

An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts* in Positive Psychology at the North-West University

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Graduation May 2018
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr V. Koen, for her expert guidance and patience. Thank you for your feedback and encouragement, especially during the research proposal and mini-dissertation process. My heartfelt appreciation and gratitude goes to Prof. Marié Wissing and every other lecturer and guest lecturer that inspired and taught me during the MAPP programme. I would like to thank Prof E du Plessis for co-coding, Dr A van der Merwe for language editing and Ms M Henning for editing of sources. To my fellow-students with whom I ventured into this educational adventure, thank you for what accumulated to be hours of support and encouragement towards our common and individual achievements. For me, the completion of this mini-dissertation is the highlight of the MAPP course and a celebration of the countless hours of research, reflections and writing to conclude this valuable learning process, with the promise of new learning opportunities in the future. To my family, who has been a pillar of support and encouragement during a time that revealed its own challenges, thank you for reminding me of our bigger dreams and higher goals. To all of you (Dad, Mom, Hans, Babette, Killian and Sebastian) for always living the example of hard work and dedication and being good stewards of the opportunities before you: I truly experience living among people that are always grateful and who lead by example. To my Heavenly Father, for granting me this wonderful opportunity and gracing me with the knowledge, wisdom and insight to complete the task.

SUMMARY

Available evidence strongly suggests that the parent-adolescent relationship, which is a foundational relationship, can play a crucial role in individuals' relational development as well as their experience of well-being. The various challenges experienced with regard to parent-adolescent relationships are indicative of the need for research in this regard, including the South African context. Research in the field of positive psychology suggests that the development of gratitude and participation in gratitude activities can strengthen relationships, but also identifies the need for research with adolescents in terms of gratitude and gratitude activities. This study therefore explores and describes parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

The study implemented a qualitative, explorative-descriptive research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six parent-adolescent dyads (n=12) that were sampled purposively and were analysed through the use of thematic analyses.

The findings entail identified themes and sub-themes: Positive experiences of participants regarding the gratitude activities (including doing something different, of a pleasant nature, a positive challenge and usefulness of activities); experiencing a deeper understanding of gratitude (including a realisation of taking things for granted, a realisation of how much there is to be thankful for, reflection in terms of gratitude, the uniqueness of the gratitude experience and the value of sharing gratitude); experiencing the relational value of gratitude (including spending time together, seeing the other person in a new light and improvement of the relationship); and recommendations (changes to activities and promoting the activities with others).

The study's findings contribute to empirical data and knowledge concerning gratitude activities, specifically as experienced by parent-adolescent dyads in a South African context.

Key words: Parent-adolescent dyad, parent-adolescent relationship, gratitude activities, positive psychology

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES

Permission is hereby granted that the manuscript entitled “An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads’ experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context” may be submitted by the candidate, E. Ludick, for examination purposes in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Positive Psychology.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Koen', followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line extending to the right.

Supervisor:

Dr V Koen

DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

Hereby I, El-Marie Ludick, declare that this research study “An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads’ experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context” is a product of my own work, and that all sources have been fully referenced and acknowledged. Furthermore, I declare that this dissertation was edited by a qualified and experienced language editor.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, consisting of a stylized capital 'E' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

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Ms E Ludick
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Dear Ms Ludick

Language editing

This is to confirm that I edited your dissertation, *An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context* (excluding tables and references), and that I indicated the necessary grammatical corrections. Please contact me if there are any queries or if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely



A van der Merwe

PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Positive Psychology. The Positive Psychology curriculum (curriculum code G801P) consists of a total of 180 credits. The mini-dissertation in Positive Psychology accounts for a third of these credits (60 credits).

This mini-dissertation is presented in an article format, in line with the General Academic Rules of the North-West University (NWU, 2015). In terms of these rules, the first section of the mini-dissertation provides a short literature review and problem statement. The second section provides the guidelines of the journal to which the manuscript will be submitted, as well as the manuscript itself. For examination purposes, the word count of the manuscript in this dissertation exceeds the words allowed by the intended journal and the manuscript will therefore be shortened accordingly before it is submitted to the journal for review. The third and final section includes the conclusions of the study.

The manuscript will be submitted to the *Journal of Family Studies* for possible publication. This journal is an accredited, peer-reviewed international journal that aims to develop, amongst others, the understanding of families and relationships in society from a range of disciplines, including family and psychology studies. The topic of this study is therefore fitting for the journal's aim and scope.

Section 1

Literature Review and Problem Statement



Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others.

- Cicero

Section One

Literature Review

The following discussion focuses on the importance of relationships, family relationships (with a specific focus on parent-adolescent relationships) and the potential value of gratitude activities in this regard. The conceptual definitions applicable to this study are also discussed.

The social nature of human beings inevitably develops to satisfy the basic human psychological need to belong and to be recognised (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A relationship is a formative experience; an interactive process of engagement between entities within a context with the potential of affective value that contributes to shaping individual identity and reinforcing meaning in life (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker & Garbinsky, 2013). Humans are relational beings who are influenced and defined by multiple relationships, whether intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, environmental or spiritual in nature. This social nature of human beings and how people experience their relatedness is significantly linked to their quality of life and well-being (Baumeister et al., 2013).

White (2010) and Van Schalkwyk and Wissing (2010) affirm the significance of experiencing positive relationships, in their conceptualisation of well-being. Many studies indicate that healthy personal relationships have the tendency and potential to incubate positive emotions that may result in various advantageous effects, such as posing as a buffer against illness (Wissing, 2014) and promoting respectful, responsible and fair undertakings (Prilleltensky, 2013) while preventing unsociable bearing in misconduct (Hromek & Walsh, 2012). These studies also indicate that further investigation of personal relationships is important for the development of the positive aspects of relationships. One such prominent personal relationship is between the parent and adolescent child in the family.

It is, for example, within the family that an individual should experience love – the most common happiness-generating emotion – for the first time, thereby establishing a foundation

with the potential for higher-quality interpersonal relationships that can give meaning and purpose in life (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Research suggests that the experience of positive emotional feedback will result in a loop that is referred to as an ‘upward spiral’ of happiness, or the ‘broaden effect’ (Fredrickson, 2005; Lyubomirsky, 2007). The potential of positive emotions has been stressed in studies on family well-being to underscore the value of cultivating a healthy parent-child relationship, not only as a protective factor for children but also to set the stage for subsequent competence regarding relational skills (Sheridan & Burt, 2009).

The relationship between personal well-being and family well-being is multifaceted and complex and is reportedly influenced by a range of factors, as illustrated in a broad study by McKeown, Pratschke and Haase (2003). McKeown et al. (2003) identified four broad sets of influences on the well-being of families: 1) processes within the family, such as communication, attitudes and the way conflict is resolved; 2) individual characteristics, such as personality traits; 3) the demographic family structure of one- or two-parent households and whether the parents are married, single, cohabiting or separated; and 4) family circumstances, such as education, life events, social class and working hours. Their findings reveal that the first two sets of influences have more of an effect on family well-being than the latter two.

The quality of relationships in young people’s lives has been researched by the Search Institute for the past 25 years as part of the Positive Youth Development programme that has created a broad theoretical and applied framework for understanding and influencing adolescents’ development (Scales, Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2011). They characterise high-quality relationships as being caring, subservient, meaningful, interdependent, and emanating in young people’s perception of belonging, and as having a direct impact on the well-being of individuals. This institute’s conceptualisation of “The Developmental Relationships Framework” has successfully resulted in bi-directional benefits for both relational participants,

indicating the potential value that positive psychology and strengths practice can have in fostering an experience of gratitude in the parent-adolescent relationship (Search Institute, 2016).

The reality exists that a large percentage of South African families experience less than ideal circumstances that impact on parents' and adolescents' emotional experiences of relationships, such as challenging social ecologies, -including living in a violent community or attending poor performing schools, experiencing specific negative life events like the death of a parent, various socio-demographic risks, including growing up with a single parent, divorce, unemployment and poverty, physical and substance abuse, as well as racism and discrimination (Otwombe et al., 2015; Van Rensburg, Theron & Rothmann, 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010). A common observation of the global context shows evidence that the traditional structure of the family – consisting of a father, mother and child or children – has dramatically been affected by socio-political forces and economic currents and constraints (Bandura, Caprara & Barbaranelli, 2011; Baoyan & Minggang, 2015). Multiple risk factors impact the modern parent-adolescent relationship, such as work demands, a greater social mobility and independence of individuals due to technological development, personal expectations and perceptions of the relationship, changing family structures and family demise (O'Brien & Mosco, 2012). Another risk factor that could have an impact on this relationship is the changes that adolescents experience during the adolescent developmental phase with emerging adult sexuality and new metacognitive ability (Gouws, Ebersohn, Lewis & Theron, 2015).

Adolescence as a developmental phase is recognised as a time of dynamic brain development that is characterised by an increase in health-compromising risk-taking behaviour that could negatively impact on the interactive rules between the home and community to contribute to stressors in family functioning (Qu, Fuligni, Galvan & Telzer, 2015). The perceived breakdown in communication between adolescents and parents during this

developmental phase can also be challenging, as adolescents strive for greater autonomy and independence with a decrease in willingness to share information (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013; Lansford, Laird, Pettit, Bates & Dodge, 2014). This appears to be a stressful time for parents in that they experience feelings of incompetence because there is a decrease in interaction and affective exchange with the adolescent and an increase in conflict (Seiffge-Krenke & Pakalniskiene, 2011). Putnick et al., (2010) explain that the source of increased stress results from dysfunctional parent-adolescent interaction in response to changes in the parent-adolescent relationship that need to be accommodated. Studies have found that during adolescence, peer group relationships become more dominant, with the potential to negatively influence the relationship between parents and adolescents and that adolescents seem to experience significant satisfaction and meaning from peer relationships outside of the family, while perceiving their adult family members as part of a larger psycho-social environment (Casas et al., 2012).

In line with the ideas of Post-Freudian psychodynamic perspectives, which view the parent-adolescent relationship from a multidimensional perspective that considers contextual and individual factors that shape this enduring bond, it is suggested that much of the research on the relational change and development is viewed as problematic. The prominent personal relationship between adolescents and their parents has proven worthy of research because it has already been established that this is a foundational relationship (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This relationship is found within the boundaries of the social system of the family that affects well-being and almost all aspects considered during the formative personal development phases (Bandura et al., 2011).

Research on close relationships derived from Attachment Theory offers convincing evidence of a positive correlation with attachment when the parent-adolescent relationship attachment style is healthy and secure. The attachment of a child to a primary caregiver, such

as a parent, provides the child with a context that facilitates cognitive, emotional and behavioural interactions that directly influence the social-emotional development of the child (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Bowlby & King, 2004) popularly becomes an inclusive framework for research regarding human relationship studies, with strong evidence indicating that the child-caregiver experience becomes a predictor of later attachments (Goldner & Berenshtein-Dagan, 2016). The importance of a secure attachment is confirmed to positively predict healthy autonomy in young individuals (Boniwell, 2012), with the potential to become a social support system that enables personal adjustment and adaptation of behaviour (Larose & Bernier, 2001) that is a key element of autonomy. Various studies support the Attachment Theory and suggest that the development of gratitude as a relationship skill is important for relational and family well-being (Boniwell, 2012; Froh, Bono & Emmons, 2010; Li, Zhang, Li, Li & Ye, 2012; Ramsey & Gentzler, 2015; Thomas, 2015).

Within the framework of the social cognitive theory that predicts self-efficacy, the parent-child relationship capacitates the potential agency that will influence the personal perception and beliefs of a young persons's own efficacy. A family member is not autonomous in this regard but part of an interdependent collective which, on its part, acts as an agent that shapes the collective efficacy. Research by Bandura et al. (2011) indicates that the development of a strong sense of collective efficacy is likely to positively influence the quality of family functioning and satisfaction with family life. The parent-child relationship becomes a foundational agent that affects and positively correlates with psychological and physical well-being, which is considered to be an important resource associated with positive relational functioning (Ramsey & Gentzler, 2015).

Much research suggests that the close relationship experiences that result in positive affect are a bidirectional process with reciprocal consequences that become a resource that continues throughout the lives of the parties in the relationship (Fredrickson, 2000; Ramsey & Gentzler,

2015). This involves a course of action referred to as an “upward spiral” of happiness, also called the “broaden and build effect”, which is founded in the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Lyubomirsky, 2007). The positive relationship poses the potential to protect against dysfunction and distress and becomes an essential contributor to individual flourishing (Thomas, 2015). The potential of positive emotions has been stressed in studies on family well-being to underscore the value of cultivating a healthy parent-child relationship, not only as a protective factor for children but also to set the stage for later competence regarding relational skills (Sheridon & Burt, 2009). Establishing this foundation creates the potential for higher-quality interpersonal relationships and social and emotional skills that give meaning and purpose in life (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

Research towards intervention programmes to facilitate a stronger bond between parents and adolescents, to overcome difficulties in adjustments during this challenging developmental and transitional phase (Kocayoruk, 2012), reveals that the presence of fulfilled basic psychological needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy) act as mediators in the parent-adolescent relationship. It also motivates the call for strength-based activities, such as gratitude activities to moderate well-being of such relationships, with the intent to positively support and influence the subjective well-being of individuals during these relational developmental phases (Duan, Ho, Tang, Li & Zhang 2014; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). The importance of the development and presence of fulfilled basic psychological needs are addressed in studies on the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) framework to promote the value of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono and Wilson (2011) support this theory and explain that gratitude can influence intrinsic motivation and perceived qualities of relationships. Empirical literature indicates that the parent-adolescent relationship becomes an incubator for the development of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, which

in turn can become the basis for self-motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Kocayoruk, 2012; Vallerand, 2000).

