been highlighted as a threat to student wellbeing and welfare (Green, Navarro-Paniagua, Ximenez-de-Embun, & Mancebon, 2014). Students who have parents of higher SES, who attend non-government schools, have also been shown to have higher levels of perceived parental pressure, which causes increased levels of stress and anxiety, as students worry that they will not live up to the perceived educational expectations placed upon them (Chen, 2012; Green et al., 2014; Putwain, Woods, & Symes, 2010). When considering the role education plays in supporting the wellbeing of the student population, this point is crucial. Sociologically and ecologically, students who come from families of higher SES have a range of protective factors supporting their wellbeing, yet, coming from this demographic can also create feelings of parental pressure to achieve, which leads to poorer levels of mental health and wellbeing (Chen, 2012; Green et al., 2014; Knight & McNaught, 2011; Putwain, Woods, & Symes, 2010).

Moreover, the current job market has also compounded the academic pressure students of this generation feel. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has led to a significant decline in suitable full-time jobs for young people in Australia.
(Burrows, 2010). Indeed, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 is on the rise, increasing from 9% in 2008 to 12.4% in 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). This represents more than double the unemployment rate for the general public, which currently sits at 6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). This has created a highly competitive graduate job market, where young people are forced to compete with one another for places in higher education and paid work (Wyn & White, 2000). It is expected that young people do this on their own, “through public emphasis on being suitably employable” (Wyn & White, 2000, p.173). Subsequently there is an increased pressure felt by the student population to achieve academically; it is viewed as a mechanism to ensure a stable career path that results in successful employment.

Finally, academic achievement is not the only source of pressure in the lives of young people. Due to their immersion with ICTs, this generation has a need for rapid access to information and immediacy, with an intolerance for any delay; they want everything right here, right now (McMahon & Pospisil, 2005). As a consequence, they feel pressure when they are forced to be what they consider to be stagnant, when in reality, it is the natural processes of life, and the normal time period to complete study and attain career success (Bahr & Pendergast, 2007).

This pressure comes at the cost of a decreased sense of wellbeing, as represented by the current health status and wellbeing of young people. These findings are consistent with a lack of wellbeing education within schools.

According to Making Progress: The health, development and wellbeing of Australia’s children and young people, there have been many unfavourable trends during adolescence (13-19 years) recorded in the period from 1995-2008.
Hospitalisation for assault has increased by 18%, and intentional self harm has increased 27% (AIHW, 2008). Hospitalisation due to transport accidents decreased by 10% in 1998-1999, but has subsequently risen (AIHW, 2008). The unfavourable trends continued in mental health, with “1 in 10 Australians aged 15-19 reporting a mental or behavioural problem” (AIHW, 2008, p.31). Mood disorders were most common in females, whilst inhibited/delayed psychological development were the most prevalent in males (AIHW, 2008). Overweight and obesity rates in adolescents aged 15-19 also increased significantly, with 1 in 20 classified as obese, and a 3% increase in the overweight category (AIHW, 2008). Alcohol and drug use are also threatening the health and wellbeing of teenagers, with 1 in 4 at risk of short-term harm, and 1 in 10 at risk of long-term harm (AIHW, 2008). Finally, Australians aged 15-19 represented one quarter of all robbery victims, and 0.6% of 13-19 year olds were under juvenile justice supervision (AIHW, 2008).

In more recent findings, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has also reported “rising rates of diabetes and sexually transmitted infections (largely chlamydia), and high rates of mental disorders and, among males, road transport accident deaths” (AIHW, 2011, p.7). Likewise, there are rising rates of alcohol consumption, putting young people at high risk of being victims of alcohol-related violence (AIHW, 2011).

However, it is interesting to note that regardless of these rises, 93% of young people aged 15-24 rated their health as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ (AIHW, 2011). This is consistent with literature, which states that whilst young people self-report their health status at high levels, many still have health problems, or engage in behaviour which puts their health and wellbeing at risk, for example,
lack of exercise, obesity, and alcohol consumption (Eckersley, 2008; Muir, Mullan, Powell, Flaxman, Thompson & Griffiths, 2009).

These findings suggest that a sound level of wellbeing does not necessarily coincide with a good living environment (Seligman, 2002; Seligman, 2011). Standard of living, housing size, completion of high school and continuation to further education have all increased over the past 60 years (Seligman, 2011). Likewise, there are declines in racism, equality between genders, and greater access to entertainment like books, music, and movies (Seligman, 2011).

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) believes the causes of discontent, lack of happiness and wellbeing, can be traced back to socialised conditioning. He argued that we chase what we believe will give us meaning, without engaging in activities that truly lead to meaning in life. Being a part of a scientifically, medically, economically and politically advanced westernised nation led to a belief that we would automatically have a more meaningful life than previous generations. Yet, for Csikszentmihalyi, this is a falsification, and as soon as this is realised, no amount of affluence or advancement will compete with the lack of meaning that ensues: “Basically it is a fear of being, a feeling that there is no meaning to life and that existence is not worth going on with. Nothing seems to make sense” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp.11-12). Some people deal with this feeling by acquiring items we are socialised to believe represent success – a glamorous lifestyle with large homes, a powerful job, and a surplus of disposable income (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Others treat the supposed symptoms of their feeling of discontent, for example, if their body is viewed as undesirable, diets and gym memberships will follow, whilst others seek to numb the effects by indulging in harmful behaviours that provide instant pleasure, for instance, over-indulging in
food or promiscuity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Yet none of these remedies will cure the lack of meaning and discontent a person feels. Individuals need to reclaim their experience by learning how to gain contentment from their lives. As Csikszentmihalyi (2002) outlines, the human race has the potential to deepen their understandings on how to experience life optimally: “while human kind collectively has increased its material powers thousand fold, it has not advanced very far in terms of improving the content of experience” (pp.15-16).

One of the solutions to this issue of a decline in wellbeing and meaning in adolescence is Positive Education, which is based upon principles of Positive Psychology, and marries traditional academic pursuits with wellbeing education (Seligman, 2011). First, however, an overview of what constitutes wellbeing is required.

2.3 The Wellbeing Discourse

There is no universally-accepted definition of wellbeing. It is a concept that is followed by debate, with central disputes focusing on how people could live their best lives in pursuits of happiness, purpose and meaning (Haybron, 2008).

Philosophically there exists a debate between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Hedonic wellbeing theory began with Aristippus, a Greek philosopher, who believed that the goal of human existence was to experience the greatest amount of pleasure possible (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Contemporary hedonic psychology built upon this theory, placing a high emphasis on the experience of
pleasure, positive affect, and life satisfaction (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Many of the studies in hedonic wellbeing are concerned with how to enhance positive affectivity (having an immediate positive psychological response to stimuli), what makes life experiences pleasurable or un-pleasurable, and how to enhance both of these factors to increase levels of life satisfaction (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). This is otherwise known as subjective wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

However, the hedonic view of wellbeing has been challenged from the beginning. Aristotle considered hedonic notions as vulgar, denoting humans as mindless followers to their desires (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Today, critics maintain that there are flaws in the hedonic theory of wellbeing. Specifically, not all pleasure-producing human desires will promote wellbeing (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Indeed, indulgence in some pleasurable activities can serve to hinder wellness (Ryan & Decci, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Additionally, subjective measures of wellbeing vary on how the individual is feeling at that point in time; if they are feeling positive affect, they will tend to rate their wellbeing highly, or if they are feeling negative affect they will tend to rate their wellbeing poorly (Seligman, 2011). As a result, self-rating of wellbeing can vary greatly (even across a day) depending on the circumstances (Seligman, 2011).

Rather than creating a life in pursuit of pleasure to enhance wellbeing, Aristotle believed that true happiness required thoughtful action on behalf of virtue – to create a life full of meaning, with actions that meant something to the self, and society (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudiamonic wellbeing has this construction of meaning and purpose in life at its core (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). In the pursuit and construction of life goals that are congruent with the inner self, that
are authentic and contribute to something larger than self, wellbeing is viewed in the context of human flourishing (Ryff & Singer, 1998). This is described as “the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one’s true potential” (Ryff, 1995, p.100). Seligman (2011) expands upon the concept of human flourishing, believing there are five components that contribute to enhancing a person’s psychological wellbeing. These are: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). Eudamonic wellbeing requires people to live authentically, with the goal of all of our actions to lead to flourishing (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

The concept of flourishing is a central term in positive psychology, which has “tended to integrate subjective states and objective elements such as family, community and the built environment” (La Placa, McNaught & Knight, 2013, p.117). Hence, wellbeing through a positive psychology lens focuses on both the structural determinants of wellbeing, which are external to the individual, as well as helping people flourish and reach their full potential (La Placa, McNaught, & Knight, 2013). It looks beyond the individual, understanding that there are external elements that can help or hinder the ability to flourish (La Placa, McNaught, & Knight, 2013).

However, wellbeing has also been examined on a purely individual level, and conceptualised as a state that results from the interaction of psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Following are the accepted definitions of each of these concepts:

2. Emotional wellbeing: “The presence of positive affect in the absence of negative affect, as well as satisfaction with life” (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.147). It also includes the internal understanding and regulation of feelings, understanding the emotions of others and acting accordingly, and the ability to adapt and respond to challenges (resiliency) (AIHW, 2012).


Hence, there are a variety of perspectives and theories regarding wellbeing. In an attempt to create a functional articulation of wellbeing, Knight and McNaught (2011) created a definitional framework that encompasses objective and subjective components (see Fig. 2). It has four domains: individual wellbeing, family wellbeing, community wellbeing and societal wellbeing.
2.4 The Positive Psychology Movement

The positive psychology movement branched off from the traditional psychology discipline, therefore, an overview of the history of this discipline is required. An examination of the history of psychology demonstrates that it began with a focus on the positives and negatives of the human experience; there was a somewhat equal focus on the strengths and weaknesses of people. Seligman
and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) highlight this: “Before World War II, psychology had three distinct missions: curing mental illness, making the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling, and identifying and nurturing high talent” (p.6). However, once the war ended, the face of psychology changed (Faller & College, 2001). This was due to two events: in 1946 the Veterans Administration enabled psychologists to earn a profit from treating mental illnesses, and in 1947, the National Institute for Mental Health was formed, permitting psychologists to receive grants for research on mental illness (Faller & College, 2001). This focus on mental illness treatment and research led to a vast increase in the knowledge and understanding of how to assist those with a mental illness: “At least fourteen disorders, previously intractable, have yielded their secrets to science and can now be either cured or relieved” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.6).

However, due to the narrow focus on preventing, treating and curing mental illnesses, two of the three focuses of psychology were neglected: (1) how to help people flourish, creating fulfilling lives, and, (2) nurturing talent (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This led to a differing outlook on the human experience, where people were viewed as victims. “Practitioners went about treating the mental illness of patients by repairing damage: damaged habits, damaged drives, damaged childhoods, and damaged brains” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.6). At best, this treatment focusing on negative mental effects, would only serve to bring patients away from dysfunction to what was considered ‘normal’ functioning (Seligman, 2002, 2011). It did not aid in personal growth, life satisfaction, wellbeing, hope, optimism or finding true meaning of one’s life (Seligman, 2002, 2011). Positive psychology aims to
improve the human condition by exploring what is ‘right’ with a person, and what they can work on to enhance their experience (Faller & College, 2001). Additionally, it aims to reconnect people to what truly enhances their happiness and wellbeing, rather than what our society believes is symbolic of our success (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

2.5 The Pioneers of the Positive Psychology Movement

Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are considered to be two pioneers of the positive psychology movement (Cherubini, 2009; Faller & College, 2001; Wellner & David, 2000). They articulate positive psychology as valued subjective experiences at a past, present and future level:

- Wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction (in the past), hope and optimism (in the future), and flow and happiness (in the present). At an individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity to love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At a group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals towards better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance and group ethic. (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.7)
2.5.1 Seligman’s Contribution

In 2002 Seligman released his theory of Authentic Happiness, which stated that there are three measurable elements in life that can be used to help increase or maintain a person’s level of happiness thereby having positive flow-on effects to life satisfaction (Seligman, 2002). These were the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2002).

The pleasant life is concerned with what positive emotions we feel, for example, warmth, comfort and rapture (Seligman, 2002). The engaged life centres on Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) theory of flow, where a person’s attention, and cognitive and emotional resources are entirely focused on the task at hand. An individual is believed to lose self-consciousness when in flow, as they are functioning at their highest capacity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Seligman believes that a person can increase the levels of flow they experience in their lives by identifying their highest character strengths (signature strengths), and finding ways to use them in everyday life, as often as they can (Seligman, 2002).

A person’s character strengths are derived from six core virtues which are universal; these virtues have been highly valued across time, in varying cultures and societies (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). They are “courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence and wisdom” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.36).

Courage is doing what is morally right, regardless of the adversity and loss one faces (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002). Courage is comprised of three measurable character strengths, these being, valour and bravery,
perseverance/industry/diligence, and integrity/genuineness/honesty (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002).

At the core of justice are principles of equality, equity and fairness (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The strengths of this virtue come forth during actions of citizenship, contributing to larger groups like family and community, and extending to one’s nation and the world (Seligman, 2002). The strengths that comprise justice are leadership, fairness and equity and citizenship/duty/teamwork/loyalty (Seligman, 2002).

Humanity differs from justice as it concerns the interpersonal relationships with others beyond acting in a fair and equitable manner (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is concerned with how a person treats another, and is considered an altruistic and pro-social virtue (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It encompasses two character strengths, kindness and generosity, and, loving and allowing oneself to be loved (Seligman, 2002).

Self-restraint in the face of excess, abundance or temptation is a demonstration of the virtue of temperance (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This virtue has self-control, prudence/discretion/caution, and humility and honesty as its three strengths (Seligman, 2002).

Transcendence is a virtue where an individual is connected to something higher, and holds a belief that they are meant for something larger than their own immediate life (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). A person with signature strengths of appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope/optimism/future mindedness, spirituality/sense of purpose/faith/religiousness, forgiveness and mercy, playfulness and humour, and, zest/passion and enthusiasm, is able to
“connect to something larger and more permanent: to other people, to the future, to evolution, to the divine, or to the universe” (Seligman, 2002, p.154).

The final virtue discussed is wisdom, which is concerned with the acquisition and utility of knowledge to help the human race in its endeavours (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It has strengths of curiosity and interest in the world, love of learning, judgment/critical thinking/open-mindedness, ingenuity/originality/practical intelligence/street smarts, social intelligence/personal intelligence/emotional intelligence, and perspective (Seligman, 2002).

The meaningful life is the third and final aspect of the Authentic Happiness theory, and is where a person knows where he/she fits into the world, and feels as though their life goals are contributing to society (Seligman, 2002). These people could also have a spiritual connection, feeling as though they are serving a higher entity (Seligman, 2002). All human beings have an innate want to feel meaning and purpose in their lives, otherwise a feeling of chaos/loss ensues (Seligman, 2002).

In 2011, Seligman modified this theory, clarifying a shift in focus from happiness to wellbeing, as he now believed that “the topic of positive psychology is wellbeing, that the gold standard for measuring wellbeing is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing” (Seligman, 2011, p.13). He outlined the three inadequacies surrounding Authentic Happiness, the first being with what the term happiness denotes “Positive emotion is the rock bottom meaning of happiness” (Seligman, 2011, p.13). Engagement and meaning in life – two of the three elements of his
original theory – have no inferences to positive emotion, hence happiness is not a true representation (Seligman, 2011). Secondly, the gold standard of happiness was measured by life satisfaction, a self-report measure where, depending on one’s mood, life satisfaction increased or decreased. “Averaged over many people, the mood you are in determines more than 70 percent of how much life satisfaction you report, and how well you judge your life to be going at that moment determines less than 30 percent” (Seligman, 2011, p.13). Finally, Authentic Happiness did not include what people choose to pursue for no other purpose apart from the pursuit, for example, people strive to achieve to feel a sense of achievement (Seligman, 2011).

Seligman’s most recent theory is Flourish, and it addresses the three inadequacies mentioned. Flourish is concerned with enhancing one’s wellbeing via measurable contributing factors, as opposed to the construct of happiness and a self-report measure of life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). There are five elements of wellbeing, and to be considered an element, the following properties must be present:

1. It contributes to wellbeing.

2. Many people pursue it for its own sake, not merely to get other elements.

3. It is defined and measured independently from the other elements (exclusivity). (Seligman, 2011, p.16)

Hence, wellbeing has five elements, each contributing to a person’s ability to flourish. These are Positive emotion, Engagement, Meaning, Positive relationships and Accomplishment (PERMA) (Seligman, 2011).
Accomplishment is one of the two elements which were added to the original theory, as it is an element that people pursue purely to have it – whether it is represented by success, winning, achievement or mastery (Seligman, 2011). People want to accomplish things, simply to feel like they have done so, and will continue to pursue these feats, even if it does not give them pleasure, engagement, meaning or enhanced relationships with others (Seligman, 2011).

Positive relationships is the second addition, and was included because “very little that is positive is solitary” (Seligman, 2011, p.20). Humans are sociable by nature, and our greatest feelings of joy, happiness, pride and sense of meaning all occur when we are with others (Seligman, 2011). People help us through difficult times, and are the greatest way to increase momentary feelings of wellbeing through acts of kindness and gratitude (Seligman, 2011).

Seligman argues that for individuals to achieve optimal functioning and flourish, they must exhibit the core features, and at least three of the additional features (see Table 1).

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<tr>
<th>Core Features</th>
<th>Additional Features</th>
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<td>Positive emotions</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
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<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
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<td>Interest</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
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<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Vitality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Self-determination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive relationships</td>
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The final change Seligman made in *Flourish* was in reference to the 24 character strengths, which supported engagement, that is, the more someone used their signature strengths in life, the greater amount of flow he/she would experience, enhancing the engaged life (Seligman, 2002). These character strengths now underpin all five elements of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

2.5.2 Csikszentmihalyi’s Contribution

In order to reclaim our experience and lead an engaged life, we need to change our consciousness, whose function is to “represent information about what is happening inside and outside an organism in such a way that it can be evaluated and acted upon by the body” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.24). People who are in active control of their consciousness are able to experience any range of emotions independently of their environment, for example, if an individual does not own the latest, most sophisticated mobile phone, he/she will not feel inadequate (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Our consciousness is how we intentionally order the information we receive. Consciousness then affects our life, as it is how we have interpreted the information we have received and acted upon it (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

The force that orders our consciousness is called our intentions, which are “organized into a hierarchy of goals, which specify the precedence among them” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.28). In other words, an individual has the capacity to focus on their goals, independent of societal and cultural belief/value systems. The way in which a person controls their focus is called attention, or more specifically, psychic energy. Psychic energy is not mystical in nature, but simply
how a person selects information from the billions of sources available, and
interprets it to form a meaningful life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

The self, or inner voice, is every single piece of information that has entered
your consciousness, all the pains, pleasures and past experiences that have
brought you to the present (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). It is the most important
element of consciousness, as it is a symbolic representation of all elements of
consciousness, and represents the personal hierarchy of goals an individual
has created (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Consciousness can become disordered when the information we receive from
the world detracts from the intentions we have for carrying out our hierarchy of
goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Common emotions experienced are fear,
anxiety, anger or pain. This disorder is called psychic entropy, a
“disorganization of the self that impairs its effectiveness” (Csikszentmihalyi,
2002, p.37). Hence, a person needs to learn to focus their attention on aspects
of the world that will positively contribute to their attainment of goals, and
address and remove features which are detrimental, causing psychic entropy
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

When the information an individual receives tells them that their actions are
congruent with their goals, their physical energy flows with ease
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). This helps a person gain optimal experience, or flow,
as represented in figure four: Flow Channel and Complexity (Csikszentmihalyi,
People tend to describe flow as an experience where time stops, where nothing
else matters except what they are doing at that moment, it is almost like floating
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). It is defined as “the intense experiential involvement in movement-to-movement activity which can be physical or mental. Attention is fully invested in the task at hand, and the person functions at his or her fullest capacity” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p.349).

When an individual engages in flow, he/she overcomes a challenge and feels a sense of accomplishment and improved capability (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). This can result in growth of self, which requires complexity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Complexity has two components, which are differentiation and integration. “Differentiation implies a movement towards uniqueness, toward separating oneself from others. Integration refers to its opposite: a union with other people, with ideas and entities beyond oneself” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.41). People who complete a flow experience inevitably differentiate as they feel an enhanced sense of skill and ability, as they have overcome an immensely challenging task which absorbed them completely (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Integration allows people to feel harmonious with the world, after their flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Without integration, these people are at risk of becoming self-centred and egotistic, and without differentiation people would lack individuality and uniqueness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). To achieve complexity and ultimately growth of self, an individual needs to continually invest psychic energy into new, challenging experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Hence, a person needs to continually create optimal experiences or flow.

There are characteristics of optimal experience, which can help guide people to complexity, growth of self and attainment of goals. These are:
a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear cues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult, or dangerous. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.71)

Figure 3: Flow Channel and Complexity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.74)

The work of Seligman and Csiksentmihalyi created the positive psychology movement, which has created many avenues for further research in this field. Of particular interest to this study was the role that meaning (one of the five components of Seligman’s PERMA model) had on enhancing the wellbeing of
high school aged students. This is an applied branch of positive psychology, investigating how the theories can be used in a variety of settings.

### 2.6 Positive Organisations

#### 2.6.1 Applying Positive Psychology to Organisations

An organisation is a group of people, organised around a central purpose, like a workplace or school (Stevenson, 2010). Government and business organisations have significant losses in resources “due to work-related ill health problems, working days lost, sick leaves, turnover and the subsequent costs of searching and training new employees” (Rodriguez-Carvajal, Moreno-Jimenez, Rivas-Hermosilla, Akvarez-Bejarano, & Sabz Vergel, 2010, p.235). Additionally, it is estimated that work-related stress accounts for 50%-60% of all working days lost (Rodriguez-Carvajal et al., 2010). Since the emergence of the positive psychology movement, the implications of applying these approaches to organisations have been theorised (Money, Hillenbrand, & da Camara, 2008). Of particular inquiry is whether organisations can apply the principles of positive psychology to organisations to enhance employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, retention, and performance (Money, Hillenbrand, & de Camara, 2008).

