PARENTS' DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHARACTER STRENGTHS OF THEIR CHILDREN

by

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DECLARATION

I, *Christina Magdalena van der Walt 2014125674* hereby declare that the dissertation titled *Parents' descriptions of the character strengths of their children* is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university or for another qualification. I further cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

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Abstract

A positive psychology approach guided the research study. Research within positive psychology conducted on a characteristic level provided insights into the impact of positive emotions and character traits on the functioning of an individual. Character strengths used optimally lead to gratification, true happiness, and enable an individual to deal with life's challenges in such a way that the risk of mental illness decreases. Character strengths encompass one of the many ways in which children's functioning can be improved, well-being maintained, and the effects of trauma buffered. Within the South African context it was found that limited research on character strengths have been conducted. Studies conducted focused more on resilience than character strengths and did not take a cross-cultural approach to the research. The current study aimed to identify character strengths of children aged seven to ten years within the four main racial groups: Black, Coloured, Indian, and White. This study functioned on a similar premise as the study done by Park and Peterson (2006) whereby parents were asked to report on their child's behaviour within different contexts through written descriptions. Purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. A total of 20 parents participated in the study and provided written descriptions of their children. The average length of the essays was 1671 words. Content analysis was used as data analysis procedure. Additionally, a weighting between one and three was given to each identified character strength: *one* indicated a vague description of the character strength; *two* represented a fair description; and a weighting of *three* referred to a direct and clear description of the character strength. Through the data analysis process discussed above, parents' experience of their children were deduced to distinct character strengths, through comparison with the clusters set out in the VIA Classification of Strengths. Social intelligence, zest, and love of learning were found to be the three most prevalent character strengths with the highest weighting within all four groups. The high prevalence and weighting of social intelligence are supported by the argument that children in this age group start to develop a greater awareness of other individuals, and can view the world from another perspective than their own. The high prevalence and weighting of zest in this study are supported by the argument that children in this developmental phase are biologically and developmentally inclined to approach life with energy and enthusiasm. The high prevalence and weighting of love of learning in this study are supported by the argument that children in this developmental phase are not only able to learn new information, but due to increased abilities, also exhibit enthusiasm for broadening their

knowledge base. The virtue group of transcendence showed the lowest prevalence of all six virtue groups. This finding is possibly due to the developmental stage and cognitive abilities of the child. The best hope of this study is that it may lead to the development of enabling institutions, such as schools and other relevant programmes, to ensure that children are aware of, and make use of their unique strengths.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Appendices

Chapter 1
Introduction and Overview

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the discipline of positive psychology and more specifically character strengths, with specific focus on the role of character strengths in the resilience of young children. The rationale and purpose of this study are indicated, and finally a brief summary of consecutive chapters follow.

1.1 Orientation and Motivation to the Study

This study was approached from a positive psychology perspective as it allowed the researcher to consider the strengths and abilities of individuals. Peterson (2013) highlights the fact that positive psychology is a science in its own right, and that "happiness, strengths of character, and good social relationships are buffers against the damaging effects of disappointments and setbacks" (p. 5). In this context, a positive psychology approach resonated with the researcher's aim to do research with the potential to effect change.

Different branches and sub-disciplines of positive psychology have inspired research over the recent decades. Specifically on a characteristic level, studies conducted provided insights into the impact of positive emotions and character traits on the functioning of an individual. Character strengths are synonymous with a good life, satisfaction with life, well-being and happiness. Seligman (2002) writes in his book, *Authentic Happiness* that character strengths used optimally lead to gratification, true happiness, and enable an individual to deal with life's challenges in such a way that the risk of mental illness decreases. One could conclude that when strengths are identified, people will know the *how* of living an honest and good life. A study done by Van Eeden, Wissing, Dreyer, Park, and Peterson (2014) further strengthens the argument for character strengths, as they found a positive correlation between character strengths and not only resilience, but also health. However, the identification, importance and know-how of character strengths are not limited to adults. From the above literature it is apparent that character strengths play in integral role in the optimal functioning of an individual.

As mentioned, character strengths encompass one of the many ways in which children's functioning can be improved, well-being maintained, and the effects of trauma buffered. Character strengths also show a strong correlation with life satisfaction and the well-being of

children (Park, 2009). Children face multiple challenges at home and at school that can potentially threaten their well-being. However, Park (2009) found that some strengths may play a role in protecting children against disorders that result from severe distress and trauma.

Given the current context of South Africa, character strengths could play an important role in mitigating the effects of crime, abuse and other trauma endured by our children. South African studies have shown that a high percentage of South African children are exposed to trauma and are as a result suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Calitz, De Jongh, Horn, Nel, & Joubert, 2014; Swain, Pillay, & Kliewer, 2017).

As this study was conducted in South Africa, existing South African literature within the field of positive psychology and youth was of specific relevance. Govender, Reardon, Quinlan, and George (2014) looked at the psychosocial wellbeing of South African children within the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty. The authors found that various factors, including social and relational, influence the psychosocial wellbeing of young children. A further study that focused on resilience was that of Theron and Malindi (2009) who studied the presence of resilience among street youths. It was found that the capability to bounce back from adverse experiences was embedded within a socio-cultural context.

Additionally, Theron and Theron (2010) conducted a critical review of resilience studies of youth executed between the years of 1990 to 2008. From their study it emerged that most research studies were quantitative in nature and focused primarily on resilience amongst black youth of South Africa.

Despite the evidence above, Duckworth, Steen, and Seligman (2005) noted that insufficient research had been done on the role of positive emotions and strengths in prevention and treatment and proposed that more studies should focus on character strengths among youth. This is also experienced within the South African context as most research focuses on resilience specifically, and not on character strengths, nor amongst youth (Van Eeden et al., 2014).

Another gap that was identified in the literature was that of a cross-cultural perspective with regard to character strengths within South African youth. This study therefore aimed at including participants from four main racial groups in South Africa namely Black, Coloured, Indian and White.

This study functioned on a similar premise as the study done by Park and Peterson (2006) whereby parents were asked to report on their child's behaviour within different contexts through written descriptions. According to these authors, the motivation for this study was two-fold: Firstly, they had been unable to use self-report measures with children younger than ten years. Secondly, they hoped to better understand whether happiness and character strengths had a link early in development. The parents' written descriptions were then analysed using content analysis. The researchers found that happiness related to three specific character strengths: love, zest, and hope.

As a final word of motivation for this study, it should be mentioned that the results hold the potential to enable future research and/ or educational/ parenting programmes to build on certain character strengths necessary for optimal health and well-being, as well as a variety of interventions for children exposed to trauma. This potential value is based on Griffin, Martinovich, Gawron, and Lyons' (2009) suggestion that children's character strengths be considered in treatment approaches to reduce the impact of trauma and disrupted developmental character strengths.

Given the arguments presented above, it was important to the researcher to formulate a clear research aim and objective in order to best account for the task at hand.

1.2 Research Problem and Objectives

The aim of this study is to identify the character strengths of children aged seven to ten years within four different racial groups – as described by their parents.

1.3 Document Overview

Chapter two provides a review of the literature pertaining to this study. Both positive psychology and character strengths will be defined and discussed. The impact of both these constructs on the individual's functioning will be explored within this chapter, as well as the potential advantages of character strengths in various domains of functioning. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on children and the role that character strengths play in their optimal functioning and potential resilience against psychological trauma. This chapter includes an overview of existing studies on the topic of character strengths amongst children. This chapter is approached through a cultural lens, given the specific participants of this study.

Chapter three provides an overview of the procedures carried out during the study: research design, participants and recruitment method, method of data collection, and data analysis. This chapter also considers the ethical aspects that were included.

Chapter four provides an overview of the results obtained through analysis of the data. This chapter provides individual graphs of strengths and also groups the results of racial groups together.

Chapter five provides a discussion of the results embedded within the relevant literature. Additionally the limitations of this study, recommendations for future study, and a conclusion are elucidated.

1.4 Terminology Frequently Referred to Within This Document

Positive psychology is a science that aims to increase quality of life and protect against mental illness when challenges arise (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

VIA Classification of Strengths is a classification system that identifies and assesses health and well-being based on character strengths. It consists of 24 different strengths of character, clustered in 6 virtue groups including wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Character Strengths are a part of the individual's personality (Park & Peterson, 2009) that guide thoughts, feelings and actions (Niemiec, 2013).

Children refer to individuals under the age of twelve years.
However, when discussing this study (in terms of the participants specifically, *children* will refer to those between the age of seven and ten years).

1.5 Personal Motivation

Although resilient, children are also fragile and dependent. The South Africa that children are growing up in is far from suited for those who are vulnerable. However, the identification and use of character strengths could provide insight into how the children of South Africa may be supported and empowered to be healthy, happy, and contented human beings. Once the importance of character strengths are highlighted and then developed, it is possible that children maybe protected from serious psychological distress and disorders. In a country where access to mental health services is limited, a shift to prevention in mental health care might be beneficial. It is my belief that each individual, irrespective of race and/ or gender deserves an opportunity to live a good life. My hope is that this study will be a contribution, albeit modest, to the good life of our children.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief overview of the study. As mentioned this study will be conducted from a positive psychology perspective that values the strengths and abilities of the individual. Each individual has inherent strengths that determine their day-to-day existence, and also their experience of this. However, many children within South Africa are faced with trauma due to exposure to violence, whether in person or as a witness. The importance of character strengths for children is subsequently highlighted all the more. Despite this, literature on children in South Africa focus mainly on well-being and resilience, while character strengths are often neglected. This, together with a too restrictive population group and socio-economic class, leads to an identified gap in the literature regarding children and character strengths. Through partial mimicking of an existing study, the researcher aims to identify character strengths of children between the ages of seven and ten years through parental descriptions. To make this study more inclusive, participants from the four main racial groups in South Africa were approached. The best hope of this study is that it would possibly lead to the development of **enabling institutions** to ensure children are aware of, and make use of their unique strengths.

Chapter 2

Positive Psychology, Character Strengths, and Children

This chapter will discuss the construct of positive psychology, how it has developed over the last two decades, and the influence that it has had on the stance many professionals now take toward their clients. Additionally, the development of character strengths from the discipline of positive psychology is explored. An in-depth discussion about character strengths and the significant impact it has on the day-to-day functioning of the individual will further highlight the pivotal role it plays in the well-being of individuals. Finally the focus will be returned to the crux of this study: South African children and their character strengths. Character strengths play an important role in the well-being of children and have been shown to act as a buffer against the effects of trauma. Through considering the many studies done internationally, the case for a stronger focus on the development of character strengths will be made.

2.1 Positive Psychology Roots

> *"Positive psychology is a call for psychological science and practice to be as concerned with strengths as with weakness; as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst; and as concerned with making the lives of normal people fulfilling as with healing pathology"* (Peterson, p. 4).

Positive psychology, in many respects, is a science that aims to study positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). When considering these main study areas, it becomes apparent that positive psychology engages with what is viewed as human strengths and potential. However, one should avoid the pitfall of thinking that this branch of psychology is naive or even blind to the truth of psychopathology. Positive psychology addresses both sides of the mental health coin: helping individuals to overcome their psychopathology, and on the other side strengthening those without psychopathology as a means of preventing mental illness (Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Conoley, 2015).