The discussion above illuminates the foundational nature and importance of the parent-child and parent-adolescent relationship in the experience of well-being, as well as the need to research possible factors that can strengthen or contribute to a positive experience of the parent-adolescent relationship. The developing field of positive psychology can potentially play a valuable role in this regard.

It was Abraham Maslow (1954) who first noted psychology's focus on the negative and the neglect of the positive. This brought about a paradigm shift in the science of psychology to pay more attention to understanding and answering questions about the positive in people to promote well-being, and is referred to as positive psychology (Lopez & Gallagher, 2009; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In the field of positive psychology, various constructs reflecting positive experiences and emotions have been identified and research continues to contribute to our understanding of people's perceptions as reflected in their positive emotional experiences and well-being globally (Cooperrider, 2012; Hoy, Suldo & Mendez, 2013; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Thus far, research in this field indicates that the recognition and appreciation of individuals' unique qualities and character traits generate the experience of intrinsic value and moral competence (Duan et al., 2014; Park & Peterson, 2006, 2009; Proctor et al., 2011; Proyer, Ruch & Buschor, 2013).

Sheridan and Burt (2009), in their family-centred positive psychology approach, acknowledge the family as the single constant during child development. This suggests a strengths-focused approach to illuminate positive resources in the family to accommodate changes and challenges (Sheridan & Burt, 2009). Strength-based activities, using the validated Value-In-Action Inventory (VIA-IS) for youth (Park & Peterson, 2006) have, amongst others, been used to inform youth development programmes with the intention to incorporate character

strength-based exercises in the school curriculum (Proctor et al., 2011). These activities have also been used to examine the structure and relationship between strengths and subjective well-being of adolescents (Toner, Haslam, Robinson & Williams, 2012), without looking into how the relationship between parents and adolescents are influenced by strengths development. Literature therefore reveals a gap in the interpersonal consequences of strengths development and the parent-adolescent relationship (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The research of Niemiec (2014) and colleagues implements strength-based activities to assist in the development of personal traits of a character mind-set with a focus on mindfulness, and reveals that people are significantly unaware and ignorant about their strengths and the potential benefits of developing positive traits (Niemiec 2014; Niemiec, Rashid & Spinella, 2012). Without neglecting personal weaknesses, their activities focus on the development of strengths by clearly communicating a growth mind-set to prevail over areas of weakness. This correlates with and supports the research of Young, Kashdan, and Macatee (2014) on the value of a balanced approach to foster the interdependent and context-dependent character of individuals' strengths to support the importance of the family context as a sound basis to develop assets such as gratitude (Jarden & Steger, 2012; Young et al., 2014).

Gratitude has been proved to positively influence well-being in various studies (Halberstadt et al., 2016; Seligman et al., 2005; Toussaint & Friedman, 2009), but a literature review reveals a gap in the study of gratitude interventions with adolescents and youth (Froh, Yurkewicz & Kashdan, 2009). For this reason, Froh, Yurkewicz et al. (2009) identify the study of gratitude intervention in younger populations as crucially necessary. Halberstadt et al. (2016) argue that the best place to start studying the development of gratitude in children is by understanding parents' perceptions of gratitude. An adult is naturally more grateful due to more experience in the cognitively complex emotion of gratitude, and this indicates that structured activities aimed to enhance gratitude and encouragement from adults could foster the development of gratitude

in children (Froh, Kashdan, Ozinkowski & Miller, 2009). The definition of gratitude as perceived in adult studies remains multidimensional and it is constituted by emotional and cognitive aspects (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001). This refers to cognition and acknowledgment for receiving a kind act from someone and an emotional response of appreciation, thankfulness, and joy as a positive experience of value. Value is derived from the attributions of benefitting from a voluntary, intentional and costly doing of another. It can therefore be described as a state or a mood as a result of an action (Froh et al., 2014; Halberstadt et al., 2016), but may also be viewed as a personality trait or virtue that is present as a life orientation (Toussaint & Friedman, 2009).

Conceptual Definitions

The following definitions represent the researcher's use of core concepts that are applicable to this study.

Adolescence and adolescent. The term 'adolescence', which refers to the developmental phase of the human life-cycle between childhood and adulthood, is derived from the Latin verb *adelescere*, meaning 'to grow to adulthood' or 'to grow up' (Gouws et al., 2015). The Penguin Student Dictionary defines an adolescent as somebody in the period of life between puberty and maturity (Allen, 2004). For the purpose of this study an adolescent is defined as a young person that is experiencing cognitive, physical and emotional development. The range of the adolescent age group considered for this study, is from 13 to 19 years of age (secondary school age).

Parent-adolescent relationship. A relationship can be defined as a tie or a degree of kinship between two people Reber and Reber (2001) defines a primary relationship as a basic and long-lasting relationship that is founded upon emotional ties and a sense of commitment. The relationship between parents and adolescents has been established as a prominent personal relationship, as it is foundational in the relationship development of individuals

(Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The focus of this study is on the relationship, including the long-lasting nature of that relationship, the emotional ties and the sense of commitment between parents and adolescents.

Parent-adolescent dyad. A ‘dyad’ refers to a group of two; a couple that consists of two individuals or units regarded as a pair (“Dyad”, 2014).

The members of a dyadic relationships are considered to directly or indirectly influence one another’s behaviour, cognition and emotions because they exist within the same context and experience similar influences (Bedin & Sarriera, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the two individuals or units refer specifically to the parent and adolescent, and the focus is on the parent-adolescent dyad.

Family. The term ‘family’ as a set of human relatives and a primary social group that can consist of parent/s and child/ren and of which the principle function is provision (“Family”, 2014). It is important to note that in the South African context, the term ‘family’ does not only refer to the traditional nuclear family which consists of a married man and woman and their child/ren, but also to biological families, blended families and single-parent families (Greeff, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the term ‘family’ therefore refers to a group of people who are blood-related, emotionally connected, caring for extended family and/or united by material possessions (Greeff, 2013).

Gratitude. In this study, the term ‘gratitude’ refers to noticing, appreciating and savouring elements in life that are valuable and meaningful to oneself. It is a general state of thankfulness and a sense of joy that is conceptualised by Emmons and McCullough (2003) as a moral affect and a reaction to complex cognitions. This affective reaction can be directed toward others, the natural (e.g. nature, beauty), or the supernatural (Froh et al., 2010; Lavelock et al., 2016). Being grateful has proven to have the potential to strengthen social bonds (Froh et al., 2010).

Activities that focus on gratitude (as experienced by parent-adolescent dyads) are explored in this study.

Strength-based activities. Strength-based activities are perceived as positive activities posited to positively influence well-being when deliberately practiced, and are described by Lyubomirsky and Layous (2013, p. 57) as “simple, intentional, and regular practices meant to mimic the myriad healthy thoughts and behaviours associated with naturally happy people.” Through research it is now understood that positive developments due to these activities can act as protective factors or buffers to support individual well-being (Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012). This study explores the experience of gratitude activities as a form of strength-based activity.

Gratitude activities. Convincing evidence exists that the experience of gratitude can initiate an upward spiral toward social and emotional well-being and that a grateful inclination can be developed as a strength through practicing and participating in gratitude activities (Froh et al., 2010). For the purpose of this study, ‘gratitude activities’ refer to activities that focus on facilitating and boosting feelings and ideas of value as related to well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Wood, Froh & Geraghty, 2010).

Problem Statement

The discussion above highlights the important role that relationships and family relationships – specifically the foundational nature and role of the parent-child and parent-adolescent relationship – play in experiencing well-being. On the other hand, the discussion is also indicative of the challenges people face with regard to their family relationships, specifically with regard to the parent-adolescent relationship and in a South African context. The parent-adolescent relationship is shown to face unique and numerous challenges, indicating a clear need for research focusing on the well-being of the parent-adolescent relationship. Available research and literature suggest that positive psychology and, in

particular, strength-based activities – including gratitude activities – can be valuable in research of this nature, but it also reveals a gap in the interpersonal consequences of strengths development and the parent-adolescent relationship (Froh et al., 2010; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The character strength of gratitude is specifically pointed out as an area that requires research with adolescents (Froh, Kashdan, et al., 2009; Froh et al., 2011) because of the relational value that has been found to exist between gratitude and positive emotion and relationships (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2015). The presence of gratitude as a trait or state is also empirically linked to various indices of well-being (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). Taking this into consideration, the proposed study aims to fill this gap by exploring and describing parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context. The significance of this study therefore lies in the fact that it has the potential to contribute to our knowledge base of how parent-adolescent dyads experience gratitude activities in the parent-adolescent relationship and to make recommendations for the future use of gratitude activities in this regard.

Conclusion

The first section of this mini-dissertation establishes the background of the study, including the literature review, conceptual definitions and problem statement. The next section presents the intended journal (Journal of Family Studies) guidelines for authors and the manuscript intended for submission to this journal.

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Section 2

Manuscript



“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it”

– William Arthur Ward

Section 2

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- Participants are credited and consent was obtained for publication.
- Conflict of interest are declared.
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References

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The manuscript structure is as follows: Title page; abstract (including key words); introduction/problem statement and aim; method (research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations); findings; discussion; conclusion; and references.

Title Page

Research Article

An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context

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Author Contribution

This manuscript formed part of a mini-dissertation that the first author submitted in partial fulfilment of degree (MA in Positive Psychology) requirements. The second and third authors respectively acted as supervisor and co-supervisor in this regard and were therefore continually involved throughout the entire study.

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Abstract

The parent-adolescent relationship is regarded as a foundational relationship which can greatly influence individuals' relational development. Relational research in the field of positive psychology suggests that the development of gratitude can strengthen social bonds but also point to the need for research with adolescents with regard to gratitude and gratitude activities. This article explores and describes parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context. A qualitative, explorative-descriptive research design was implemented and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six parent-adolescent dyads (n=12) that were sampled purposively. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and the following themes and sub-themes regarding the experience of gratitude activities were identified: Overall it was a positive experience in that participants reported doing something different together, found the activities to be of a pleasant nature, found it to be a positive challenge and reported on the usefulness of the activities; participants experienced a deeper understanding of gratitude by coming to the realisation of taking things for granted, of how much there is to be thankful for, of reflection in terms of gratitude, of the uniqueness of the gratitude experience and the value of sharing gratitude; and the relational value of gratitude was experienced with reports of time spent together, seeing the other party in a new light and the improvement of the relationship. Participants also made recommendations regarding the gratitude activities, specifically eluding to necessary changes to the activities and promoting the activities with others. The study contributes to the knowledge base of and empirical data on gratitude activities, specifically as experienced by parent-adolescent dyads in a South African context.

Key words: Parent-adolescent dyad, gratitude, gratitude activities, positive psychology, qualitative research design

Background and Introduction

‘Gratitude’ refers to the act of noticing, appreciating and savouring elements in life that are valuable and meaningful to oneself and can further be described as a general state of thankfulness and a sense of joy that can be conceptualised as a moral affect and a reaction to complex cognitions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). The experience of gratitude is highly regarded as a positive emotion that can regulate well-being, with the potential to achieve sustainable happiness (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). The past five years have seen an exponential interest and increase in research on gratitude, with more than 160 empirical studies published on the topic in various disciplines, including philosophy, theology, sociology and psychology (Rusk, Vella-Brodrick & Waters, 2016).

The Moral Affect Theory of McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons and Larson (2001) conceptualises gratitude as a highly adaptive sentiment that manifests to express socially interactive exchange and as being the most common way to respond to perceived benevolence. The Affect Theory of Exchange describes gratitude as a positive global emotion resulting from an interpretative effort, reactive to a stimulus (Lawler, 2001). Gratitude is perceived as an active constructive response to moral behaviour and value that sets it apart from and above other related positive emotions, in that the reactive expression is developmental and a key component of positive relationships with added potential to thrive and flourish (Thomas, 2015).

Experiencing the positive emotion of gratitude also correlates with the Affect Theory of Social Exchange, in which a joint activity or interaction, between relations, results in positive emotional feelings that will, in turn, contribute to the objectification of the relationship (Lawler, 2001). In this regard the presence of gratitude in a relationship has been found to positively relate to trust and pro-social behaviour (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; McCullough et al., 2001), the development and formation of friendship (Algoe, Haidt & Gable, 2008), relationship satisfaction (Algoe, Gable & Maisel, 2010; Thomas, 2015) and empathy (Kini, Wong, McInnis,

Gabana & Brown, 2015). Lawler (2001) theorises that a thankful manner of interaction has the potential value and benefit to generate individual identity.

Research by Wood, Maltby, Stewart, Linley, and Joseph (2008) and Wood, Froh, and Geraghty (2010), which resulted in the theoretical social-cognitive model, presents gratitude as moral affect and as a result of cognitive emotion. Gratitude is further described as a cognitive process of appraisal that takes place in a context with situational factors and within an individual with inherent qualities to express thankfulness – also referred to as ‘trait gratitude’ (Wood et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2010). Trait or higher-order gratitude is also described as a disposition or inherent quality to experience or be aware of and express thankfulness by noticing and appreciating the positive in life, irrespective of the occasion or case (Lin, 2013; Wood et al., 2010) or to recognise and respond with grateful emotions (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002). The dynamic dyadic social function of gratitude that creates, reinforces and sustains moral social behaviour by acknowledging the help or positive input from another, motivates the urge to return the favour that was experienced (Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable 2013; Fredrickson, 2000). State gratitude, is an experience or feeling that can vary within a person across circumstances and time and may be caused by or influenced by trait gratitude (Krejtz, Nezlek, Michnicka, Holas & Rusanowska, 2016; Lin, 2015).