Transformational leadership, the enhancement of positive psychological capital, educating employees on positive attributional style (explanatory style), core-self evaluations and creating affective-motivational outcomes to enhance flow, are mechanisms through which the literature proposes an organisation could
enhance wellbeing, job satisfaction and performance of employees (Rodriguez-Carvajal et al., 2010). However, as applying positive psychology principles to organisations is a relatively new field of research, the empirical evidence is lacking. From the limited empirical evidence available the experiences of transformational leadership, and its effect on flow can be discussed.

Cillers (2011) researched the experiences 11 executives and managers of a financial organisation had when learning and applying positive psychology leadership practices to their workplace. These leaders were engaged in ten experiential learning workshops over a three-month period. They were taught “work engagement, learned resourcefulness, sense of coherence, self-actualisation values and locus of control” (Cillers, 2011, p.1). The study outlined that initially the participants found the workshops confronting and difficult, but as they progressed, they realised the challenges they faced in managing others could be explained through their own actions, rather than the actions of their employees (Cillers, 2011). In other words, their locus of control switched from external to internal over the course of the training. Similarly, as the participants moved through the workshops, they began to describe their job role beyond performance measures, and included a focus on the importance of building strong interpersonal relationships with those that they managed (Cillers, 2011). Finally, the participants outlined that their previous style of management did not facilitate the growth of others. They controlled and dictated, rather than facilitated and communicated (Cillers, 2011). By changing their management style, they felt the employees could gain greater opportunities for autonomy and job satisfaction (Cillers, 2011).
Another study conducted by Smith, Koppes Bryan and Vodanovich (2012) investigated the effect positive leadership had on flow. Enhancing the amount of flow employees engage in per working day is of particular interest to organisations, as enhancing flow is conducive to performance (Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012). The researchers trained senior executives and managers in the principles of transformational and authentic leadership, where leaders possess positive inspirational behaviours, for example catering for individual differences, as well as the ability to develop authentic relationships with others, based on trust and mutual respect (Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012). The study found that transformational and authentic leadership were both positively correlated with job satisfaction, employee perception, and organisational commitment (Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012). There was also a statistically significant relationship between enhancing these factors and workplace flow (Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012). Therefore, by changing the leadership style to one which utilises positive psychology principles, this workplace was able to enhance job satisfaction, employee attitudes and organisational commitment. This had a positive effect of the amount of time employees engaged in flow, thereby enhancing performance and wellbeing (Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012).

From the theoretical and empirical literature available, it is clear that positive psychology principles can be applied to organisations. Changing the leadership style of executives and managers was the top-down approach conducted in both studies and an approach the literature recommended. By doing so, these organisations did experience positive changes in their workplace, with both
managers and employees reporting benefits to job satisfaction, flow, and wellbeing. However, more empirical research needs to be conducted to create further support for these initial findings.

2.6.2 Positive Education

Schools are an organisation, and like Governments and businesses, have been viewed as a place to apply positive psychology principles. The term used to describe the application of positive psychology to schools is positive education. Positive education links the skills of academic achievement with the skills of wellbeing, aiming “to develop the skills of wellbeing, flourishing and optimal functioning in children, teenagers and students” (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011, p.210). This model of education has been proposed as a remedy to the decline of adolescent health and wellbeing because schools are an excellent point of contact for youth (Seligman, 2011). Furthermore, increasing the overall wellbeing of students is beneficial to learning – the traditional goal of education – as positive mood improves attentional focus (Bolte, Goschke, & Kuhl, 2003; Frederickson, 1998; Rowe, Hirsh, Anderson, & Smith, 2007). It also improves creative thinking and holistic thought, as opposed to negative affect, which encourages critical and analytical processes (Seligman, 2011). Improving wellbeing allows both vital ways of thinking to enter a classroom, rather than purely emphasising critical thinking and negative mood (Seligman, Ernst, Gillman, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

Marques, Pais-Ribeiro and Lopez (2011) conducted a two-year longitudinal study that underscores the importance of enhancing wellbeing in children and
adolescents. Three hundred and sixty seven Portuguese middle school students from seven schools (mean age 11.70) participated in this study, which examined the predictive power of positive psychology concepts on mental health (a component of wellbeing) and academic achievement. The three positive psychology concepts measured over the four time-points were hope, life satisfaction and self-worth. Hope was found to predict academic achievement, and life satisfaction strongly predicted mental health. The study concluded that these results provided educators with important information on how to cultivate sound mental health and promote academic achievement.

Introducing wellbeing education and/or education of positive psychology concepts does have a place in the Australian education system. The rationale and goals of positive psychology, positive education and the Australian national goals of education, outlined in the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young People, align. The national goals of Australian education have acknowledged that schools play a vital role in the holistic development of their students: “Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion” (ACARA, 2011, p.4).

Furthermore, specific positive psychology and positive education principles of flow, meaning in life, purpose in life and hope draw direct links with ACARA’s national goals of promoting academic excellence, and creating successful learners, who are also confident, creative individuals.
Flow, or optimal experience, occurs when one’s resources are adequately challenged, requiring an individual to be completely absorbed in the task at hand, losing self-consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Succeeding an optimal experience, people have the opportunity of self-growth, differentiating and assimilating their experience, accommodating to their new outlook (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). ACARA aims to create classroom environments which are challenging and stimulating, that lead to an improvement of students’ gifts and talents, in other words, environments which induce flow: “Goal one: Promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents” (ACARA, 2011, p.7).

Purpose in life is a person’s unique overarching aim for their lives (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). It is “…comprehended in light of one’s values, and enacted in reflection of one’s community” (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p.680). It is an integral part of meaning in life, which is defined as “…the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life” (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p.682). These concepts correlate with the national goal of having students feel a sense of self-worth and personal identity, which in turn, enables them to manage their wellbeing (ACARA, 2011). Likewise, meaning and purpose also assist in aiding young people to be prepared for their “…potential life roles as family, community and future workforce members”, as they help define who they want to be, and what they want to do within society (ACARA, 2011, p.8).
Additionally, as enhanced wellbeing increases positive affect, and positive affect induces creativity, the national aims of creating students who can solve problems with innovation and a creative mind, and who “are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities” are also aligned (ACARA, 2011, p.8).

Finally, in terms of positive psychology, hope is linked to optimism and future mindedness (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011). It is defined as “a cognitive set involving an individual’s beliefs in his or her capacity to produce workable routes to goals (waypower or pathways) and beliefs in his or her own ability to initiate and sustain movement towards these goals” (Snyder & Lopez, 2009, p.134). Hence, if an individual can effectively set goals, find a realistic way to achieve these goals, pursue and achieve their goals repeatedly, they exhibit hope, which in turns helps them feel optimistic about the future (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). This is another national education goal for Australian students (ACARA, 2011).

Whilst there are clear links between the national education goals for Australian students and the positive education model, there needs to be evidence-based guidance on how to best implement positive education programs in schools. As positive education is a new branch of applied positive psychology research, there are few intervention studies to draw upon.

2.6.3 Positive Education Interventions and Recommendations

Research on the effectiveness of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) - not limited to those in the education system - is still in its early stages, and few comprehensive studies have been published and reviewed. Nevertheless Sin
and Lyubomirsky (2009) conducted a meta-analysis on PPIs existent in the literature. They aimed to determine which interventions enhanced wellbeing and reduced depressive symptoms. Fifty-three interventions were identified from the period of 1977-2008. These interventions targeted different age groups: up to 17 years, 18-35 years, 39-59 years and 60 years and above. Forty-nine of these studies were meta-analysed for wellbeing. It was concluded that 65% of participants who were exposed to a positive psychology intervention experienced enhanced levels of wellbeing, as compared to those in the control group (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). These increases were statistically significant (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Of the fifty-three interventions identified, only three were aimed at school-aged children (up to 17 years), and one of these interventions was unpublished. Thus, there is a lack of empirical findings in positive education for primary and high school aged children.

One of the two studies identified in this meta-analysis implemented a school-based positive psychology intervention in an Italian middle school (Ruini, Belaise, Brombin, Caffo, & Fava, 2006). Four classes volunteered to be a part of the project, with 111 participants in total (Ruini et al., 2006). Students were randomly assigned to three groups: “(a) protocol for affective education, particularly focused on negative emotions using theories and techniques derived from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, (b) a protocol derived from Wellbeing Therapy, which focused on positive emotions and on dimensions of psychological wellbeing” (Ruini et al., 2006, p.332). The third group was the control group.
The participants who received the Wellbeing Therapy intervention partook in four two-hour sessions that ran every other week. The first two sessions helped students recognise, express and share positive emotions. The third session assisted children in recognising and complimenting others on the positive emotions they expressed. They were also asked to record the compliments they heard about themselves in a diary. The final session focused on self acceptance and self growth, asking students to “recognise and communicate to the class some positive aspects of their personality and share with schoolmates some very positive moments they had experienced during their life” (Ruini et al., 2006, p.332). At the conclusion of this intervention, participants who were exposed to Wellbeing Therapy had significant increases in psychological wellbeing (self acceptance), and significant decreases in hostility (Ruini et al., 2006). The study concluded that Wellbeing Therapy could be used as a way to promote wellbeing and flourishing within schools (Ruini et al., 2006).

The second intervention identified in the meta-analysis centred on cultivating gratitude in 11 classes of early adolescents (221 participants with an average age 12.17) (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). The classes were randomly assigned into three groups: gratitude (4 classes), hassles (4 classes) and control (3 classes). The participants in the gratitude group were asked to list five things they were grateful for since yesterday, the hassles group were asked to list five things that were hassles since yesterday, and the control group simply completed the pre- and post-test measures (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). The study found that cultivating gratitude was positively correlated with gratitude, optimism and life satisfaction (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008).
The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) is another example of a Positive Psychology Curriculum that has been used as the basis of 17 school-based interventions in the United States (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Australia, China and Portugal (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). A research team at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, developed the PRP for people aged 8-15. It entails a comprehensive curriculum, delivered in 12, 90-minute sessions by graduate psychology/education students, mental health professionals, school teachers and/or counsellors (Gillham & Reivich, 2007). The PRP educates students on the Adversity-Consequences-Beliefs model, where students learn how to identify, challenge and respond to automatic negative thoughts. Skills education is also a focus of this program, students learning assertiveness, negotiation, decision-making, problem solving and relaxation. In delivery, meaningful instruction is used, linking content to real life (relationships, family, achievement and academics). Student-centred learning is the key pedagogical model, with resiliency concepts taught through role plays, skits, short stories or group work. Seligman et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of the seventeen interventions that used PRP in their schools. They found that it: significantly reduces the symptoms of depression (post intervention, 6 and 12 months following the intervention), significantly reduces hopelessness, prevents clinical levels of depression and anxiety, and reduces behavioural problems (Seligman et al., 2009). The meta-analysis concluded that this program, when implemented in schools, “produces positive and reliable improvements in students’ wellbeing” (Seligman et al., 2009, p.300).

Finally, Waters (2011) conducted a systematic evaluation of 12 school-based positive psychology interventions. This review outlined the pockets of positive
psychology chosen as topics for intervention, and, what elements comprised a successful intervention. Each of the interventions either targeted hope, gratitude, serenity, resilience, or building character strengths in students (Waters, 2011). They were each successful in enhancing wellbeing, goal-directed thought, positive affect, and in some cases, academic achievement. Waters (2011) also outlined that these successful interventions had similar features. They all extended positive psychology topics into traditional academic disciplines, used a school-wide approach, and used strategic frameworks to guide the roll-out of positive psychology (Waters, 2011).

Extending positive psychology topics into traditional academic disciplines enables the wellbeing/positive psychology curriculum to be a consistent and prominent emphasis in a child’s education (Waters, 2011). These interventions did so by encouraging teachers to examine topics through the lens of flourishing, allowing students more opportunities to learn, develop and use their wellbeing skills in a variety of contexts (Waters, 2011). The following example was used to explain how this could be done in an English classroom:

For example, the English curriculum could study hope and gratitude as topics in their analysis of character and text. Moreover, in English literature, students can learn the skills of analysis argument formation, and writing by studying uplifting text such as ‘Invictus’ by William Ernest Henley. (Waters, 2011, p.85)

A school-wide approach is also recommended for PPIs in schools. This is consistent with the National Health Promoting Schools Framework, which outlines for a health initiative (like PPIs) to be successful in schools, a
multifaceted approach needs to undertaken (Australian Health Promoting Schools Association, 2000). As viewed in figure 4, this approach outlines three areas of schools that need to be targeted to ensure success of a health promotion initiative: *i.* curriculum, teaching and learning, *ii.* school organisation, ethos and environment, and, *iii.* partnerships and services (Australian Health Promoting Schools Association, 2000, p.7).

Like this framework, Waters (2011) concluded that successful PPIs in schools partnered with external organisation(s) to train the teaching and nonteaching staff on the principles and techniques of positive education. This enhanced the ethos of the school, as by enhancing the social and emotional health of staff,
their interactions between themselves and students were increasingly positive. By doing so, the explicit education of the positive psychology principles was supported.

Following a school-wide approach interlocks with the final successful PPI feature: using strategic frameworks to guide the roll-out of positive psychology in schools (Waters, 2011). The review explicitly states positive psychology programs in schools need to move away from the narrow focus of implementing isolated programs, and extend their reach to the whole school.

Positive education frameworks need to target curriculum, pastoral care, the broader teaching and learning environment, and the playground, as well as organisational structures, policies and processes, so that every aspect of the school culture is supporting the conditions that allow students and staff to thrive. (Waters, 2011, p.86)

This review of current PPIs in schools reveals the limited amount of empirical data in this applied field of positive psychology. Whilst the results of the interventions discussed are encouraging, there needs to be more research conducted to draw confident conclusions about the successes of positive psychology in schools. Moreover, none of the interventions targeted meaning in life or purpose in life. Hence there is a significant gap in the literature regarding these concepts, their teach-ability (i.e. can they be taught or are they inherent within people), and whether they have an effect on student wellbeing.
2.7 Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life

Early theologians, like Plato, observed that human beings instinctively and automatically examine their life experiences and construct meaning from them. This also encompassed the meaning of their life itself.

Meaning assists people in comprehending their place and roles on this earth by forming connections, understandings and interpretations of their experiences, helping us “direct our energies to the achievement of our desired future” (Steger, 2012, p.165). By viewing life through this lens, we feel that our lives make sense and what we do with our lives matters (Steger, 2012). This, in turn, forms the cognitive component of meaning, where we develop a sense of “who we are, what the world is like, and how we fit in with and relate to the grand scheme of things” (Steger, 2012, p.165). People who feel meaning have a solid grounding for all life experiences, as they are able to reflect upon new experiences by calling upon their previous understandings and interpretations of life (Steger, 2012). For example, people with a sound sense of meaning are able examine their employment beyond their income, suitability and enjoyment; they develop an understanding of how their employment benefits the world beyond themselves. This deeper understandings of their place in the larger scheme of life can include the following aspects: supporting a family, helping those in need, or providing the world with something (or a service) of need or value.

Meaning in Life encompasses cognitive and motivational components (Steger, 2012). The motivational constituent, is also known as Purpose in Life. Damon
(2008), a key contributor to psychological research in Purpose in Life, defines it as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential to the world beyond the self” (p.59). Purpose is how significant or purposeful we deem our lives to be based upon our values, and, our overarching goals/missions for ourselves (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). It becomes a person’s ultimate concern and forms their answers to the question ‘why’ — why a person does anything, why do their actions matter, what is the importance of their actions, and why they are trying to accomplish their goals (Damon, 2008).

Authenticity – where people live lives that are congruent with how they understand themselves (inner voice) – is integral to a person’s level of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. Keyes (2011) explains this concept as **authentic purpose**, where individuals develop life goals that utilise “one’s gifts, brings a deep sense of worth or value, and provides a significant contribution to the common good” (Keyes, 2011, p.286). This is otherwise known as finding a vocation, where individuals reflect on their unique skills, attributes, and interests, and create lives using the aforementioned to serve others (Keyes, 2011). Figure six outlines the link between psychological Purpose in Life and social contribution (also known as Meaning in Life).
Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life have been shown to have strong correlations protecting and enhancing wellbeing in adolescents and adults (Damon, 2008). As mentioned previously, purpose in life is the motivational component of meaning; it is the hierarchy of goals, aims or missions people have for their existence (Steger, 2012). This definition is expanded upon by McKnight and Kashdan (2009): “Purpose is the central, self-organizing life aim that organizes and stimulates goals, manages behaviors and provides a sense of meaning. Purpose directs life goals and daily decisions by guiding the use of finite resources” (p.242).

There are three dimensions of purpose, the first being scope. Scope is how omnipresent purpose is in a person’s life – the extent to which it influences their thoughts, actions, behaviours and emotions. The greater the influence, the larger the scope (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).
Strength is the second facet of purpose, and is how much purpose influences the thoughts, actions, behaviours and emotions of a person. Hence, if scope is ubiquitous in a person’s life, the strength with which it influences their lives is high. Likewise, the less prevalent the scope is, the weaker the strength of the influence (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

The final dimension of purpose is awareness, that is, how conscious a person is of their purpose, and their ability to articulate it. Scope and strength influence the awareness of a person (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

It has been proposed by researchers that purpose could serve as a protective factor to wellbeing (Burton, Lydon, D’Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006; Damon 2003, 2008; Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Whilst there are correlational findings, research to show a direct link has not yet been conducted. Nevertheless, people report greater feelings of wellbeing when they have a deep knowledge, and are actively pursuing goals which are meaningful to them, as opposed to partially articulated and/or confused life goals (Burton, Lydon, D’Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006).

Furthermore, research with adults has shown a link between purpose, wellbeing and health behaviours. Those who have a broad scope, strong strength and high attention are more likely to carry out behaviours that are in alignment with their purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Similarly, those with a small scope, weak strength and low attention are more likely to participate in behaviours that are irrelevant, or serve to counter their purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). As a consequence, motivation decreases, and purposelessness increases (Seligman, 2011). Purposelessness and a lack of goal-directed behaviour
correlate with a greater usage/abuse of alcohol and drugs, heightened levels of anxiety, increased levels of depressive symptoms, and disordered eating (as a way of feeling control) (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

Neurological research has also shown that the neuronal webs in sections of the brain, which govern social and moral judgment, fire heavily when people act with purposeful intention (Gallese, Eagle & Migone, 2007).

Additionally helping people with a mental health problem, illness or disability find a purpose in life can assist them in overcoming psychological deficits (Damon, 2008). Similarly, for the aging population, a prime predictor of health and wellbeing is the ability for one to maintain and/or enhance purposeful living (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staundinger, 2006). The implications of these findings are that human beings are born with the need to create a purpose for their lives, and this purpose is central in guiding our thoughts, choices, actions and behaviours (Damon, 2008).

There is limited literature available that investigates the effect purpose in life has on the wellbeing of adolescents. However, when one compares the adolescents of today, to those two to three decades ago, it is argued that a sense of purpose and direction has diminished (Damon, 2008). Two to three decades ago, people in their late teenage years and early twenties knew what their occupation would be, where they were going to live, and be with a person whom they may most likely marry (Damon, 2008). Today, people in their mid-late twenties can still not answer these questions (Damon, 2008). This is due to the global economy increasing the opportunities and subsequent pressure young people have (Damon, 2008). A large portion of the youth of today
struggle and avoid to make decisions that will impact their lives in the long run because they lack clear life goals, which results in stalled personal and social development, and missed opportunity (Damon, 2008). Indeed, “young people are hesitating to make commitments to any roles that define adult life, such as parent, worker, spouse or citizen” (Damon, 2008, p.26). It is important to acknowledge, however, that some young people do take advantage of the opportunities that are given to them, and create clear goals, and aspirations for their lives, and take direct actions to accomplish everything they envision for themselves (Damon, 2008).

The key difference between the motivated and the drifting youth is purpose in life. It provides direction, and guides thoughts, actions and behaviours.

What is too often missing – not altogether absent but evident in a minority of today’s youth – is the kind of wholehearted dedication to an activity or interest that stems from a serious sense of purpose that can give meaning and direction to life. (Damon, 2008, p.31)

Preliminary findings have shown correlational links between purpose, the formation of identity, and overall wellbeing (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). However, there is a need for further research in this area to draw stronger links between purpose and adolescent health and wellbeing (Damon, 2008; Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003).

Adolescence is a critical moment in an individual’s development, as it is a significant time of hormonal-behavioural and psychosocial changes (Cobb, 2010). During this period, individuals construct, reflect and refine their identity
based upon three main facets: process, content and structure (Cote, 2009). Process is where adolescents are constantly monitoring and critically reflecting upon how they are perceived by others (Cote, 2009). Content is their own self-concepts, or how they view themselves in relation to various social arenas in their lives, for example, family, in class or in their peer group. Finally, structure is the cognitive combination of process and content. It is their roles, identifications, and values in a configuration that reflects cultural expectations, their independence, and interdependence from and with others (Cote, 2009).

If an identity is constructed with a sense of purposelessness, the individuals ‘drift’ away from themselves – their values and goals in life – which can lead to personal and social pathologies (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). The effects of purposelessness in adolescence also include self-absorption, anxiety, depressive symptoms, addiction, deviant and destructive behaviour, lack of productivity and poor social relations (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). When one examines the construction of identity, it is clear why. The content (or constructions of self) upon which they judge themselves and evaluate how others perceive them (process) are based upon a feeling that they do not matter, as they are not actively pursuing anything close to their hopes, dreams or values as a person (Damon, 2003).