The disease model that governed the discipline of psychology for many years placed the clinician in the position of diagnostician with one aim: diagnose and prescribe a specific

intervention aimed at alleviating symptoms (Maddux, 2002). The behaviouristic perspective,most prevelant during the years of 1897 and 1971, moved away from the focus on disease to specific behaviours and aspects that were more observable within the individual (Watson, 1913). This was followed in the mid 20th century by the humanistic perspective that allowed the clinician to consider the individual from a more holistic perspective by taking into consideration their behaviour, as well as aspects inherent to the individual that had an impact on said behaviours (Hardy, 2016). The most recent shift in psychology is known as positive psychology.

Positive psychology highlights the healthy and adaptive functioning of the individual. The focus is thus more on what the individual is "doing right" and how these strengths can be built upon to further allow the individual to thrive. Positive psychology takes the focus of the clinician away from the "problem" and forces the clinician to rather ask what is helping this individual to function despite adversity. The focus of intervention then becomes these aspects of the individual that promote and maintain their well-being. Positive psychology is an ever-expanding field that is gradually better understood due to an ever-increasing scientific underpinning. The amount of interest in the field of positive psychology from researchers, students, and authors has increased progressively with the expansion of the science. Jarden (2012) interviewed 13 influential individuals in the field of positive psychology to understand their perspectives on the field. His research allows for multiple definitions of positive psychology by those most familiar with the science. One of the questions in his interview schedule specifically tapped into their understanding of positive psychology's most unmistakeable properties and five of the interviewees answered as follows:

- Sonja Lyubomirsky: "Positive psychology is about what makes life worth living. It's about the positive side of life" (p. 79).
- Alex Linley: "One of the features of positive psychology is its inherent focus on the positive. By that I don't mean that it will ignore the negative, but it will pay attention to more of the positive things than has traditionally been looked at" (p. 83).
- Ryan Niemiec: "I might be a little biased, but I, and many others, see the work on character strengths as being the backbone to positive psychology. I say that because whatever theory or approach or topic people are interested in, you can apply character strengths to it, or that particular topic stems from character strengths" (p. 106).
- Barbara Fredrickson: "At the overarching general level would be looking at the aspects of human nature that help us become a better version of ourselves over time, that help propel us

towards growth, or greater confidence, greater resilience, greater honesty, greater integrity" (p. 116).

- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: "It's hard to find an exact common element of positive psychology, except in terms of the fact that everybody is trying to understand how to leverage and increase positive aspects of human experience and human life" (p. 136).

In contrast to what many believe, positive psychology has its roots in many foundational and seminal works. The early literature on positive psychology is vast. Aristotle penned his views on happiness in 350 BC: "He is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life" (Nicomachean Ethics, 1101a10).

In his 1954 book, *Motivation and Personality,* Maslow not only writes about the individual's need to self-actualise, but also stresses the importance of looking at that which the individual is doing right as well. He suggests that clinical psychology could also focus on studying the individual who is healthy and happy in his relationships and career, and he also views positive life experiences as therapeutic. In this early work of Maslow he summarises the aim of positive psychology long before the science was recognised: "Everything seems directed towards preserving life and very little towards making it worthwhile" (Maslow, 1954, p. 284).

Other seminal works include that of Jahoda (1958) who attempted to find a comprehensive definition for mental health. Her viewpoint regarding mental health shows similarities to that of positive psychologists today: mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness. Further similarities lie in the fact that she remarked that the mentally healthy person is one who understands and uses their unique strengths. An exploration of the above literature highlights man's need to live a good, happy life.

2.1.1 Positive psychology's position in this study.

Positive psychology is believed to function on three levels, each with its own characteristics (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These three levels should be kept in mind when considering the well-being and functioning of the individual. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) describe these levels as follows: The subjective level that describes how the individual "feels" about or perceives their life to be, and encompasses experiences such as happiness, satisfaction, contentment; The individual level that includes individual traits such as virtues and character

strengths that serve as elements to living a good life and being a good person; and finally the group level that refers to civic virtues and institutions such as schools and programmes aimed at contributing to the individual's development. Furthermore, the individual level of positive traits acts as a mediator for the other two levels: positive traits allow for positive experiences which then impact positively on others contexts (Park & Peterson, 2003).

These levels are important as they are integrated throughout for this study. The most ostensible level in relation to the current study is the individual level as that entails individual character strengths. Character strengths are also shown to link directly with the subjective level and are an integral part of well-being or even "thriving". Finally this study also refers to the way in which institutions such as schools could contribute to the development of character strengths and subsequent well-being of children.

The above-mentioned levels provide a theoretical framework for the understanding of positive psychology. Yet one wonders how positive psychology translated into the day-to-day behaviour of the person would manifest. The word most often used to describe this manifestation is "thriving". Benson (1990) described the term *thriving* as a set of signs that point to academic success, caring for others and the community, and a commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, Benson and Scales (2009) postulate that thriving, much like positive psychology, does not point to the absence of sadness and challenges, but rather to the individual's drive to learn and grow from challenges. From the description above, one is able to form a picture of the child, adolescent, and/or adult that is thriving: someone who is doing more than *just* meeting their developmental milestones and related expectations. The picture that comes to mind is someone who is doing more than what is needed to just get by. In essence, one's character strengths should be identified and used to enable thriving.

In considering thriving, the Values in Action Classification of Strengths (VIA) can be used to identify those character strengths that are evident. In one such study, Benson and Scales (2009) presented various qualities of the thriving young person that show similarities with the character strengths and virtues as set out in the VIA: perseverance, honesty, justice, social intelligence, judgement, forgiveness, love, hope. A virtue is a process in which the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours merge in the way most beneficial to the individual and greater society (Snyder & McCullough, 2000). In a blog entry by Niemiec (2017) he lists many similar qualities to those mentioned by Benson and Scales (2009). He mentions eight additional

character strengths including love of learning, curiosity, and appreciation of beauty and excellence. Again, this supports the argument that character strengths and thriving are interlinked.

2.2 Character Strengths

"We believe that character strengths are the bedrock
of the human condition and that strength-congruent activity represents
an important route to the psychological good life"

Peterson & Seligman (2004, p. 12)

Underlying the premise of positive psychology is character strengths. The basis of positive psychology is to identify those characteristics and strengths of people that allow them to function optimally (Seligman, 2007). As mentioned previously, character strengths are inherent to the individual and aids in living a prosperous and well-lived life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and are linked with thriving (Benson & Scales, 2009).

When examining character strengths, the term *psychofortology* should be mentioned. This term was coined by South African researchers Van Eeden and Wissing (2008), and in its broadest sense refers to not only the origin of psychological well-being and health, but also to its intricacies. They suggested the term psychofortology as it allows for a broadened understanding of psychological strengths that could aid in enhancing quality of life (Wissing & Van Eeden, 1997).

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (2011), character strengths can be viewed as inherent characteristics of the individual that, when used, bring about positive emotions and subsequent healthy outcomes. Strength of character manifests in the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals, and has been linked to important aspects of both individual and social well-being (Park & Peterson, 2009).

2.2.1 The Values in Action Classification of Strengths.

The Values in Action Classification of Strengths (VIA) was developed to allow practitioners the opportunity to identify and assess health and well-being based on character strengths

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This classification includes virtues and character strengths that have been documented across cultures and centuries.

The VIA classification of strengths developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) identifies 24 different strengths of character, clustered in 6 virtue groups: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Personality traits were considered and, based on a specific set of criteria, where chosen as character strengths.

While developing the VIA classification of strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) ensured that the 24 character strengths included adhered to a specific set of criteria as set out in table 1.

Table 1

Criteria for character strengths

Criteria for Character Strengths
1   Fulfilling – adds to the individual's experience of satisfaction.
2   Morally valued – the strength on its own is valued from a moral stance.
3   Admired – does not demean others, but is rather seen as something to aspire to.
4   Trait-like – character strengths are different from positive traits.
5   Measurable – research has provided data to prove this true.
6   Distinct – unique from other strengths.
7   Opposite – there can be a clear polar of a strength.
8   Absent – possible to not be present at all.
9   Institutions – it is the clear aim of developmental programmes or other practices.
10   Prodigies – shown to have a stronger presence in some young children.

Adapted from Peterson and Seligman (2004)

Using information provided by Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Van Eeden and Wissing (2008), a thorough description in table format of each virtue, its description, and related character strengths is provided in table 2.

Table 2

VIA Classification of Strengths

Value	Description	Character strength

Value 1: Wisdom and knowledge **referring to cognitive strengths related to the development and use of wisdom.**	Character strengths that enables the attainment and use of knowledge	• **Creativity**: finding new and innovative ways to do things; could also involve art and creation • **Curiosity**: interest in experience as it presents; investigative and making discoveries • **Open mindedness**: flexible thinking; taking into considerations various aspects of a situation prior to making a decision • **Love of learning**: systematic development of knowledge; continuous mastery of new knowledge, skills and attitudes • **Perspective**: realistic view of situations; sharing of advice with others
Value 2: Courage **entailing emotional strengths that allows the individual to use internal motivation to achieve goals despite resistance.**	Character strengths that, despite internal or external obstacles, allows for the attainment of goals	• **Bravery**: shows resolve amidst resistance, pain, and even physical danger; stands up for personal beliefs • **Persistence**: continuing in activity or action despite impediments; finishing tasks • **Integrity**: Being honest and open; taking responsibility for words and actions • **Vitality**: experiencing life as an adventure; approaching life with energy and zeal; doing

		everything with absolute surrender
Value 3: Humanity **which refers to interpersonal strengths related to caring for and reaching out to other people.**	Interpersonal character strengths	• **Love**: an appreciation of close, reciprocal relationships with others • **Kindness**: helping others without expecting anything in return; includes giving to others • **Social intelligence**: an awareness of one's own and other's motives and feelings; the ability to act appropriate in social situations and interactions
Value 4: Justice **refers to civil strengths forming the foundation of healthy community relationships**	Civic character strengths	• **Citizenship**: social relationships; loyalty; cooperation; doing one's part in the community • **Fairness**: treating all individuals with fairness; not allowing personal attitudes to influence decisions affecting others • **Leadership**: developing healthy relationships with others; influencing and motivating others to do things; organising and implementing group activities
Value 5: Temperance **refers to all the strengths that protect against excess.**	Protects against superfluity	• **Forgiveness and mercy**: forgiving those who has wronged you; accepting the shortcomings of others;

		believing in second chances; not being vengeful • **Humility and modesty**: not viewing oneself as exceptional; allowing achievement to be and say enough • **Prudence**: not taking unnecessary risks; taking all options into consideration before making a decision; avoiding experiencing regret about what is said and done • **Self-regulation**: regulation of emotions and actions; taking and maintaining control over emotions and feelings
Value 6: Transcendence **refers to strengths related to a connection with the greater cosmos and gives meaning and purpose to life.**	Character strengths that connect to a power larger than ourselves	• **Appreciation of beauty and excellence**: looking at and appreciating beauty and excellence in life (from nature to art to science) • **Gratitude**: being aware of and grateful for good things; saying "thank you" • **Hope**: expecting the best from life and the future; working hard toward the expected future • **Humour**: laughing regularly; making jokes and seeing the lighter side of a situation • **Spirituality**: having a belief about higher meaning and

		purpose; adjusting actions toward attainment of purpose

2.3 The Use of the VIA Classification of Strengths in Research: What We Know

Within the context of positive psychology, specific character strengths have been researched and linked with (amongst others), productivity, meaningfulness, and job satisfaction at work (Littman-Ovadia & Lavy, 2016; Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017); higher treatment adherence to medication in young asthma sufferers (Berg, Rapoff, Snyder, & Belmont, 2007); mental health, life satisfaction, positive affect, and increased self-esteem in undergraduate students (Macaskill & Donovan, 2014); and better performance on creative tasks and lower reported levels of stress (Avey, Luthans, Hannah, Sweetman, & Peterson, 2012). From the above literature it is clear that character strengths have been used to study specific populations and environments. A unique population that has received some attention in character strengths research is children. Through these studies the positive impact of character strengths on children and adolescents has been highlighted.