Various studies have convincingly reported that gratitude positively influences well-being (Halberstadt et al., 2016; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Toussaint & Friedman, 2009; Wood, Froh & Geraghty, 2010). In spite of this, available literature reveals that there is a need to study gratitude interventions focused on adolescents and youth (Froh, Yurkewicz & Kashdan, 2009; Hoy, Suldo & Mendez, 2013). Froh et al. (2009) therefore emphasise the importance of the study of gratitude intervention in these younger populations, especially in light of the relational value reported in studies on the relationship between gratitude, positive emotion and human relationships (Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono & Wilson, 2011; Kern, Waters,

Adler & White, 2015). Furthermore, irrespective of whether gratitude is present as a trait or a state, it is empirically linked to various indices of well-being, such as life satisfaction, happiness, positive affect, hope and optimism (McCullough et al., 2002; Rash, Matsuba, & Prkachin, 2011; Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). Existing research therefore points out that gratitude is important in developing and promoting factors that have been identified to assist parent-adolescent interaction during this developmental phase known for its challenges. The research of Algoe and colleagues proposes that the development of higher quality relationships can be uniquely promoted by pairing gratitude as a positive emotion with the (parent-adolescent) dyadic relationship as a norm (Algoe, 2012; Algoe, Kurtz & Hilaire, 2016).

Research towards intervention programmes to facilitate a stronger bond in the established dyads of parents and adolescents, reveals that the presence of basic psychological needs satisfaction acts as a mediator in the parent-adolescent relationship (Kocayoruk, 2012). Froh et al. (2011) support this theory and explain that gratitude can influence intrinsic motivation and the quality of relationships (Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono, & Wilson, 2011). Empirical literature indicates that the parent-adolescent relationship becomes an incubator for the development of autonomy, relatedness and competence, which in turn can become the basis for self-motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Kocayoruk, 2012; Vallerand, 2000).

It should also be noted that adolescence is a key stage of emotional, cognitive and social maturation (Steinberg, 2005) with emerging adult sexuality and new metacognitive ability, and is often regarded as a challenging developmental phase (Gouws, Ebersohn, Lewis & Theron, 2015). Adolescence is, for example, recognised as a time of dynamic brain development that is characterised by an increase in health-compromising risk-taking behaviour that could have a negative impact on family functioning (Qu, Fuligni, Galvan & Telzer, 2015). Adolescents also strive for a personal sense of identity in contemporary culture that is increasingly characterised by mass media, imposing commercial forces that push materialistic pursuits and

risky behaviours that could undermine healthy social development and pose challenges for the parent-adolescent relationship (Froh et al., 2014). A perceived breakdown in communication between adolescents and parents is common as adolescents strive for greater autonomy and independence, with a decrease in willingness to share information (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013; Lansford, Laird, Pettit, Bates & Dodge, 2014), while the need for parental nurturance and involvement remains (Morrissey & Gondoli, 2012). Peer group relationships also become dominant as adolescents seem to experience significant satisfaction and meaning outside the family, which can potentially have negative influences on the relationship between parents and adolescents (Casas et al., 2012). The perceived demise due to a decrease in interaction and affective exchange may result in conflict and feelings of incompetence being experienced by parents (Seiffge-Krenke & Pakalniskiene, 2011). Research confirms that the changes in the parent-adolescent relationship become a source of increased negative stress and these experiences, a reason to find ways to accommodate change, and that adaptive changes can become a buffer against dysfunctional parent-child interaction (Putnick et al., 2010).

In the South African context, a large percentage of families experience less than ideal circumstances that has an impact on the emotional experiences of relationships, for example challenging social ecologies such as living in a violent community or attending ineffective schools, experiencing specific negative life events like the death, illness or work demands of a parent (O'Brien & Mosco, 2012; Otjombe et al., 2015). There are also various socio-demographic risks to families, which include growing up with a single parent, divorce, unemployment and poverty, a greater mobility, and independence of individuals, physical and substance abuse, as well as racism and discrimination (Van Rensburg, Theron, & Rothmann, 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010). In the global context, socio-political and economic currents and constraints affect the structure of the family that traditionally consisted of a father,

mother and their children (Bandura, Caprara & Barbaranelli, 2011; Baoyan & Minggang, 2015).

Problem Statement

Above it was indicated that the intentional engagement in activities that realise strengths with the aim to cultivate positive feelings (such as self-worth, expressive behaviour, and contemplative cognition) induces positive subjective experience (Diener, 1984) and well-being (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Rash, Matsuba & Prkachin, 2011) and enhances pro-social behaviour (Grant & Gino, 2010). It is argued that the experience of positive activities such as expressing gratitude is a mechanism (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2016; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2011; Lin, 2015; Nelson, 2009) that enables individuals to feel valued in their interpersonal relationships and to sustain well-being (Fox, Kaplan, Damasio & Damasio, 2015; Froh et al., 2010; Grant & Gino, 2010; Işık & Ergüner-Tekinalp, 2017; Rash et al., 2011). Indirectly, gratitude potentially acts as a buffering agent against negative states of emotion such as stress and depression (Nelson, 2009). The engagement in positive or strength-based activities, in particular gratitude activities, in the context of close relationships such as parent-adolescent relationships, is further said to have a positive relationship with positive emotional experiences (Ramsey & Gentzler, 2015; Hoy, Suldo & Mendez, 2013). While available research and literature suggest that positive psychology and, in particular, strength-based activities – including gratitude activities – can play a valuable role in research focused on relationships (Froh et al., 2010). It also reveals a gap in the interpersonal consequences of strengths development in the context of the parent-child relationship (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The character strength of gratitude during adolescence is specifically pointed out as an area that requires research (Froh et al., 2009, 2011). This is mainly because of the relational value revealed in studies between gratitude and positive emotion and relationships (Kern et al., 2015) and because the presence of gratitude as a trait or state is empirically linked to various

indices of well-being (McCullough et al., 2002; Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). Taking this into consideration, the proposed study aims to fill this gap by exploring and describing parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context. The significance of this study therefore lies in the fact that it has the potential to contribute to our knowledge base on how parent-adolescent dyads experience gratitude activities in the parent-adolescent relationship, and to make recommendations for the future use of gratitude activities in this regard.

Research Question

Based on the problem statement, the researcher posed the following research question: What are the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa?

Aim

In accordance with the research question, the aim of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa.

Method

This section provides a discussion of the research design, gratitude activities that were utilised, population and sampling, procedure, data collection, data analyses, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

The conceptualisation of a strategic framework to collect, analyse and report data in this research study was motivated and guided by the research question and aim (Creswell, 2013; Willig, 2001). The strategy of inquiry followed a qualitative, explorative-descriptive research design. Qualitative research is the study of personal knowledge and the appreciation of experience with the intention of understanding phenomena (Stake, 2010) and can therefore not

be limited and constrained by individual truths and realities. Exploratory research is conducted to collect data when the topic or issue of inquiry is new and it is often more flexible in approach to accommodate broader research questions such as *what*, *why* and *how*? The objective of descriptive research is to describe the knowledge regarding the phenomena accurately (Schutt, 2012). The design was chosen based on the above, to ensure that it was fitting for the study and its aim.

The methodology of qualitative research that allows for the implementation of person-activity fit diagnostic measures was applied in this study, in the sense that the features of the activities allowed for participants, as individuals in small family groups (dyads), to shape the timing, social support, frequency and interpretative scope of the gratitude activities (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). It was anticipated that not all participants would perceive all of the selected activities as equally effective and beneficial, and for this reason a variety of activities were selected. These activities are discussed in more detail below.

Gratitude Activities

Table 1 provides an overview of the gratitude activities that were used. These activities were performed by the participants prior to data collection and did not form part of data collection. The guidelines for these activities were provided to the participants by the researcher (see Addendum C).

Table 1

Gratitude Activities

Activity 1: Expression of gratitude by writing a letter
<p>Background: Gratitude is strongly related to satisfaction with life and refers to an awareness of and appreciation for the positive aspects of life. A number of studies are indicative of the potential benefits of this activity, including increased happiness and life satisfaction (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Toepfer, Cichy & Peters, 2012). Froh et al. (2014) report on the beneficial cognitive experiences of adolescents during the social</p>

exchange of gratitude. As an intervention to increase gratitude, Froh et al. (2009) had children (aged 8-19 years) write and then read a thank you letter to a person they needed to thank. Findings indicated an improvement in those participants' level of positive affect at post-treatment and an even more positive affect during a two month follow-up. The writing of the gratitude letter deals with the cognition of experiencing gratitude, while reading the letter to the other person focuses on expressing gratitude; as it is within the expression of gratitude that the pro-social value and effect is found (Kini et al. 2015).

Purpose: This activity creates the opportunity for participants to reflect on and focus on experiences within the relationship and gives them the opportunity to express their gratitude in a thoughtful, purposeful and potentially meaningful manner.

Explanation: Participants were requested to write a letter to a specific individual to express feelings of gratitude. The adolescent of each dyad was requested to address a letter to their parent and the parent of each dyad was requested to address his/her letter to their adolescent child. Participants were asked to deliver the letters to the intended recipients within one week of performing the activity and were requested to do so in person, by standing in front of the other member of the dyad and reading the letter out loud.

Activity 2: Counting blessings: Gratitude journal

Background: Evidence shows that gratitude can be enhanced by writing down a list of good things in one's life in a gratitude journal for a specific period of time (Martinez-Marti, Avia & Hernández-Loreda, 2010; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Some of the reported beneficial effects of this activity include positive affect, life satisfaction and optimism (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Watkins, Woodward, Stone & Kolts, 2003). Research also found that after counting their blessings for a period of two weeks, adolescents reported an increase in their gratitude, optimism and life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2008).

Purpose: Participants are given an opportunity to reflect and to be reminded of what they are grateful for.

Explanation: Participating individuals were instructed to choose a specific time in their day during which they had the needed time to reflect and to think of three to five blessings or things for which they were grateful at that point in time, and to write these blessings down in a journal. They were informed that they could also include more information in their journal regarding these blessings, e.g. how they were grateful for the impact of other individuals in their lives. They were requested to do this for a period of one week and to

share their blessings written in their gratitude journal face-to-face with their family members (parent or adolescent) at the end of the week.

Activity 3: Create a gratitude gallery

Background: This activity was developed by the researcher based on relevant gratitude literature. It has not been used or reported on as a gratitude activity in any literature.

Purpose: To give the participants an opportunity to express in a creative, visual and expressive manner what they – as a parent-adolescent dyad – are grateful for and to leave behind a visual reminder of the experience for the participants.

Explanation: The gratitude activities were concluded with a creative parent-adolescent activity. The researchers provided the participants with a collection of art and craft supplies containing black chalkboard paint, poster paint, coloured chalk, a paint brush, a sponge, a stencil with the entire alphabet, white and black A6 cards, three super-wood assembling boards, one meter cord, and an A5 picture frame (also see Figure 1). The participants were requested to collaborate in making a visual representation of what they were collectively grateful for, thereby creating a kind of ‘gratitude gallery’. The time and execution of this activity were the decision of each parent-adolescent dyad. Participants were requested to take a photograph of their final product and to e-mail this photograph to the researcher. Participants gave permission for the photographs to be used in the research when they completed and signed the informed consent forms for participation in the research. These photographs were not included as data or subjected to data analyses, but are displayed in the mini-dissertation at the start of each section.



Figure 1. Art and Craft Package Supplied to Participants

Population and Sampling

The population included parent-adolescent dyads from diverse South African families who were located in the towns of Mafikeng or Lichtenburg in the North West province of South Africa. Participating dyad members were selected with the implementation of a voluntary, purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2013) because they would be able to provide the information that was the focus of this study. Participants had to meet the following criteria:

- They had to be members of one family (either a parent or adolescent);
- They had to reside in Mafikeng or Lichtenburg (North West province) for economic, practical and logistical purposes;
- Adolescents had to be between the ages of 13 and 19 (secondary school age);
- They had to be proficient (and able to read and write) in English because the instructions regarding activities and data collection were in English;

- At least one parent and one adolescent of a specific dyad or family had to be willing to participate since this research focused on the parent-adolescent dyad;
- They had to have access to electronic mail and/or a telephone;
- They had to be willing to participate.

Apart from the inclusion criteria, there were no other exclusion criteria. The sample size was determined through data saturation, but the decision was made that a minimum of five parent-adolescent dyads would be sampled to ensure sufficient data and trustworthiness with regard to data. In the case of an overwhelming response of qualifying participants, a random selection would have been made by pulling potential participants' names from a hat until data saturation was reached. If this process had to be followed, individuals who indicated an interest in participating but were not selected would have been notified telephonically by the researcher.

The demographic profile of the participants is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Participants

Item	Category	Total
Age	13 - 19	6
	30 - 39	1
	40 - 49	4
	>50	1
Gender	Males	5 (2 parents, 3 adolescents)
	Female	7 (4 parents, 3 adolescents)

Home language of dyads	Afrikaans	4
	English	1
	Zimbabwean Shona	1
Residential area of dyads	Lichtenburg	3
	Mafikeng	3
Marital status of parents	Married	4
	Divorced	1
	Widowed	1

Procedure

Permission was sought from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) prior to the commencement of the research. Potential participants were recruited following a purposeful, voluntary sampling technique. An advertisement was placed in Mafikeng and Lichtenburg local newspapers and on noticeboards at local Mafikeng and Lichtenburg shops. Parents were the first line of contact in this regard and adolescents were not approached without parents' permission (see Addendum A for the advertisement). The recruitment took place without the use of bribes, coercion and/or intimidation. The advertisement indicated how participants could inform the researcher that they were interested in participating in the research (telephonically or via electronic mail).