The converse is also true; if an adolescent has a strong feeling that their life serves a purpose, and they ‘matter’ in this world, they view their existence to be of great value (Damon, 2003). By extension, people who have Meaning in Life also have higher levels of self-acceptance, self-worth, self-esteem and resiliency, as they view themselves and their path in life as important and worthy (Piko & Steger, 2010; Scannell, Allen & Burton, 2002; Steger, 2012).
More effective coping is also reported, where one emotionally focuses on resolving challenges and seeks appropriate support, rather than avoiding the problems they are facing. Moreover, higher levels of autonomy, responsibility, greater future orientation, and, hope and optimism about the future were also found (Damon, 2003).

By knowing where one fits into the world in relation to others, people are also able to enhance their connectedness to friendships, romantic partners, family, the broader community, social events, and (if their faith permits) enhanced religious/spiritual transcendence (Steger, 2012). Connectedness is vital for the wellbeing of young people, as it enhances their sense of belonging and enables them to seek support when necessary (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). This has flow-on benefits for resiliency, and serves as a protective factor against harmful health behaviours (Compas & Reeslund, 2009).

Additional research has shown that if adolescents have a sense of purpose, they are able to effectively control the course their lives take (Damon, 2008). Most teenagers are able to feel if this sense of purpose is missing in their lives, but struggle to articulate it (Damon, 2008). Instead, it is shown in “expressions of anxiety (‘I’m so stressed out!’), cynicism (‘like I should care?’) or apathy (‘whatever!’)” (Damon, 2008, p.31). These young people may be achieving, doing what they are told, and staying out of trouble, yet without a sense of direction, it is a short step from doing well, to becoming derailed (Damon, 2008).

During the time of puberty, adolescents experience a surge of neural capacity which amplifies their emotional and cognitive functioning (Damon, 2008). Whatever captures an adolescent’s attention is what they will pour their
attention into; these may be positive or negative in nature (Damon, 2008). Naturally, if a teenager knows their purpose, aspects of life that will contribute to their purpose will grab their attention and they will enthusiastically devote their time and energy to it (Damon, 2008). This can be compared to an adolescent who lacks a sense of purpose, and chooses to spend their energies on *anything* that captures their attention, like driving cars to dangerous speeds (Damon, 2008). Adolescents can be easily misguided, but a sense of purpose assists them on staying on the right track (Damon, 2008). Indeed, they can become increasingly passionate about their range of interests – from music, to public speaking, mathematics or sports – if they find these activities to be purposeful (Damon, 2008).

Finding this passion from purpose is linked to Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) theory of flow:

Purpose leads to personal satisfaction by bringing people outside themselves and into an engrossing set of activities. People become fascinated instead by the work or problem at hand. As they muster their mental and physical capacities to reach a solution, they must discover powers they never thought they had: untried talents, new skills, reservoirs of untapped energy. They lose track of everyday cares and woes, of where they happen to be, of what time it is – in short, all mental boundaries usually posed by our physical and material worlds. In such cases, they experience that sublime state of inspiration that
psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has termed flow.

(Damon, 2008, p.57)

The research surrounding positive psychology and adolescence indicates that meaning in life and purpose in life are two factors that strongly correlate with psychological wellbeing, and are protective factors of overall health and wellbeing. That is, adolescents are less likely to participate in destructive behaviours that could be detrimental to their physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual health, for example, alcohol abuse (Brassai, Piko & Steger, 2010).

Additionally, whilst purpose in life may be taxing to the individual, with adolescents constantly grappling with this concept in relation to their identity formation, it ultimately predicts sense of optimism, satisfaction and wellbeing (Brassai, Piko, & Steger, 2010).

Similarly a study was conducted that measured 144 American adolescents on three domains (via surveys): purpose (Revised Youth Purpose Survey), life satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale) and personality (Big Five Personality Inventory) (Cotton Bronk & Holmes Finch, 2010). It found the participants who had long-term aims orientated towards others – rather than goals for self gain – were also ones who searched for purpose in their lives. These participants also scored higher in life satisfaction, and expressed openness in their personality (Cotton Bronk & Holmes Finch, 2010).

Meaning in life and Purpose in Life are increasingly recognised as important aspects of an adolescent’s development. However, the study of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life is still in its preliminary stages and the literature available is predominantly theoretical. There is minimal empirical evidence available, and
no current research that investigates the effect introducing these positive psychology concepts in a positive education intervention would have on wellbeing of primary or secondary aged students.

2.8 Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Adolescent Development

Developmental theories suggest that the development of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life takes place within the exploration and construction of identity (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). This development begins in early adolescence and continues throughout life (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). Erik Erikson’s value orientation stages of identity development outline the significance of the development of a belief system during adolescent identity reconstruction and formation (Damon, Menon & Cotton Bronk, 2003). During adolescence Erikson suggested that individuals (or more specifically, their ego) entered a phase called ideological orientation (Cote & Levine, 1987). During this phase, adolescents experiment with ideological values, and eventually choose which ethical/value worldview will guide their future (Cote & Levine, 1987). The ideological orientation phase is divided into two subtypes: implicit and explicit (Cote & Levine, 1987).

The implicit subtype refers to the development of a worldview that is congruent with mainstream societal beliefs and values, where adolescents experience social support for beliefs and values that align with society (Cote & Levine,
Moreover, adolescents will be able to justify their beliefs and values in accordance with mainstream society (Cote & Levine, 1987).

In the explicit subtype of the ideological orientation phase, the adolescent has developed an organised system of beliefs and values, but may not have figured out how to tangibly apply these to their lives (Cote & Levine, 1987). This is due to the lack of life experience and understanding of the practical implications of their choices (Cote & Levine, 1987).

As the research of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life has moved beyond the existential and into the valid measurement of psychological constructs, Erikson’s identity development theory has been linked to the development of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life in adolescents (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). It is theorised that adolescents develop Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life during the ideological orientation phase (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). During this phase, individuals develop worldviews that incorporate where they fit into and contribute to the larger world (Meaning in Life), as well as, develop overarching life goals that align with their worldviews (Purpose in Life). Therefore, this phase is of high developmental significance, as the adoption of a belief system during adolescence influences life choices in adulthood (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003).

Recent research into Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life has called for greater inquiry regarding how adolescents engage with, and make meaning of, these constructs throughout their development. Initial research suggests that the search for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life occurs throughout adolescence, with the presence of each forming in adulthood (Hill, Burrow, O'Dell, & Thornton,
2010; Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). Therefore, when examining how to adequately measure Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, it is important to clarify what adolescents are searching for. Initially Damon, Menon and Cotton Bronk (2003) suggested current quantitative measurements of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life in adolescents were limited, as they were normed for adult samples. However, studies have now found no difference in how adolescents and adults conceive and define Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. In regards to Meaning in Life, Prager (1996) found Australian adolescents and adults gained the most level of Meaning in Life from the same sources. These were:

- Personal relationships
- Meeting personal needs
- Preserving values and traditions
- Leisure activities
- Personal growth
- Altruism
- Identification with tradition and culture
- Interest in social causes. (Prager, 1996)

With regard to Purpose in Life, Hill et al. (2010) found both adolescents and adults gained a sense of purpose from the following:

- Foundation and direction
- Happiness
- Prosocial behaviours
- Religion
- Occupational/financial.
Therefore, the difference between how adolescents and adults engage with the constructs of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life is not where they gain their sense of each from, nor how they define it. Rather, adolescents are in the process of searching for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, whereas adults generally have a sense of presence of each.

Moreover, with respect to developmental stages, it is important to acknowledge that the journey to developing a sense of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life in adulthood could potentially be impacted by a state of prolonged adolescence in this generation. There are limited studies that have examined the relationship between the delayed onset of taking on traditional adult milestones - like completing education, financial independence, long term partnerships and starting a family - and the search of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, and the impact this has on the amount of presence felt throughout this transition. Whilst this particular study cannot examine whether the search for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life is also prolonged due to delayed onset of taking on traditional adult roles, it is recommended that future studies do so to address this gap.

2.9 Criticisms

A resounding amount of the theoretical and empirical evidence on positive education is positive, outlining that this model can be used to enhance the wellbeing and academic outcomes of students. However, it has been faced with
some criticism, particularly around the purpose of schooling. Traditional models of education focus on the acquisition of knowledge to prepare students for further education and/or entrance into the workforce (Cigman, 2012). It is argued that effective teachers will pass on this knowledge, and through learning and mastery, students experience heightened positive emotion and wellbeing (Cigman, 2012). Likewise, it is through the learning content that students gain access to further education/employment, which serves to enhance their wellbeing by increasing their chances of traditional models of ‘success’, that is, wealth (Cigman, 2012). Finally, a bigger picture criticism is the effect the focus on wellbeing will have on the broader economy; if knowledge is not valued will there be a decrease in skilled workers? (Cigman, 2012).

However, the positive education model does not seek to replace traditional pursuits of knowledge, but rather complement it (Seligman et al., 2009).

2.10 Conclusion

The salient message from the literature on positive psychology is that positive education is a potential model that can be used to combat the growing levels of poor wellbeing in children and youth. However, this is a relatively new field of applied positive psychology, and there is a need for more research to be completed. Moreover, there is a significant gap in the areas of meaning in life and purpose in life, as whilst there is evidence that outlines the relationship between these concepts and wellbeing, there appears to be no published research in positive education targeting these areas for interventions in schools.
Chapter Three

Situational Analysis

This research was conducted as part of a study entitled *Positive Education: The Role Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology in Promoting Positive Educational Environments and Outcomes for the Staff and Students*. As such, this chapter provides a context for the larger project and the role the following research project plays: *To What Extent Do Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life, and Hope Work as Protective Factors for Senior High School Boys’ Wellbeing and Academic Outcomes?*

The idea to implement a positive change at the research site – a selective boys’ secondary high school in the Upper North Shore of Sydney – began in 2009. The school conducted exit surveys after the Year Twelve trial Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations. The results indicated that whilst the students felt well prepared academically, they were somewhat disillusioned with the school, and its tutoring program (otherwise known as pastoral care) (Zolezzi¹, 2012). The 2009 cohort performed well academically, placing this school in the top 40 schools in New South Wales. Yet the students felt their needs were not addressed, that tutoring was a waste of their time, and they lacked connection with their tutors (Zolezzi, 2012). A survey conducted with the tutors demonstrated complementary findings, indicating that the ten minutes designated before class for mentoring felt more like roll call, rather than any meaningful instruction.

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¹ S. Zolezzi is the school psychologist who has been heavily involved in the implementation of the whole school approach to positive education at the school/research site.
In response, the Headmaster and school council made a commitment to improving the existing tutoring program. They had a vision of their students leaving school with a skill set that enabled them to create a purposeful life. To do so, they believed it was their role to equip the students with life skills and enhanced wellbeing, whilst also helping them achieve academically (Zolezzi, 2012).

After conducting research and attending conferences, the Headmaster sought out the Positive Psychology Institute\(^2\), as they were at the forefront of implementing evidence-based positive psychology approaches in schools, and whose results matched what the Headmaster and the council envisioned for the school. Two experts in Positive Education were recruited to help introduce a whole school, multi-dimensional positive change (Zolezzi, 2012).

In 2010 a positive education team was formed, including the Headmaster, four onsite school psychologists, and the two experts\(^3\) from the Positive Psychology Institute. The two experts were registered psychologists, specialising in the field of positive psychology and implementing organisational change (Zolezzi, 2012). Initially, the school psychologists received training on the principles of positive psychology and positive education. This training was then given to those teachers and administration staff who wished to participate. Ninety-eight percent of the staff (200 members) attended three days of training (Zolezzi, 2012). The first two days were grounded in theory, where participants learnt

\(^2\) The Positive Psychology Institute provides individual clinical/counselling and coaching services, positive education services and positive organisation services. This institute employs registered psychologists, educators and researchers. They integrate and apply emergent positive psychology theory and best practice to their various fields of expertise.

\(^3\) The two experts were two clinical psychologists working for the Positive Psychology Institute. One specialised in organizational psychology and mental fitness, and the other in positive education.
positive psychology concepts, including, flow, mindfulness, ways to flourish, active and constructive responding, the power of thought, reframing thinking, responding to stress, human strengths, time management, mental fitness and goal setting. The third day was of a practical nature, focusing on how to apply the principles they had learnt to a classroom setting (Zolezzi, 2012).

During this year, structures were set up to allow positive education to be supported at a whole school level, assisting its delivery to students in 2011. Mentors replaced tutors and received ongoing training in the Positive Psychology Institute onsite master classes (conducted at the beginning of each term). Mentors were to deliver 3 x 30 minute positive psychology lessons on a fortnightly basis. In this position, their responsibilities covered the following:

- To be responsible for leading mentor groups on a day-to-day basis and implementing the Positive Psychology curriculum.
- To encourage communication within the mentor group that is supportive, cheerful and constructive and develop a positive climate by fostering compassion, connectedness, forgiveness and gratitude among the students in the mentor group.
- To attend regular Positive Education meetings and training updates with other mentors and Mentor Team Leaders.
- To contribute to the building of positive relationships and effective communication within the school and the broader school community.
- To liaise frequently with parents so as to develop a trusting relationship between school and home.
• To liaise regularly with a broad range of staff, including, Mentor Team Leaders, Senior Academic Masters, Counsellors, Student Administration Officers, Heads of Department, Co-curricular Staff and other staff with related responsibilities for student progress across all domains

• To provide support and loyalty to professional colleagues. (Beiharz, 2011, pp.1-2)

Mentors, Year Masters (heads of faculty), the onsite psychologists, and the experts from the Positive Psychology Institute then developed curricula and positive education programs specific to the needs of the students. This included consideration of their gender, socio-economic status, location, interests, ethnic background, facilities, those students who boarded, age, and developmental level. To this team, it was of upmost importance to cater the program for its students. The modules in this program were as follows:

1. What is stress?
2. Stress and peak performance
3. Positive Psychology – what determines happiness?
4. Quick relaxation and wellbeing tips
5. Learning how to relax – progressive muscle relaxation.
6. Meditation
7. Mindfulness
8. Stress and the way you think
9. Changing your thinking
10. Turning negative thinking into positive thinking
11. Breathing techniques

12. Changing your focus

13. Pressure points to help you relax

14. Time management. (Beiharz, 2011)

In addition to the mentoring program, students from Years 7-12 also participated in wisdom studies for three periods (classes) a week. This class combined philosophy with positive psychology, and like the mentoring program, was not formally assessed.

Wisdom studies had four modules:

1. Who am I really?
2. How do I get along with others?
3. Is there something more?
4. What is my purpose? (Lines, Gallasch, Hobbs, & Bennett, 2010)

Module one, Who am I really?, explores identity, sense of self, who they wish to be, deconstruction of gender, self talk, gratitude, values exploration, authentic living and body image (Lines et al., 2010).

Module two, How do I get along with others?, centres on interrelatedness and connectedness. Students gain a deeper understanding about authenticity, and explore various communication modes, including anger, aggression, assertiveness and submissiveness. They also receive education in how to communicate openly, and effectively using ‘I’ statements. How one relates with friends, peer groups and the wider community are also studied. Finally students learn support strategies, the importance of recognising your mistakes, apologising and forgiving (Lines et al., 2010).
Module three, *Is there something more?*, covers stillness, silence, solitude, intuition, values, truth, wisdom, death, how to be happy/flourish, elders, time management and coping with sadness (Lines et al., 2010).

Module four, *What is my purpose?*, encourages students to examine all aspects of self (positive and negative), listen to their inner voice and help them begin to discover what their purpose in life is. It teaches students to set goals which will help them live a purposeful life. They are encouraged to actively pursue positive desires, and take responsibility for how they shape their lives. Students also learn about meaning in life, the importance of gratitude and random acts of kindness. Finally, coping with change is addressed (Lines et al., 2010).

In 2011 mentoring and wisdom studies began, and continued into 2014. During 2011 the school implemented a policy where training was offered. This training had six levels:

- **Level one**: all new staff receive a one-day training course in positive psychology upon induction. This is compulsory.
- **Level two**: complete two-day training course. This is compulsory.
- **Level three**: this is for teachers who wish to be year leaders, and want to become part of the positive education team. They attend master classes once a term.
- **Level four**: diploma in positive education.
- **Level five**: share findings with educational community, typically at conferences or running training days.
- **Level six**: collaborate with the Positive Education School Alliance (nine schools in Australia) to refine positive education practice (Zolezzi, 2012).
In 2012, a need to educate parents was also recognised, and as a response, a website was launched to help parents/caregivers of students to understand the goals of positive education. Information nights were also run, and newsletters sent (Zolezzi, 2012).

In order for the program to have credibility, the school wished to have it independently evaluated by the University of Wollongong. From 2010 onwards, data on various teacher, staff and student variables have been collected twice a year (Zolezzi, 2012).

There are various researchers from the University of Wollongong who are attached to this project, all of whom are using teachers as their participants, and researching from an organisation psychology perspective. There was a need for an evaluation to be conducted from the student/curriculum viewpoint. The positive psychology literature identifies meaning in life and purpose in as protective factors for wellbeing. However, it lacks empirical evidence, especially from a program with a comprehensive systemic approach. Hence, this research project was formed. The main aims of this project were to determine any relationships between the predictors and outcomes, whether any changes in the outcomes over time were a result of the positive change implemented, or external factors, and strengths and weaknesses of the positive change (including mentoring, wisdom studies, school ethos and parental/caregiver support).
Chapter Four

Method

The purpose of this study was two fold: first to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on the Wellbeing of one secondary boys’ year group; and, second, to establish whether the positive education change implemented by the larger project, *Positive Education: The Role of Positive Education and Coaching Psychology in Promoting Positive Educational Outcomes for the Staff and Students*, had any effect on the predictors and outcomes. For this reason, a longitudinal, mixed method study was executed. It enabled the quantitative examination of the predictors/outcomes over the course of the Positive Education implementation, as well as qualitative insights into what the student participants attributed to their varying levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.

The primary research question used in this study was:

“What is the relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and secondary student Wellbeing?”

The question was divided into predictors and an outcome to develop secondary research questions. The predictors were *i.* Meaning in Life, and, *ii.* Purpose in Life. The outcome was Wellbeing.

Once predictors and an outcome were established, the researcher developed a set of secondary questions to help answer the primary question. These were:
1. To what extent did Meaning in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?

2. To what extent did Purpose in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?

3. To what extent did Wellbeing change over the course of the positive education implementation?

4. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing?

5. What is the predictive power of the effect of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

6. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

This chapter details the research design, primary research model used, site, participants, data collection tools, ethical considerations, data analysis methods and validity, limitations and credibility of this study.

4.1 Research Design

This project was longitudinal and mixed method in design. Quantitatively, questionnaires were utilised to determine the participants’ Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. Throughout the Positive Education implementation there were four time points where quantitative questionnaire data were collected on the predictors and outcome (see Table 2).
Table 2: Data Collection Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Point</th>
<th>Month/Year Collected</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td>Year Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time One</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Year Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Two</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Year Ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Three</td>
<td>October 2012</td>
<td>Year Ten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Repeated measures of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing were conducted to determine any changes over time, and predictive power, in relation to the Positive Education implementation that occurred within the participants’ school. The baseline measures were conducted one month prior to the roll out of the positive education initiative to determine what the participants’ levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing were prior to the roll out. Succeeding this, measures conducted at time points one, two and three tracked any changes of the levels of each psychological construct over the course of the positive education implementation at the site. This longitudinal research design was chosen because it enabled the examination and development of theory, linking “…individual dynamics with the dynamics of institutions and social structures” (Ruspini, 2002, p.25).

Succeeding the quantitative data collection, fifteen students were randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured focus group interview. Each focus group consisted of five participants. The semi-structured focus group interviews were utilised to add depth to the statistical findings. Conducted in July 2013, they aimed to determine the participants’ understanding of their Meaning in Life,
Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, and, what they felt supported or hindered their levels of each. This included the Positive Education implementation within their school, external factors, a combination of the two, or through their own personal discovery. In terms of the Positive Education implementation put in place within the school, participants were also asked what parts they found beneficial, and those they believed could be improved upon. It is important to note that at the time of the semi-structured focus group interviews, the positive education implementation at the site was still in progress.

The student work samples from the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies were also requested, however, for privacy reasons, the school (research site) denied access. Thus, student work samples could not be used as an additional qualitative data source.

A mixed method research design was chosen as the quantitative and qualitative data collected were complementary to one another, enabling elaboration and enhancement of findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

4.2 Research Model: Longitudinal Mixed Method

4.2.1 Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method

Mixed methods research is a relatively new form of research that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Creswell, 2014). It is founded upon studies originally conducted in “evaluation, education, management, sociology, and health sciences” (Creswell, 2014, p.217). In essence, mixed method research
involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data sources within a study (Creswell, 2003; Morse, 2003). In combining these different methods, the researcher is able to develop knowledge from one, and expand on it using the other (Plowright, 2011). This model also enables convergence and confirmation of findings, triangulation and neutralises the limitations of purely quantitative or qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003; Plowright, 2011). The mixing of data may be within one study, or several (Creswell, 2014).

Mixed methods research was primarily chosen for this study as it allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the quantitative and qualitative findings, help explain quantitative findings through qualitative analysis, and gain a better understanding of the impact the Positive Education implementation had on the participants (Creswell, 2014).

There are various forms of mixed method research, with researchers either following a sequential, concurrent or transformative procedure (Creswell, 2003). This project followed a sequential explanatory strategy to address the research question. This strategy is also known as two-phase mixed methods, as it involves the collection and analysis of the quantitative data, then the qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). Integration of the entire analysis then occurs (Creswell, 2003). Figure 6 outlines a model for this strategy.

Figure 6: Sequential Explanatory Design (Creswell, 2003, p.213)
In a sequential explanatory mixed method design, qualitative data are used to help explain and interpret quantitative results, adding depth of explanation and understanding to the initial quantitative findings (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The quantitative component is given priority, as the findings usually assist in characterisation of participants, purposeful selection, or informing qualitative design, for example interview questions (Creswell et al., 2003).