Within a young population, research has indicated that character strengths of the virtues temperance, transcendence, humanity, and wisdom and knowledge were linked to higher levels of life-satisfaction in adolescents (Gillham et al., 2011). Additionally character strengths from the humanity and temperance virtues present at the start of the child's high school career, predicted decreased prevalence of depressive symptoms throughout the child's 10th grade year (Gillham et al., 2011). As support, character strengths from the virtues of transcendence, temperance, and zest were found as indicators of well-being among adolescents (Toner, Haslam, Robinson, & Williams, 2012). Park and Peterson (2008) suggested that the cultivation of gratitude, optimism, enthusiasm, curiosity, and love becomes a priority if we wish our children to have long-term happiness and contentment. As mentioned previously, studies show that character strengths protect children against the harmful effects of stress and trauma (Park & Peterson, 2009), increase positive classroom behaviour (Wagner & Ruch, 2015), and could also predict academic success (Park, 2004).

The above literature confirms that character strengths are of significant importance. The relevance of South African character strength research cannot be discounted and this research aims to contribute to knowledge in this field.

A previous study in South Africa is that of Eracleous (2008) that set out to establish the unique character strengths of young cancer survivors. Despite the research not finding any difference in character strengths of cancer survivors and physically healthy adolescents, it was still able to identify hope, gratitude, spirituality, love, perspective, and appreciation of beauty and excellence in the narrative writing of the participants. At the same time, Van Eeden and Wissing (2008) researched character strengths in a group of youths in South Africa. Their findings indicated that positive affect, ego-strength, health and life satisfaction have a positive relationship with character strengths.

It was possible for the above-mentioned researchers to use the VIA classification of strengths within different populations and nationalities as the VIA classification of strengths has been studied for cultural reliability.

2.3.1 Cross-cultural findings.

The VIA classification of strengths has been tested in various international research studies. As part of its literature review before the development of the VIA classification of strengths, literature from across the world was explored. The six core virtues that serve as the foundation for the 24 strengths were identified in a study done by Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman (2005). In this study the authors investigated written text from well-known and established traditions: Confucianism and Taoism (China); Buddhism and Hinduism (South Asia); Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Western world). This intensive study of literature brought the authors to an interesting conclusion: courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence – or the six core virtues – were present across these different cultures, as well as across time, and place. The differences present between these virtues were found to be culturally determined and were mostly related to the importance of the virtue to the culture, and the frequency with which it manifested. Despite this variance, the authors concluded that the six core virtues were omnipresent with a high possibility of being universal. Once the VIA classification of strengths came into being, multiple researchers made use of it not only in their studies, but also aimed to replicate studies proving its relevance as a cross-cultural classification system.

One such study was done by Shimai, Otake, Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2006). The aim of the study was to look at American and Japanese youth and the presence of character strengths, the gender differences, and the link between character strengths and happiness. Results

indicated cultural similarities in the distribution of character strengths with love, humour, and kindness (showing the highest prevalence). In both cultures, genders reported similar strengths. Furthermore, both cultures showed a relationship between happiness and the character strengths of zest, hope, curiosity, and gratitude.

Littman-Ovadia and Lavy (2012) analysed the psychometric properties of the VIA inventory of strengths (VIA-IS). A Hebrew translation of the VIA-IS was presented to 635 Israeli adults. Findings suggested satisfactory reliability for all 24 character strengths, and further found that hope, gratitude, zest, curiosity, and love were associated with greater life satisfaction. Another extensive study that aimed to establish the cross-cultural reliability of the VIA classification of strengths recruited 1, 063, 921 participants from 75 countries over the course of 10 years (McGrath, 2014). In all 75 countries, a high consistency in self-description of character strengths were found. The study showed that the 24 character strengths in the VIA Classification of Strengths were held in high esteem, albeit in differing degrees, by all 75 countries. Furthermore, it was found that the most valued character strengths were honesty, fairness, kindness, judgement, and curiosity.

From a South African perspective, two separate studies, one done on the youth inventory and another on the basic VIA, found that the six virtues set out in die VIA Classifications of Strengths did not present in a similar way in a South African context (Van Eeden, Wissing, Dreyer, Park, & Peterson, 2014; Khumalo, Wissing, & Temane, 2008). However, the latter study did indicate that the VIA Classification of Strengths has sufficient reliability in the South African context. The study included 256 African students from three campuses of the North-West University. Results from the study showed that most of the character strengths had high reliability in this context. However, it was found that only three clusters emerged within the African context: integrity in group context, intrapersonal strengths and relationship strengths. This is further supported by Van Eeden et al. (2014) who found that within the South African context, the VIA presented with an emic factor pattern that highlights the African collective-cultural system. Theron, Theron, and Malindi (2012) conducted similar research using the VIA classification system in South Africa in which adults were asked to describe resilient Basotho youths. Findings proved that aspects such as social support; being value driven; academic achievement; having a goal; tolerance; and unique individual strengths predicted resilience.

Various other studies have been done within the South African context regarding the well-being and resilience of children and adolescents, but as mentioned before, not specifically using the VIA classification system nor exploring through a multicultural lens.

2.4 Character Strengths and Children

Youth must be seen as potential ready to be developed,
rather than problems needing to be managed
(Bowers, Geldhof, Johnson, Lerner & Lerner, 2014)

The positive impact of character strengths on the functioning of children is far-reaching. As discussed earlier in this chapter, character strengths, according to Seligman et al*.,* (2005) are essential to allow the individual to thrive. Issues of character strengths among the youth have received attention from parents, educators and policy makers (Park & Peterson, 2006). Studies have been conducted in a variety of settings and have been documented to enable young people to, *inter alia,* thrive, experience scholastic success, and to develop leadership skills (Park, 2004). Furthermore, good character, according to Proctor (2013) decreases the risk for psychological, behavioural and social problems among the youth. According to Park and Peterson (2009a) character strength may serve as a protective factor against disorders, by buffering the child against the effects of stress and trauma. In the same regard, research has shown that love, social intelligence and kindness contribute as moderating factors during times of trauma (Shoshani & Slone, 2015).

Wagner and Ruch (2015) also indicate that character strengths such as perseverance, self-regulation, prudence, social intelligence, and hope are associated with positive classroom behaviour while character strengths such as love of learning, perseverance, zest, gratitude, hope, and perspective are associated with academic achievement. Research conducted by Weber, Wagner, and Ruch (2016) further supports the positive connection between character strengths and success at school. Duckworth and Seligman (2005) found that the strength of self-regulation was a stronger indicator for academic achievement than IQ.

Decreases in internalising problems such as depression and anxiety disorders have been associated with the character strengths of hope, zest and leadership; decreases in externalising problems such as aggression have been associated with the character strengths of persistence,

honesty, prudence, and love (Park, 2009). Hunter and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) found that children who scored high in the character strengths of curiosity were more likely to be optimistic, hopeful, confident, and experienced a stronger sense of control over their own behaviour.

Park and Peterson (2006; 2009a; 2009b) indicated that love, zest and hope predicted happiness in young children, and that perseverance, love, gratitude, hope and temperance were linked to academic success in youths. Character strengths such as zest, love, perseverance, and social intelligence are associated with a higher prevalence of positive affect related to school; while teamwork, hope, self-regulation, and love mitigates negative school-related affect (Weber, Wagner, & Ruch, 2016). Proctor, Tweed, and Morris (2016) found that zest, bravery, honesty, leadership, and spirituality among youth aged 16 to 19 years correlated positively with the "fully functioning" person as described by Rogers (1961).

A 2006 study conducted by Park and Peterson requested parents to describe their children between the ages of three and nine years. Through content analysis the presence of the 24 VIA character strengths was established. The main findings of this study include an association between the character strengths of love, zest and hope, and happiness among young children. It was also interesting that in the 680 descriptions they received, all 24 character strengths were identified. However, according to the findings certain character strengths such as love, curiosity, kindness, creativity, and humour were mentioned most in the descriptions. As would be expected from children within this age group, character strengths that require more independent thinking such as judgement, gratitude, forgiveness, humility, and honesty were less common in the descriptions. From this study it became apparent that character strengths of the "heart" had a greater impact on happiness than character strengths of the "head" as it relates strongly to the quality of social relationships.

Park and Peterson's research (2006) informed the current study as it also used parental descriptions to identify the character strengths of children.

2.4.1 Character strengths within children: The educational context.

The above argument focused on the importance of character strengths in children's lives and highlighted the need for more research on the topic. This study will generate data that could be used in various domains. The knowledge of relevant character strengths may be utilised in our education system to aid the optimal academic development of children. According to Park

(2009), strengths of character can be developed and strengthened through schooling, developmental programmes specifically focused on children and youth, and also through parenting. The idea is that the development of a child's character should be viewed as even more important than the development of cognitive abilities (Yeo, 2011). From the literature it is clear that academic abilities and performance often stem from the presence of well-developed and well-used character strengths.

Within the educational context, curriculums are developed to focus on both academic skills and positive education (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). A review done by Waters (2011) indicated that multiple attempts have been made to develop the character strengths of children. The review found that children's' character strengths developed when they were exposed to character strengths in their curriculum. It further allowed the children to experience more enjoyment, hope, engagement, and academic confidence. As already mentioned, character strengths and academic performance are in a clear reciprocal relationship. Thus, character education aims to not only develop the character strengths of children, but to assist children in learning to use these strengths optimally (Linkins, Niemiec, Gillham, & Mayerson, 2015).

2.4.2 Character strengths within children: The family context.

The family context can be viewed as the "breeding ground" for character strengths. When considering the various strengths of character, some clear links with developmental literature can be made, which further stresses the relevance of family context. Bowlby (1969) postulated that attachment to a parent/ primary caregiver provides the basis for love in the child's life and possibly continues its influence into that of the adult's life. On the flipside, a poor attachment will lead to developmental problems such as poor emotional regulation, disruptive behaviour in school, and other externalising problems (Malekpour, 2007). This description is in stark contrast with the child who is thriving and doing well. Other developmental theories, such as Erikson (1963), shows that hope develops when the child feels safe and secure within their family context. As mentioned earlier, the character strength of hope is linked to thriving (Benson & Scales, 2009), positive classroom behaviour (Wagner & Ruch, 2015), and a lower frequency of internalising disorders (Park, 2009).

Parents/primary caregivers need to be actively involved in the development of children's strengths through exposing them to those activities and institutions geared toward building

strengths (Rashid, Anjum, Lennox, Quinlan, Niemiec, Mayerson, & Kazemi, 2013). Even though this study does not focus on parents, the parental descriptions of children will still provide some insight into the degree to which parents are aware of their child's strengths.

In the South African social context, children are faced with a myriad of obstacles against their best functioning. The statistics regarding South African children are concerning, to say the least: one in three young children in South Africa will be exposed to some form of sexual abuse (Etheridge, 2016); seven million children in South Africa live in the poorest 20% of homes (Statistics South Africa, 2010); according to Statistics South Africa (2013) between 82 000 and 143 000 children are part of a child-headed household. Considering these statistics, it becomes all the more apparent that strong action needs to be taken. It is hoped that the identification and use of character strengths might play a pivotal role in assisting the children of our nation to cope with these life events.