Once potential participants confirmed their interest, an objective, independent party made telephonic contact with them regarding the informed assent/consent. The latter was also obtained from them by the objective party and not by the researcher. The objective party was experienced and qualified in obtaining informed assent/consent and provided the participants with a copy of the informed assent/consent (either by electronic mail or in person). Parents and adolescents who were 18 years of age or older were the first line of contact and contact was

made by the person responsible for obtaining consent. This person was Dr Elsabé Wessels, a former MA student in Positive Psychology, who has theoretical and practical training in research, and specifically in obtaining informed consent/assent.

Parents of parent-adolescent dyads of which the adolescent was younger than 18 years of age (between 13 and 17 years of age) also had to give parental permission before these adolescents were approached by the person responsible for obtaining informed consent (provision was made for this in the informed consent form that was distributed to parents) and provided with informed assent forms (see Addendum B for copies of the respective assent/consent forms).

The participants were given at least one week to study the informed assent/consent form, to ask questions and to decide if they wanted to participate. The information of the researcher and the person obtaining informed assent/consent were provided on the form in case they had any questions. After participants gave informed assent/consent and the forms were collected, they were contacted telephonically by the researcher to arrange a convenient time and date to provide them with instructions regarding the activities and data collection. The researcher provided instructions to guide participants through the gratitude activities in which the parent-adolescent dyads were expected to participate in addition to data collection after completion of the activities. Please see Addendum C for a copy of these instructions.

The socio-demographic information (specifically age, gender, culture, marital status, the number of children and location (Mafikeng or Lichtenburg)) was requested from participants so that a demographic profile could be established (please see Addendum D for a copy of this form). This information was collected only for the purposes of establishing a demographic profile for publication purposes. Data were collected by the researcher with the use of semi-structured interviews with separate parent-adolescent dyads.

Data Collection

Interviews with separate parent-adolescent dyads in the form of semi-structured interviews were used to collect data with parent-adolescent dyads on their experiences of the gratitude activities after they had completed the activities. The interview schedule was as follows:

- What was your experience of the gratitude activities?
- Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful, and why?
- What recommendations do you have regarding gratitude activities for parent-adolescent dyads (pairs)?

The interview schedule was also evaluated by a panel of qualitative experts. Apart from probing and clarifying questions, no questions other than those indicated above, were asked to participants. The first interview served as a pilot study to determine the effectiveness of the questions. The interview proved successful and was included for analysis.

All interviews were recorded with a digital voice recording device and the recorded interviews were downloaded onto a password-protected computer as soon as possible after each interview. Recorded interviews were then deleted from the recording device to protect the participants' identities. All the data collected were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, for analysis. Please see Addendum F for an example of such a transcript. The researcher opted to do the transcription herself in order to immerse herself in the data as far as possible. Interview transcripts were numbered to conceal participants' identities and the recordings were saved on a password- and virus-protected computer of the researcher prior to transcription. After transcription, the recordings were saved on a password- and virus-protected computer in a locked office at the NWU for audit purposes, and were deleted from the researcher's computer.

Participants were requested to take a photograph of their final product of the last gratitude activity (see Table 1 and Addendum C) and to e-mail this photograph to the researcher. Participants gave permission for this when they completed and signed the informed consent

forms. These photographs were not included as data or subjected to data analyses, but acted as a means to monitor participation and are displayed in the mini-dissertation at the beginning of each section, to provide examples. None of the other artefacts produced as a result of the gratitude activities were collected as data or analysed by the researcher, and they remained the property of the participants.

Field notes. Observations made during the research process and reflections on interviews are described as field notes or memos and are an essential part of the qualitative research process (Wolfinger, 2002). The intention is to systematically record and describe the proposed research as it unfolds, as well as to document a trail for auditing purposes on a technical level (Gibbs, 2009). The researcher kept field notes for auditing purposes. An example of a field note is provided in Addendum G.

Data collection setting. In accordance with the family-orientated nature of the research, the researcher, in consultation with participants, asked for a quiet and appropriate location at a venue outfitted with tables and chairs and that had appropriate access control, where data collection could comfortably take place in private and with minimum distractions. A time that was convenient for the participants was arranged at the location as determined. The researcher travelled to the participants.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis – a categorising strategy used to determine codes – was used to analyse the data collected during the interviews. In essence, the thematic analysis focused on reports of the experiences, meaning and the reality of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data collection and analysis were done concurrently up to the point that data saturation was achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) suggest the recursive and data-driven thematic analysis process that was followed, namely: 1) Familiarisation with the data was embedded in the transcription of interviews by the researcher. Transcriptions of all participants

were repeatedly read by the researcher and co-coder in search of meaning and patterns in the data. This initial process of analysis was independently performed by the researcher and the co-coder. 2) Next, the researcher and the co-coder independently labelled the core ideas to clarify initial codes. 3) Working independently, the researcher and co-coder then rigorously categorised the data into clear groups as themes and overarching themes for thoroughness and clarity. 4) The themes were independently reviewed and labelled by the researcher and co-coder to ensure the amount of data supporting the themes and to identify the essence of the themes. 5) A hierarchy of themes or a thematic network of basic, organising and global themes was established. 6) Finally, the themes were honestly and neutrally written up in conclusion of the process.

All the data collected were independently analysed by the researcher and an experienced co-coder who both had extensive theoretical knowledge and practical experience in qualitative data analysis, and thematic analysis in particular. The researcher provided the co-coder with a work protocol to inform the data analysis (Addendum H). After independent analysis, the researcher and co-coder discussed the themes that emerged to reach consensus on the categories. The appointed co-coder was required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Addendum E). After data analysis concluded, the transcripts were saved on a password- and virus-protected computer in a locked office at the NWU and were deleted from the researcher's computer, and the co-coder was also requested to delete any copies of transcripts from her devices.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research findings must be perceived as a goal rather than a product and measured in relation to the purpose and circumstances of the study (Maxwell, 2005). The evaluation criteria conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied as a

strategic measure of trustworthiness. Table 3 provides an overview of the measures that were taken to ensure trustworthiness.

Table 3

Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness

Criteria	Measures
Credibility (compatibility between the constructed realities that exists in the minds of participants and those that are attributed to them)	<p>Reflexivity (the researcher reflected on herself and the whole process by being honest and critical about her own perceptions and/or bias to ensure the credibility of the research);</p> <p>Peer review (the researcher consulted with peers for guidance and feedback regarding the study);</p> <p>Structural coherence (a literature integration was conducted to account for similar or contradictory findings and research; linking it to other research findings).</p>
Dependability (consistency and auditability of the data)	<p>Dense and detailed description to ensure consistency and replicable nature (the participants, method, data collection, data analysis, etc. are described in detail);</p> <p>Code-recorder procedure (the data were analysed independently by the researcher and an experienced co-coder);</p> <p>Audit trail by keeping detailed records and field notes.</p>
Confirmability (refers to the criterion of neutrality according to which the bias of the researcher should be avoided with regard to the procedures and findings)	<p>Audit trail;</p> <p>Reflexivity.</p>
Transferability (applicability of the results in other contexts, settings and other groups)	Dense and detailed description of the processes and procedures for future applicability.

Ethical Considerations

The key aspect of ethical considerations when research involves human beings is to protect and respect the participants. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to be familiar with ethical principles and guidelines as set out in the Helsinki declaration to allow for the strict application of prescribed conduct (Burns & Grove, 2005). To abide by the ethical practice as prescribed, the researcher gave attention to the considerations discussed below.

Before initiating recruitment, institutional permission for this study was received from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Science of the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University (NWU-00016-17-A1). Since the participants included minors, Ministerial consent was also sought and obtained via HREC. The study was determined to be a medium-risk study since some of the participants were adolescent minors, who are considered to be a vulnerable population as a result of a lack of legal capacity (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, & Wright, 2010; Department of Health [DoH], 2015). The Children's Bill states that "every child capable of participating meaningfully in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in those proceedings in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration" (DoH, 2015, p. 22). The National Health Act, on the other hand, does not distinguish between children or adolescent minors and requires the consent process in both cases to be the same, depending on the therapeutic or non-therapeutic nature of the research (DoH, 2015). Considering the nature of the proposed research, the inclusion of adolescents in this research is justified as the adolescents' participation is indispensable to the research and the research concerns a problem that is relevant to adolescents.

Participants were recruited through an advertisement (see Addendum A) placed in Mafikeng and Lichtenburg local newspapers and on noticeboards at local Mafikeng and Lichtenburg shops, so that parents were the first line of contact in this regard and so that adolescents were

not approached without parents' permission. The sampling, which utilised a voluntary purposive technique, was fair and followed the inclusion criteria and participants were not exploited or subjected to discrimination based on their race, gender, religion, class or sexual orientation (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010).

Participation was voluntary and participants had to give written informed consent (see Addendum B) or assent to participate. An independent and qualified individual obtained informed consent/assent from participants (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) and the researcher was not involved in this process. To protect the adolescents, assent for their participation was obtained from them, while consent for their participation was obtained from their parent/s or legal guardian/s. Participants were informed of their right to privacy and that they could withdraw from the research at any stage without consequences and without providing an explanation.

The participants' right to privacy was considered and respected throughout the entire process. Participants' identities were concealed by numbering the demographic information forms and interview transcripts. The co-coder also signed a confidentiality agreement (see Addendum E). Participants will not be identified in the dissertation or publication. The assent/consent forms and data will be stored separately for a period of seven years after publication, as required by the NWU. Hard copies of data are stored in an NWU storage area in a locked cabinet in a locked office, and electronic data is kept on a password-protected, virus-free computer in a locked office at the NWU. Only the research team (researcher, supervisors and co-coder) will have access to the electronic data. After the seven year period, all the hard copies of data will be shredded and the electronic data will be deleted from the computer by a member of the research team.

While the researcher could not identify risks associated with any of the gratitude activities, the possibility of risk in this regard was considered. In light of possible risk, such as

experiencing mental distress as a direct result of participation, the contact information of a qualified professional was made available to participants. The possibility of fatigue and boredom as a result of the data collection methods were considered and in the case of such an occurrence, participants would have been given an opportunity to rest and take a break during data collection.

The benefits of the study outweighed the risks, as the participants may have indirectly benefitted from the study by gaining knowledge about gratitude activities in general and with regard to parent-adolescent dyads. The findings of the study will be made available to participants in the form of face-to-face feedback sessions with separate parent-adolescent dyads or short written reports sent via electronic mail. Resulting from the gratitude activities, visual images (gratitude galleries) will remain behind as a visual reminder of the family members' participation, which may influence the understanding of the family dynamics and family well-being.

The researcher has not changed the findings or manipulated data, and she reports on the research findings to the best of her ability (Creswell, 2013).

Findings

This section presents the findings of the research. An overview of the findings is presented in Table 4, followed by a detailed discussion of the themes, sub-themes and substantiations (please note that all of the participants' comments are verbatim, but that translations are also provided for quotes that were not originally in English).

Table 4

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Positive experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing something different • Of a pleasant nature • A positive challenge

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usefulness of activities
Experiencing a deeper understanding of gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realisation of taking things for granted • Realisation of how much there is to be thankful for • Reflection in terms of gratitude • The uniqueness of the gratitude experience • Value of sharing gratitude
Experiencing the relational value of gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending time together • Seeing the other person in a new light • Improvement of the relationship
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to activities • Promote the activities with others

Theme: Positive Experiences

The participants' positive experiences of the gratitude activities as a whole are described under the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Doing something different.

Participants shared that taking part in the activities created an opportunity for them to participate in something different. Participants shared that “... *it was doing something different than what we normally do.*” (P1P); “... *we do not usually do stuff like this together ...*” (P1A); “*the subject is not something that we had to talk about before, so it’s something different. I think it’s also a good thing to talk about it.*” (P1P); “... *ons doen goed saam maar ... Dis nice ... maar sulke goed, ’n projek as ek dit so kan noem.*” (... we do things together but ... This is nice ... but something like this a project, if I can call it that.) (P4P).

Sub-theme: Of a pleasant nature. Participants reported on the pleasant nature of the activities. Specific examples include: “*It was fun for us.*” (P1A); “... *it was quite fun it was quite nice ...*” and “*it’s not difficult to say thank you ... it’s really easy*” (P1P); “... *it’s really quite nice ... it’s quite a nice warm feeling inside.*” (P2A); “... *dis rêrig ook net lekker om te hoor ...*” (it’s also just really nice to hear) (P2P); “... *en dis lekker*” (and it’s nice) (P3P); “*Dit*

was lekker ...” (It was nice) (P4A); *“And all the things that I was grateful for ... I think of it more. And I must say it is actually a good thing.”* (P5A).

Sub-theme: A positive challenge. Some participants indicated that they experienced challenges when commencing with or while participating in the gratitude activities, but that the challenge was experienced positively: *“... at first, look as you don’t know what to do ... A bit sad sometimes ... a bit difficult to write to someone how you feel ... ah it was a bit difficult but its fine.”* (P1A); *“I found them quite difficult ... you get so busy that it is difficult to actually sit down and think ... what I should be thankful for every day. But when I did start doing it I did find I then noticed something ...”* (P5A).