Sequential explanatory mixed method design was selected for this project for a variety of reasons. This research aimed to discover any statistically significant changes over time, and any predictive power between the predictors and outcome. The quantitative aspect was chosen as this project measured Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing through questionnaires with high reliability that generate a numerical representation of each. Additionally, this project wanted to determine what influences impacted the participants’ levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, in hopes of discovering ways to enhance protective factors of Wellbeing for adolescent males. To do so, an evaluation of the participants’ response to the Positive Education implementation that occurred within their school needed to take place, as this was a main change in their lives post baseline data collection. To conduct this evaluation successfully, the researcher performed a quantitative analysis of the predictors and outcome in relation to time (over the four time points). However, this alone would not provide insight into what the participants attributed to their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, nor their beliefs about the Positive Education implementation. Therefore the need for qualitative data was
established, as semi-structured interviews were required to help add further explanation to the quantitative findings.

Furthermore, the procedure of collecting and analysing quantitative data, followed by qualitative data, was also necessary for this project. Through the quantitative analysis of the predictors and outcome, the researcher was able to see trends in the data. By examining the trends, the researcher was then enabled to tailor the semi-structured focus group interview questions to gain richer insight and deeper explanations of why these trends occurred.

4.2.2 Prospective Longitudinal

Longitudinal research is diachronic in nature, involving the repeated measurement of a variety of variables during the observation of participants over time (Ruspini, 2002). These repeated measurements are known as waves, and require participants to provide information on behaviours, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, or beliefs, at established times on the chosen measures (Ruspini, 2002).

There is an array of longitudinal research methods, including repeated cross-sectional studies, prospective longitudinal studies, and retrospective longitudinal studies (Ruspini, 2002). The prospective longitudinal method, also known as a panel or total population design, repeats the same data collection measures on the same participants over a period of time (Menard, 2008). It is considered the most reliable of all forms of longitudinal design because it allows “…the data to be collected concurrently with the events in question” (Grotpeter, 2008, p.13).
The prospective longitudinal method was chosen in conjunction with the explanatory mixed method design because part of the research examined the effect the Positive Education implementation within the school had on the predictors (Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life), and the outcome (Wellbeing). To do this effectively repeated measures were required to accurately track any alterations in the levels throughout the implementation. Additionally, this method best suited as data from one year group were collected over three years.

In summary the sequential explanatory mixed method design aligned with the forms of quantitative data required to produce reliable measures of the predictors and outcome, enabled examination of any statistically significant predictors of Wellbeing, and helped inform the semi-structured focus group interviews. Specifically the sequential component assisted in gaining a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings through informing the questions asked in the semi-structured focus group interviews. Therefore the prospective longitudinal method assisted in increasing the validity of the conclusions drawn about the effect the Positive Education implementation had on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.

4.3 Sample Selection

4.3.1 Site

The research site was a private and independent Uniting Church secondary school in the upper north shore of Sydney. It was a selective boys’ secondary
school, which was both a day school and a boarding house for some of its students. The school had a strong focus on helping the students achieve academically, as well as providing them with a range of co-curricular activities that help them develop as a well-rounded citizen capable of contributing to society. The students had a range of sporting and artistic activities they could participate in, as well as those which focused on charity and being a responsible citizen. Similarly, this school focused on character development, by teaching students Christian values and providing leadership opportunities.

This school was ranked within the top 30 schools for HSC\(^4\) performance in 2011, with 10% of students achieving an ATAR\(^5\) 99+, and 50% of students achieving an ATAR of 90+. Twenty five of the students were also placed on the All Rounder’s Achievers list, achieving 90 or over in their best 10 units.

This school also had an invested interest in the Wellbeing of their students, choosing to implement a positive education program in 2011, with the vision of increasing the mental fitness and resilience of its students, and mentoring students to nurture their strengths and set personal goals. As the school did have the funding to be able to invest into positive education, they believed that they had a role to model the benefits of such programs in all schools.

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\(^4\) Higher School Certificate (HSC) is the credential awarded to senior secondary students who successfully complete their final year of secondary education (Year Twelve) in New South Wales.

\(^5\) Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a percentile score from ‘less than 30’ to 99.95. It indicates a student’s ranking in relation to his/her peers upon their completion of secondary education in Australia.
4.3.2 Participants

There were 189 students who participated in this study. At the beginning of the research, they were in Year 9, aged 14-15 years. At the conclusion, they were in Year 11, aged 16-17 years. Over the course of the quantitative data collection, 11 participants did not complete all of the questionnaires, thus this study had a 5.5% attrition rate. As senior students, their ages ranged from 16-18 years. These participants were of a high socio-economic status, with school fees being upwards of $25,000 per annum. The students who boarded at the school were approximately 60% from rural or regional areas, 20% international and 20% local. Those who were day students were predominantly Anglo Saxon in heritage, with a minority having Asian or European backgrounds.

4.4 Procedures

4.4.1 Ethical Considerations

All participation in this study was voluntary. Participants had no obligation to participate, and were able to leave the project at any time without suffering any negative outcome. This was explicitly noted in the Participant Information Sheet for students and parents. Additionally the participants were under the age of 18 and, as such, parental consent to participate was sought.

As there were repeated and multiple forms of data collection, all students were assigned a code to keep their identities confidential. The only individuals who
saw the data collected from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were the researchers, ensuring all information was kept confidential.

4.4.2 Authorisation

4.4.2.1. Approval from the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee

The University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee granted approval for this research project, reference number HE10/528.

4.4.2.2. Participant Consent

A cohort of 189 Year Nine students of a private, selective independent school were selected as potential participants of this study. An assembly was set up with the cohort, where a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) for the students was distributed. This PIS explained the purpose of the study, what it entailed, and what would be expected of them if they chose to be participants. This was also verbally explained to the students. A copy of the student PIS can be viewed in Appendix One.

It was also explained to the students that if they were interested in becoming a participant, because they were under the age of consent, their parents/caregivers/guardians must also consent to their participation.

Once interest to participate in the study was shown, the students were given a PIS for their parents/caregivers/guardians (Appendix One) and a Consent Form (Appendix Two) to take home. The students and parents/caregivers/guardians were able to read the PIS. If the parents/caregivers/guardians were willing for their child to be a participant in the study, they read and signed the Consent
Form, agreeing to the terms and conditions stated. If the student was willing to be a participant, he/she, also signed this form, also agreeing to the terms and conditions stated.

Participants who were randomly selected to participate in the semi-structured focus group interviews were provided an additional PIS and Consent Form, and followed the same steps. These can be viewed in Appendix One and Two respectively.

4.4.3 Data Collection Tools (Quantitative)

4.4.3.1. Meaning In Life Questionnaire (MIL)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire measures two dimensions, the search for meaning and the presence of meaning. Individuals are asked to respond to a 10-item, 7-point Likert scale, rating their beliefs on the truthfulness of the statements (1 = Absolutely Untrue, 7 = Absolutely True) (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). A sample question from this questionnaire is “I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant” (Steger et al., 2006, p.93).

Higher scores indicate that individuals feel their lives have significant meaning and have high levels of Wellbeing. They also have high levels of religiosity/spirituality, extraversion, agreeableness, altruism and a consistent ability to reflect on experiences and grow from them (Steger et al., 2006). Lower scores are related to anxiety, depression, close-mindedness, neuroticism and negative affect (Steger et al., 2006).
The reliability of this questionnaire is high, Cronbach alpha scores ranging from 0.82 – 0.87 in three studies aiming to assess the reliability of the questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). In terms of construct validity, the test-retest coefficient was reported at 0.72. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are few measures of meaning in life, hence less analysis opportunity for the validity of this instrument. As such, only basic construct validity can be presented.

4.4.3.2. Purpose in Life subscale of the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PIL-PWB)

The Psychological Wellbeing Scale is designed to measure six dimensions of psychological Wellbeing, which are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self acceptance (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryff, 1995; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The purpose in life dimension of the scale is the tool used to measure purpose in life in this study. Participants respond to a 9-item, 6-point Likert scale rating their attitudes towards statements (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree). A sample statement from this questionnaire is “Some people walk aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them” (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Those with higher scores have direction, objectives for living and hold a belief that their lives have a purpose whereas those with lower scores have little to no goals in life, lack direction, and/or do not believe that their life has purpose or meaning.

The Purpose in Life subscale has high reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.90, and a test-retest correlation of 0.82 (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). It also has high construct validity, scoring 0.86 in factor analyses (Kafka & Kozma, 2002).
4.4.3.3. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale is a self-report 14-item scale of mental Wellbeing. It addresses both subjective Wellbeing and psychological functioning, each item addressing aspects of positive mental health (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). It is scored by adding the responses from a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with the lowest total score being 14, and the highest 70 (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). Participants are required to rank their responses to statements from 1 = none of the time, to 5 = all of the time (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). Sample statements include “I've been feeling optimistic about the future” and “I’ve been able to make up my mind about things” (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008, p.15). This tool aims to measure Wellbeing as a stand-alone entity, rather than the determinants of Wellbeing, for example, resilience, skills in relationship, conflict management, poverty, domestic violence, bullying, unemployment, racism and other forms of social exclusion. It is validated for use in people who are 16 years and over (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008).

The WEMWBS has a high level of internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient reported at 0.89, and has a 0.83 correlation in test-retest reliability (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). In relation to nine other scales which measure Wellbeing, this scale has significant construct validity, with correlations ranging from 0.51 - 0.79 (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). A majority of the correlations fell in the 0.70 – 0.79 range (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008).
4.4.4 Data Collection Tools (Qualitative)

4.4.4.1. Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview

Interviews are an excellent data collection tool in action research, as students are able to elicit detail about their experiences (Stringer, 2008). Focus group interviews, where a sample of the participants are interviewed together, are also valuable, as participants are able to share their understandings, building upon each, giving the data collected further depth. Focus group interviews also remove any feelings of reluctance of the participant to open up, as the collaborative nature of the group encourages elaboration (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2005).

Utilising a set of interview questions assists in giving the interview a direction and flow, prompting participants’ thoughts and responses (Martens, 2010). The focus group interview conducted was semi-structured, allowing greater flexibility in conversation, without deviating from its original purpose (Stringer, 2008).

As such, this study conducted three focus group interviews with fifteen randomly selected participants (3x5 participants in each). Groups of five participants in each interview were chosen as Stringer (2008) outlines that four to six people is an ideal number for a focus interview, enabling maximum participation from all members. The random selection method was chosen because the school (research site) requested the majority of the quantitative scores remain anonymous. Therefore the participant codes were entered in Excel, and fifteen names were randomly selected through this program. These
participants were asked to participate in a thirty-minute semi-structured focus group interview. The interview was loosely comprised of six questions:

1. What is your understanding of Wellbeing?

2. Can you describe your level of Wellbeing?

3. How would you describe your Purpose in Life?

4. How would you describe your Meaning in Life?

5. What has your experience been with the Mentoring Program?

6. What has your experience been with the Wisdom Studies subject?

The semi-structured interviews were utilised to add depth to the statistical findings. Conducted in July 2013, the three focus group interviews aimed to determine participants’ understanding of their Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, and how they felt these factors impacted their levels of Wellbeing and academic outcomes. The interviews also investigated how hopeful the participants felt, and how they believed it affected their Wellbeing and academic achievement. Participants were also questioned on to what they attributed their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Hope: the positive change implemented within their school, external factors, a combination of the two, or through their own personal discovery. In terms of the positive change program put in place within the school, participants were also asked what parts they found beneficial, and those they believed could be improved upon.
There were several validity strategies incorporated into collecting the qualitative data. First the researcher clarified any bias she brought to the study. As a person who is passionate about promoting Wellbeing in educational settings, she wanted to discover that the Positive Education implementation was successful in enhancing the participants’ levels of Wellbeing. From the beginning, the researcher was aware of this potential bias. Thus, throughout the development of the interview questions and collection of qualitative data, she was mindful to address this in a non-biased way. The researcher also utilised member checking as a strategy to ensure validity; the final qualitative results section was presented to each of the participants. They had the opportunity to comment, specifically on the accurate representation on their thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Finally the researcher used peer debriefing to enhance the validity. Her supervisors reviewed and questioned the study, ensuring her interpretations of the findings were accurate.

Reliability strategies were also embedded; transcripts were checked to ensure no mistake were made during transcription, data were constantly compared to codes to ensure accuracy of emergent themes, and the codes assigned were cross checked with the supervisors of the project.

4.4.5 Procedure

Once participant consent\(^6\) was gained, quantitative data collection occurred in an online environment. At a time that was deemed convenient for the cohort,

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\(^6\) Participant consent for the quantitative component of this study occurred as part of the larger study. A second informed consent process occurred to request the release of this data for the sub-study that formed the basis of this thesis.
the participants logged into survey monkey to complete the PWB-PIL, MIL and WEMWBS questionnaires/surveys. Each time the participants logged in, they entered their unique identification code. The participants completed the questionnaires/surveys at four time points: March 2011, October 2011, April 2012, and October 2012.

Once all four rounds of quantitative data collection were completed, the data was analysed in SPSS. This analysis informed the design of the semi-structured focus group interviews. In July 2012, 15 participants were randomly selected through creating a random sample in excel. Additional consent was sought for these participants to engage in one of three thirty minute semi-structured focus group interviews. Of the 15 selected, ten chose to participate. The remainder of the participants did not receive parental consent or did not arrive at the scheduled time. An additional interview with the remaining participants was sought, however, the timing was not desirable as it was close to their yearly examinations and the school (research site) was concerned that the interview could be a potential distraction for their study. Similarly, after the examinations the participants were entering Year Twelve, and further interviews were not permitted once the participants entered this final year of secondary school.

Succeeding the interviews, a text analysis occurred where emergent themes were coded. Both quantitative and qualitative findings were then analysed, generating a final interpretation of both sets of analysis.
4.5 Data Analysis

This section includes detail on the three phases of data analysis in this research project: quantitative data analysis, qualitative data analysis and integration of each analysis.

4.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative component of this study had two aims. The first was to determine the change over time in the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, in the cohort. Secondly, the study aimed to determine the predictive power the predictor(s) had on the outcome.

To address the first aim – change over time – one-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted for Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in SPSS. This test is suitable to use as this study collected quantitative data on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing for a single cohort multiple times over two years. Field (2005) outlines one-way repeated measures ANOVAs are the test to use when examining change over time for a singular group of participants.

To determine the predictive power of one predictor on one outcome, simple regressions were run in SPSS for each time point. This test is suitable as a simple regression determines the predictive value one predictor (or independent variable) has on one outcome (or dependent variable) (Field, 2005). Specifically, simple regressions were run on Meaning in Life and Wellbeing, and, Purpose in
Life and Wellbeing at the baseline, time point one, time point two and time point three.

The final test run in SPSS was a multiple regression. A multiple regression determines the predictive power two or more predictors (or independent variables) have on the outcome (or dependent variable) (Field, 2005). Thus, a multiple regression was used to determine the predictive power Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had on Wellbeing at each of the four time points.

4.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

There was one form of qualitative data collected in this study: a semi-structured focus group interview from randomly selected participants. The thirty-minute semi-structured focus group interview was audio recorded. Each interview was then transcribed, and the researcher familiarised herself with the transcripts. A text analysis then took place, where the researcher categorised similar phrases and words into themes. The themes were coded by assigning each a colour.

4.5.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis using Typology

Typology development is a form of data analysis used to integrate quantitative and qualitative analysis in mixed method research (Caracelli & Greene, 2008). It is explained by Caracelli and Greene (2008) as “analysis of one data type that yields a typology (or set of substantive categories) that is then used as a framework applied in analyzing contrasting data” (p.321).
In the case of this study, the quantitative findings were used to create categories, with the qualitative emergent themes being used to further analyse the reasoning behind each grouping. The categories created were Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. They were then broken down into the secondary research questions. Each secondary research question was initially answered using the quantitative findings, which informed the design of the qualitative data collection tool (questions for the semi-structured focus group interviews). The qualitative findings then provided deeper explanations of the trends found in the quantitative component.

4.6 Conclusion

This study adopted a longitudinal, mixed method design. Specifically, the sequential explanatory mixed method design aligned with the forms of quantitative data required to produce reliable measures of each of the predictors/outcomes, enabled examination of any statistically significant relationships, and the qualitative assisted in gaining a deeper understanding of the relationships found. The prospective longitudinal method assisted in finding any changes in the predictors/outcomes over time, thereby identifying possible participants who had varying responses to the positive education program, thereby informing purposeful selection of participants for qualitative data.
Chapter Five

Results

5.1 Introduction

This study was of a longitudinal mixed method design. It focused on two predictors — Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life — and one outcome — Wellbeing. To discover the predictive power that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had on Wellbeing, the primary research question used to guide this study and all the processes of data collection was:

“What is the relationship between Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and secondary student Wellbeing?”

As a structured program that explicitly taught concepts of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to secondary boys was implemented within the school, a longitudinal study was utilised to examine any changes in the predictors and outcome over time. This increased the researcher’s ability to determine the reasons behind any changes in the predictors and outcome. The researcher selected a year group to follow for three years. The year group selected was Year Nine, whose progress was tracked through to Year Eleven.

The primary research question had six secondary questions:

1. To what extent did Meaning in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?
2. To what extent did Purpose in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?

3. To what extent did Wellbeing change over the course of the positive education implementation?

4. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing?

5. What is the predictive power of the effect of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

6. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

This chapter will report on the findings for each question. The quantitative results from the questionnaires will be reported first, with the qualitative results from the semi-structured focus group interviews following.

5.2 Quantitative Results

5.2.1 To What Extent did Meaning in Life Change Over the Course of the Positive Education Implementation?

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MIL) comprised ten questions. Each question required participants to respond on a 7-point Likert scale, rating their beliefs on the truthfulness of the statements. The ratings ranged from Absolutely Untrue (1) to Absolutely True (7). Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities were run on the data set of this study; Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in this instance
was 0.94, therefore the Meaning in Life questionnaire was found to be highly reliable.

The participants were asked to complete the Meaning in Life Questionnaire at four different time points. Below are the findings of the statistical analyses conducted on these questionnaires in SPSS.

Descriptive statistics reported in table 3 demonstrated the changes in the mean scores of Meaning in Life over the four time points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning in Life Time Point</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline (May 9th, 2011)</td>
<td>43.0644</td>
<td>10.98940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time One (October 30th, 2011)</td>
<td>31.0495</td>
<td>22.91467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Two (April 26th, 2012)</td>
<td>31.6485</td>
<td>23.00833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Three (October 21st, 2012)</td>
<td>35.3465</td>
<td>25.38928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine if significance existed, and if so, between which time points, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. A repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that the mean for Meaning in Life differed significantly between time points (F (3/199) = 91.239, p<0.001, n² = 0.579). Post hoc tests using Bonferroni correction revealed that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores between the
baseline time (43.0644) and time one (31.0495), p<0.001. It was also shown that there was a statistically significant difference in Meaning in Life mean scores from time two (31.6485) to time three (35.3465), p<0.001. There was no significant difference in Meaning in Life mean scores between time points one (31.0495) and two (31.6485), p = 1.000.

The findings of the pairwise comparisons are detailed in table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure: Meaning in Life Pairwise Comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Time (J) Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on estimated marginal means
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.
Upon examination of the mean scores it is clear that once the participants received the positive education program, with explicit education on Meaning in Life, their rating of their level of Meaning in Life dropped significantly. This is particularly evident from baseline to time point one. As the positive education program continued, there was no significant difference in mean scores from time point one to time point two, and significant increase in mean scores from time point two to time point three. Hence from the beginning of the program (time point one) until the end of the program (time point three) there was a significant increase in the participants’ Meaning in Life score. However, the participants’ highest level of Meaning in Life was recorded at the baseline time point, prior to the positive education program being implemented at their school.

A line graph (Fig.7) was created to further illustrate the changes in the mean scores of Meaning in Life over the course of the positive change implemented within the school.

![Figure 7: Meaning in Life Means Over Time](image)
5.2.2 To What Extent did Purpose in Life Change Over the Course of the Positive Education Implementation?

The Purpose in Life Questionnaire (PIL) was comprised of nine questions. Each question required participants to respond on a 6-point Likert scale, rating their beliefs on the truthfulness of the statements. The ratings ranged from Absolutely Untrue (1) to Absolutely True (6). Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities were run on the data set of this study; Cronbach’s alpha coefficient in this instance was 0.93, therefore the PIL-PWB was found to be highly reliable.

The participants were asked to complete the Purpose in Life Questionnaire at four different time points. Below are the findings of the statistical analyses conducted on these questionnaires in SPSS.

Descriptive statistics reported in table 5 demonstrated changes in the mean scores of Purpose in Life over the four time points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose in Life Time Point</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline (May 9th, 2011)</td>
<td>31.0597</td>
<td>7.25441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time One (October 30th, 2011)</td>
<td>21.6816</td>
<td>16.23940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Two (April 26th, 2012)</td>
<td>22.5572</td>
<td>16.20858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Three (October 21st, 2012)</td>
<td>25.2488</td>
<td>17.96685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine if significance existed, and if so, between which time points, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that the mean score Purpose in Life differed significantly between time points (F (3/198) = 153.013, p<0.001, n² = 0.699). Post hoc tests using Bonferroni correction revealed that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores between baseline time (31.0597) and time one (21.6816), p<0.001. It was also shown that there was a statistically significant change in Purpose in Life mean scores from time two (22.5572) to time three (25.2488), p<0.001. There was no significant difference in Purpose in Life mean scores between time points one (21.6816) and two (22.5572), p = 1.000.

The findings of the pairwise comparisons are detailed in table 6.
Upon examination of the mean scores it is clear that once the participants received the positive education program, with explicit education on Purpose in Life, their rating of their level of Purpose in Life dropped significantly. This is particularly evident from baseline to time point one. As the positive education program continued, there was no significant difference in mean scores from time point one to time point two, and significant increase in mean scores from time point two to time point three. Hence from the beginning of the program (time point one) until the end of the program (time point three) there was a significant increase in the participants’ Purpose in Life mean scores. However, the participants’ highest level of Purpose in Life was recorded at the baseline
time point, prior to the positive education program being implemented at their school.