Chapter 3

Methodology

"One measures what one values, and values what one measures" (Park, 2009)

This chapter provides an in-depth look at the research design, the participants and method of recruitment, the procedure followed in data collection, and also an explanation pertaining to

the analysis of the data. Measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the current study and ethical conduct throughout will also be addressed.

3.1 Research Aim

This study aimed at providing insight into the character strengths of children between the ages of seven and ten years. By asking parents/primary caregivers from different racial groups the question *"what character strengths do your child between the ages of seven and ten years exhibit in various contexts?"* the researcher was able to design the study accordingly. As in all research, the aim, research question and limitations could only be answered and mitigated respectively by making use of an appropriate research design**.**

3.2 Research Design

An inductive qualitative approach (Patton, 1990) was used for this study. According to Thomas (2006), the purpose of an inductive research approach is three-fold. Firstly, it allowed the researcher to condense multiple descriptive essays into categories / strengths as set out in the VIA Classification of Strengths. Secondly, it provided a clear link between the research objective of identifying character strengths and the categories used. Finally it enabled the researcher to make use of the VIA Classification of Strengths as an underlying framework for the descriptions by parents. Thus, by applying an inductive approach the researcher was able to organise the broad parental descriptions into condensed themes and strengths.

According to Yin (2011), the research design provides guidance that assists the researcher to make and maintain the link between the research question/ aim, the data to be collected, and strategies for analysis of the data. Therefore, prior to undertaking this research study, special consideration was given to the desired outcome of this study, the participants that would be involved, and also the nature of the data to be collected. Since the nature of this study focused on interpreting parental descriptions, the conclusion was made that a qualitative approach would provide the ideal framework for this study as it focused on the way in which parents/ primary caregivers experience and interpret their children's behaviour, thoughts, and feelings (Brooks & King, 2017).

Finding a precise definition of qualitative research posed challenging as, according to Yin (2016), qualitative research is used in such a multitude of disciplines and for a multitude of

purposes. Despite this Denzin and Lincoln (1994) view qualitative research as a method used to study phenomena as they present in an undisturbed environment.

Table 3

Guiding Checklist of Qualitative Research

1	Establish meaning that parents/ primary caregivers associate with children's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.
2	Make use of an inductive approach as an existing theory is the foundation of the study.
3	Consider the children as a functioning whole: thoughts, feelings, and behaviour at home, school, and in interaction with others.
4	Obtain descriptions about how the child behaves in their everyday lives.
5	View parents/ primary caregivers' perspective as significant.
6	Emphasize why this research was particularly useful and significant.
7	All data obtained were to provide something useful.
8	Acknowledge that a qualitative research design will be changeable throughout the process.

Adapted: Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016)

A qualitative research design allowed the researcher to describe the character strengths of these young children from within their natural setting. An additional advantage of the use of a qualitative research design, as noted by Tracy (2013), is that qualitative research enables researchers to achieve a myriad of research goals, and furthermore allows for a better understanding of relevant issues with the purpose of making changes for the better. In this study this refers to the ability to identify character strengths of children and use this knowledge as a means of possibly developing and building on existing strengths through further research and endeavours.

As a means of addressing the aforementioned need, it was decided that a descriptive research method in the format of a multiple case study would guide the research. According to Algozinne and Hancock (2017) a descriptive research method allows for a comprehensive summary of the phenomenon under investigation within its context. In the case of this study it provided the opportunity to study the character strengths of children within their contexts. Since the researcher decided to make use of multiple parental descriptions, a multiple or collective case study design (Yin, 2003) was utilised. Algozinne and Hancock (2017) view

multiple case studies as a way of combining data from individual cases to provide a more thorough understanding of a phenomenon. Another advantage of making use of this type of design was that it allowed for descriptions of various children, consequently affording for well-rounded and well-founded data.

3.3 Participants and Recruitment Method

3.3.1 Participants.

The population of interest for this study was children between the ages of seven and ten years. However, the researcher had to take into consideration that children of this age would not have been able to provide comprehensive and relevant descriptions about themselves, their behaviour, thoughts, and feelings. According to Louw and Louw (2007), children in the life stage of early childhood do not have the emotional or cognitive capacity to 1) fully understand their own or others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, and 2) to express these in a comprehensive manner using language. Also, the VIA only provides an inventory for youths aged 10 to 17 which subsequently holds that children within the age group of this study would not have been able to complete an inventory. The above-mentioned limitations guided the researcher in establishing a way forward with the current study. It was decided that the parent/primary caregiver of children within the specified age group should be approached to take part in the study. This allowed the researcher a way around the limitation of such a young age.

Five middle class parents/primary caregivers of children between the ages of seven to ten years each from four different racial groups of South Africa were included in the study. The participants were recruited from the Black, Coloured, Indian, and White racial groups. This allowed the study to be equally representative in terms of racial composition. A total of twenty (20) parents/ primary caregivers participated. Inclusion criteria that were considered are outlined as follows:

- Should be a parent/primary caregiver of a child between the ages of seven and ten years;
- Must be proficient in reading and writing English;
- To ensure that the parent/primary caregiver that took part in the study had sufficient knowledge of the child, the parent/ primary caregiver had to reside with the child at the time of the study;
- Essays needed to be accompanied by a signed informed consent form.

Table 4

Demographic Breakdown of Participants

Participant	Province	Relationship with child	Age of child	Sex of child
Black				
Participant 1	Gauteng	Parent	Nine years	Male
Participant 2	North West	Parent	Ten years	Male
Participant 3	North West	Parent	Seven years	Female
Participant 4	North West	Parent	Seven years	Male
Participant 5	North West	Parent	Seven years	Male
Coloured				
Participant 1	Northern Cape	Parent	Nine years	Female
Participant 2	Northern Cape	Parent	Seven years	Male
Participant 3	North West	Parent	Seven Years	Male
Participant 4	North West	Parent	Eight years	Male
Participant 5	North West	Parent	Ten years	Female
Indian				
Participant 1	Free State	Parent	Nine years	Female
Participant 2	Gauteng	Parent	Seven years	Female
Participant 3	Gauteng	Parent	Ten years	Female
Participant 4	Gauteng	Parent	Seven years	Female
Participant 5	Gauteng	Parent	Ten years	Female
White				
Participant 1	North West	Parent	Seven years	Female
Participant 2	North West	Parent	Seven years	Male
Participant 3	Gauteng	Parent	Nine years	Male
Participant 4	Gauteng	Parent	Nine years	Female
Participant 5	North West	Parent	Seven years	Female

Table 5

Combined Demographic Table of Participants

	Mean age of child	**Relationship to child**
Black	8 years	3 Fathers; 2 Mothers
Coloured	8 years	5 Mothers
Indian	8.6 years	5 Mothers
White	7.8 years	1 Father; 4 Mothers

3.3.2 Recruitment of participants.

For this particular study, 20 participants were recruited. Due to the fact that the researcher did not aim at making a generalisation of character strengths across racial groups, nonprobability sampling techniques (Kalton, 1983) were employed. Purposive sampling (MacNealy, 1999) allowed the researcher to include participants that fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Additionally, snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) was utilised as the researcher did not have direct access to potential participants.

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006), in purposive sampling, cases are selected for theoretical reasons that are considered good examples of the phenomenon. Thus, a couple of participants fulfilling the inclusion criteria were asked for voluntary participation. These participants were then asked to identify other parents/primary caregivers within their racial group, with children between the ages of seven and ten years.

The task of finding participants who met the criteria had been challenging. It forced the researcher to explore various avenues of finding participants for the research study. The researcher approached the recruitment in three ways that adhered to the initial purposive and snowball sampling as discussed. First the researcher contacted friends, family, and acquaintances known to have children within the designated age group. Second, the researcher asked for information of potential participants from friends, family and acquaintances and subsequently contacted these individuals. Third, the researcher asked known individuals to send the research information to potential participants within their immediate circle. This provided the researcher with a broadened field of potential participants.

3.4 Data Collection

The researcher considered the least threatening way for a parent/primary caregiver to describe their child and consequently decided on written descriptions. Through allowing the parent/primary caregiver to describe their children in this manner, the researcher was provided with an image of the child's character as exhibited in day-to-day behaviour (within relationships, at home and at school).

The use of descriptive essays was advantageous to the researcher for multiple reasons. It enabled the researcher to present a question(s) on which the participants had to respond (Moon, 2006). Descriptive essays further aided the researcher in ensuring that the essays stayed within the expectations of the research and allowed detailed explorations (Glaser, 2014). Asking parents/primary caregivers to write about their children meant that the researcher was able to form a picture of the way in which the child's character strengths played out in specific situations. Parental descriptions made it possible to produce naturalistic data since 1) the researcher did not interfere with the exhibition of character strengths, and 2) the data were present even before the researcher conducted the study (Hesse-Biber & Leary, 2011). Character strengths were not intentionally brought out in the child's day-to-day behaviour merely because a study would be conducted. The character strengths identified through this study are those that the child would have exhibited prior to and regardless of the study, and possibly will continue to exhibit after the study.

A descriptive essay is a data collection method that is regularly used by researchers. Kohnstamm, Halverson, Mervielde, and Havill (1998) made use of personality descriptions from parents of children aged two to thirteen years; Park and Peterson (2006) used parental descriptions in a similar manner to the current study looking at character strengths and happiness in children aged three to nine years; within a different context; and Jones-Smith (2012) described how parental descriptions can be used in psychotherapy with children to establish how the child perceives their place in the family.

The focus of the essay was guided by an initial open-ended question:

Please write a description, in essay form, of your child as he/ she behaves in various contexts (at school, at home, with friends).

This was followed up by a further breakdown of what was expected from the participant:

You are welcome to refer to the way your child interacts with others, and also how he/ she reacts to certain situations or events. Please limit your essay to one page. At the end of the essay I should have a better understanding of your child.

This question was also translated into two other official South African languages (Afrikaans and Sesotho). A translator was retained on an ad hoc basis to translate the open-ended question according to the language needs of the participants. However, this service was not utilised, as all participants were able, and freely chose, communication in Afrikaans and predominantly English.

Password-protected essays were then emailed back to the researcher for analysis. Participants were not restricted as to what they could include in their essay. The nature of the essay allowed participants to write only one essay about their child. Participants were also only allowed to write about one of their children that fit within the designated age group.

3.5 Data Analysis

For the purpose of this study, content analysis (Krippendorf, 1980) was used. Content analysis refers to "any qualitative data reduction and sense making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Essentially, content analysis allowed the researcher to take broad descriptions of the phenomenon of character strengths, and condense it into existing virtues and strengths of character as described in the VIA Classification of Strengths. The 24 character strengths in the VIA Classification of Strengths were encoded using content analysis.

Prior to coding, the researcher familiarised herself with the data. Essays were read, and re-read. To code the virtues and strengths the researcher numbered the virtues from one to six, and made use of abbreviations to indicate the strengths (e.g. Curiosity = Cu; Perseverance = Pe). While reading the descriptive essays, the researcher kept the 24 character strengths in mind. The descriptive essays were encoded line by line. Once a potential strength was identified, the descriptions of character strengths in the VIA Classification of Strengths were used as a reference. When the researcher established that a parental description complied with the VIA Classification of Strengths, the appropriate code was assigned (see Appendix A). This process was repeated with all 20 descriptive essays.