Sub-theme: Usefulness of activities. The findings point to the usefulness of the gratitude activities. The gratitude journal activity, in particular, received attention in terms of the activity’s usefulness. Various reasons were provided for the usefulness of the gratitude journal activity, ranging from finding the reflective character valuable and an easy way to help one focus on big and small things that are present in one’s life; to realising what it is that others value, a way of getting to know them better and realising the value of practicing gratitude regularly. With regard to the usefulness of the gratitude journal activity, participants shared the following: *“... dis goed want jy doen bietjie retrospeksie oor jou lewe en oor jou omstandighede en oor die mense om jou.”* (... it’s good because you reflect on your life and on your circumstances and on the people around you.) (P2P); *“... the journal that you kept, the writing down because you did it more regularly and it was generally highlighting more sort of ordinary things that you don’t normally think of.”* (P5A).

Writing the gratitude letter was a useful activity and some participants reported that the expressing of feelings through writing was easier and more valuable and therefore enjoyable: *“... dit voel vir my dit het meer waarde as ek dit kan neerskryf ... en woorde wat mens neer pen het baie meer krag as wat jy somer net dit praat.”* (I feel that it has more value when I

write it down ... and words that you write down are much more powerful than words just being spoken.) (P2P); “... *the letter ... it was a chance to express yourself in a way that we normally would not do ... to say more than what we usually do ... it will always be there ... things that we did not know.*” (P6A).

Participants that experienced the creative gratitude activity to be useful, expressed that it was valuable for the communication, reflection and time spent together during this enjoyable collaborative effort: “... *we talked a lot the two of us because we had to decide ... what we are going to do with it and how we are going to do it. It was quite fun for us that. I think it was the best part for us. It will also remind us what we did ... spending the time ...*” (P1P); “... *The fact that we did it together ... It was fun for us. The useful part was spending time together.*” (P1A); “*But I also liked doing that ... (pointed to the creative activity result) ... it also makes you think, it makes you reflect*” (P5P).

Theme: Experiencing a deeper understanding of gratitude

The deeper understanding of gratitude that was experienced by participants is described under the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Realisation of taking things for granted. The gratitude activities brought participants to realise the value of cherishing the sometimes less seen and less thought of things in life. Examples of what participants reported, include the following: “... *today I am thankful for ... but it is not something that we do often.*” (P1P); “*Dit laat jou net dink, jy het soveel goed om voor dankbaar te wees wat ander mense ook nie het nie.*” (It just makes you think. You have so much to be thankful for that other people don’t have.) (P3A); “... *dinge nie net as van selfsprekend aanvaar nie.*” (... not just take things for granted ...) (P3P); “*Ons waardeer daai goed nie genoeg nie ...*” (We don’t appreciate those things enough ...) (P4P); “*You think ... I should actually be grateful for that or this person or that interaction.*” (P5A); “... *it was generally highlighting more sort of ordinary things that you don’t normally think of.*” (P5P);

“... I realised how many things I actually take for granted ... I actually was taking this for granted but this is important.” (P6P); “I think ... we got a chance to actually appreciate ... some of them which we have been grateful for from a long time.” (P6A).

Sub-theme: Realisation of how much there is to be thankful for. Participants experienced that the activities improved their own awareness of things that they can be grateful for: *“... we must realise that ... every day.”* and *“... it’s not difficult to say thank you ...”* (P1P); *“... baie meer om voor dankbaar te wees ...”* (... much more to be thankful for ...) (P2P); *“... nice to be grateful ...”* and *“... en dan besef mens ook weereens ons het so baie om voor dankbaar te wees.”* (... and then you realise once again that we have so much to be grateful for.) (P2A); *“... soveel meer as wat ander kan kry by hul ouers.”* (... so much more than other could get from their parents.) (P3A); *“... those small things that we should be noticing.”* (P6A); *“... you realised how blessed you were.”* and *“... really helped me, because I was grateful for every minute of the day and for one week.”* (P6P).

Sub-theme: Reflection in terms of gratitude. The participants realised the value of reflecting on events and relationships and how it feeds into experiencing gratitude: *“... dis goed want jy doen bietjie retrospeksie oor jou lewe en oor jou omstandighede en oor die mense om jou.”* (...it’s good because you reflect on your life and your circumstances and the people around you.) (P2P); *“... you think of all the nice things that happened and you feel a bit heavier afterwards because you see that it is actually quite a nice day.”* and *“You should always look back on ... the day because it will make you a lot more positive ... and shows you, you have a lot to be grateful for ...”* (P5A); *“... it makes you reflect back on what you should be grateful for or what you are grateful for...”* (P5P).

Sub-theme: The uniqueness of the gratitude experience. The findings revealed how individuals uniquely experience gratitude and that the participants also became aware that their gratitude experiences can differ and that people also express gratitude in different ways: *“... ”*

om te sien hoe my pa oor my ook voel ... wat hy oor dink was amazing.” (... to see how my dad feels about me ... what he thinks about is amazing.) (P3A); “... *elke ou het iets anders waaroor hy dink ’n persoon is dankbaar ... dis nie dieselfde as wat jy voel nie. ’n Ander manier van dankbaar.*” (... every person thinks differently about something that he/she is grateful for ... it is not the same as another’s feelings. A different kind of gratitude.) and “... *dat ek insig gekry het oor hoe my kind dink oor goeters.*” (... that I gained insight into how my child thinks about things.) (P3P); “... *it can be a bit of a habit ... you can learn it...*” (P5A); “... *if it is not in your nature to say thank you...*” (P5P); “... *a chance to express yourself ... to say more and see more than what we usually do ...*” (P6A).

Sub-theme: Value of sharing gratitude. Participants indicated the value of sharing gratitude through different forms of communication and reported the following: “*It is something that you can discuss. You can talk about it.*” (P1P); “... *sitting and doing that board-things together and talking about how our day went.*” (P1A); “... *woorde wat mens neerpen het baie meer krag ...*” (... written words are much more powerful.) (P2P); “*Ons het meer met mekaar gepraat ...*” (We talked to one another more ...) (P3P); “*ek praat meer met Pa ... iemand om mee te praat wat elke dag by jou is.*” (I talk to Dad more ... someone to talk to that is with you every day.) (P3A); “... *vir my ’n whatsapp gestuur het wat sê, Dankie ... daai het nou vir my die wêreld beteken.*” (... sent me a whatsapp that said, Thank you ... now that meant the world to me.) (P4P); “*Dit was lekker om vir my ma te sê van alles waarvoor ek dankbaar is.*” (It was nice to tell my mom about all the things that I am grateful for.) (P4A).

Theme: Experiencing the Relational Value of Gratitude

Participants also reported on their experience of the relational value of gratitude, which is discussed under the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme: Spending time together. Participants experienced that taking part in the activities created an opportunity for them to spend time together, for example: “... *it was nice,*

just spending time with my Dad ... the fact that we did it together ...” (Participant (P)1A); *“the two of us sat together ... and wrote ...”* (P1P); *“... meer met mekaar gepraat ...”* (... spoke more to one another ...) (P3P); *“Ek praat meer met Pa ... lekker om met iemand ... te praat wat elke dag by jou is”* (I speak more to Dad ... nice to speak to someone that is with you every day) (P3A); *“... ons kon iets as ’n gesin saam doen”* (... we could do something together as a family) (P4A); *“Dit was vir ons nou nogal ’n ding ... om net om daai tafel [te] sit ...”* (For us it was quite something ... just to sit around that table ...) (P4P).

Sub-theme: Seeing the other person in a new light. The findings confirm the role that the activities can play in parent-adolescent dyads to gain a better understanding and insight of each other and how they appreciate each other: *“... quite nice when someone tells you that they appreciate you ... a nice warm feeling inside.”* (P2A); *“... skielik bewus gemaak van goeters ... kyk ek met ander, nuwe oë na hom.”* (... suddenly I became aware of stuff ... I look at him through new eyes.) and *“... dit was vir my interessant ... Sulke gemeenskaplike goedjies.”* (...it was interesting to me... such small commonalities.) and *“... dit was lekker om te hoor wat hy teenoor my ook voel,”* (... it was also nice to hear what he feels towards me.) (P2P); *“... leer meer oor jou ouers.”* (...learn more about your parents.) (P3A); *“... om van die ander se oogpunt na ’n storie te kyk.”* (...to view a story from another’s point of view.) and *“dat ek insig gekry het oor hoe my kind dink oor goeters”* (that I gained insight into how my child thinks about stuff). (P3P); *“... now we know thing we did not know”* (P6A); and *“I realise ... I saw that she is more of a nature person and I am more grateful for personal relationships.”* (P6P).

Sub-theme: The experience of “togetherness”. The findings further reveal that the participants experienced that the activities encouraged a closeness in the parent-adolescent relationship: *“... it brought us together a bit more...”* (P1P); *“... ’n mens se verhouding te verbeter...”* (... one’s relationship improves ...) (P2A); *“Dit maak dat ons net meer openlik met mekaar kan wees.”* (It enables us to just be more open with one another) and *“... dit het*

net gemaak dat mens nader aan mekaar kom.” (... it just made us come closer to each other.) (P3P); *“So close saam ... Dis nice.”* (So close together ... It’s nice.) (P4A); and *“Because it brought us closer ...”* (P6P).

Theme: Recommendations

Another theme identified from the reports of participants, involves recommendations with regard to the gratitude activities, specifically in terms of changes to the activities and promoting the activities with others.

Sub-theme: Changes to activities. The participants experienced the structure of the activities to be well explained and only commendations were made in this regard: *“Dit was vir my goeie oefeninge ... ek sal nie noodwendig daaraan verander nie.”* (To me it was good exercises ... I would not necessarily make changes.) (P2P); *“... eenvoudig en daar is nie verwarring, dis op die punt af en almal kan dit verstaan.”* (... simple and uncomplicated, it is to the point and everyone can understand it.) (P3P).

Participants made recommendations towards expanding the activities to include other people, for example: *“With her mom, she can perhaps share with her mom ... For them also to spend more time together and do something together will be good.”* (P1P); *“... ’n lekker ding om te doen en mens hoef dit nie net eers te doen met ouers en tieners nie, enige iemand kan dit eintlik doen.”* (... a nice thing to do not only for parents and teenagers, anyone can actually do this...) (P2A); *“Ek sou sê baie meer mense moet dit kan doen.”* (I would say that many more people should be doing this.) (P3P); *“... it could have worked for a family setting where say the four of us instead of just the two.”* (P6P); *“... the more people, the more effective it will be ... if there is more people then more people can actually realise that how grateful they should be each day.”* (P6A).

The need to take more time to do the activities was expressed: *“... ’n mens moet ten minste, een of twee keer ’n maand, tyd saam spandeer...”* (... one must spend time together, at least

once or twice a month.) (P4P); “... *more time ... what I realised in one week, I can imagine how much ... if this is to be done over more time. I think it would actually be more beneficial.*” (P6P); “... *the length would have added to the value ...*” (P6A).

Participants expressed that they realised that more regular application of the activities would be beneficial and they contributed remarks such as: “... *’n mens moet dit meer gereeld doen.*” (... one must do it more often.) and “... *op ’n daaglikse basis ... dalk net een ding sê vir mekaar.*” (...on a daily basis...maybe just say one thing to one another.) (P2P); “... *always look back on what they liked during the day because it will make you a lot more positive about ...*” and “... *it doesn’t jump to one’s mind immediately if you don’t do it regularly ...*” (P5A).

Sub-theme: Promote the activities with others. Participants suggested the promotion of the gratitude activities with others, including other parent-child dyads. Often referring to the simplicity of the activities, some participants indicated that they themselves would recommend it to others, and suggested how it should be promoted and applied in different contexts: “... *it will be a good thing ... we can recommend it to other people ... it can also help them to grow.*” (P1P); “*Dis nie net van jy is dankbaar nie, maar dit kan help met daai kommunikasie tussen ouer en kinders ...*” (It is not just that you are grateful, but it can help with the communication between parents and children ...) (P3P); “... *ek sal dit ook aanbeveel vir almal want jy leer meer oor jou ouers. Dit is iets wat almal kan doen.*” (... I will also recommend it to everyone because you learn more about your parents. It is something that everyone can do.) (P3A); “*I will do it another two or three times with someone, because it also made me realise ... the things you value*” (P6A) “... *enige iemand kan dit eintlik doen om ’n mens se verhouding te verbeter ...*” (... anyone can actually do this to improve their relationship ...) (P2A); “*Dit help parents om hulle kinders te verstaan.*” (It helps parents to understand their children.) (P3P); “... *it brought us closer ... but as a family it could actually be a bit more ...*” (P6P); “*I would recommend that a lot of the students at school should actually keep gratitude diaries ... and*

maybe adults as well. And what you could do to show gratitude because I think sometimes people don't know. You know, if it is not in your nature to say thank you. And bringing their attention to something positive.” (P5P).

Discussion

The following discussion focuses on an integration of the findings with relevant literature.

The findings clearly point to the positive experiences of participants regarding the gratitude activities (including doing something different, doing something of a pleasant nature, which is a positive challenge and useful). Although the meta-analysis of gratitude interventions by Davis et al. (2015) focused on the efficacy of gratitude activities, they also found that enthusiasm and positive experiences characterised gratitude activities. Positive emotions were reportedly generated while experiencing these activities and were described in terms of an opportunity to participate in something different, participating in something of a pleasant nature and participating in something useful. This finding is supported by Froh, Sefick and Emmons (2008), in their work on the effectiveness of gratitude-inducing intervention to increase life satisfaction while alleviating negative affect. The specific experience of the gratitude activities as a positive challenge shares similarities with the work of Layous, Sweeny, Armenta, Na, Choi and Lyubomirsky (2017), which suggests that gratitude exercises can be experienced as being pleasant and mildly unpleasant at the same time.