A line graph (Fig. 8) was created to further illustrate the changes in the mean scores of Purpose in Life over the course of the positive change implemented within the school.

5.2.3. To What Extent did Wellbeing Change Over the Course of the Positive Education Implementation?

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) comprised fourteen questions. Each question required participants to respond on a 5-point Likert scale, rating their beliefs on the truthfulness of the statements. The ratings ranged from None of the time (1) to All of the time (5). Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities were run on the data set of this study; Cronbach’s alpha coefficient
in this instance was 0.93, therefore the WEMWBS was found to be highly reliable.

The participants were asked to complete the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale at four different time points. Below are the findings of the statistical analyses conducted on these questionnaires in SPSS.

Descriptive statistics reported in table 7 demonstrated changes in the mean scores of Wellbeing over the four time points.

Table 7: Wellbeing Means Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellbeing Time Point</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline (May 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2011)</td>
<td>48.8818</td>
<td>9.39116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time One (October 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2011)</td>
<td>34.3695</td>
<td>24.90132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Two (April 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2012)</td>
<td>34.2217</td>
<td>24.85991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Three (October 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2012)</td>
<td>38.3202</td>
<td>27.48863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine if significance existed, and if so, between which time points, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that the mean score for Wellbeing differed significantly between time points \(F (3/200) = 125.793\), \(p<0.001\), \(n^2 = 0.654\). Post hoc tests using Bonferroni correction revealed that there were statistically significant differences in mean score between baseline time (48.8818) and time one (34.3695), \(p<0.001\). It was also shown that there was a statistically significant difference in Wellbeing mean scores from time two
(34.2217) to time three (38.3202), p<0.001. There was no significant difference in Wellbeing mean scores between time points one (34.3695) and two (34.2217) p = 1.000. The findings of the pairwise comparisons are details in table 8.

Upon examination of the means it is clear that once the participants received the positive education program, with explicit education on Wellbeing, their rating of their level of Wellbeing dropped significantly. This is particularly evident from baseline to time point one. As the positive education program continued, there was no significant difference in mean scores from time point one to time point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure: Wellbeing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Difference (I-J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L) WellbeingTime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on estimated marginal means
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.
two, and significant increase in mean scores from time point two to time point three. Hence from the beginning of the program (time point one) until the end of the program (time point three) there was a significant increase in the participants’ Wellbeing. However, the participants’ highest level of Wellbeing was recorded at the baseline time point, prior to the positive education program being implemented at their school.

A line graph figure 9 was created to further illustrate the changes in the mean scores of Wellbeing over the course of the positive change implemented within the school.

![Figure 9: Wellbeing Means Over Time](image)
5.2.4. What is the Predictive Power of the Effect of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing?

It was clear from the descriptive statistics and repeated one-way ANOVAs, that there were significant differences between the mean scores of Meaning in Life and Wellbeing over the four time points. As such, the researcher deemed it suitable to report on the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing for each time point, rather than collectively. The findings will be organised in this manner.

5.2.4.1 Predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline Time Point

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point. The simple regression revealed that Meaning in Life had a low predictive power on Wellbeing at the baseline time point, accounting for 28.9% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.289$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.286$), $F (1/200) = 81.464$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 71.1% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 9. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).
A scatter plot graph (see Fig. 10), including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point.

**Table 9: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Dependent Variable: WellbeingBaseline

**Figure 10: Predictive Power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline**
5.2.4.2 Predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point one. The simple regression revealed that Meaning in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point one, accounting for 93.3% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.933$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.932$), $F(1/204) = 2815.069$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 6.7% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 10. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

![Image](image.png)

**Table 10: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unstandardized Coefficients</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.025</td>
<td>.761</td>
<td>2.660</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>53.057</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: WellbeingT1

A scatter plot graph (see Fig. 11), including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point one.
5.2.4.3 Predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point two. The simple regression revealed that Meaning in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point two, accounting for 94.1% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.941$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.942$), $F (1/204) = 3211.287$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 5.9% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 11. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).
A scatter plot graph (see Fig. 12), including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point two.

Table 11: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>1.806</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>-.119 to 2.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife</td>
<td>1.045</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>56.668</td>
<td>.000 to 1.009 to 1.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: WellbeingT2

Figure 12: Predictive Power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two
5.2.4.4 Predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point three. The simple regression revealed that Meaning in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point three, accounting for 96.9% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.969$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.969$), $F(1/204) = 6388.322$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 3.1% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 12. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Unstandardized Coefficients</td>
<td>Standardized Coefficients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife</td>
<td>1.063</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>1.063</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A scatter plot graph (Fig. 13) including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing at time point three.
5.2.5 What is the Predictive Power of the Effect of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

It was clear from the descriptive statistics and repeated one-way ANOVAs, that there were clear and significant differences between the means of Purpose in Life and Wellbeing over the four time points. As such, the researcher deemed it suitable to report on the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing for each time point, rather than collectively. The findings will be organised in this manner.
5.2.5.1. Predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the Baseline Time Point

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point. The simple regression revealed that Purpose in Life had a low predictive power on Wellbeing at the baseline time point, accounting for 4.4% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.044$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.039$), $F (1/200) = 9.208$, $p < 0.003$. This means that 95.6% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 13. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < 0.003$).

Table 13: Regression Equations for Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients$^a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife Baseline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A scatter plot graph (Fig. 14) including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point.
5.2.5.2. The Predictive Power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point one. The simple regression revealed that Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point one, accounting for 88.8% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.888$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.888$), $F(1/204) = 1612.552$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 11.2% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 14. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < .001$).
A scatter plot graph (Fig. 15) including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point one.

Table 14: Regression Equations for Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.203</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>3.289</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife</td>
<td>1.448</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>40.157</td>
<td>1.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: WellbeingT1

Figure 15: Predictive Power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One
5.2.5.3. The Predictive Power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point two. The simple regression revealed that Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point two, accounting for 94.8% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.948$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.948$), $F(1/204) = 3737.284$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 5.2% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in Table 15. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife T2</td>
<td>1.494</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>61.133</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A scatter plot graph (Fig. 16) including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point two.
5.2.5.4. The Predictive Power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three

A simple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point three. The simple regression revealed that Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point three, accounting for 96.7% of change effect, $R^2 = 0.967$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.966$), $F(1/204) = 5875.539$, $p < 0.001$. This means that 3.3% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 16. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($p < .001$).
A scatter plot graph (Fig. 17) including a line of best fit, was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point three.

![Figure 17: Predictive Power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three](image)

Table 16: Regression Equations for Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>-.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose in Life T2</td>
<td>1.503</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.983</td>
<td>76.692</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Wellbeing T2
5.2.6. What is the Predictive Power of the Effect of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

In examining the findings from the previous simple regressions, the researcher discovered that the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at each of the time points was very similar. This relationship is supported by Steger (2012), who outlines that although Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are separate entities, Purpose in Life is a motivational component of Meaning in Life, as it allows people to understand how their life goals serve a purpose larger than themselves. Purpose in Life also helps people understand how they fit into the world; they have an identity related to their accomplishments and what they are striving to achieve (Steger, 2012).

As such, the researcher wanted to discover what predictive power Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had on Wellbeing when combined rather than examined as separate entities. A multiple regression was conducted with Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life as predictors, and Wellbeing as the outcome. Multiple regressions were conducted at each of the time points, and were reported on accordingly.

5.2.6.1. Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the Baseline Time Point

To address whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were related to Wellbeing at the baseline time point, zero-order correlations among the two predictors and outcome were computed. At the baseline time point, there was no intercorrelation between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life (predictors) and
Wellbeing (outcome) \((r(20) = 0.54, p<0.01)\). The results of the zero order correlations are outlined in table 17:

**Table 17: Correlation Matrix; Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing at Baseline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WellBeing Baseline</th>
<th>PurposeinLife Baseline</th>
<th>MeaninginLife Baseline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeing Baseline</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife Baseline</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife Baseline</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (1-tailed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeing Baseline</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife Baseline</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife Baseline</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeing Baseline</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLife Baseline</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLife Baseline</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A multiple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point. The multiple regression revealed that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had a low predictive power on Wellbeing at the baseline time point, accounting for 28.7% of the change effect, \(R^2 = 0.287\) (adjusted \(R^2 = 0.279\)), \(F(2/200) = 39.779, p<0.001\). This means that 71.3% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 18.
A three-dimensional scatter plot graph (Fig. 18) was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point.

Table 18: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>28.014</td>
<td>2.902</td>
<td>9.653</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>22.291 - 33.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeBaseline</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>-.108 - .216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeBaseline</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.339 - .553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: WellbeingBaseline

Figure 18: Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Baseline
5.2.6.2. Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One

To address whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were related to Wellbeing at time point one, zero-order correlations among the two predictors and outcome were computed. At the time point one, there was strong intercorrelation between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life (predictors) and Wellbeing (outcome) (r(20) = 0.97, p<0.01). The results of the zero order correlations are outlined in table 19:

Table 19: Correlation Matrix; Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing at Time Point One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WellBeingT1</th>
<th>PurposeinLifeT1</th>
<th>MeaninginLifeT1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>.966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT1</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT1</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT1</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A multiple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point one. The multiple regression revealed that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at time point one, accounting for 94.7% of the change effect, $R^2 =$
0.947 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.947$), $F(2/204) = 1815.468$, $p<0.001$. This indicates that 5.3% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 20.

**Table 20: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.386</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT1</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT1</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-dimensional scatter plot graph (Fig. 19) was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point one.
5.2.6.3. Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two

To address whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were related to Wellbeing at time point two, zero-order correlations among the two predictors and outcome were computed. At the time point two, there was strong intercorrelation between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life (predictors) and Wellbeing (outcome) \( (r(20) = 0.98, p<0.01) \). The results of the zero order correlations are outlined in table 21:
Table 21: Correlation Matrix; Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing at Time Point Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WellBeingT2</th>
<th>PurposeinLifeT2</th>
<th>MeaninginLifeT2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT2</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>.970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT2</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT2</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT2</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT2</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A multiple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point two. The multiple regression revealed that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at the baseline time point, accounting for 96.3% of the change effect, $R^2 = 0.963$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.963$), $F(2/204) = 2650.911$, $p<0.001$. This means that 3.7% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 22.
A three-dimensional scatter plot graph (Fig. 20) was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point two.

Figure 20: Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Two
5.2.6.4. Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three

To address whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were related to Wellbeing at time point three, zero-order correlations among the two predictors and outcome were computed. At the time point three, there was strong intercorrelation between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life (predictors) and Wellbeing (outcome) \( r(20) = 0.99, p<0.01 \). The results of the zero order correlations are outlined in Table 23:

*Table 23: Correlation Matrix; Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing at Time Point Three*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WellBeingT3</th>
<th>PurposeinLifeT3</th>
<th>MeaninginLifeT3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT3</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.983</td>
<td>.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT3</td>
<td>.983</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT3</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WellBeingT3</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PurposeinLifeT3</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeaninginLifeT3</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A multiple regression was run to determine the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point three. The multiple regression revealed that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power on Wellbeing at the baseline time point, accounting for 98.1% of the change effect, $R^2 = 0.981$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.981$), $F(2/204) = 5213.661$, $p<0.001$. This means that 1.9% of the change in Wellbeing was the result of other factors. The unstandardized and standardized regression equations are reported in table 24.

*Table 24: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three*

![Table 24: Regression Equations for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at Time Point Three](image)

A three-dimensional scatter plot graph (Fig. 21) was created to further illustrate the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at time point three.
5.3 Qualitative Results

The following section outlines the results from the semi-structured focus group interviews. Fifteen students were randomly selected via an Excel database to participate in the semi-structured focus group interview. Of the 15 selected, ten chose to participate. The remainder of the students did not receive parental consent, or forgot to attend. The researcher attempted to organise a fourth focus group interview with the remaining students, however, it was close to their yearly examination period and was not desirable. The school (research site) was concerned that the interview could distract students from study. Similarly,
interviews were not permitted after the examination period, as the students would be entering Year Twelve, and any potential distractions were to be minimised or eliminated.

There were six emergent themes arising from these interviews:

1. Wellbeing articulated at high levels from a partially holistic viewpoint.
2. Purpose in Life articulation had a clear focus on creating careers in areas in which they had a personal interest.
3. Meaning in Life derived from a sense of citizenship, but disconnected from achievements in future.
4. Help or hindrance - duality in the role family members played in the development of Wellbeing, Purpose in Life and Meaning in Life.
5. Teachers and school ethos supported wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life.
6. Conflicting views on the role the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies played in the development/enhancement of Wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life.

5.3.1 Theme One: Wellbeing Articulated at High Levels From a Partially Holistic View.

On the topic of wellbeing, participants were asked, “What is your understanding of wellbeing?” In terms of holistic wellbeing, participants outlined one to three of the following components: physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual. There was no mention of the interrelated nature of these components of wellbeing. Each participant outlined slightly differing combinations. Mental
functioning (particularly the ability to cope), social connections with friends and family, physical fitness and emotional state (feelings of happiness) were most commonly identified in each interview. This can be viewed below:

“Wellbeing, it’s like your psychological. How you are going and dealing with stresses, how you cope…And yeah, I think it’s also like your friends. Like I have a pretty solid group of friends that I can rely on, and that makes me feel good” (Participant Two).

“Well the school would define it as faith, sport and social activity. It would also include family. But for me it is how well I interact with my family and how fit I am” (Participant Three).

“I guess wellbeing is just like if you are happy I guess, like if you are content with life and if you are physically fit and able to keep up with everything that is going on around here” (Participant Nine).

Succeeding this, participants were asked, “Can you describe your personal level of wellbeing?” If participants used a rating scale in their response, with one denoting the lowest and ten the highest, high scores of seven to eight were used. If a rating scale was not used, “pretty good” or “really good” were common descriptors:

“I guess my level of wellbeing would be, if I had a scale from one to ten, ten being the highest, I’d probably be an eight. I think I am pretty well off as I am, and I’m able to keep up and understand things as they come along. And yeah I’m pretty happy how life is. Emotionally I’m pretty decent too I reckon. I’ve had a couple of things recently which I’ve kind of been annoyed with, but I knew how to handle it. I kept a level head and thought about it, and worked out a way
where everything could work out” (Participant Six).

“My level of wellbeing at the moment is really good, probably better than it’s ever been” (Participant Four).

Two of five participants also noted academic stress was something they found detrimental to their wellbeing:

“Yeah like my wellbeing I would say is good now, whenever exams are on I get really stressed out. We’ve been told by our mentors how to cope but it’s really hard” (Participant Three).

“Yeah same. I hate exams. Like I know we have to do them and stuff, but I just hate them. They make me feel sick. I just want to do good and it stresses me out. I can’t sleep either sometimes” (Participant Seven).

5.3.2 Theme Two: Purpose in Life Articulation Had a Clear Focus on Creating Careers in Areas in Which They Had Personal Interest

Each participant believed that it was important to shape their futures based upon who they are and where their interests lie. Their goals were academically focused, with all but two participants expressing a desire to attend university and study a degree:

“I’m really interested in business and law, so I want to do law at university. I can’t see myself doing anything else” (Participant One).

“Well I’m into mountain biking, so what I’d like to do is be an engineer at a mountain biking company. And design bikes and stuff like that. That’s kind of
like my ultimate goal. I decided I wanted to do this because I did design and tech and industrial tech, and I really liked those. Then I did engineering studies in Year Eleven, and I like that, so I just kind of picked that subject for the future because I like it” (Participant Two).

The two participants who did not mention gaining entrance into University, or specific job roles, still had an understanding of pursuing things that appealed to their interests:

“I think I’d like to do something that would make me happy, not necessarily do something like being a lawyer or something where you’d be making people distraught, say if I was a nutcase or something. Or like being a doctor where I’d have to look after someone else’s wellbeing. I can’t do that. I’d like to be someone who helps people and makes them happy, rather than doing something for personal gain” (Participant Ten).

“I guess I really don’t want to be stuck behind a desk. You know, I want to be out there trying to help the world in the way that I can. For me that would be in a physical way. I’m not quite sure how I’d use my sporting stuff, but I want to help others somehow” (Participant Seven).

5.3.3 Theme Three: Meaning in Life Derived From a Sense of Citizenship, But Disconnected From Achievements in Future.

All participants had an understanding of citizenship, and giving to the world in some way. Three participants had a particularly strong sense of charity:

“Well, Engineering in a bike company doesn’t really help starving children in
Africa, but I think you can help people, like a select few. Like I’ve been on a few service trips to Papua New Guinea and stuff. That was really good, I want to keep doing stuff like that in the future” (Participant Two).

“Yeah, like I am actually going to Cambodia in December to help teach English, and help the kids. I really want to keep doing that too” (Participant One).

“I really like to give back at my church. I’m a junior leader on Friday nights, so I feel like I have a big connection to the people there” (Participant Eight).

The remaining participants gained their sense of meaning from their families, feeling a strong sense of belonging, an understanding of place, and the need to contribute to assist in the smooth functioning of the family unit. This is viewed in the following:

“Like my family went through a rough patch, so that made me question my place in the world. But I think that helped me work out sort of where I was. So I think I have definitely found out where I am. I realised I need my family, so I’m a lot more helpful. I talk to them a lot more too. I don’t just hang out in my room” (Participant Five).

However, when probed to explain how their Meaning in Life fits in with their overarching life goals, the students were not able to respond.
5.3.4 Theme Four: Help or Hindrance - Duality in the Role Family Members Played in the Development of Wellbeing, Purpose in Life and Meaning in Life

When posed questions about what helped them develop their wellbeing, purpose in life and meaning in life, each participant commented on the role their family members played. Indeed, they were central to their explanations. Five participants outlined the positive impacts key family members (parents, siblings and grandparents) had on their wellbeing, meaning and purpose. Specifically they were people who were trusted, to whom they could turn for advice, who guided their life decisions and helped them view the world beyond an egocentric view:

“Well, pretty much my Dad is my hero. Like he’s taught me so much about life. He taught me to follow my passions and listen to myself. Like he’s told me he doesn’t want me to make his mistakes, he hates his job. He’s told me to do what I want to do. Have fun. Live your life. He also taught me how to be a good person, like to help people and not take advantage. He’s always there for me. I am so lucky to have a Dad like him. Oh! And he also taught me to keep moving forward, no matter what! Awesome.” (Participant Seven).

“My sister has really helped me out a lot. She’s older than me, like a mentor kind of. I can talk to her about anything, whenever I want. She’s awesome. And like, she’s at Uni and she sees heaps of people who don’t like their degree and stuff, and warned me about it. It made me really think about what I want to do so I’m not unhappy” (Participant Five).

However, the remaining participants outlined the negative effects parents had in
supporting their wellbeing and purpose in life. These participants felt pushed, stressed, had no work-life balance, and expressed a need to live up to their parents’ expectations. This included following a career path their parents had mapped out for them at the expense of their own wants and desires:

“With my family, like my parents are really academically pushing and I have to study all the time, and go to bed early. They are those kinds of parents. I’m not allowed to do anything but study, even on weekends. I don’t think they help my wellbeing sometimes. And like, if you are talking about purpose or whatever, they have it all mapped out for me. What Uni they want me to go to, and what I want to study. I have no say. All I have to do is study, and it’s never good enough anyway” (Participant Nine).

“My Dad has probably been a bit too persuasive on me. Like we were talking the other day and he was saying how I was going to the University of Newcastle or something. So, he’s kind of got a plan for me. I have to study all the time too, and I don’t get to do much. It’s really stressful, especially around exams” (Participant Ten).

These participants expressed gratitude towards the school, feeling as though the staff understood their struggles:

“It’s good though, coming to school after I’ve been worried about study. Like the teachers understand the pressure, and they are really good for advice and stuff” (Participant Two).

“Yeah the teachers are really good. They get how stressful this time is, and they know what to say to make it less stressful and help us out” (Participant Three).
5.3.5 Theme Five: Teachers and School Ethos Supported Wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life

When discussing what factors helped promote their wellbeing, meaning in life and purpose in life, eight of the ten participants highlighted either teachers or the ethos of the school. It was clear that the participants felt supported, and the school ethos encouraged pro-social behaviour:

“Yeah the teachers are pretty good here. Like most of them want to help us out. And like they really kind of hammer down on bullying early, and it hasn’t really been a problem. And also, I think the sport program really helps with like getting friends and keeping them” (Participant Two).

“Yeah like there’s not much bullying that goes on here, and if it is, it’s like poking fun and making jokes. It’s not so much, it’s not major at all. We all kind of just hang out in our groups or whatever, but like in the year group we are all mates. No fighting or whatever” (Participant Six).

“Well like the whole department (teachers) are awesome. Like they are really enthusiastic, and supportive. They guide me a lot, and give me really good advice on how to cope with things” (Participant Seven).

Of particular note, the participants found the encouragement from the teachers, to pick subjects they are interested in for Year Eleven and Twelve, to be very supportive of their wellbeing and purpose:

“The fact that they told us when choosing subjects to choose things that we want to study, and stuff we are good at but still enjoy, is pretty good I think, because other schools would say choose these subjects because they will
scale our school, but it’s not all about that here. It’s about making people ready for the real world, who are like happy” (Participant Six).

5.3.6 Theme Six: Conflicting Views on the Role the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies Played in the Development/Enhancement of Wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life

As the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies were redesigned and implemented as possible ways to enhance wellbeing, meaning in life and purpose in life for students, the participants were asked what role these played in developing or supporting each. Participants who believed they had a ‘good’ mentor, found great benefit in the mentoring program. The following participant, rebutting against another who believed otherwise, outlines this:

“I reckon it’s the kind of mentor you have” (Participant Four).