After all 20 descriptive essays had been read and encoded; the researcher recorded the identified strength, together with the parental description of the character strength. Examples of the descriptions are provided in table 6. A total of 20 parental descriptions were coded. Descriptions were an average of 1671 words, and brought forth approximately 14 character strengths per essay.

Additionally, a weighting between one and three was given to each identified character strength: *one* indicated a vague description of the character strength; *two* represented a fair description; and a weighting of *three* referred to a direct and clear description of the character strength (see Appendices D through W). By adding a weight to the character strength, the researcher was able to present not only the presence of a character strength, but also how strong it features in the child's day-to-day existence.

As a means of establishing the significance of the data analysed, the frequency as well as the weighting of the character strengths were added up. Although the study was not aimed at comparing character strengths between different racial groups, making use of quasi statistics allowed the researcher to identify possible areas of future research.

Appendix one provides an overview of the character strengths identified, the number of times they were present in the description, and the weighting of the character strength.

Through the data analysis process discussed above, parents' experience of their children were deduced to distinct character strengths, through comparison with the clusters set out in the VIA Classification of Strengths. For the purpose of triangulation, two individuals; the researcher and the research supervisor, independently coded the descriptive essays.

Table 6

Examples of Parental Descriptions of Sstrengths

Strength	Parental Description
Creativity (C)	"…creative, artistic 9 year old…"
Curiosity (Cu)	"…very inquisitive…"
Judgement (J)	"…very open-minded child."

Love of learning (LL)	"…keen to learn new things."
Perspective (P)	"…open-minded when it comes to accepting other cultures and religions."
Bravery (B)	"…does not stand back for any challenge."
Perseverance (Pe)	"…will not give up until she gets it right."
Honesty (H)	"…leaves notes around the house…with words of apology."
Zest (Z)	"…and embraces everything whole-heartedly."
Love (L)	"…she loves her friends."
Kindness (K)	"Where there is a need to assist he is always ready…"
Social Intelligence (SI)	"…notices when another family member is feeling down…"
Teamwork (T)	"…likes taking part in team activities."
Fairness (F)	"She likes standing up for those who cannot defend themselves."
Leadership (Le)	"…natural leader…"
Forgiveness (Fo)	"…forgives easily…"
Humility (Hu)	"…may even exaggerate (her friends') strong points to make them feel good about themselves."
Prudence (Pr)	"…and walks away when there is mischief happening so that she does not get into trouble."
Self-regulation (SR)	"…can handle other disappointments well…"
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (A)	"…found pleasure in music and dance."
Gratitude (G)	"…always appreciates the help provided by the teachers."
Hope (Hop)	
Humour (Hu)	"…likes jokes a lot…"
Spirituality (Sp)	"…passionate and intense in her Christian beliefs."

3.6. Trustworthiness

3.6.1 Credibility.

Credibility may be regarded as the most important aspect of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, various methods of triangulation were used. Triangulation aided in ensuring the validity of the research through making use of various viewpoints (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Denzin (1970) proposed that triangulation could be achieved through multiple avenues: by using data from multiple sources; allowing more than one investigator to analyse data; and through multiple methods of data gathering. This study met the above-mentioned criteria in the following ways: multiple case studies were used; theory triangulation (Patton, 1999) was done through making use of the existing theory of the VIA Classification of Strengths to examine the data, as well as various psychological theories including but not limited to learning theories of Bandura (1977) and Vygotsky (1962), Erikson's theory on psychosocial development (1959), the cognitive development tehory of Piaget (1923), and theories of religious development of Elkind (1964; 1970); the researcher kept a reflexive journal during the research process; and analyst triangulation (Patton, 1999) was ensured through parental descriptions being analysed by not only the researcher, but also the supervisor to this study; finally the researcher had contacted participants when it had been needed to clarify information.

Patton (1999) also suggests that the credibility of the researcher plays an important role in the overall credibility of the study. The credibility of this study is further built upon by the fact that the research was conducted under strict supervision. Since the researcher had limited experience and knowledge in research at the time of this study, an ethical committee cleared the study prior to its undertaking. This was done to ensure that the study was not harmful to those involved and that it upheld the ethical standards of the institution. Additionally the researcher had continuous contact with the supervisor of this study. Through supervision the researcher was supported and guided in the research process.

3.6.2 Transferability.

Guba (1981) referred to transferability as the possibility of research findings to be applied to other contexts outside the study situation. This is mostly done through a thorough description of the research process as this allows other researchers a glimpse into what happened and how to replicate it should they wish to (Guba, 1981). In the case of the current study the researcher gave a comprehensive description of the number of participants that were used, as well as the provinces in which they were based. Inclusion criteria were also clearly stated; for the sake of

thoroughness, the descriptive essay that was used as data collection method was discussed. The character strengths that form the basis of this study were provided in table 2. Although the responsibility to transfer findings does not fall on the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) nor is it the intended outcome of this study, the information provided will allow future researchers to understand the way in which the process and findings of this study can be generalised to other contexts.

3.6.3 Dependability.

As a means of ensuring the dependability of the study and its findings, data analysis was conducted by a second researcher. Through this process it was possible to ensure that the findings of the analysis were similar, which consequently added to the dependability of the study (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). Through keeping detailed record of data and the results of the analysis of the aforementioned data, dependability can be ensured (Campbell, 1996). Thus, the researcher ensured that the raw data, as well as the process of content analysis applied to the parental descriptions, were clearly noted. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that a thorough record was kept of interaction with the supervisor of this research study. Challenges and the subsequent solutions were discussed and recorded. The researcher also followed the suggestion by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2010) of keeping a personal research diary to increase dependability. Thus, throughout the process the researcher kept a journal in which personal bias, feelings, challenges, choices, and decisions were recorded.

3.6.4 Confirmability.

Shenton (2004) states that triangulation has an important role in establishing confirmability. Thus, through 1) theory triangulation and 2) analyst triangulation, the confirmability of this study was achieved. This was done to ensure that the bias of the researcher was minimised.

The researcher was also in a process of self-reflection as a means of staying aware of own biases. For example, as some individuals presented with fewer identified character strengths, the researcher had to be aware of any descriptions or other information that might have blinded the researcher to character strengths that were present, or those that were in all actuality absent. A second coder allowed for the identification and rectification of any bias that might have presented itself in the content analysis stage. Furthermore, for the sake of confirmability, the researcher made available a couple of anonymous essays, together with their analysis sheets. This assisted in allowing for transparency of the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In approaching the study, the researcher took into consideration the research guidelines for psychologists conducting research as set out in the Health Professions Act No. 56 of 1974.

Prior to obtaining data, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of the Free State. The researcher was granted final ethical clearance on the 24th of July 2017 (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2016/1386) and subsequently undertook the process of data collection.

Before any data were collected, all participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B). As part of the informed consent process, the participants were provided with an information sheet that delineated the nature, procedure and potential advantages of the study (see Appendix C). This allowed the participants to have a comprehensive understanding of the study in which they were taking part. The consent form provided all the relevant and ethical information pertaining to the study. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the research at any moment. Partial anonymity of participants was ensured by allowing for the use of pseudonyms in the descriptions. Most of the participants mentioned their children's names in the essays. As part of upholding the ethical standards of this study, all identifying information such as names of children, schools, churches etc. were removed. A number was assigned to each essay as means for the researcher to keep track of the data.

All steps were taken to ensure that no harm was done to participants. Although no harm or distress to participants were expected, the researcher nonetheless provided the contact information of an appropriate professional as part of the informed consent form. Prior to obtaining data, an agreement was made that the researcher would be willing to provide three therapy sessions to all participants who felt the need. Dr Nel ek weet nie hoe ek hierdie moet antwoord nie.

Further information provided included the names and telephone numbers of both the researcher and supervisor of the study. The informed consent form was signed by both the researcher and supervisor of this study, and finally by the participant.

At the conclusion of the study, the data (both electronic and hard copies) was stored in a safe and secure location. Electronic versions of data were transferred to a USB data stick. After the transfer data was deleted from the computer used for this study. The USB stick together with the hard copies of data was then stored in a safe in the researchers home. The data of this study will be kept safe and secure for the next seven years.

Chapter 4

Findings

This study set out to identify character strengths of children aged seven to ten years. Through a process of content analysis as proposed by Krippendorf (1980) character strengths in parental descriptions were identified. The prevalence of each character strength in the individual descriptions, as well as in total for all 20 descriptions, were identified and coded. As a means of gauging how strong the character strength manifested, a weighting from one to three was awarded to each identified character strength. A weighting of one (1) referred to a vague description of the strength, a two (2) weighting referred to a satisfactory interpretation, and finally a weighting of three (3) entailed a direct and clear description. In total, 284 indications of character strengths were identified within 20 parental descriptions. Findings are presented hereafter in order of predominance per group.

4.1 Character Strengths of the Black Participants

Figures 1 to 5 provide an overview of the findings yielded for the individuals in this group. Figure 6 presents the prevalence and weighting of character strengths within the whole group of black participants.

Figure 1. Bennie: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

Figure 2. Bert: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

Figure 3. Betty: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

Figure 4. Barry: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

Figure 5. Blake: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
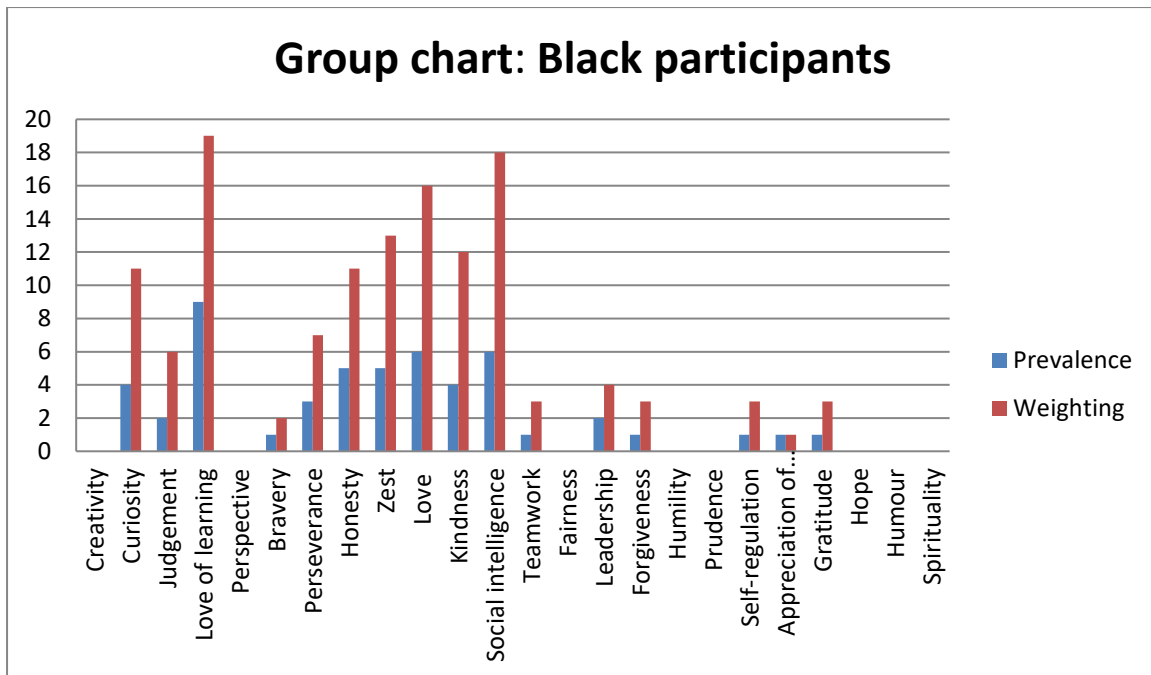
Figure 6. Combined Graph for the Total Group of Black Participants

In total, 53 character strengths were identified within the five descriptions analysed for this group.