All the activities were reported by participants as useful, but the gratitude journal activity were singled out by participants as being particularly useful. They noted that the reflective nature of the activity was very valuable; and that it was an easy way to help them focus on big and small things that were present in their lives and to come to the realisation of what it is that others value. Various studies report on the usefulness and benefits of keeping a gratitude journal, including positive affect, life satisfaction, optimism, and an increase in gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2008; Seligman et al., 2005; Watkins et al., 2003).

Some participants reported that the gratitude letter activity made it easier for them to express their feelings through writing and that the process was therefore more enjoyable and valuable. This indicates that the cognitive and reflective process of writing down their thoughts was experienced more positively than the verbal expression of gratitude, but it does not mean that it has less pro-social value to the individual (Kini et al., 2015). The reports by the participants, are in contrast with the findings reported by Huffman et al. (2014) and Kaczmarek et al. (2015) in that the writing of a gratitude letter – due to the more intense interpersonal expression – is experienced less positively or as being more difficult than gratitude activities such as counting blessings or keeping a gratitude journal. This leaves scope for further investigations regarding the experience of this activity, particularly in a South African context.

The creative gratitude or gratitude gallery activity was developed by the researcher based on relevant gratitude literature and has not been used or reported on as a gratitude activity in any literature. The findings of this study point to the usefulness of the activity for the group of parent-adolescent dyads in this study in terms of its value for communication, reflection and time spent together while participating in this collaborative activity.

A deeper understanding of gratitude was experienced because participants realised the value of cherishing the things in life that are sometimes less seen and thought of, and they experienced an improved awareness of things for which they could be grateful. Halberstadt et al. (2016) refer to this as the cognition that may influence relational behaviour positively in the parent-child relationship. Reportedly, the selected activities helped participants realise the value of reflecting on events and relationships and how it feeds into experiencing gratitude. Froh et al. (2008) offer support for this finding as they indicate that certain gratitude activities, such as counting blessings, that are considered to be reflective in nature, are associated with induced gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction and reduced negative affect, which contributes to subjective well-being.

While research has examined the efficacy of various gratitude activities (Harbaugh & Vasey, 2014; Rash et al., 2011), often using quantitative laboratory controlled conditions to determine how variables moderate the effects of gratitude on participants' well-being, it has been found that it does not address the quality of the experience, with no substantial evidence on how participants uniquely experience gratitude activities and how on a qualitative level the sharing of gratitude is experienced while participating in these activities. The findings of this study in this regard is very valuable in that it reveals how participants uniquely experience gratitude and that they also become aware that gratitude experiences can differ, and that people also express gratitude in different ways. Participants valued the sharing of gratitude through different forms of communication.

The research of Rash et al. (2011) points to the positive relationship possibilities between gratitude and social integration. According to Kaczmarek et al., (2015) the experience of cultivating and sharing appreciative feelings appears to be one way to nurture and strengthen social relationships and supports the reports communicated by participants that they got to know the other person better while noting and sharing their feelings of gratitude. This supports the experience of relational value as experienced and reported by participants in this study.

It was experienced that by participating in the activities, an opportunity was created for dyads to be together and to value spending time together. The effects of gratitude expressions is reported by Grant and Gino (2010) to mediate social worth and to increase pro-social behaviour; and it therefore supports these reports by parent-adolescent dyads as well as their reports of experiencing an improvement in the parent-adolescent relationship. This finding further correlates with the Affect Theory of Social Exchange, which is described by Lawler (2001) as the experience of positive emotion, gratitude due to interaction, between relations, resulting in positive emotional feelings that will, in turn, contribute to the objectification of the relationship.

The concept of person-activity-fit is a strategy applied in positive psychology practice and refers to engagement in simple intentional activities daily, according to the personality, resources, lifestyle, goals and interests of the participant (Schueller, 2014). With regard to the usefulness of the activities, it is therefore noteworthy that person-activity-fit was reported by most participants for at least one or more of the activities, in that the activities were experienced as easy to perform, enjoyable, valuable and accommodative of personal circumstances (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Because the data collection took place in pairs during the semi-structured interview, no individual person-activity-fit measures were conducted. Still the findings did indicate overlaps between person and activity features, such as frequency and timing as well as the interpretative scope of the gratitude activities (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). As anticipated and as shown in participants' reports, every participating individual experienced each of the selected activities differently in terms of effectiveness, usefulness and benefits. This finding also points to the value of using a variety of activities for application purposes.

Recommendations and limitations of this study.

The focus of this study was on the experience of gratitude activities of a sample of six parent-adolescent dyads residing in Mafikeng or Lichtenburg in the North West Province of South Africa, or what could be described as sub-urban South Africa, with half of the participants from one cultural group. It is therefore suggested that research be done in a broader context to include participants from rural and urban areas and from diverse cultural groups in order to provide a broader perspective. The triangulation of various qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques can also prove useful for providing different and broader perspectives. Various studies report on the lasting effects (short-term to longer-term effects) of different gratitude activities (O'Connell, O'Shea & Gallagher, 2017; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). Longitudinal studies are therefore recommended for this purpose, especially with parent-

adolescent dyads and in a South African context. Quantitative experimental research designs may also be beneficial in the evaluation of the activities. Quantitative studies that consider personal features of participants, for example personality traits in addition to examining the experience of activities, may enrich and benefit future studies.

Based on participants' recommendations, the activities could be performed by the whole family and over a longer period of time, which would mean expanding the research into the longitudinal experience of gratitude activities, for a better understanding of the long-term experience of individual members of the participating dyads.

In conclusion, while much of the recent research and literature has an international focus on the value of gratitude, strength-based activities and gratitude (as is also evident from the literature integration above), there is a definite need for research in the South African context. International literature also identifies a need for research pertaining to the role that gratitude can play in the interpersonal consequences of strengths development, such as gratitude in the parent-child relationship. The significance of this study therefore lies in its contribution to the knowledge base and empirical research on parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities, and in the fact that the study specifically focuses on the South African context.

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Section 3

Conclusions



“Gratitude makes sense of the past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

– Melody Beattie

Section 3

Conclusions

This section discusses the conclusions regarding the literature study, the empirical study and a personal reflection.

Literature Conclusions

The parent-adolescent relationship has been thoroughly researched and reported on in the fields of psychology and sociology and has been investigated and studied from a developmental perspective mainly to address the deficits and psychopathology that commonly manifest in this relationship. Most of the literature that deals with this relationship was found to be relevantly informative, but added limited value towards positively influencing the relationship and the well-being of the individuals concerned. It is only in the past decade that positive psychology research literature started actively focusing on intervention with strengths-based activities, to increase subjective well-being by inducing positive feelings in participants. Keeping the focus of this study in mind, most literature was therefore sourced from the relatively new and dynamic field of positive psychology. Because it is such a young field of study, the limitations are numerous. It was also found that most of the literature reports on the parent-adolescent relationship in the field of positive psychology are demographically focused in the northern hemisphere, and mainly the USA, Europe and China, where cultural, social and economic influences are very different to that of South Africa.

Gratitude as a construct has proven to be a very popular topic of investigation in the field of positive psychology, with much research and literature produced over the last decade. The focus is mainly on understanding how promoting a sense of gratitude can enhance well-being to indicate that gratitude potentially acts as a buffering agent against negative states of emotion. A wealth of literature reports on investigations regarding gratitude as a construct and highlights the relational nature of gratitude and its potential for promoting and improving satisfying

relationships, to contribute to well-being. Less research has, however, been done on the role that gratitude can play in the interpersonal consequences of strengths development, such as gratitude in the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, no studies have yet been done in the South African context. On an international level, available literature confirms the ability of gratitude to mediate and fulfil the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness; but literature also indicates a need for research on the experience of gratitude in this regard, specifically in the parent-adolescent relationship.

Research that addresses parent-adolescent relationships and gratitude in the South African context from a positive psychology perspective, is an obvious void in the above-mentioned literature. This makes this study quite unique and relevant, seeing that the themes resulting from the study predominantly correlated with international literature but also revealed contrasting findings regarding the writing of a gratitude letter. It also addresses the unique experience of gratitude on a qualitative level. It is argued that research regarding the above-mentioned findings to contribute to context-specific literature in the field of positive psychology.

Empirical Conclusions

The research method applied in this study was chosen to fit the research question formulated by the researcher, namely “What are the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa?” An answer to this question was obtained and the aim of this study, which was explore and describe the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa, was met.

Participants were selected by means of a voluntary, purposive sampling technique. This technique proved to be appropriate, as the participants that were selected for the sample were selected specifically because they would be able to contribute to knowledge and insight

regarding the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis, which enabled her to immerse herself in the research process and data as much as possible. While a single data collection technique – namely semi-structured interviewing – was implemented, the technique was found to provide in-depth, rich data about participants' experiences and data saturation was achieved with six dyad interviews. The systematic method of thematic analysis identified strong themes from the data and the use of an experienced co-coder in this regard further contributed to the trustworthiness of the analysis of the data.

The findings and integration of relevant literature therefore contribute to the collection of empirical data on the experiences of gratitude activities of parent-adolescent dyads in the North West province of South Africa.

Personal Reflection

I have found this research project to be a blessing. Spending so many hours reading and writing on this very worthy topic has been a great privilege and I feel honoured to have had the opportunity to promote – even if it was amongst only a few – the value of the construct *gratitude*. Conducting my study with parents and adolescents made this study purposeful and relevant to me personally as well – having worked with adolescents for the last thirty years and being a parent myself, made this experience real and meaningful. I am aware of the challenges with which this relationship is faced and how it has changed over the years, amongst others due to the dynamic progress and changes that technology has brought about in our society, and it has become clear that the parent-adolescent relationship is in dire need of guidance and support to raise future generations. I therefore found it easy to engage with this topic which I found personally relevant and convincing in what has turned out to be a rich experience that concluded positively, in hope. The research experience has been an educational journey that

fills me with hope because of the potential that the dynamic new-generation science of positive psychology offers. With the theoretically based, tried and tested activities and development, positive psychology makes the problem-solving process approachable, real and sustainable to all. The three week activity programme that was part of my research project, turned the theory into application and practically illustrated the potential impact that a few simple practices can have. As a first-time researcher I found every new step in the research process challenging but learned very much during the experience. I gained valuable insight into the role and practice of a qualitative researcher and the value of following a disciplined ethical process, and I learned to apply it in practice in order to respect all parties involved as well as to honour the scientific process.

Addendum A: Advertisement



ADVERTISEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH: AN EXPLORATION OF PARENT- ADOLESCENT DYADS' EXPERIENCES OF GRATITUDE ACTIVITIES IN A SA CONTEXT

YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED



My name is El-Marie Ludick and I am enrolled as a Master's student in Positive Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. I intend to carry out a study with the aim to explore and describe parent-adolescent dyads' (pairs') experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

I invite you to take part in the study.

Participants must: be members of a family (either a parent or adolescent); reside in Mafikeng or Lichtenburg for economic, practical and logistical purposes; adolescents must be between the ages of 13 and 19; all participants must be efficiently fluent in and able to read and write in English because the activities, instructions and data collection will be in English; participants must have access to electronic mail and/or a telephone; at least one parent and one adolescent of a family must be willing to participate since this research focuses on the parent-adolescent dyad (pair).

You will be expected to take part in gratitude activities and to share your experience during an interview.

Participation is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in the study you will have to give informed assent/consent. If you are interested you can contact the researcher and you will be provided with an informed assent/consent letter that contains all the information you need.

Please contact me by e-mail or send me a "please call me" if you are interested or have any questions.

Tel: 083 225 1120

e-mail: elludick@telkomsa.net

Addendum B: Informed Assent/Consent Forms



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHA
BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM
CAMPUS

Health Research Ethics Committee	
Faculty of Health Sciences	
NORTH-WEST University	
(Potchefstroom Campus)	
2017-05-18	

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS AND ADOLESCENTS WHO ARE 18 OR OLDER

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context

REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00016-17-A1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Vicki Koen

STUDENT: El-Marie Ludick

POSTAL ADDRESS: P O Box 1188, Lichtenburg, 2740

CONTACT NUMBER: 083 225 1120

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my Master's research. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. I will make an appointment with you, creating an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty

of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00016-17-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *The aim of this research is to explore and describe parent-adolescent dyads' (pairs') experiences gratitude activities in a South African context.*
- *This study will be conducted with parents and adolescents in the towns Mafikeng and Lichtenburg in the North West Province. Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews with separate parent-adolescent dyads with experienced health researchers trained in the methods used (qualitative research, specifically semi-structured interviewing and thematic analysis).*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because you have complied with the following inclusion criteria: You are a member of a family (either a parent or adolescent who is 18 years or older) and are part of a specific parent-adolescent dyad or pair in a family, you reside in Mafikeng or Lichtenburg in the North West Province, you are efficiently fluent in and able to read and write in English because the activities, instructions and data collection will be in English; you have access to electronic mail and/or a telephone; and you are willing to participate. Apart from these inclusion criteria there are no other exclusion criteria.*

What is the procedure?