“YES!” (Participants Five, Six and Seven).

“Yes, like, my mentor is awesome. I’ve learnt so much about time management, and role models, and who I want to be like, and why it’s important to follow what I do. It’s so good. He talks about his life and then we learn from it and talk about ours” (Participant Four).

Similarly, Participant One outlined:

“Mentoring definitely helped me out quite a bit. They just do positive psychology kind of stuff which has helped me understand that I need to focus on me and not like others. It helped me like identify role models and helped me see who I
want to be. My mentor is good though. Some aren’t.”

In contrast, eight of the ten participants found the mentoring program to either be boring, a free period, or a waste of time:

“As far as the mentoring sessions go, they seem rather superfluous because not many people pay attention in time, and they are on their phones or on the computer, like doing their own thing. Most people want the mentoring program to be time where they can work on assignments and homework they have left over, that would be a much better use of time” (Participant Six).

“I’ve found mentor groups to pretty much be a free period, like to do work. There’s not much happening. Pretty boring if you don’t have any homework” (Participant Nine).

When discussing wisdom studies, every participant felt the subject was not meaningful, forcing Christianity on them:

“The resounding sentiment from most of the boys in our year is that faith and the skills we get taught are not very applicable to everyday life. It was one of the more tedious subjects in the week” (Participant Three).

“Oh wisdom studies. Hey kids – everyone needs to be like Jesus. That’s the message really” (Participant Five).

“Wisdom studies is more of a Christian studies subject. It’s so boring. They just want us to act all Godly and stuff” (Participant Eight).

When probed on recommendations to improve the mentoring program and wisdom studies, the participants outlined meaningful instruction linking content
to real world examples, within a student-centred lesson format:

“I like it when we get to work with our friends. The teacher should also tell us how it works in real life, rather than just talked at us and telling us how we should act and what we should do” (Participant One).

“Both would be better if the teacher talked about themselves, and gave us examples of how what they are talking about actually works in real life. Otherwise it’s just so boring. Then we could talk about it, like a discussion” (Participant Five).

“If they let us talk about the stuff more, and linked it to real life it would be good. I also like researching real life stories on the computer and reporting on it. I like working with my mates as well, when we are given a research topic. Then we could talk about it after” (Participant Seven).

5.4 Conclusion

From the results it is clear that the participants’ level of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing did change over the course of the positive education implementation. Respectively, each followed a similar trend between time points, that is, self-reporting high levels of each at March 2011 (baseline), experiencing a statistically significant decrease to below average levels at October 2011 (baseline – time point one), only to experience a statistically
significant increase in October 2012 (time point two – three). Interestingly, the predictive power of Meaning in Life and/or Purpose in Life on Wellbeing at the baseline time point was low. However, once the positive education implementation begun at the site, the predictive power of each predictor on the outcome was strong, regardless of the statistically significant declines and inclines in the levels of each over time. Moreover, whilst Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life had a strong predictive power for Wellbeing at time points one – three, the strongest predictor of Wellbeing occurred when combining Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life.

Qualitatively, the emergent themes provided depth to the quantitative findings, with participants explaining their understandings and personal constructions of wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. These participants had a clear sense the role Purpose in Life played in developing career paths that had held a level of personal interest for them and derived a sense of Meaning in Life from acts of service or citizenship. However, the participants did not link the future aspirations, life goals and career paths with gaining a sense of meaning. Moreover, it was clear that family members, the teachers and school ethos, and subjects like the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies have the potential to influence – either positively or negatively – participants’ levels of wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. The following chapter will analyse and interpret these results, explain the implications for the findings, and provide recommendations for future research.
Chapter Six

Discussion

Throughout the longitudinal analysis of the positive education implementation, the researcher aimed to gain insight into three main areas of inquiry: any changes in Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life over time; whether Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life or a combination of the two predicted student Wellbeing; and, the participants’ experience with the Positive Education implementation.

Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were focussed on because the literature suggested that each promotes wellbeing in adolescents and adults (Damon, 2008). Moreover, whilst this was stated in theoretical literature, there were no empirical findings that demonstrated whether these concepts could be taught, and by extension, whether education on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life could promote the wellbeing of student populations. Improving the wellbeing of students is a key purpose of positive education, hence it was deemed vital to investigate a positive education implementation in reference to possible factors that had been linked to wellbeing promotion, but had not been thoroughly researched (Heffernon & Boniwell, 2011). To date, current empirical studies in positive education interventions have focused on hope, gratitude, serenity, resilience, and/or building character strengths (Waters, 2011). Hence this project added to the existing empirical studies through exploring the impact of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on student wellbeing.
This chapter will answer the primary research question, “To what extent do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life serve as protective factors for secondary boys’ Wellbeing?” by addressing each secondary question. It will then discuss the implications of these findings for education practice, outline limitations and make recommendations for future research. Through analysis of the results, it was deemed best to address the secondary research questions in two sections: change over time and predictive power.

The change over time analysis first addresses the quantitative findings, followed by the qualitative findings, and concludes with an integrated analysis. This procedure of analysis follows the sequential explanatory mixed method design (quantitative → quantitative → interpretation of entire analysis) outlined in the Method chapter. This method was chosen as it gave quantitative data priority, and enabled the utility of qualitative data to help explain and interpret quantitative results, thereby adding depth of explanation and understanding to the initial quantitative findings (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). In the case of the change over time analysis, the assumptions drawn from the quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of the positive education implementation conflicted with the qualitative findings. Therefore an initial examination of the quantitative findings needed to be conducted as it established the assumptions. These assumptions could then be adequately challenged through the qualitative data. The dual analysis was then able to tie the both together, drawing stronger conclusions on the effectiveness of the positive education implementation in reference to Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.
The predictive power analysis only addresses the quantitative component of the data gathered because the qualitative data did not reveal any links/relationships the participants made between the predictors (Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life) and outcome (Wellbeing).

6.1 Change Over Time

This section addresses the extent participant levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing changed over the Positive Education implementation. Secondary questions one, two and three will first be discussed in terms of the quantitative data, followed by the qualitative data, and finished with a dual analysis.

6.1.1 Secondary Research Question One: To What Extent Did Meaning in Life Change Over The Positive Education Implementation?

6.1.2 Secondary Research Question Two: To What Extent Did Purpose in Life Change Over The Positive Education Implementation?

6.1.3 Secondary Research Question Three: To What Extent Did Wellbeing Change Over The Positive Education Implementation?

To adequately address the questions regarding the extent of the change in Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, various factors of the positive education implementation need to be analysed. By doing so it ensures a
comprehensive investigation of why these changes have occurred. Thus this section will discuss the changes at each time point in reference to:

- The impact of knowledge versus understanding;
- The impact of the phased roll out (positive education implementation had two phases);
- The effectiveness of the Wisdom Studies subject;
- Broader societal and social context; and
- Student experience as reported in the qualitative results.

The quantitative results revealed Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing each followed a similar trend when examining change over time. In each, the baseline mean was the highest recorded over the four time points. Similarly, between the baseline and time one there was a statistically significant decline in each of the means. Likewise between time one and time two there was no statistically significant difference, and, from time two to time three there was a statistically significant increase in each of the means.

A possible explanation for these trends is clear when examining the quantitative results in reference to the timeline of the phases of the positive education implementation. Immediately after the baseline data collection, phase one of positive education was implemented at the school. This roll out of positive education followed a whole school approach, targeting curriculum, teaching and learning, school organisation, and community partnerships. Staff were trained in the principles of positive psychology, how to apply these principles to their classes, and the language of positive psychology was introduced to the school. A positive education curriculum was also embedded throughout the subjects
offered. Furthermore, the tutoring program (pastoral care) was replaced by the Mentoring Program. This program had a new focus on the education of positive psychology concepts, including Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. The Mentoring Program increased the time spent with students; as opposed to ten minutes prior to class (as was the norm in the tutoring program), students now spent 3x30 minute sessions per fortnight with their allocated mentor. It is also important to note that the mentors received additional training in the form of onsite master classes run by the Positive Psychology Institute at the beginning of each term.

Hence between the baseline time point (May 9th, 2011) and time one (October 30th, 2011), participants received explicit education of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the Mentoring Program. Additionally, positive psychology language was introduced to the school, policy, and classrooms, creating an organisation that supported the content taught. Combined, these factors created a knowledge base on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing for participants to draw upon when assessing their levels of Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the MLQ, PIL-PWB and WEMWBS questionnaires. The significant decrease in the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing between the baseline and time point one could be attributed to the enhanced context and knowledge base the positive education implementation provided to the participants. Indeed the ‘true’ baseline measure is considered to be at time point one, as the Positive Education implementation eliminates many limitations of the self-report measures of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.
This reasoning is consistent with the literature on the limitations of self-report measures of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. The context a person is placed in has the potential to bias their responses in questionnaires, based upon how that context has made them think or feel (Eschleman & Bowling, 2010). Similarly, when a person is assessing their thoughts/feelings on a questionnaire statement, their feelings and thoughts are reconstructed mentally, which informs their judgment (Robinson & Clore, 2002). This reconstruction is based upon cues throughout the day, thus positive or negative cues can bias the way the memories are reconstructed (Robinson & Clore, 2002). However, by providing participants with a sound knowledge base on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, they had information to draw upon, which informed their thoughts/feelings about each of the statements. Hence when reporting at time points one, two and three, they were increasingly informed on the content, and had a greater ability to make accurate judgements on their levels of each rather than relying on their feelings alone. This counteracted the effects of reporting solely on affectivity – as demonstrated at the baseline time point through to time point one.

The trend of over-reporting levels of Wellbeing has also been demonstrated in studies completed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Regardless of the rising rates of diabetes, sexually transmitted infections, mental disorders, road transport accident deaths, alcohol consumption, alcohol related violence, obesity, and self harm, 93% of Australian young people rated their health as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ (AIHW, 2011). Eckersley (2008) and Muir et al. (2009) also report on this contradiction. Both studies outlined that whilst young people self-report their health and wellbeing status at relatively high levels,
many still have health problems or engage in behaviour that puts their health and wellbeing at risk.

Between time point one (October 30th, 2011) and time point two (April 26th, 2012) there was no significant difference in the means of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life or Wellbeing. This was attributed to accumulation of knowledge versus understanding (Killen, 2004). Understanding is the ability to apply knowledge to a variety of contexts (Killen, 2004). Therefore, the participants were equipped with knowledge of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing – which informed their judgements in the questionnaires at time point one – but lacked the understanding of how to apply Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing content to their lives to enhance the levels of each.

Often when students encounter new concepts, they require time to process and make sense of the knowledge they have learnt (Killen, 2004). Similarly, for students to gain a true understanding of their own unique Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life it requires substantial reflection of their life goals, why they want to pursue them, and if these goals are authentic with their inner self (Damon, 2008). Generating this understanding requires a reflective process - that continues throughout life - hence increases in the level of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life cannot be expected quickly (Damon, 2008). Additionally, the Mentoring Program served to educate students on a variety of positive psychology skills (beyond Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life) that could be used to enhance their Wellbeing. This included an examination of their identity and envisioning the man they wanted to be in the future. Whilst these are key components of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education, it requires further
comprehensive inquiry for students to adequately comprehend and apply these concepts to their day-to-day lives.

In continuing the analysis of the quantitative findings, the impact of comprehensive education focused on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life was reflected in the second phase of the positive education implementation.

Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were recognised by the Positive Psychology Institute (partners in the Positive Education implementation) as key protective factors for Wellbeing. Thus in phase two, Wisdom Studies replaced Christian Studies. Wisdom Studies removed the emphasis on explicit Christian education and focused on the underpinning values, morals and teachings of this religion. This included a comprehensive unit on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. Wisdom Studies was taught in 3x30 minute classes per week, from the beginning of 2012. By the time of the second time point (26th April, 2012), Wisdom Studies had only been running for approximately two months. This is not a sufficient amount of time for reflection and application, hence a possible reason for no significant difference between the time points one and two.

The introduction of Wisdom Studies and the Mentoring Program and the ongoing whole school approach towards Positive Education did coincide with a significant increase of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing from time point two (26th April, 2012) to time point three (October 21st, 2012). This increase could represent an improvement in the participants’ ability to apply the skills learnt in Wisdom Studies to enhance their levels of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. Likewise participants potentially applied the positive psychology concepts learnt in the Mentoring Program - and those discussed in general
classes by trained teachers - to potentially enhance their Wellbeing. The additional time spent on learning the skills of each potentially allowed adequate time for further knowledge and understanding to be obtained. This increase in the student levels of each could therefore be attributed to enhanced understanding, where students applied the concepts learnt to their own lives. However, further research into the students’ understanding of these concepts – with work samples and further interviews - is required to accurately determine the effect the application of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life content on student wellbeing.

Overall, if time point one is taken to represent the true initial measure of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, there was a significant increase in the levels of each over the course of the positive education implementation. It is of importance to note that the increase coincided with the introduction of the Wisdom Studies subject, which had ongoing, explicit instruction on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, including the requirement of students to reflect on and refine their own Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. It also provided students with scaffolds to help them discover their authentic purpose.

However, when examining the qualitative results, the participant explanations of what aspects of the positive education implementation supported their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing differed from the timeline of events, and the conclusions drawn from the quantitative findings.

As mentioned, there was a clear increase in the participants’ levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing once explicit education of each Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life was introduced through Wisdom Studies. However,
the participants in the focus group interviews stated they felt this subject was not meaningful to them, and found it tedious. Some mentioned they felt the subject forced the teachings of Christianity on them, for example, Participant Five stated he felt the subject could be described as one where he was told to emanate, or live like Jesus.

A joint analysis of the qualitative and quantitative results suggests that Wisdom Studies was effective in helping the participants develop their sense of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, but its effectiveness could be enhanced if the subject was redesigned to be made more applicable to their lives. This recommendation is supported by the participants, who stated they would prefer it if teachers explained how the content can be translated into real life, along with sharing stories and allowed further analysis of the content through discussion.

Conversely the Mentoring Program was viewed as beneficial to some students if they had a ‘good’ teacher/mentor. These participants outlined that a ‘good’ mentor ran classes in a student-centred format, shared stories of their own life, and helped them see the real world value in what they were learning. The content areas that were repeatedly noted by the participants as beneficial was the identification of role models and an examination of their identity/morals, which in turn helped them envision who they wanted to be in the future.

An understanding of who they are, what they value, and who they want to be are all integral building blocks for the formation of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life (Steger, 2012). Therefore the knowledge gained in the Mentoring Program had the potential to be transferred and built upon in Wisdom Studies. The
participants were provided with foundation knowledge of an awareness of self and an image of their future selves. In Wisdom Studies, the participants were provided with an opportunity to extend upon this; they were encouraged to think about what they were going to do in the present to achieve the future they envisioned (Purpose in Life), and, how these steps contributed to something larger than themselves (Meaning in Life). There was a clear benefit in running the Mentoring Program alongside Wisdom Studies. Therefore, through a curriculum teaching and learning lens, the increase in Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life from time point one to time point three, is not solely due to the introduction of Wisdom Studies, but rather its implementation served to extend the knowledge attained in the Mentoring Program. Both were integral components of the positive education implementation.

Moreover, if the participants had a poor experience in the Mentoring Program it has the potential to affect the effectiveness of Wisdom Studies. Indeed, the focus group interviews revealed a majority of the participants (eight out of ten) did not find the Mentoring Program beneficial, regarding it as a free period, or waste of time. Like Wisdom Studies, these participants outlined that they would find the Mentoring Program more engaging and enjoyable if their mentors shared their experiences with them, and conducted the classes in a student-centred format, allowing further exploration of the content through group work, project based learning and discussion.

Therefore this is a potential area of improvement for the curriculum, teaching and learning perspective of the positive education implementation. If the mentors were provided with further training on how to engage the students in a meaningful manner, the content taught would resonate with more students,
therefore enhancing their understanding of themselves and who they want to be. This has a flow-on effect benefiting Wisdom Studies and the development of the students’ Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life.

Beyond the curriculum, all of the participants felt that the teachers and environment/ethos of the school supported their wellbeing. The participants felt supported, that they received helpful guidance, and felt they could seek support when necessary. It was also clear they felt the pro-social behaviour was encouraged, with participants commenting that bullying was not prevalent, and whilst friendship groups were existent, there was a feeling of friendliness between peers.

Participants also felt that the teachers did support their Purpose in Life, as they were encouraged to choose subjects based upon interest, not academic merit. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the community partnership formed with the Positive Psychology Institute. By working with the Positive Psychology Institute in creating a whole school approach to positive education - which included continual training of staff - the school was able to shift the ethos of one where students did not feel supported (as demonstrated by previous exit surveys) to one where they felt their wellbeing and Purpose in Life were supported. Furthermore, these qualitative findings also confirm the necessity of creating an environment/ethos and culture that supports the positive psychology content taught in the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies. Without it, the participants receive mixed messages thereby hindering the effectiveness of delivery.
An area of community partnership that could be enhanced to promote Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing are the parents/carers/guardians of the students. Some participants felt that they worked against the messages promoted by the school (in curriculum and culture). Often these participants felt that they needed to follow the plan their parents/carers/guardians had set out for them, at the expense of their wellbeing and own desires. These participants felt an ample amount of academic pressure coupled with the pressure to succeed and live up to their parents’/carers’/guardians’ expectations of them.

For example, Participant Nine commented on the parental pressure he experienced, stating he had to study at all times and follow the career path his parents mapped out for him. Regardless of what this participant achieved, he did not feel he ever met the expectations his parents placed upon him.

Conversely parents/carers/guardians were deemed a positive influence in their lives if the participants were encouraged to discover and follow their own passions and desires (promoting Purpose in Life). If participants had this experience they expressed feelings of gratitude and explained that this support helped them create life goals that aligned with who they were and what they desired.

Therefore, if parents/carers/guardians receive further information about the aims of the school, and how they can support their son, they have the potential to enhance the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing of the student population.

In summary there was a significant increase in the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing from time point one to time point three. A
possible reason for this is the effectiveness of the whole school approach towards the positive education implementation. The school successfully created a community partnership with the Positive Psychology Institute, who helped develop a curriculum and environment/ethos which promoted Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. This approach is supported by the Health Promoting Schools Framework, which concluded any successful health promotion initiative in schools will target curriculum, teaching and learning; school organisation, environment and ethos; and community partnerships (Australian Health Promoting Schools Association, 2000).

Similarly, the areas of improvement for the Positive Education implementation can be focused on two of the three areas: curriculum, teaching and learning and partnerships. Teachers need to be provided with further training on how to best engage students with positive psychology concepts taught in the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies. This may include a restructure of the programs to a more student-centred format. This training and possible restructuring (in the past) has been done in collaboration with the Positive Psychology Institute.

Similarly, there needs to be greater partnership with parents/carers/guardians where they are provided with information on the missions of positive education, and how they can support their son(s).

Nevertheless, whilst the quantitative findings demonstrated an improvement in the overall levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing from time point one to time point three, the improvement only moved the average mean of the cohort from below average (time points one and two), to average at time point three. To gain greater insight into this trend the qualitative data were drawn upon.
In addition to the previous criticisms made about curriculum, teaching and learning, and partnerships, another reason for this average score is apparent in the way that the participants articulated their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing in the focus group interviews.

Meaning has two components: cognitive and motivational. This study has discussed the cognitive component as Meaning in Life, and the motivational component as Purpose in Life. The cognitive component - Meaning in Life - assists people in comprehending their place and roles on this earth by forming connections, understandings and interpretations of their experiences, helping us “direct our energies to the achievement of our desired future” (Steger, 2012, p.165). This helps people develop a sense of “who we are, what the world is like, and how we fit in with and relate to the grand scheme of things” (Steger, 2012, p.165).

The participants’ descriptions of their Meaning in Life reflected an element of comprehension of the world beyond themselves, and a sense of how they contribute to this world, and where they fit in (particularly with their families). It was clear the participants had a strong sense of citizenship, expressing their positive experiences with giving back through charity work. The participants also articulated an understanding of how they fit into the world through a sense of belonging with their families.

Whilst this sense of belonging and citizenship was present in their articulations of where they fit into the world beyond their individual selves, there was an apparent disconnection between this, and how they articulated their goals when asked about their Purpose in Life. This is critical as Meaning in Life includes
how we channel “our energies to the achievement of our desired future” (Steger, 2012, p.165).

Purpose in Life is the motivational component of Meaning. It is defined as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential to the world beyond the self” (Damon, 2008, p.59). Purpose in Life is how significant or purposeful we deem our lives to be based upon our values, and, our overarching goals/missions for ourselves (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). It becomes a person’s ultimate concern and forms their answers to the question ‘why’ — why a person does anything, why their actions matter, and why they are trying to accomplish their goals (Damon, 2008).

Therefore, from the participants’ answers on their Meaning in Life, it is evident that their values were strongly grounded in giving back, and they derived a strong sense of belonging from their families. Yet these intrinsic values did not align with the predominantly academic and successful career goals outlined in the participants’ descriptions of their Purpose in Life.

For example, Participant One expressed an enjoyment for charity work, but when asked of his Purpose in Life he described an interest in studying law at university. As outlined, adolescence is a time period, where developmentally, identity exploration and construction occurs (Damon, Menon, & Cotton-Bronk, 2003). During this phase adolescents develop their world views. These world views incorporate where they fit into and contribute to the larger world (Meaning in Life) as well as support the development of overarching life goals (Purpose in Life) (Damon, Menon, & Cotton-Bronk, 2003). With reference to Participant One,
there was a lack of integration between where he gets his sense of Meaning in Life from (a particular world view) and his overarching life goals (Purpose in Life). Whilst charity work and career goals can co-exist, a clear integration between the two would suggest a stronger sense of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, as the individual would demonstrate an understanding of how their life goals can contribute to their meaning. It is also important to note that individuals can have overarching life goals that link to their career, as well as other pursuits. No participants in the qualitative component of this study alluded to overarching life goals beyond their careers. This suggests a tunnel-visioned worldview of their constructions of Purpose in Life. In further development of the positive education implementation, it is recommended that content on broader definitions of Purpose in Life and/or goal setting is included.