The character strength of **love of learning** was present in the description of all five children in this group. Descriptions that led to the identification of this character strength included: *"...keen to learn new things"*, *"...doing well in his academic tasks"*, *"...bright kid..."*, *"...at school she is excelling"*, and *"...she doesn't want to miss school"*. The second most prevalent character strength in this racial group was **social intelligence**. Four of the five children exhibited this character strength. Descriptions included: *"He mingles with other kids well..."*, *"...enjoys himself with friends who have similar interests and values"*, *"...asks them (people) about themselves"*, *"When I talk to him he responds in a good manner"*, and *"...feels bad about something he will say it out"*.

The virtues of **temperance** and **transcendence** were poorly represented. Within this group the following specific character strengths were not identified: **creativity, perspective, fairness, humility, prudence, hope, humour,** and **spirituality**.

4.2 Character Strengths of the Coloured Participants

Figure 7 through 11 provide an overview of the findings yielded for the individuals in this group. Figure 12 depicts the prevalence and weighting of the character strengths for the whole Coloured racial group.
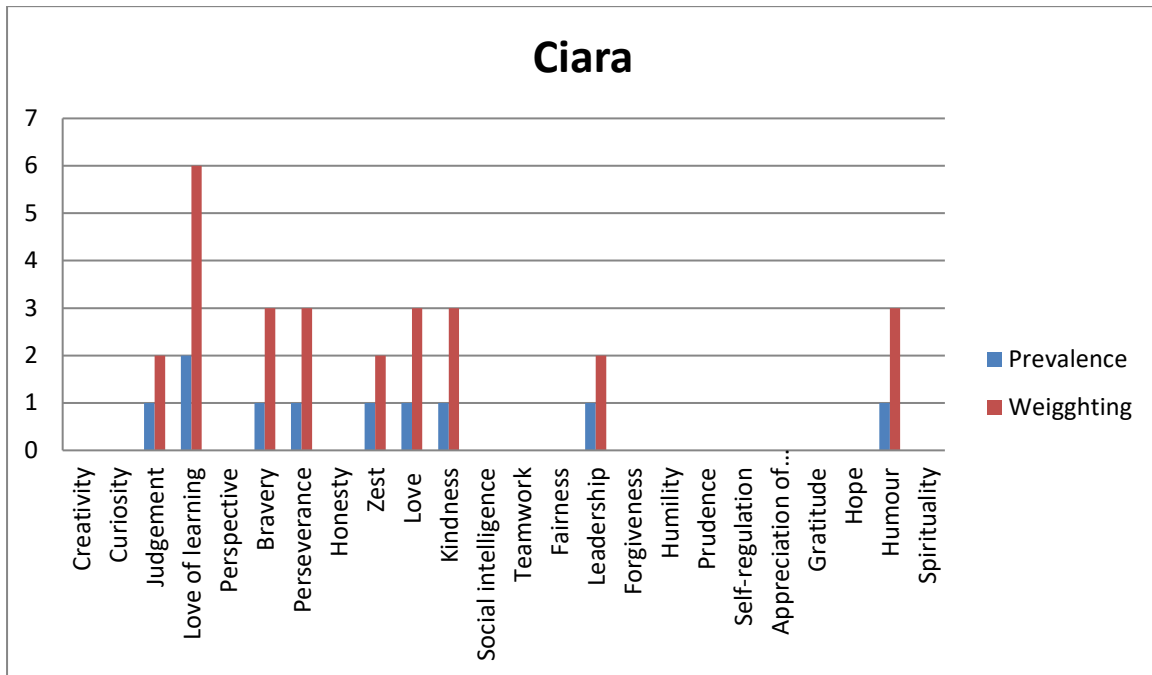
Figure 7. Ciara: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
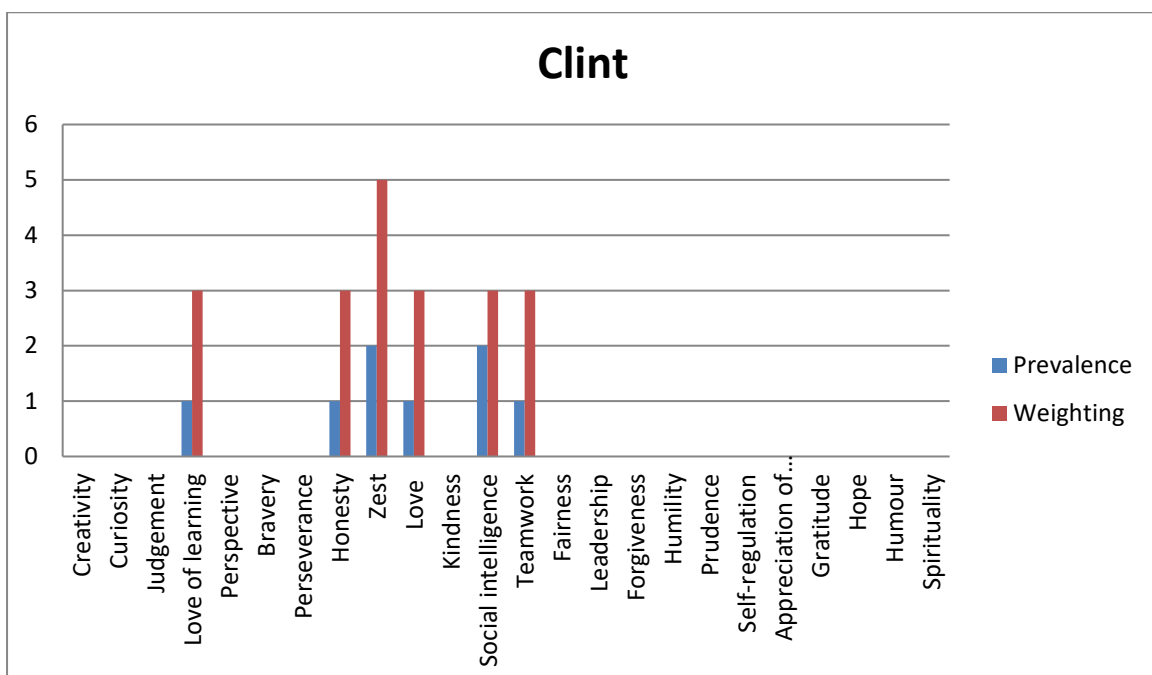
Figure 8. Clint: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
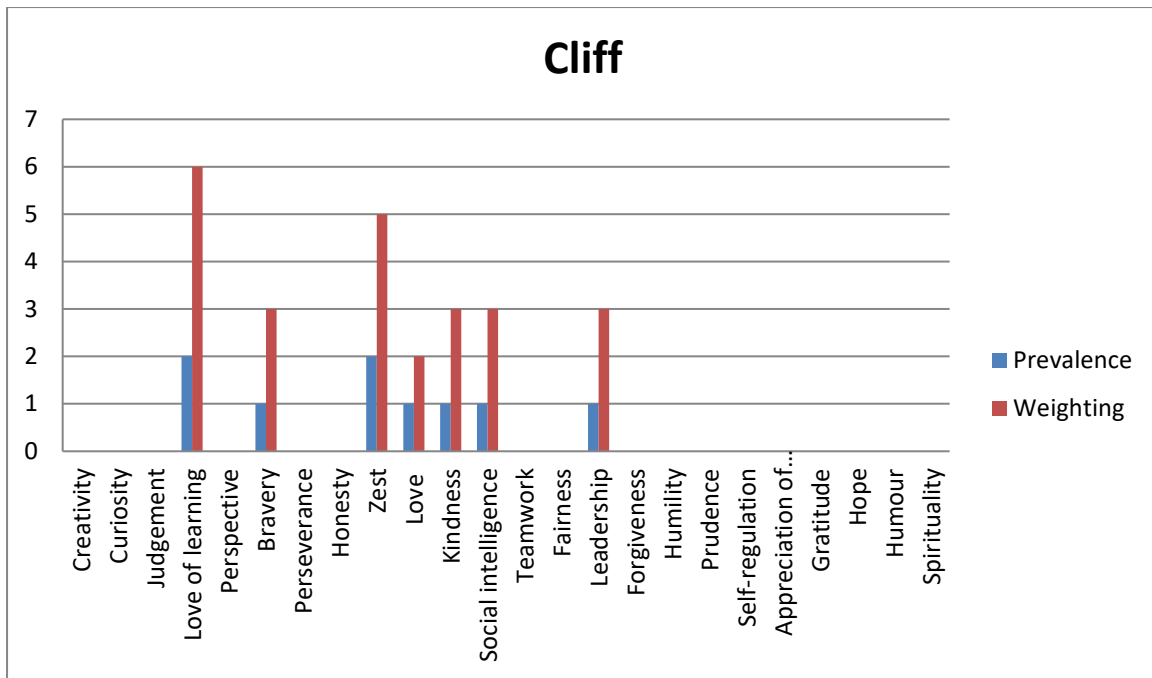
Figure 9. Cliff: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
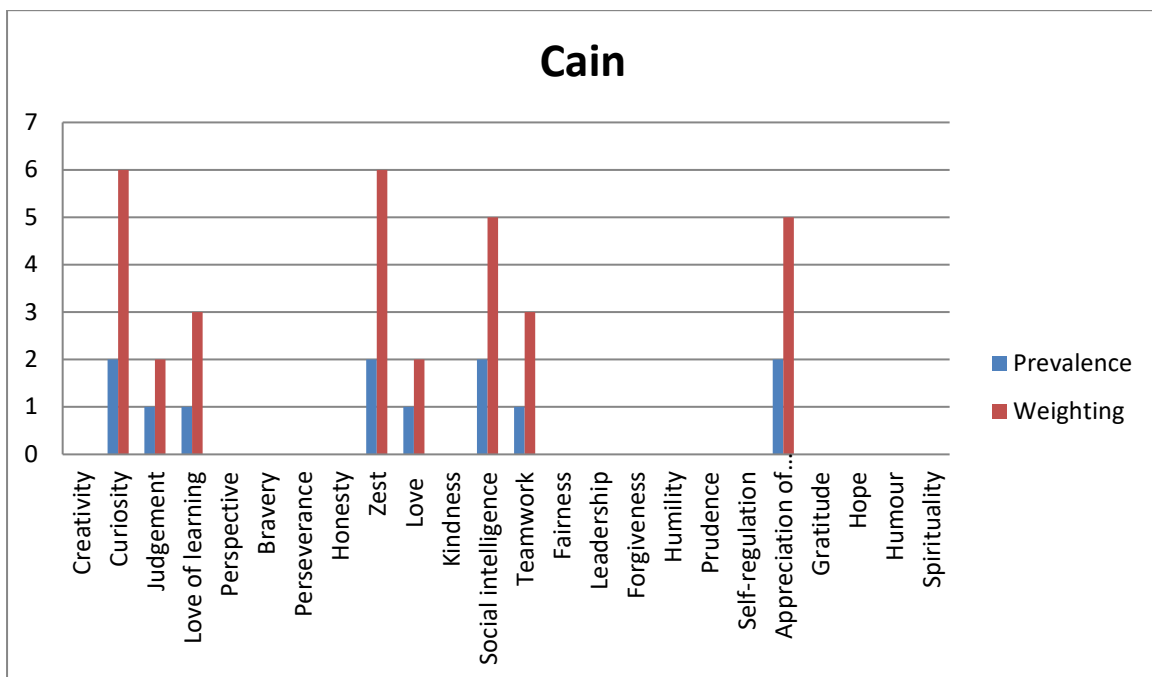
Figure 10. Cain: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
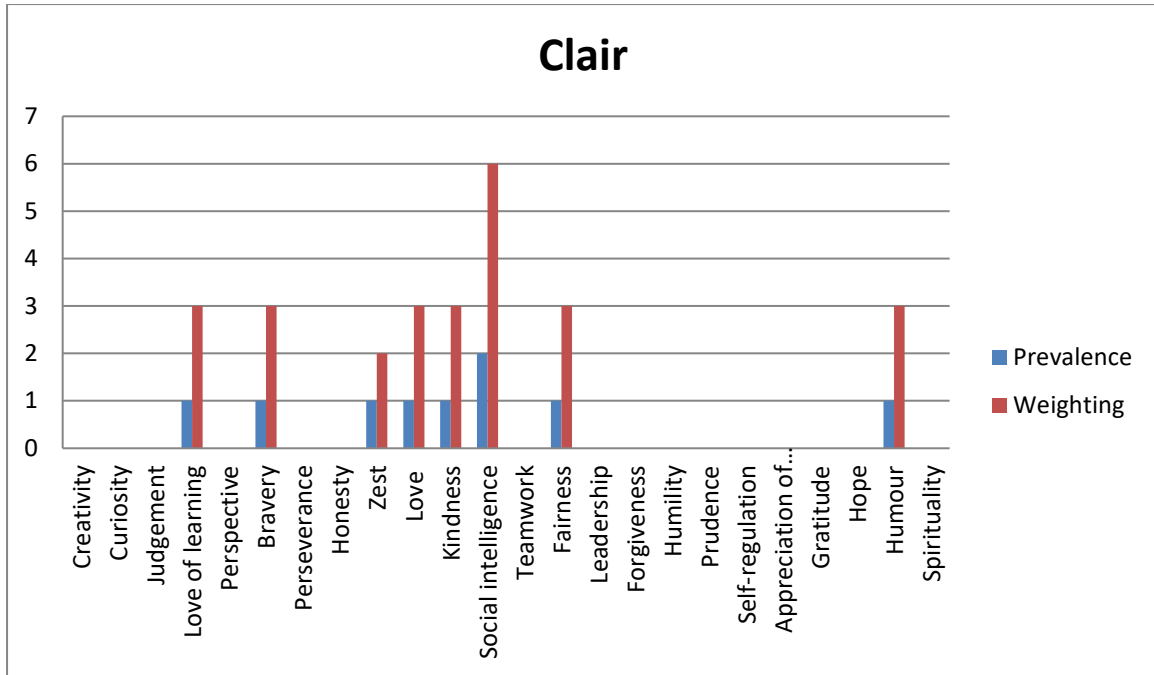
Figure 11. Clair: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
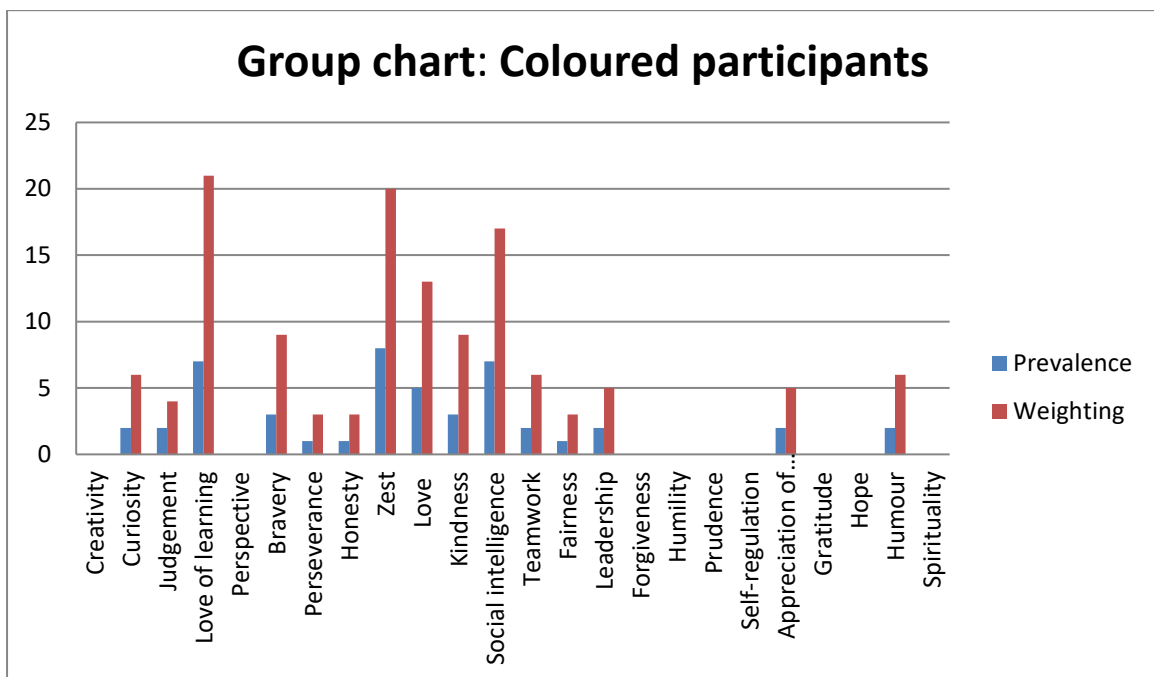
Figure 12. Combined Graph for the Total Group of Coloured Participants