- *Potential participants will respond (either by sending an electronic mail or "please call me" to the researcher) to the advertisement placed on Mafikeng or Lichtenburg local newspapers or on noticeboards; at local Mafikeng and Lichtenburg shops so that parents are the first line of contact in this regard and so that adolescents are not approached without parents' permission.*
- *Once potential participants have indicated a willingness to participate, they are contacted telephonically by an outside party who will provide them with a copy of the informed consent form (either by electronic mail or post).*
- *In the case of an overwhelming response of qualifying participants, a random selection will be made by pulling potential participants' names from a hat until no new data is needed. Individuals who have indicated an interest in participating but have not been selected will be notified telephonically by the researcher.*
- *Once you have received the informed consent form, you will have a week to study the form and have an opportunity to contact the researcher if you have any questions.*
- *Once you have given informed consent, the researcher will provide you with the demographic information form for completion as well as the specific instructions and guidelines for the activities and interview via electronic mail or in person at a venue, date and time that is convenient for you (also see section on "What will your responsibilities be?").*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be provided with instructions to guide you through the gratitude activities that you will be expected to complete before data collection in the form of an interview.*
- *You will be expected to provide some of your demographic information (specifically age, gender, culture, marital status, the number of children and location).*
- *You will be expected to do the gratitude activities as described in the instructions that you will be provided with. Activities will include: 1) Writing a gratitude letter; 2) Counting blessings by keeping a gratitude journal; 3) A collaborative creative activity in which you will make a visual representation of what you are collectively grateful for - a 'gratitude gallery' of sorts. You will be requested to take a photograph of your final product and e-mail this photograph to the researcher. These photographs will not be included as data or subjected for data analyses, but will be displayed in the dissertation and publication of the results and will be used for research purposes only.*
- *After the completion of the activities, you will be required to take part in a semi structured interview as a parent-adolescent dyad and will be expected to answer open-ended questions (questions that are not answered by yes or no answers). The questions will be as follows: What was your experience of the gratitude activities? Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful and why? What recommendations do you have regarding gratitude activities for parent-adolescent dyads? The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour. In order to record the content of interviews precisely, an audio recording will be made (with your permission) with a digital voice recorder.*
- *Digital voice recordings will be downloaded onto the researcher's password-protected personal computer immediately after data collection and will then be deleted from the recording device by the researcher in order to protect your identity.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *A possible indirect benefit for you as participant is that you may gain knowledge about gratitude activities in general and with regard to parent-adolescent dyads (pairs).*
- *A possible indirect benefit is that the knowledge gained through this research may benefit other parent-adolescent dyads (pairs) or families by providing insight on gratitude activities and parent-adolescent dyads' (pairs') experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.*
- *The results of the study will be made available to you once the study is complete in the form of a short written report sent via electronic mail.*

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- *This research has a low likelihood of trivial harm. Physical harm in the form of fatigue, headaches, boredom, discomfort, and muscle tension related to the data*

collection method may be experienced during the three weeks of doing activities and once-off data collection.

- *There will be no financial costs involved regarding participation in this study.*
- *The benefits outweigh the risks.*

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

- *Should you experience discomfort or distress during or as a direct result of your participation in this research, you must inform the researcher who will provide you with the contact information of a helping and qualified professional to provide emotional containment and support if necessary.*

Who will have access to the data?

- *Only the research team, namely, the researcher, supervisors and co-coder will have access to the data.*
- *Anonymity will be protected and no names will be mentioned in the dissertation or reporting or publishing of the research.*
- *Collected data will be used exclusively for research purposes.*
- *Only the consent form you sign will identify you and only the research team (student, supervisors and co-coder) will have access to the consent forms, audio recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes. The co-coder will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.*
- *The interview transcripts will be labelled with a unique number. No one (apart from the research team) will be able to identify you.*
- *After transcription and analyses, all copies of data will be deleted from the researcher's and co-coder's computers and electronic mail. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in an office at the NWU and electronic data will be stored on a password-protected, virus-free computer in an office at the NWU. Data will be stored in this manner for seven years after the publication of the results.*
- *After the seven year period, any data on paper will be shredded and electronic data will be deleted from the computer by a member of the research team.*
- *The Health Research Ethics Committee has the right to inspect research records.*

What will happen with the data?

- *The audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word by the researcher.*
- *After the interviews have been transcribed, they will be analysed by the researcher and an experienced co-coder who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.*
- *This is a once off collection and data will be analysed in South Africa.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

- *No, you will not be paid to take part in the study.*

Are there any conflicts of interest?

- *There are no existing conflicts of interests that the researcher is aware of.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs. Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206; carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.*

How will you know about the findings?

Once the study is complete, the researcher will arrange a face-to-face feedback session with you (separate parent-adolescent dyads) at a venue and time of your choosing or, if you so choose, a summary of the findings of the research will be shared with you by electronic mail after the completion of the study.

Declaration by participant.

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study titled: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- I give permission that the family interview may be recorded on a digital voice recorder.
- I give permission that the photograph of the 'gratitude gallery' final product may be used for research purposes.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)..... 20 ...

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

Please provide an e-mail address where you would like us to send the summary of the results if you are not able to meet with the researcher face-to-face for a feedback session:

Please note that e-mails will only be sent to one participant at a time and after e-mails have been sent, they will be deleted from the researcher's mailbox/sent items to protect your identity.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are a parent of a parent-adolescent dyad of which your adolescent is younger than 18 years of age, you need to give your permission in order for your

adolescent child to be approached regarding participation and you need to complete the following declaration:

Declaration by parent or legal guardian of adolescent

By signing below, I agree that my child may take part in a research study titled: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had opportunity to ask questions to both the person obtaining assent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and my child has not been pressurised to take part.
- My child may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- My child may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in his/her best interests, or if he/she does not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- I give permission that the interview may be recorded on a digital voice recorder.
- I give permission that the photograph of the 'gratitude gallery' final product may be used for research purposes.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20...

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20...

Signature of person obtaining consent

Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

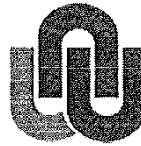
I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20...

Signature of researcher

Signature of witness



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHA
BOKONE BOPHIRIMA NOORDWES-
UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

<p>Health Research Ethics Committee HREC Stamp Faculty of Health Sciences NORTH-WEST University (Potchefstroom Campus)</p> <p>2017 -05- 18</p>	
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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT
{AGREEMENT} FORM FOR ADOLESCENTS {TEENAGERS}
WHO ARE 17 OR YOUNGER**

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

REFERENCE NUMBER: NWU-00016-17-A1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Vicki Koen

STUDENT: El-Marie Ludick

POSTAL ADDRESS: P O Box 1188, Lichtenburg, 2740

CONTACT NUMBER: 083 225 1120

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my Master's research. Please take some time to read the information in this form, which will explain the details of this project. I will make an appointment with you and your parents so that you can ask me any questions that you may have. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Participation is entirely voluntary (your own choice) and you are free to decide not to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw (stop participating) from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00016-17-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might

be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to look at the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- *The aim of this research is to explore and describe parent-adolescent (teenagers) dyads' (pairs') experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.*
- *This study will be done with parents and adolescents (teenagers) in the towns of Mafikeng and Lichtenburg in the North West Province.*
- *Data collection will involve semi structured interviews (an interview using interview questions that will be done with parent and teenager pairs) with experienced health researchers trained in the methods used (how to do interviews and analyse them).*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because: You are a member of a family (specifically an adolescent (teenager) who is 17 years or younger) and are part of a specific parent-adolescent dyad or pair in a family; you stay in Mafikeng or Lichtenburg in the North West Province; you understand English and you can read and write in English because the gratitude activities, instructions on how to do the activities, and data collection (interviews) will be in English; you have access to electronic mail and/or a telephone; and you are willing to participate. Apart from these inclusion criteria, there are no other exclusion criteria.*

What is the procedure?

- *Potential participants will respond (either by sending an electronic mail or "please call me" to the researcher) to the advertisement placed on Mafikeng or Lichtenburg local newspapers or on noticeboards at local Mafikeng and Lichtenburg shops so that parents are the first line of contact in this regard and so that adolescent are not approached without parents' permission.*
- *Once those people have indicated that they want to take part, they are contacted telephonically by a person who is not directly involved in the study and this person will give them a copy of the informed assent (agreement) form (either by electronic mail or post).*
- *In the case of many responses of people who can participate, a random selection will be made by pulling potential participants' names from a hat until no new data is needed. Individuals who have indicated an interest in participating but have not been selected will be notified telephonically by the researcher.*
- *Once you have received the informed assent (agreement) form, you will have a week to look at the form and you and your parents can contact the researcher if you have any questions.*
- *Once you have given informed assent (agreement) and your parent/s or legal guardian/s have given informed consent (agreement), the researcher will give you with a shortform to complete that asks about your age, gender, culture and location. You will also be given guidelines or instructions for the gratitude activities and interview (data collection) via electronic mail or in person at a venue, date and time that is convenient for you (also see section on "What will your responsibilities be?").*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be provided with instructions on how to do the gratitude activities that you will be expected to complete before the interview.*
- *You will be expected to give some information (specifically age, gender, culture and location).*
- *You will be expected to do the gratitude activities as described in the instructions that you will be provided with. Activities will include: 1) Writing a gratitude letter; 2) Counting blessings by keeping a gratitude journal, · 3) A collaborative creative activity in which you will make a visual representation of what you are collectively grateful for, a 'gratitude gallery' of sorts. You will be requested to take a photograph of your final product and e-mail this photograph to the researcher. These photographs will not be included as data or subjected for data analyses, but will be displayed in the dissertation and publication of the results and will be used for research purposes only.*
- *After the completion of the activities, you will be required to take part in an interview and will be expected to answer open-ended questions (questions that are not answered by yes or no answers). The questions will be as follows: What was your experience of the gratitude activities? , Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful and why? ; What recommendations do you have regarding gratitude activities for parent-adolescent (teenager) dyads (pairs)? The interview will last about one hour. In order to record what people say in the interviews correctly, an audio recording will be made (with your agreement) with a digital voice recorder.*
- *Digital voice recordings will be downloaded onto the researcher's personal password-protect computer immediately after data collection and will then be deleted from the recording device by the researcher so that other people will not know you are and will not be able to identify you.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *A possible indirect benefit for you if you decide to take part is that you may learn about gratitude activities in general and with regard to parent-adolescent (teenager) dyads (pairs).*
- *A possible indirect benefit is that what is learned through this research may benefit other parent-adolescent (teenager) dyads (pairs) or families by giving them a better understanding of gratitude activities and parent-adolescent (teenager) dyads' (pairs') experiences of gratitude activities in South Africa.*
- *The results of the study will be made available to you once the study is complete in the form of a short written report sent via electronic mail.*

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- *This research has a small chance of little harm. You could experience physical harm in the form of feeling tired, headaches, boredom, discomfort, and muscle tension during the three weeks of doing activities and the interview.*
- *Taking part in this study will not cost you anything.
There are more benefits than risks.*

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

If you feel any painful emotions because of your participation in this research, you must let the researcher know so that the researcher can give you the contact information of a helping and qualified professional to give you emotional support if it is needed.

Who will have access to the data?

- *Only the research team, namely, the researcher, supervisors and co-coder (person who helps to analyse the data) will have access to the data.*
- *No names will be mentioned in the dissertation or reporting or publishing of the research.*
- *Collected data will be used only for research purposes.*
- *Only the assent (agreement) form you sign will have your name on it and only the research team (student, supervisors, transcribe (person who types the recorded interviews) and co-coder (person who will help to analyse the data)) will have access to the assent (agreement) forms, audio-recordings, typed interviews, and field notes. The co-coder will be required to sign confidentiality agreements.*
- *The interview transcripts (typed interviews) will be given unique numbers. No one (apart from the research team) will be able to identify you.*
- *After transcription and analyses, all copies of data will be deleted from the researcher 's and co-coder 's computers and electronic mail. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies (data on paper) in locked cupboards in an office at the NWU and electronic data will be stored on a password-protected, virus-free computer in an office at the NWU Data will be stored in this manner for seven years after the publication of the results.*
- *After the seven years, any data on paper will be shredded and electronic data will be deleted from the computer by a member of the research team.*
- *The Health Research Ethics Committee has the right to look at research records.*

What will happen with the data?

- *The audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim (typed word-by-word) by the researcher.*
- *After the interviews had been typed, they will be analysed by the researcher and an experienced co-coder who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.*
- *This is a once off collection and data will be analysed in South Africa.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

- *No, you will not be paid to take part in the study.*

Are there any conflicts of interest?

- *There are no existing conflicts of interests that the researcher is aware of.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs. Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206; carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.*

How will you know about the findings?

- *Once the study is complete, the researcher will arrange a face-to-face feedback session with you (separate parent-adolescent dyads/pairs) at a venue and time of your choosing or, if you so choose, a summary of the findings of the research will be shared with you by electronic mail after the completion of the study.*

Declaration by adolescent participant who is 17 or younger

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study titled: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and assent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining assent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- I give permission that the family interview may be recorded on a digital voice recorder.
- I give permission that the photograph of the 'gratitude gallery' final product may be used for research purposes.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20...

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

Please provide an e-mail address where you would like us to send the summary of the results if you are not able to meet with the researcher face-to-face for a feedback session:

Please note that e-mails will only be sent to one participant at a time and after e-mails have been sent, they will be deleted from the researcher's mailbox/sent items to protect your identity.

Declaration by person obtaining assent/consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)..... 20...

Signature of person obtaining consent

Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)20...

Signature of researcher

Signature of witness

Addendum C: Instructions for Participants



Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to partake in the study entitled: An exploration of parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in a South African context. Below is an outline of the gratitude activities that you are required to do over a three-week period.

PLEASE NOTE: It is very important that you do all of the activities as requested, otherwise you will not be able to answer the interview questions.