Whilst these two can co-exist in any person’s life, it is key that the individual makes the link between study and chosen career path with how they can continue to give back, help others, gain a sense of a belonging, and, contribute to the world beyond themselves. This ensures a sound sense of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. For instance, if Participant One outlined he wished to study law at university as it would help him support his future family, or assist him in giving back to his charitable efforts, he would have exhibited a stronger sense of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life because he could legitimately make sense of why he was structuring his life around that particular goal.

However, no participant made this link. Without a linkage made between how they gain Meaning in Life and what they wish to achieve with their life (Purpose in Life), it becomes difficult for people to make sense of why they are striving to achieve current goals. The necessity of creating life goals (Purpose in Life)
which centre on a person’s authentic self, what they value and how they gain Meaning in Life, is supported by the work of Keyes (2011). This research states that humans are capable of self-reflexive thought. Through this reflection humans gain insight into why their objectives are good, ethically sound, and of benefit to those beyond themselves. Upon reflection, if a person cannot explain their objectives through this reasoning, they begin to feel a sense of purposelessness, which flows onto their level of meaning (Keyes, 2011).

In the case of the participants interviewed, no links were made between what they wanted to achieve academically and with their future careers, with how they contributed to a world beyond themselves, either through charity or their family/future family. Ultimately this suggested their overarching life goals were out of alignment with their intrinsic values/beliefs. This, in addition to their developmental age and the ongoing development of these constructs throughout life, are two possible explanations of why their levels of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life at time point three were moderate.

This lack of alignment can be attributed to increased achievement-based societal pressure and the influence some family members had on the participants. As outlined in the literature, the current generation of adolescents face increasing pressure to succeed (Nilan, Julian, & Germov, 2007). Similarly, some participants stated that they felt pushed and stressed with the need to live up to their parents’ expectations. This included following a career path their parents had mapped out for them, as viewed on page 149, where Participant Nine stated he had the kind of parents that pushed him to achieve academically which would enable him to follow the career they wanted for him, at the expense of developing his own sense of purpose and wellbeing.
This demonstrates that participants who experience this kind of parental pressure follow their parents'/carers'/guardians' plans for them, rather than focusing on the goals they desire for themselves that align with their personal beliefs/values. This has a negative impact on their levels of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, thus reinforcing the importance of connecting with parents about the missions of positive education, and how they can support it.

Parental pressure and its relationship to participant Wellbeing was a salient message when examining the reasons behind the moderate Wellbeing score of participants at time point three. This was outlined in the participants’ comments in their semi-structured focus group interviews, and echoed in the literature, where students who have parents of higher SES, who attend non-government schools, were shown to have higher levels of perceived parental pressure, which caused increased levels of stress and anxiety, as students worry that they will not live up to the perceived educational expectations placed upon them (Chen, 2012; Green et al., 2014; Putwain, Woods & Symes, 2010).

This analysis was conducted in reference to an adapted version of The Structural Framework for Defining Wellbeing (Knight & McNaught, 2011, p.11). It was adapted to incorporate Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model of flourishing in the individual aspects that promote wellbeing. This was deemed appropriate as the positive education implementation was based upon the principles of positive psychology.

According to figure 2 (see page 34) society, community and family are components that influence the wellbeing status of an individual. From a societal context, these participants live in Australia, a democratic country. Australia has
free health care for those on Medicare, a Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme for
discounting certain prescription drugs, free and compulsory public education,
study loan assistance for those who engage in tertiary education, and finance
assistance for individuals eligible (based on their current wage and those they
support). These participants also live in a multicultural country that takes a
strong stance against discrimination, as reflected in the Anti-Discrimination Act

These societal factors all serve to support the wellbeing of the participants.
However, the current economic climate of Australia can be viewed as a stressor
on wellbeing. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 is on the
rise, increasing from 9% in 2008 to 12.4% in 2014 (Australian Bureau of
Statistics, 2014). This is more than double the unemployment rate for the
general public, which currently sits at 6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).
Whilst this population of participants did not exhibit many of the risk factors
associated with youth unemployment – educational attainment, previous
unemployment and low socio-economic status (SES) – their surrounding
society still feels the effects of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (Burrows,
2010). Since the GFC, there has been a significant decline in suitable full-time
jobs for young people in Australia (Burrows, 2010). With fewer jobs available
and an increase in university graduates the job market has become very
competitive:

“Young people in Australia are forced to compete with their peers for grades, for
places in higher education and for slots in paid work. They are similarly meant
to internalise the importance of doing it on their own, through public emphasis
on being suitably employable” (Wyn & White, 2000, p.173).
Subsequently there is an increased pressure felt by the student population to achieve academically; it is viewed as a mechanism to ensure a stable career path that results in successful employment. The participants attended a school that is highly academically achieving; it was ranked within the top 30 schools for HSC performance in 2011, with 10% of students achieving an ATAR 99+, and 50% of students achieving an ATAR of 90+. Twenty five of the students were also placed on the All Rounder’s Achievers list, achieving 90 or over in their best 10 units.

It is an environment where this competitive nature of outcomes-based achievement and rankings based on standardised testing was cultivated. Therefore the stress associated from academic pressure was also heightened, having an adverse effect on their wellbeing. This was outlined by the participants in the focus group interviews. For example, Participant Seven stated exams made him feel sick, stressed and hindered his sleep.

Similarly although the demographics of the families of these students are supportive of wellbeing – high SES, non-government private schooling which purchases a high SES cohort, that by extension, supports academic success and provides students with access to range extracurricular activities, ample housing, food and resources – the pressure some parents/carers/guardians placed on their son served to increase the psychological distress experienced by him, affecting his wellbeing. Therefore some societal and family facets of these participants’ lives did not support their psychological wellbeing, providing an explanation for their average Wellbeing score.
In summary, the schooling community in which the participants were surrounded did serve to promote their wellbeing, as they followed a whole school approach when rolling out positive education. Moreover, the community where the school was situated was in an affluent suburb, with low levels of crime and violence, thereby helping students feel a good level of personal safety, that in turn acted as an additional protective factor for their wellbeing.

The main area of improvement centres on the parental community. The school needs to involve the parents/families of the children at their school, and educate them on ways they can support the missions of positive psychology.

The Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies were the key classes where the Positive Education curriculum was explicitly taught. As outlined, some participants felt that these classes were not meaningful or engaging, therefore raising the question of how much of the content the participants understood and applied to their lives. When asked to describe their understanding of wellbeing in the focus group interviews, the participants articulated this from a partially holistic viewpoint. None of them mentioned skills they had used to support their own wellbeing (when probed). This highlights the reasoning for an average Wellbeing level in the student population of this year group, and supporting the argument for further teacher training on how to teach these valuable concepts in an engaging and meaningful manner, preferably in a student-centred format as the participants outlined effective classes were run in this way.

Additionally, in future staff training and revision of programs some attention must be given to expanding the participants’ current understanding of wellbeing. This was a need made clear in the focus group interviews where the participants articulated wellbeing from a partially holistic viewpoint. Each of the
participants indicated that they felt high levels of positive emotion when describing their well-being. Many also mentioned the positive effect their relationships with others and physical activity had on their Wellbeing. In terms of content, it is recommended that the message of positive emotion, whilst important, is the lowest form of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). It would also be beneficial to forge a greater link between what they hope to accomplish (achievement/ Purpose in Life) and how that relates to where they fit into the world, and what they give back (Meaning in Life). This also benefits their spiritual wellbeing, which is a path of self-discovery and growth (Keyes, 2011).

To support their psychological wellbeing in stressful times it is suggested that students practise effective ways of coping: decatastrophising, positive self talk, mindfulness, and breathing techniques (Stallman, 2011). Likewise, it is recommended that students learn stress buffers: time management, realistic expectations and life balance (Stallman, 2011). Finally as connectedness, particularly with their peers, was outlined as a key component of their current understanding of wellbeing, further instruction on how to be a good support to others, and how to seek help, would be beneficial.

Ultimately the aim of positive education is to teach academic skills alongside the skills of wellbeing (Seligman et al., 2009). The results of this study demonstrate – as measured by the instruments used – a whole school approach that integrates positive psychology principles into the curriculum, environment/ethos, and community/partnerships was successful in raising the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing of the student population. Therefore these principles can be taught using this approach with positive results in schools.
In conclusion, the mean scores of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the participants increased from low to moderate levels over the course of the positive education implementation. These changes could be attributed to a variety of factors including: over-reporting at the baseline due to poor understanding of the concepts in the questionnaires, developmental age, the time it takes to develop an understanding of content, phase two complementing knowledge gained in phase one through introducing Wisdom Studies, and the partial success of utilising a whole school approach. In terms of the educational/curriculum component of the whole school approach, staff training on how best to engage students with this content in the Mentoring Program and Wisdom is recommended. Similarly, in reference to the partnerships aspect of the whole school approach, educating parents on how to support the missions of Positive Education is also recommended. By following these recommendations the school can overcome the reasons the selected participants provided for their current moderate levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the qualitative component of this study.

6.2 Predictive Power

This section addresses the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on the Wellbeing of the participants. The quantitative component of the data gathered will be addressed in this section. The qualitative data will not be drawn upon in this section since the focus group interviews did not reveal any
links/relationships the participants made between the predictors (Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life) and outcome (Wellbeing).

This section will answer secondary research questions four and five together. This method was chosen because the simple regressions run at each time point produced similar results for Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, therefore the analysis of why this occurred is best done conjointly.

6.2.1 Secondary Research Question Four: What is the Predictive Power of the Effect of Meaning in Life On Wellbeing?

6.2.2 Secondary Research Question Five: What is the Predictive Power of the Effect of Purpose in Life On Wellbeing?

To answer these questions simple regressions were run at each of the four time points. At the baseline time point the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing, and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing, was low. However, the simple regressions run at time points one, two and three revealed a stronger predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing, and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing, that increased in strength as time continued (see pages 102-120). Similar to the discussion regarding change over time, the low predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on the participants' Wellbeing at the baseline (28.9% and 4.4% of the change effect respectively) can be attributed to the tendency of adolescents to over-report their Wellbeing, particularly in self-report measures, coupled with a lack of understanding of the concepts of Meaning in Life and
Purpose in Life prior to the Positive Education implementation (AIHW, 2001).

Once the whole school approach began, the participants were exposed to education, and surrounded by an environment that supported their wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. The increase in the strength of the predictive power from time points one through to time point three also supports conclusions originally drawn in the change over time analysis. That is, the combination of creating a positive psychology policy and curriculum, investing in teacher training and the Mentoring Program assisted participants in making informed judgements about their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the corresponding questionnaires. Once the Wisdom Studies subject was introduced in phase two (two months prior to time point two), participants received additional time to develop their current knowledge of Meaning in Life. This resulted in an increase of strength of the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing, and, Purpose in Life on Wellbeing, at time point two, which heightened again at time point three. Additionally, the increase in the strength of the predictive power reflects an escalation of the participants’ ability to apply content learnt about Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to their daily lives, which in turn enhanced their Wellbeing.

Furthermore, an examination of the change over time results revealed that whilst there was a significant decrease in the level of Meaning in Life and Wellbeing from the baseline time point to time point one, the predictive power of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing remained strong (93.3%). A similar finding occurred with regard to the predictive power of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing, which scored 88.8% at time point one. This underscored the effectiveness of
phase one of the positive education implementation in heightening the knowledge of Meaning in Life and wellbeing in the population.

Ultimately these results demonstrate that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life each had a strong predictive power on the participants' Wellbeing. Moreover, each is a positive psychology concept that can potentially be taught as part of a whole school approach towards Positive Education. Therefore educating students on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life could eventually result in an increase in their levels of Wellbeing, which is the ultimate goal of Positive Education (Seligman et al., 2009). Further research, including an examination of work samples, observations and interviews, is required to determine the students’ engagement with these constructs and level of understanding.

**6.2.3 Secondary Research Question Six: What is the Predictive Power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?**

To answer this question, a multiple regression was run at each of the four time points. At the baseline time point the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing was low (28.7% of the change effect).

However the multiple regressions run at time points one, two and three revealed a strong predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing that increased in strength as time continued, with the predictors accounting for 94.7%, 96.3% and 98.1% of the change effect on the outcome at time points one, two and three respectively.
Beyond previous explanations for low strength at the baseline time point and an increase thereafter, these results also indicate the benefit of educating students on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life as relational content. Steger (2012) proposed that whilst Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are separate entities, Purpose in Life is a motivational component of Meaning in Life. It allows people to understand how their life goals (Purpose in Life) serve a purpose larger than themselves. Purpose in Life also helps people understand how they fit into the world; they have an identity related to their accomplishments and what they are striving to achieve (Steger, 2012). Therefore teaching Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life as related content, rather than in isolation, increases the predictive power of each predictor on Wellbeing.

Ultimately these results demonstrate Meaning in life and Purpose in Life had a stronger predictive power on the participants’ Wellbeing, than when examined in isolation. Therefore they are positive psychology concepts that can be taught, and should be taught in conjunction, as part of a whole school approach towards Positive Education. Moreover, educating students on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and the relationships between each, could eventually result in an increase in their levels of Wellbeing, which is the ultimate goal of Positive Education (Seligman et al., 2009). However, further research, including an examination of work samples, observations and interviews, is required to determine the students’ engagement with these constructs, level of understanding and the impact this education has on their wellbeing.
6.3 Implications

This study has addressed a gap in the literature; theoretically it was suggested that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life served to enhance the Wellbeing of adolescents and adults (Damon, 2008). However, the literature lacked application, with no empirical evidence suggesting whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were teachable concepts with a set of skills that secondary students could apply to their lives to enhance their wellbeing. Similarly, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are central to Positive Psychology theory, as viewed in Martin Seligman’s PERMA theory, yet positive education interventions had not focussed on these concepts (Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011). Therefore a key implication of this study is that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are predictive factors for male adolescent wellbeing, as demonstrated by quantitative findings; whereby there was a strong predictive power of each on Wellbeing at time points one, two and three. Upon examining the quantitative change over time findings alongside the predicative power findings, the predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing is also highlighted. In terms of change over time between the baseline and time point one, there was a statistically significant decrease in the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. Furthermore at time point one Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were found to have a strong predictive power on Wellbeing. Hence, when Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life decline, Wellbeing declines. Likewise, at time points two and three Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were found to have a strong predictive power on Wellbeing, with the change over
time findings demonstrating if the predictors remain the same or significantly increase, the outcome (Wellbeing) will follow suit. However, further studies are required to determine whether Meaning in life and Purpose in Life could act as protective factors for adolescent wellbeing, and whether these constructs could predict adolescent Wellbeing in other cohorts.

After the baseline data were recorded, a key change that was introduced into the participants’ environment was the whole school approach of positive education, which sought to increase the level of wellbeing of the students at the school. This included embedding Positive Psychology concepts of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life into curriculum, policy, classrooms, school language, environment and ethos. In examining the quantitative change over time findings, it was clear that change could have caused an initial drop in the levels of each (due to an enhanced knowledge base), followed by a steady significant increase. This increase could have been caused by developmental factors, and/or an increased level of understanding, where the students understood how to apply Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life skills to their lives to enhance their Wellbeing. Hence, the second implication of this study is that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are concepts that can be taught as part of a Positive Education change, and this education could assist in enhancing the Wellbeing status of male secondary students. However there are conditions attached to the effectiveness of the Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education enhancing student Wellbeing, and further studies need to be conducted to determine the causal relationship between these psychological constructs.

The participants’ reflections in the qualitative focus group interviews revealed that it was not one aspect of the positive education implementation that was
particularly effective, but rather it was a combination of a variety of interacting sources that they felt helped promote their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. Overwhelmingly the participants believed that the school environment/ethos and the teachers promoted their levels of each. In terms of the whole school approach recommended by the Health Promoting Schools Association (2000), this demonstrates an effective relationship between bringing in an external partnership, in this case the Positive Psychology Institute, to help develop a policy and provide ongoing training to promote a culture (that is school organisation, environment and ethos) that fosters Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing (Health Promoting Schools Association, 2000). Therefore the school organisation, environment and ethos of the school also supported the education of these concepts in classrooms as there were no conflicting messages between two vital components of the school’s functioning. However, the curriculum, teaching and learning, component of the Positive Education implementation received mixed reviews from participants. The Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies were the two main points of classroom education for positive psychology content. As mentioned previously, the content discussed in the Mentoring Program regarding identity and goal setting, feeds into an in-depth exploration of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life in Wisdom Studies. Whilst some participants stated these classes supported their Wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, others outlined that the education was inconsistent, boring, and lacked real-world application. Of particular note, a majority of the participants felt Wisdom Studies forced the beliefs on Christianity upon them. Additionally, the participants did not articulate wellbeing from a holistic viewpoint, and had an intense focus on career
aspirations when discussing their Purpose in Life. Moreover the participants expressed that family members were instrumental in either the promotion or diminishment of their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing, yet family members were not a partnership sought after in the Positive Education implementation.

These explanations reveal that there needs to be a revision regarding the curriculum, teaching and learning and partnerships components of the Positive Education implementation. In terms of curriculum, teaching and learning, Purpose in Life instruction needs to focus on areas beyond their career, ensuring that what they pursue in life is a reflection of their authentic selves (Keyes, 2011). Similarly, the education of Wellbeing has to be delivered and reinforced as a holistic concept encompassing physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual domains. Each domain is interdependent on the rest, thus balance between each is imperative to wellbeing. Pedagogically, further teacher training needs to occur to assist teachers in creating student-centred lessons, where students can see real-world application. In reference to partnerships, parents and family members need to be included as part of the positive education implementation. Through this, parents and family members will understand the importance of what the school is trying to achieve, and learn ways they can support the mission of Positive Education.

Therefore an implication of the integrated findings of this study regards the conditions that need to be met to effectively educate students on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to potentially enhance their levels of Wellbeing. Unequivocally a whole school approach that targets the three key areas of the Health Promoting Schools Framework needs to be followed (Health Promoting
Schools Association, 2000). This research site effectively utilised an external partnership to help them create a school organisation environment and ethos that supported each. However, the utilisation of the whole school approach could be bettered by extending partnerships to parents and family members. Similarly, whilst the quantitative change over time results indicate that the Positive Education implementation had a positive impact on the levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, by revisiting content on Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, and ensuring lessons are student-centred which enable students to link content to the world outside school, the effectiveness of the delivery of the curriculum, teaching and learning component of the Positive Education implementation would be enhanced. Moreover, the delivery of this component of the whole school approach could be enhanced by ensuring the level of interest and commitment to the positive education implementation is high across all staff. As outlined in the qualitative semi-structured focus group interviews, the delivery of the Mentoring Program and Wisdom Studies subject greatly varied across teachers, which suggests varying levels of commitment and/or the need for further training.

Ensuring that content is made context-specific is another condition that needs to be met to ensure effective education of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. This population of students are generally from a high socio-economic background, and attend a school that is highly academically achieving, geared towards preparing students for their next stage in life, including gaining entrance into university. Moreover, this school is one which achieves high academic grades/scores.
As such it is understandable that when these students begin to develop an understanding of what Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life means to them, they begin to construct life goals around gaining entrance into university and career pursuits. Similarly it is unsurprising that the participants outlined a main hindrance to their Wellbeing was exam-related stress and parental pressure. Therefore the content needs to be revised to counteract the negative effects of their context on their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. Specifically, students need to examine the effect they believe their context has on their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. Additionally, teachers need to guide students in broadening their life goals beyond their career aspirations. It is also vital that students are asked to contemplate how their life goals (beyond career) contribute to something larger than themselves, hence enabling the integration of their Purpose in Life and Meaning in Life.

Finally, this study underscores the importance of educating students on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. The quantitative change in time findings between the baseline and time point one highlights a severe over-reporting issue, which could be related to a lack of education and knowledge of each or developmental age. Further research to determine the reasons for over-reporting on these instruments is required to draw stronger conclusions about the cause. Nevertheless, this potential insufficiency of self-awareness could lead to poor self-validation of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, therefore hindering their potential development of skills to promote each. Ultimately, if students believe their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing are high there is little motivation to improve them. Hence education is imperative as it serves as a tool to deflate these beliefs, and assists in helping
students realise both the importance of, and how to promote their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.

**6.4 Recommendations for Further Study**

In future studies it is recommended that this whole school approach to Positive Education is implemented to a variety of secondary schools with different demographics, including co-educational and all-girl schools, public and private schools, and schools with high populations of minority groups/at risk groups. Part of this whole school approach must include consultation and collaboration between school staff, parents, students, and relevant community members to modify content to ensure it is context specific. Researching the effectiveness of the Positive Education implementation in promoting Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in a variety of secondary schools would increase the generalisability and transferability of the findings.

The qualitative component of this study found that parents were key influences on their child’s Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. In future studies it is recommended that parents are involved in the Positive Education implementation; they should receive education on the importance of supporting their child’s level on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, and how to promote their own levels of each. There is a potential to research the flow-on effect this parental education and parental perception has on the effectiveness of the Positive Education implementation.
In the qualitative results, teachers and the environment/ethos of the school were also identified as factors that influenced the Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing of the participants. Participants felt that prosocial behaviour and approachable teachers impacted their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing positively. Conversely, the participants also outlined the negative impact some teachers had when delivering the Mentoring Program in the Wisdom Studies subject. As environment/ethos is a crucial component of the whole school approach, a recommendation for future research centres on the impact ethos/environment and teacher commitment have on the effectiveness of a positive education implementation.

The quantitative findings of this study found the mean scores of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing dropped significantly from the baseline to time point one. Succeeding this, there was no significant change from time point one to two, and a significant increase from time point two to three. Moreover, at time point three, the mean scores represented a moderate level of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing in the participants. The change over time findings could represent a shift in the level of understanding of each psychological construct, or a gradual development of each as a natural developmental progression. Therefore, in future research it is recommended that the level of understanding of these constructs is assessed to decipher the impact that understanding has on the development of each. Moreover, in the future, it is recommended that positive education programs and curriculum are developed and researched with consideration of developmental stages of adolescence. Finally, the regressions of this study outlined a high predictive power of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing. It is recommended that
further research is conducted to better understand and establish the potential relationship between these constructs.

6.5 Limitations

The limitations of this study centre on lack of generalisability, the use of self-report data, and validity testing of scales. Firstly, the generalisability of this study is limited as it was conducted at one site with specific characteristics: an all-boys, non-government, private school. Moreover, the semi-structured focus group interviews had a small sample size, and are not representative of the entire cohort. Secondly, the quantitative questionnaire data was self-report data, therefore the scores may be inflated due to desirability of response, the halo effect, of affectivity at the time of the questionnaires. Finally, whilst each questionnaire has good construct validity in terms of the test-retest coefficients reported, this study did not conduct validity testing of the scales with the cohort of this study.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This study set out to discover the relationship between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life secondary student Wellbeing. At a deeper level, this study also examined the relationship between Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on wellbeing within the framework of the Positive Education implementation. This included an investigation of whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life were concepts that could be taught to enhance wellbeing within a whole school approach towards Positive Education. The reason why this study targeted Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life as components that could potentially be taught to enhance student wellbeing, was because the general theoretical literature on this topic suggested that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life could be protective factors for adolescent wellbeing, yet there were no conclusive findings on this topic. Similarly there were no studies that examined whether Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life could be taught to enhance student wellbeing, or whether they were innate qualities within us that could not be taught. Therefore this study sought to answer six secondary research questions:

1. To what extent did Meaning in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?
2. To what extent did Purpose in Life change over the course of the positive education implementation?
3. To what extent did Wellbeing change over the course of the positive education implementation?

4. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life on Wellbeing?

5. What is the predictive power of the effect of Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

6. What is the predictive power of the effect of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life on Wellbeing?

This chapter will synthesise the main empirical findings of the study to answer the primary research question: *To What Extent Do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life Serve As Protective Factors for Secondary Boys’ Wellbeing?*

The whole school approach towards the Positive Education implementation was crucial in supporting the education of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. The support the participants felt from staff and the prosocial environment were two factors to which the participants attributed their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. This support was necessary when educating participants on each as it ensured a consistent message was promoted and learnt. By extension, it guaranteed that participants felt the content taught was of high value and importance to the school, therefore aiding the legitimacy of the delivery in the classroom. Furthermore, an analysis of the change over time findings demonstrated education on Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life can lead to increases in the levels of each, therefore illustrating Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are teachable concepts, if done as part of a whole school approach to Positive Education. This was established when an overall significant increase in the means of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life
occurred between time point one and time point three. This increase occurred after the implementation of Positive Education at the site, which provided explicit education on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. Therefore the increases can be – in part – attributed to the education the participants received in the Positive Education implementation. Nevertheless, from the baseline time point to time point one, there was a significant decrease in the means of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing. This finding also underscores the importance of explicit education on each, as it reduces the tendency of adolescents to over-report in self-assessment measures, even if they still have many health problems, or engage in behaviour which puts their health and wellbeing at risk, for example, lack of exercise, obesity, and alcohol consumption (Eckersley, 2008; Muir, Mullan, Powell, Flaxman, Thompson, & Griffiths, 2009).

The Positive Education implementation provided a knowledge base for participants to accurately assess their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing, therefore leading to a drop in the previously over-reported levels of each. The significant decrease from the baseline to time point one is a key finding because it signifies the participants’ ability to accurately assess their levels of each, providing a true grounding for self reflection and growth. Without accurate self-evaluation it is hard for action to be taken to enhance their levels of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and Wellbeing.

Whilst the Positive Education implementation was effective in educating students on Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing, the reality was that the participant levels of each rose from below average to average. Whilst the increase is promising, an average score indicates there are improvements that
can be made to the whole school approach to Positive Education. These improvements could lead to an enhanced effectiveness of education in Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing.

Firstly, parents/carers/guardians need to be recognised as integral to the success of the Positive Education implementation – and by extension – the effectiveness of the education of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. The qualitative findings emphasised the importance of engaging these individuals, as they had a significant impact on how the participants viewed their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life, and, how they felt their wellbeing was supported and promoted. Depending on the participant, the influence of parents/carers/guardians was either positive or negative. Some participants described their parents/carers/guardians as instrumental to their development of wellbeing, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life. On the other hand, some participants described their parents/carers/guardians as a hindrance to their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing. These participants felt they had to pursue a career path their parents/carers/guardians wanted for them, and there was little to no focus on supporting the participants’ own aspirations. Similarly, their parents/carers/guardians often encouraged a lack of life balance, where participants felt they only had time to ‘work hard’ and study, often at the expense of their wellbeing. Therefore, the effectiveness of the education of Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing can be enhanced by engaging all parents/carers/guardians in the Positive Education implementation. These individuals need to be educated on the missions of Positive Education and how they can support them.
Secondly, it is essential that the Positive Education implementation is needs-based, tailoring the program to suit the socio-cultural context of the students. Stress related to academic pressure was outlined as a key contributor to low levels of wellbeing felt among the participants. This was attributed to the highly academically achieving nature of the school, and, pressure placed on the students by their parents/carers/guardians. Additionally, the job market for young adults is becoming increasingly competitive, which ultimately filters down into the pressure to succeed – to ‘stand out’ from their peers (Wyn & White, 2000). To counter the effect of their social and cultural context, explicit education on how these factors can potentially be detrimental to their Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life and wellbeing should be included, along with strategies and skills to overcome this. These strategies could include a self evaluation of how the social and cultural context has affected them thus far, a reflection on why they want to achieve life goals that align with their Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life, and planning ways in which they can achieve their goals (beyond simply getting 'good' marks). Similarly, stress management strategies would be beneficial for this population, for example, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and challenging negative thoughts with logic and developing realistic solutions. In stress management education, it is also important to educate students on how to recognise when they are feeling stressed; creating an awareness of bodily cues is key. For example, bodily cues may include joint ache, nausea, sweat, or shaky hands. By enabling students to become aware of these indicators, they will be able to quickly reduce stress, rather than allowing it to build to a heightened state. Combining this education with
parental/carer/guardian instruction on how to support their child serves to alleviate the pressure felt at home.

Thirdly, the nature of the Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life content relates to identity formation, for you have to discover your authentic self to develop life goals that are cognizant with your inner self (Keyes, 2011) This process of self-discovery requires extensive reflection, and is refined over time. For these reasons, a student-centred approach is recommended. In effect, this approach complements the way Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life is developed, as students are required to engage with the context in a reflective and meaningful manner (Killen, 2004). As part of this approach, story sharing is recommended, as the participants interviewed outlined that they felt the information they received thus far was too theoretical and lacked real-life application.

The results from the simple and multiple regressions demonstrated that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are strong predictors of Wellbeing, particularly when combined. Thus, in Positive Education approaches – which aim to enhance the wellbeing of students – Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life education should be included. As demonstrated by the findings, education needs to be explicit and ongoing, first focussing on identity (who they are, where have they come from and what do they value), then progress into what their life goals are/what they derive meaning from. It is imperative that the education is ongoing because the development of these concepts requires extensive reflection; without time spent on this, it is very hard to apply these concepts to their lives. This was viewed by the length of time it took participant levels of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to rise (approximately one year).
Similarly, the effectiveness of the education of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life to enhance wellbeing is dependent on how well each of the three components of the Health Promoting Schools framework is utilised.

This study has two main theoretical implications. Firstly, it solidifies theoretical postulations by providing empirical evidence that demonstrates Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are strong protective factors for male adolescent wellbeing. Secondly, this study has demonstrated that Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are teachable concepts, which can be taught as part of a whole school approach to Positive Education to improve wellbeing.

In terms of policy, this study makes a case for the explicit inclusion of Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life in the Australian national curriculum. Specifically, each should be included as part of the goal of education to create active and informed citizens. At present this goal aims to enhance students’ wellbeing, which also assists them in their academic/workplace pursuits (Seligman, 2011). This goal encompasses teaching students skills to enhance and maintain emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. This goal also aims to enhance optimism, resilience, empathy, respect, relationships with others, and, provide students with the ability to create lives which are healthy, purposeful and satisfying (ACARA, 2011). Furthermore, it aims to foster belief in oneself, hope, and the confidence to achieve set goals (ACARA, 2011). Finally, students also gain an understanding of their roles within society. These include family, community and workforce (ACARA, 2011). By including the terms Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life within this goal, it provides a theoretical reference point to draw upon when creating recommendations on how to help students achieve this goal in schools, rather than simply stating that we want education to help
students live ‘purposeful lives’ and ‘understand their roles within society’. Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life provide information on how it can be done. Likewise, they are skills that can be taught, that are integral to helping students enhance and maintain their levels of wellbeing.

In conclusion, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are strong predictors of Wellbeing for the all-boy secondary cohort who participated in this longitudinal mixed method study. Therefore, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life can be considered as predictive factors for their Wellbeing. Additionally, Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life are concepts that can be taught as part of a whole school approach to promote student wellbeing. However, the effectiveness of the education to enhance wellbeing is dependent on how rigorously all aspects of the whole school approach recommended by the Health Promoting Schools Model are addressed (Health Promoting Schools Association, 2000).
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Appendices:

Appendix One: Participant Information Sheets for Parents and Children

Appendix Two: Consent Forms

Appendix Three: Meaning in Life Questionnaire

Appendix Four: Purpose in Life subscale of Psychological Wellbeing Scale

Appendix Five: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Appendix Six: Focus Group Interview Guide
Appendix One:

*Participant Information Sheets for Parents and Children*
Dear Parent/caregiver

Your child has been invited to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The research is titled: *To What Extent Do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life Serve As Protective Factors for Secondary Boys’ Wellbeing?*

During your child’s attendance at Knox Grammar School they have experienced the roll out of a Positive Education initiative. From 2010 to 2012 your child was asked to complete a series of surveys at various time points throughout the two years. The responses your child provided are currently kept at Knox Grammar School. The researchers are seeking your permission to access your child’s survey responses. If your permission was granted Knox Grammar School to de-identify all of the surveys. This means your child’s identity will remain anonymous; they will not be able to be identified.

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

Positive Education initiatives are a relatively new approach to promoting student wellbeing within schooling settings. Therefore the purpose of this study is evaluative. Specifically, this research aims to:

- To discover protective factors for your child’s wellbeing (factors that promote their wellbeing).
- To discover what impact the Positive Education initiative at Knox Grammar School had on your child’s wellbeing.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Positive Education initiative at Knox Grammar School.

**INVESTIGATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rachel Riedel</th>
<th>Prof. Wilma Vialle</th>
<th>A/Prof. Linsday Oades</th>
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<tr>
<td>School of Education</td>
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<td>Sydney Business School</td>
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<td>4221 4434</td>
<td>4221 3694</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:loades@uow.edu.au">loades@uow.edu.au</a></td>
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**METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS**

Your child has already completed the surveys, as such, there will be no additional demands placed upon your child. The researchers are requesting your permission to access your child’s responses from the 2011 to 2013 surveys.

**POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS**

There is no foreseeable risk for your child because they have already completed the surveys.

It is important to note that if you give the researchers your permission to access your child’s survey responses, your child will not be personally identified at any time. Involvement in this study is voluntary and your child may withdraw from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has been gathered to that point. This means that your child may withdraw all their survey data at any time. Your child’s withdrawal from the study will not affect their treatment from the school in any way.

**FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**

This study is not funded. Findings from this research will provide crucial feedback on the current wellbeing initiatives taking place at Knox Grammar School, and help guide future endeavors. Findings from the study will be published as research thesis and possibly other research articles, available in the University of Wollongong Library. Confidentiality is assured, and your child will not be identified in any part of the research.

**ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS**
Participation Information Sheet for Students

Dear Student,

This is an invitation for you to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The research is titled: *To What Extent Do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life Serve As Protective Factors for Secondary Boys’ Wellbeing?*

During your attendance at Knox Grammar School you have experienced the roll out of a Positive Education initiative within your school. From 2010 to 2012 you were asked to complete a series of surveys at various time points throughout the two years. The responses you provided are currently kept at Knox Grammar School. The researchers are seeking your permission to access your survey responses. If your permission was granted Knox Grammar School to de-identify all of your surveys. This means your identity will remain anonymous; you will not be able to be identified.

The purposes of the research are:

- To discover protective factors for your wellbeing (factors that promote your wellbeing).
- To discover what impact the Positive Education initiative at Knox Grammar School had on your wellbeing.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Positive Education initiative at Knox Grammar School.

These are three people from the university involved in this study

Rachel Riedel  
School of Education  
4221 4277  
rachelr@uow.edu.au

Prof. Wilma Vialle  
School of Education  
4221 4434  
pearson@uow.edu.au

A/Prof. Linsday Oades  
Sydney Business School  
4221 3694  
loades@uow.edu.au

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

You have already responded to the surveys at various time points from 2011 to 2013, as such, the researchers are not asking whether you would like to participate in any additional data collection.

The researchers are requesting your permission to access your responses from the 2011 to 2013 surveys.

There is no foreseeable risk for you because you have already completed the surveys.
It is important to note that if you give the researchers your permission to access the your survey responses, you will not be personally identified at any time. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and may withdraw from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has been gathered to that point. This means that may withdraw all your survey data at any time. Your withdrawal from the study will not affect their treatment from the school in any way.

Findings from this research will provide crucial feedback on the current wellbeing initiatives taking place at Knox Grammar School, and help guide future endeavors. Findings from the study will be published as research thesis and possibly other research articles, available in the University of Wollongong Library. Your name, and the name of your school will not be identified in any part of the research.

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research about the way this research has been conducted, you can tell your teacher or parents or contact the University Ethics Officer, on (02) 4221 3386, or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
LETTER OF INFORMATION TO PARENTS/CAREGIVER

Dear Parent/Caregiver

Your child has been invited to participate in a research project conducted by the University of Wollongong. We write to seek your approval and assistance to conduct research and to involve your child as a participant.

Knox Grammar School is undertaking initiatives to improve pastoral care and overall school wellbeing. The Positive Psychology Institute and the University of Wollongong have partnered with Knox Grammar School in this program. Several phases are involved in this important initiative and sets of focus group interviews are part of the second phase. Your child’s participation will provide Knox Grammar School with valuable feedback on the current initiatives in place, and help inform the design and delivery of future initiatives.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The focus group interviews aim to ascertain information regarding the strengths, and areas of improvement of the current pastoral care program. We are hoping to gain feedback and further insight on whether the initiatives in place have enhanced student wellbeing.

INVESTIGATORS

Rachel Riedel
School of Education
4221 4277
racheller@uow.edu.au

Prof. Wilma Vialle
School of Education
4221 4434
pearson@uow.edu.au

A/Prof. Lindsay Oades
Sydney Business School
4221 3694
loades@uow.edu.au

METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS

Your child will be asked to participate in a 30 minute focus group interview. The interview will be with three other children and will be audio taped. Your child will not be personally identified, and will be given a number to refer to when speaking.

Typical questions asked are:

1. What is your understanding of wellbeing?
2. Can you describe your level of wellbeing?
3. How would you describe your purpose in life?
4. How would you describe your meaning in life?
5. What has your experience been with the Mentoring Program?
6. What has your experience been with the Wisdom Studies subject?

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS

There is minimal foreseeable risk for your child. The focus group interview will be organised in a time that will not disrupt their class schedule. They will not be personally identified at any time. Their involvement in this study is voluntary and they may withdraw their participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has been gathered to that point. Their withdraw from the study will not affect their treatment from the school in any way. If the questions cause them any emotional distress they will be free to leave the interview at any time, and withdraw all data collected.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is not funded. Findings from the study will be published as a research thesis and possibly other research articles, available in the University of Wollongong Library. Confidentiality is assured, and your child will not be identified in any part of the research.
If you have any enquiries about the research, you can contact Rachel Riedel on 42 7221 4277. If you any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
Dear Student,

This is an invitation for you to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to discover what you believe the strengths and areas of improvement are for the updated pastoral care program (Mentoring Program/Wisdom Studies). We would like to know your thoughts, feelings and beliefs regarding the new initiatives that have been put in place at Knox Grammar School, and whether you feel that they have helped your overall level of wellbeing.

These are three people from the university involved in this study:
- Rachel Riedel
  - School of Education
  - 4221 4277
  - rachelr@uow.edu.au
- Prof. Wilma Vialle
  - School of Education
  - 4221 4434
  - pearson@uow.edu.au
- A/Prof. Lindsay Oades
  - Sydney Business School
  - 4221 3694
  - loades@uow.edu.au

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO
We would like you to participate in a 30 minute group interview. This interview will be with three other students in your year group, and will be audio recorded. In this interview, the questions you will be asked are:

1. What is your understanding of wellbeing?
2. Can you describe your level of wellbeing?
3. How would you describe your purpose in life?
4. How would you describe your meaning in life?
5. What has your experience been with the Mentoring Program?
6. What has your experience been with the Wisdom Studies subject?

There is minimal foreseeable risk for you. You may find some of the questions asked cause you emotional distress. If this is the case, you are free to leave the interview, and seek the school counsellor that has been made available for you.

The focus group interview will be organised in a time that will not disrupt your class schedule. You will not be personally identified at any time. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and may withdraw from the study at any time and withdraw any data that has been gathered to that point. This means that may leave the interview at any time, and withdraw all data. Your withdrawal from the study will not affect their treatment from the school in any way.

Findings from this research will provide crucial feedback on the current wellbeing initiatives taking place at Knox Grammar School, and help guide future endeavours. Findings from the study will be published as research thesis and possibly other research articles, available in the University of Wollongong Library. Your name, and the name of your school will not be identified in any part of the research.
If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research about the way this research has been conducted, you can tell your teacher or parents or contact the University Ethics Officer, on (02) 42214457.
Appendix Two:

Consent Forms
Consent Form for Students

Research Title: To What Extent Do Meaning in Life and Purpose in Life Serve As Protective Factors for Secondary Boys’ Wellbeing?

Researcher’s Name: Ms. Rachel Riedel, Prof. Wilma Vialle and A/Prof. Lindsay Oades

I have read the participation information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any further questions I may have had. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time from the study without affecting my treatment at school in any way.

I understand that the risks to me are minimal in this study and have read the information sheet and asked any questions I may have about the risks. I understand that I will be giving the researchers permission to access to my survey responses collected from 2010 to 2012.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Rachel Riedel on 4221 4277.

By signing below I am consenting to (please tick):

Allowing the researchers to access my survey responses collected from 2010 to 2012.

I understand that information from me will be used for a research thesis and possibly other published studies and I consent for it to be used in this manner.

I give permission for my child ________________________ (please insert your child’s name) to participate in this research.

Parent/ Guardian Signature
___________________________________________

Date___________ Name (please print) ________________________________

Child’s signature
___________________________________________
**Consent Form for Students**

**Researcher’s Name:** Ms. Rachel Riedel, Prof. Wilma Vialle and A/Prof. Lindsay Oades

I have read the participation information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any further questions I may have had. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time from the study without affecting my treatment at school in any way.

I understand that the risks to me are minimal in this study and have read the information sheet and asked any questions I may have about the risks. I understand that I will be involved in one 20 minute group audio recorded interview. My name will not be used to identify my comments or work in the study.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Rachel Riedel on 4221 4277.

By signing below I am consenting to (please tick):

Attending one 30-minute audio recorded group interview about wellbeing initiatives at Knox Grammar School.

I understand that information from me will be used for a research thesis and possibly other published studies and I consent for it to be used in this manner.

I give permission for my child _________________________________ (please insert your child’s name) to participate in this research.

Parent/ Guardian Signature

_______________________________________________________________

Date___________ Name (please print)

_______________________________________________________________

Child’s Signature

_____________________________________________________________
Appendix Three:

*Meaning in Life Questionnaire*
7. MLQ

Please take a moment to think about what makes your life and existence feel important and significant to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I understand my life's meaning.

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<th>Absolutely Untrue</th>
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<th>Can't Say True or False</th>
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2. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.

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3. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.

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<th>Can't Say True or False</th>
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4. My life has a clear sense of purpose.

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5. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.

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<th>Can't Say True or False</th>
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6. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.

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7. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.

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<th>Can't Say True or False</th>
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8. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.

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<th>Can't Say True or False</th>
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9. My life has no clear purpose.

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10. I am searching for meaning in my life.

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Appendix Four:

*Purpose in Life subscale of Psychological Wellbeing Scale Questionnaire*
8. PIL

1. I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.

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<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>moderately disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>moderately agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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2. I tend to focus on the present, because the future nearly always brings me problems.

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3. My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.

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<th>moderately disagree</th>
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4. I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.

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5. I used to set goals for myself, but that now seems like a waste of time.

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6. I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.

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7. I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself.

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8. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.

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9. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.

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Appendix Five:

*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale Questionnaire*
5. WEMWBS

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.
Please tick the circle that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

**1. I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**2. I’ve been feeling useful**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**3. I’ve been feeling relaxed**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**4. I’ve been feeling interested in other people**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**5. I’ve had energy to spare**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**6. I’ve been dealing with problems well**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**7. I’ve been thinking clearly**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**8. I’ve been feeling good about myself**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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**9. I’ve been feeling close to other people**
1=None of the time, 2=Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5=All of the time

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<td>10. I've been feeling confident</td>
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<td>11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things</td>
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<td>12. I've been feeling loved</td>
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<td>13. I've been interested in new things</td>
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<td>14. I've been feeling cheerful</td>
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Appendix Six:

Focus Group Interview Guide
Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of wellbeing?
2. Can you describe your level of wellbeing?
3. How would you describe your purpose in life?
4. How would you describe your meaning in life?
5. What has your experience been with the Mentoring Program?
6. What has your experience been with the Wisdom Studies subject?