1. Week one: Gratitude letter

Gratitude connects us to the kindness of others. Unfortunately, our society lacks gratitude rituals – i.e. formal ways to express thanks to those who have done well by us. Some people like to say "thank you" by writing something or drawing a picture.

The assignment to the adolescent:

Write a gratitude letter to your parent to express feelings of gratitude to him or her. You must then within one week after writing the letter deliver it by personally reading it out loud to your parent.

The assignment to the parent:

Write a gratitude letter to your adolescent child to express feelings of gratitude to him or her. You must then within one week after writing the letter deliver it by personally reading it out loud to your adolescent child.

2. Week two: Counting blessings/gratitude journal:

Please follow these instructions daily for a period of seven days:

- Choose a specific time in your day during which you have time to reflect on and to think of three to five blessings or things that you are grateful for at that point in time.

- Write these blessings down in a journal.
- You can also include more information in your journal regarding these blessings, e.g. how you are grateful for the impact of other individuals in your life.
- At the end of the week, share the blessings written in your gratitude journal with your family members (parent/s or adolescent/s) face-to-face.

3. Week three: Create a gratitude gallery

To conclude the gratitude activities you will take part in a creative parent-adolescent activity.

- You will be provided with a collection of art and craft supplies and will be requested to collaborate in making a visual representation (gratitude gallery) of what you, as a dyad (father and adolescent child or mother and adolescent child) are collectively grateful for.
- The collective display as decided on by the participants can take any shape but will become the family's 'Gratitude Gallery'.
- The time and execution of this activity are the decision of each family (parent/s and adolescent/s) but must be concluded after the third week of participating in the activities.
- You are requested to take a photograph of your final product and e-mail this photograph to the researcher (elludick@telkomsa.net). These photographs will not be included as data or subjected for data analyses, but will, with your permission, be displayed in the dissertation and publication of the results and will be used for research purposes only.

After completion of the activities, the researcher will arrange a meeting with you to conduct an interview with you (parent and adolescent dyad/pair). Please see the informed consent or assent form for more information regarding this.

Addendum D: Demographic Information Form

Dear Participant

The following document includes a short demographic information form for your completion.

Please supply the following socio-demographic information by placing a cross (X) in the appropriate square or by writing down the relevant information.

Please note: Numbers 1 – 6 applies to parents and numbers 1 – 4 applies to adolescents

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: M ☐ F ☐

3. Culture: _____

4. I live in: Lichtenburg ☐ Mafikeng ☐

5. Marital status: Single ☐ Married ☐ Cohabiting ☐ Divorced/Separated ☐
Widowed ☐

6. Number of children: _____

Addendum E: Confidentiality Agreement



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between E. Ludick and E. du Plessis

I, the undersigned

Prof Emmerentia du Plessis

Identity Number: 7207110176082

Address: School of Nursing Science, North-West University, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom, 2520

hereby undertake in favour of the **NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

Address: Office of the Institutional Registrar, Building C1, 53 Borchard Street, Potchefstroom, 2520

(hereinafter the "NWU")

1 Interpretation and definitions

1.1 In this undertaking, unless inconsistent with, or otherwise indicated by the context:

1.1.1 "Confidential Information" shall include all information that is confidential in its nature or marked as confidential and shall include any existing and new information obtained by me after the Commencement Date, including but not be limited in its interpretation to, research data, information concerning research participants, all secret knowledge, technical information and specifications, manufacturing techniques, designs, diagrams, instruction manuals, blueprints, electronic artwork, samples, devices, demonstrations, formulae, know-how, intellectual property, information concerning materials, marketing and business information generally, financial information that may include remuneration detail, pay slips, information relating to human capital and employment contract, employment conditions, ledgers, income and expenditures and other materials of whatever description in which the NWU has an interest in being kept confidential; and

1.1.2 "Commencement Date" means the date of signature of this undertaking by myself.

1.2 The headings of clauses are intended for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this undertaking.

2 Preamble

2.1 In performing certain duties requested by the NWU, I will have access to certain Confidential Information provided by the NWU in order to perform the said duties and I agree that it must be kept confidential.

2.2 The NWU has agreed to disclose certain of this Confidential Information and other information to me subject to me agreeing to the terms of confidentiality set out herein.

3 Title to the Confidential Information

I hereby acknowledge that all right, title and interest in and to the Confidential Information vests in the NWU and that I will have no claim of any nature in and to the Confidential Information.

4 Period of confidentiality

The provisions of this undertaking shall begin on the Commencement Date and remain in force indefinitely.

5 Non-disclosure and undertakings

I undertake:

5.1 to maintain the confidentiality of any Confidential Information to which I shall be allowed access by the NWU, whether before or after the Commencement Date of this undertaking. I will not divulge or permit to be divulged to any person any aspect of such Confidential Information otherwise than may be allowed in terms of this undertaking;

5.2 to take all such steps as may be necessary to prevent the Confidential Information falling into the hands of an unauthorised third party;

5.3 not to make use of any of the Confidential Information in the development, manufacture, marketing and/or sale of any goods;

5.4 not to use any research data for publication purposes;

5.5 not to use or disclose or attempt to use or disclose the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing research purposes only and includes questionnaires, interviews with participants, data gathering, data analysis and personal information of participants/research subjects;

5.6 not to use or attempt to use the Confidential Information in any manner which will cause or be likely to cause injury or loss to a research participant or the NWU; and

5.7 that all documentation furnished to me by the NWU pursuant to this undertaking will remain the property of the NWU and upon the request of the NWU will be returned to the NWU. I shall not make copies of any such documentation without the prior written consent of the NWU.

6 Exception

The above undertakings by myself shall not apply to Confidential Information which I am compelled to disclose in terms of a court order.

7 Jurisdiction

This undertaking shall be governed by South African law be subject to the jurisdiction of South African courts in respect of any dispute flowing from this undertaking.

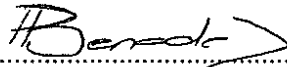
8 Whole agreement


8.1 This document constitutes the whole of this undertaking to the exclusion of all else.

8.2 No amendment, alteration, addition, variation or consensual cancellation of this undertaking will be valid unless in writing and signed by me and the NWU.


Dated at Potchefstroom this 12th September 2017

Witnesses:

1 

2 

(Signatures of witnesses)



(Signature)

Addendum F: Transcript of semi-structured interview

Research interview transcript number 6.

Semi – structured interview with Dyad 6, researcher.

Date: 4 August 2017

Start of Transcript

The researcher (Question)	So what was your experience of the gratitude activities?
Interviewee 1 (Answer)	<i>I think it was really eye opening and the fact that we got a chance to actually appreciate those things that we only discovered now and some of them which we have been grateful for from a long time.</i>
Interviewee 2 (Answer)	<i>Ok. Mine was, it was an eye opener like she said as well because I realised how many things I actually take for granted, so as I was writing down I actually ... I think I needed more time because I could have written more. It was like in a day I would think of this and that, but I thought, I mean I could have written a thousand things in one day but I, there was that thing that was on my mind that day but I could have written ten things in one day. But I guess I focussed on what was important to me for that day, but as an experience, yes it was an eye opener.</i>
The researcher (Question)	So for both of you there was a realisation of how grateful you are and how maybe not so grateful you were for things you should be.
Interviewee 2 (Answer)	<i>With me it was actually like, really I actually was taking this for granted but this is important. It is this important.</i>
The researcher (Question)	Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful?
Interviewee 1 (Answer)	<i>Mine is the letter.</i>
The researcher (Question)	Ok, and why? Can you explain?
Interviewee 1 (Answer)	<i>Because I think it was a chance to express yourself like in a way that we normally would not do and we got to say more and see more than what we usually do when we are talking face to face. So there was more I think like the letter gave a lot of value and I think it will always be there because now we know things we did not know.</i>
Interviewee 2	

<p>(Answer) The researcher (Question)</p>	<p><i>To me the letter wasn't the one that actually ... the question was?</i></p>
<p>Interviewee 2 (Answer)</p>	<p>Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful and why?</p> <p><i>The letter was useful but not as useful as the days, because the diary, actually I think I woke up every day thinking about gratitude. So it's sort of ... You know you don't have to think about gratitude but because of this exercise you woke up and you realised how blessed you were. So because you were doing it every day so it means that every day was a day of gratitude even though it was an exercise ... but it really helped me to think hard about some of those things that ... I just wake up sometimes and feel ag ... you know the taking things for granted that I was talking about. So to me that daily exercise really helped me, because I was grateful for every minute of the day and for one week.</i></p>
<p>The researcher (Probe)</p>	<p>Do you experience these exercises as something that you would maybe maintain now?</p>
<p>Interviewee 2 (Answer)</p>	<p><i>Yes the journal you can do but I think even the letter I think I will do it another two or three times with someone, say as a sister or my husband, it is something I would do again because it also made me realise, like she said like how some of the things you value but yes the daily diary or journal, I think I will do that every day. Because when you wake up in the morning we just have to be grateful for but sometimes we do it unconsciously but I think I would like to go on with this and see how far I go. Even if I can do it for another month and just say today, today, today... for however long I can go. As a way of life, and I hope I won't stop.</i></p>
<p>The researcher (Question)</p>	<p>What recommendations do you have regarding gratitude activities for parent-adolescents dyads?</p>
<p>Interviewee 2 (Answer)</p>	<p><i>I think maybe more time. Like I said, what I realised in one week, I can imagine how much... if this is to be done over a month or a week more or a little bit more time. I think it would actually be more beneficial. It is now but for a longer period it will actually make us realise more than we did in this small space of time. And I also think it could have worked for a family setting where say the four of us instead of just the two. Because it brought us closer and this is ok. I think if we could say, she does it with her brother, brother and sister and I do it with my husband as well and I do it with my son as well. So that is what I would recommend. But for us it was o k but as a family it could actually be a bit more ... yes.</i></p>
<p>The researcher (Probe)</p>	<p></p>

Interviewee 1 (Answer)	Do you have a recommendations?
The researcher (Probe)	<i>It's basically the same, because the length would have added to the value and the more people the more effective it will be as well. Because if there is more people then more people can actually realise that how grateful they should be each day.</i>
Interviewee 1 (Answer)	When did you keep your journals, in the morning or in the evening?
Interviewee 2 (Answer)	<i>In the morning.</i>
The researcher (Probe)	<i>I had no time. Sometimes when I had a free period at school I would just think about something. Or if something happened, I would think I should actually thank God for this. There was no specific time whenever something just came to my mind and I felt that I should write it down and I felt I was grateful for that, then I wrote it down immediately.</i>
Interviewee 2 (Answer)	Did you find that your gratitude was towards someone or something?
Interviewee 1 (Answer)	<i>Obviously our gratitude was mostly toward God and to people. Because for me it was friends, it was family, it was my uncles you know. So mostly it was to do with people. It was relational.</i>
The researcher (Probe)	<i>Mine was mostly to do with something but there were people as well. Like a house, we have a shelter but it is provide by my parents. So I was grateful for that and for nature, just waking up hearing the birds chirp or even the sunlight sometimes because right now there is no sun and it is a dull day, like you see those small things that we should be noticing.</i>
Interviewee 2 (Answer)	Did you compare your journaling?
	<i>No, we read each other's but we did not exactly compare But I realise that there is somethings that she is grateful for that I am also grateful for. But I saw that she is more of a nature person and I am more grateful for personal relationships. Even though we both said the house and clothing, we do appreciate that but I think relationships count better on my part.</i>

Addendum G: Example of Field Note

LUDICK 26/7/17 (4)

PAENC. PAWIS - MOTHER REQUESTED
(NOT 15)
THAT A SECOND CHILD BE PREPARED

AFTER FIRST QUESTION THE
REALISATION BECAME APPARENT
THAT THE FIRST ACTIVITY
WAS NOT TRUE

THE INTERVIEW CONTINUED AS IT
IT DID

APICTURE OF CAT GALLERY
WAS NOT AVAILABLE YET.

MA PAAT BAIE KIND MAM.

MA HET ETE AGO-DA WET AKTIVITETTE
WANTED TO INVOLVE WHOLE FAMILY
GETTING - HER WENT TO SPEND QUALITY TIME & IMPROVE
WHOLE FAMILY WELLBEING
EYE OPENER EVUARING - OOR KWA
TYO NAT SAM SPANDEE WED

Addendum H: Instructions to Co-coder

Coding Instructions to Co-Coder

The aim of this study is to explore and describe parent-adolescent dyads' experiences of gratitude activities in the North West province of South Africa.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with parent-adolescent dyads. The interview schedule was as follows:

1. What was your experience of the gratitude activities?
2. Which of the gratitude activities did you experience as the most useful and why?
3. What recommendations do you have regarding gratitude activities for parent-adolescent dyads?

Analysis Method

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis is used to manually analyse the data collected through interviews. Please follow the six steps suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006) when analysing the data, namely:

1. Familiarisation with the data: Read all interview transcripts once without coding.
2. Coding: Second reading is in hard-copy. Coding is done in words with pencil in the margins of the transcript as ideas emerge. Simultaneously remarks are noted in reaction to the mindful processing of data.
3. Theme exploration: Expand and /or reduce coded data during the third reading to develop themes.
4. Theme review: The transcriptions are now scanned for broader patterns to indicate over-arching themes, which are listed on a separate document in meaningful phrases or sentences that accommodate the data.
5. Defining and naming the themes: Themes are written up to explain in detail the critical aspects of the themes. Themes are identified and named.
6. Writing: Consolidate and validate themes by comparing with the literature.