In total, 48 character strengths were identified within the five descriptions analysed for this group.

Within this group, **love of learning, zest**, and s**ocial intelligence** were evident in most of the children's daily behaviour. **Love of learning** was identified in descriptions such as: *"…likes studying hard…"*, *"…gives her best to do well in her subjects"*, *"…keeps up with the latest trends and music"*, *"He does well in school…"*, and *"…she is one of the top achievers at school"*. **Zest** was identified in descriptions such as: *"He likes doing things in a big way"*, *"He has loads of energy"*, *"…enjoys taking part in the school's activities"*, *"…one who cannot sit still"*, *"…wild and care free"*, *"very friendly, laughs and talks a lot"*. **Social intelligence** was identified in descriptions such as: *"…can fit in easily (with others.")*, *"…can sympathise with someone when they are sad"*, *"He interacts well with his friends"*, *"He is a people's person"*, and *"He is sensitive and in tune with others' feelings"*.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that no strengths within the **temperance** virtue group was identified. Also, the virtue of **transcendence** exhibited a low prevalence of strengths with the only strengths identified being **appreciation of beauty and excellence** (only twice) and **humour** (only twice).

4.3 Character Strengths of the Indian Participants

Figure 13 through 17 provide an overview of the findings yielded for the individuals in this group. Figure 18 depicts the prevalence and weighting of the character strengths for the whole group of Indian participants.
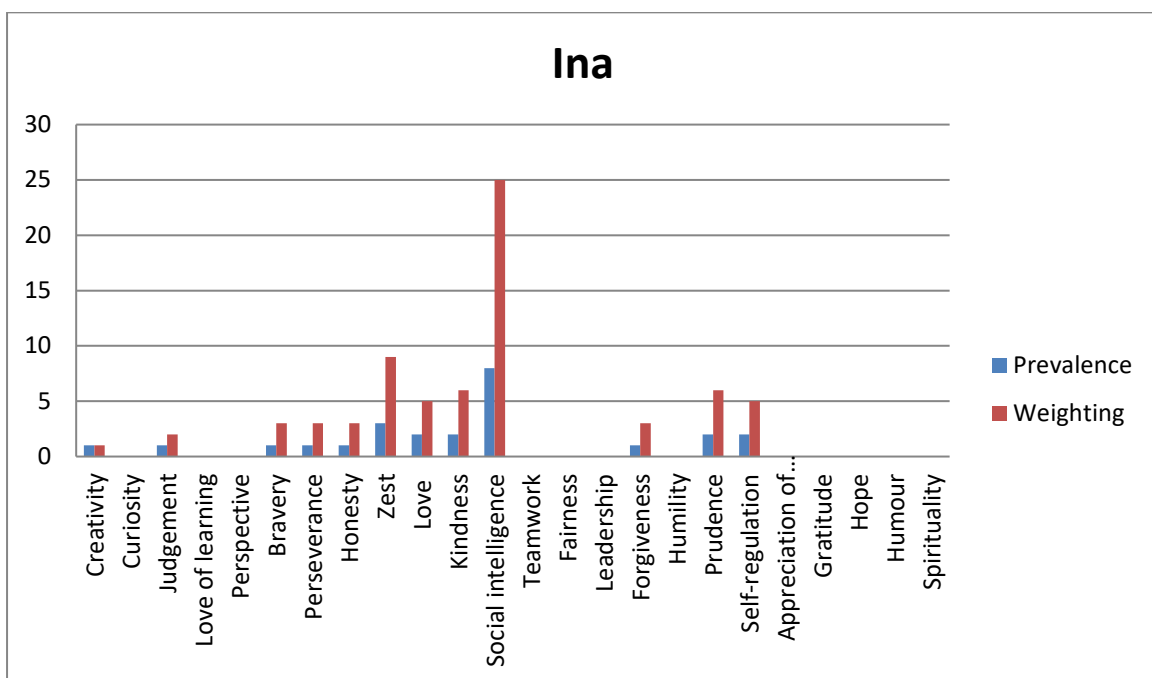
Figure 13. Ina: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
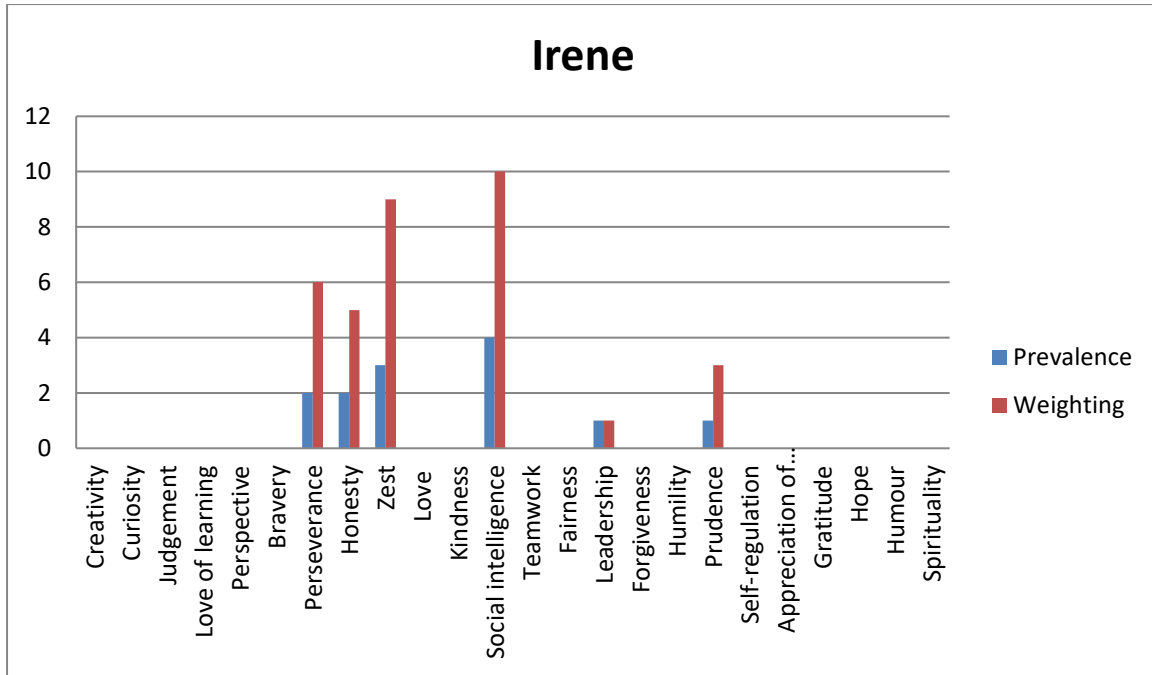
Figure 14. Irene: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
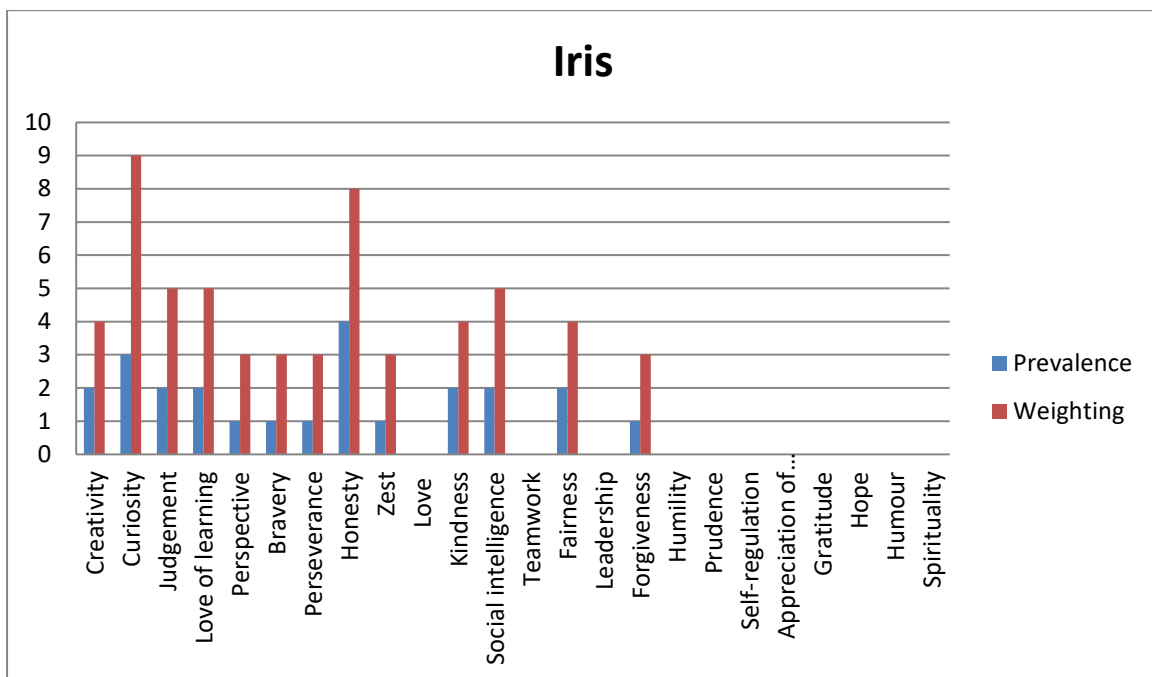
Figure 15. Iris: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
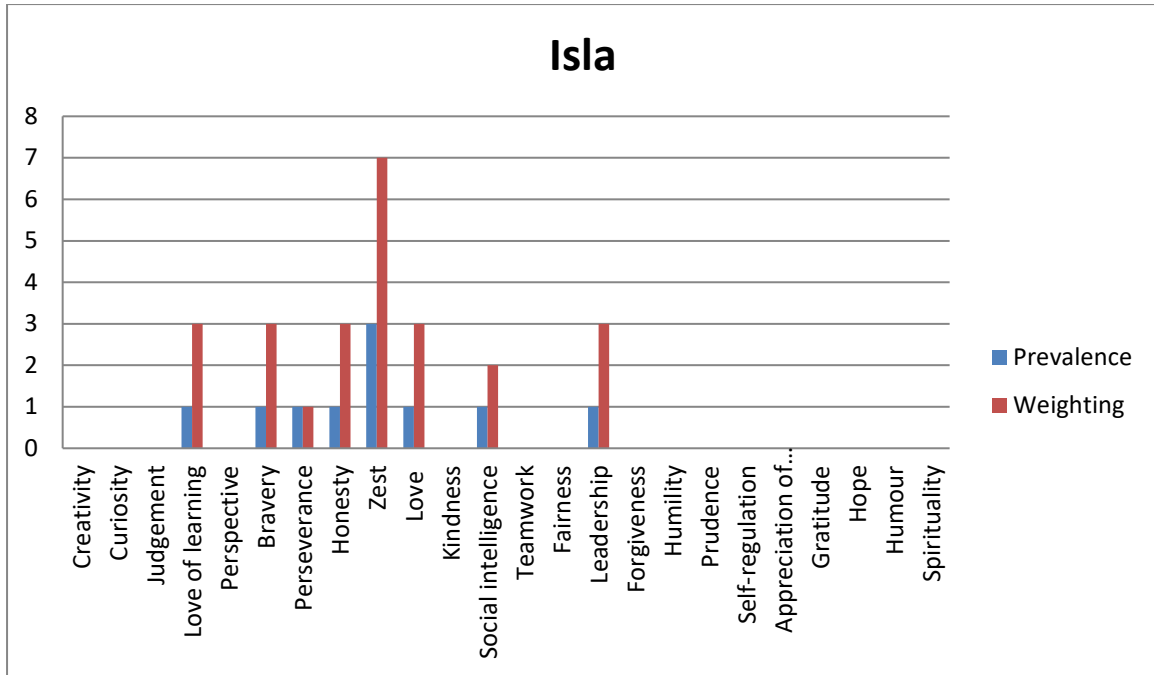
Figure 16. Isla: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
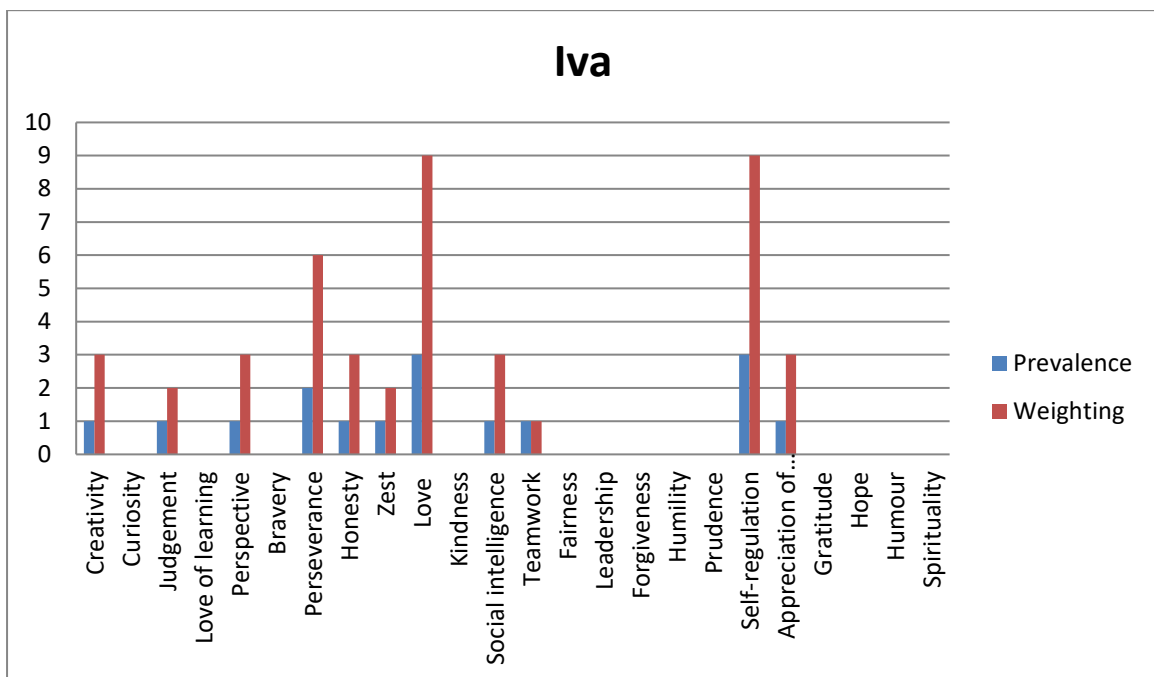
Figure 17. Iva: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
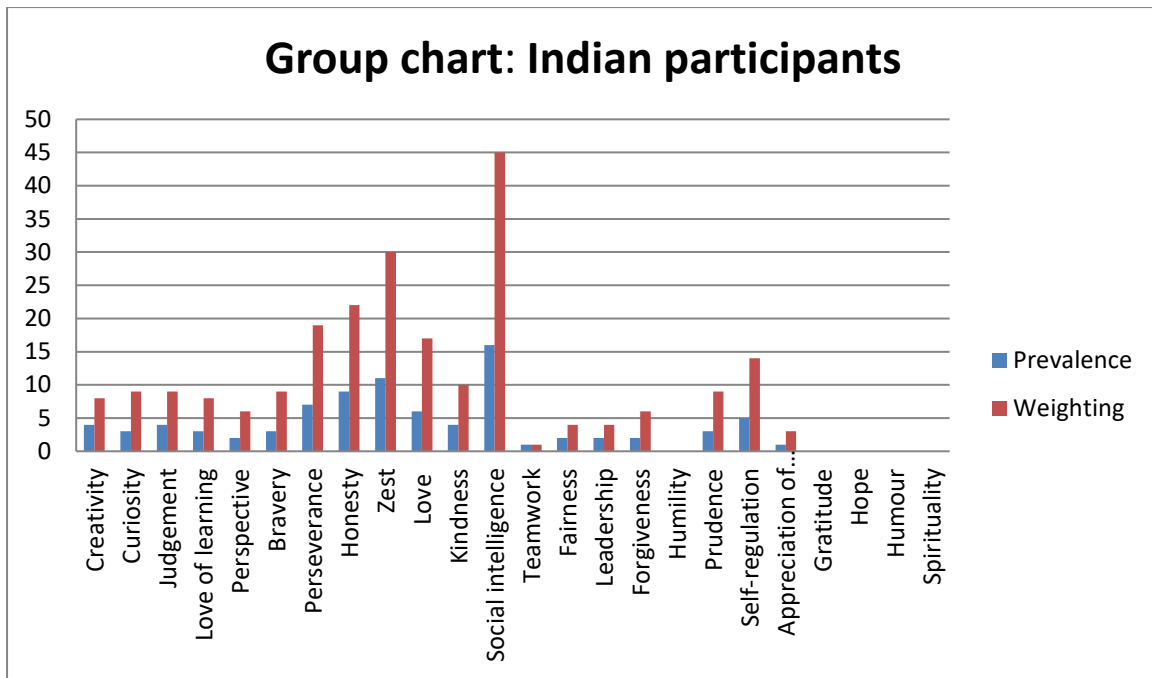
Figure 18. Combined Graph for Total Group of Indian Participants

In total, 89 character strengths were identified within the five descriptions analysed for this group.

Noteworthy about this group is that all five children portray **perseverance, honesty, zest,** and **social intelligence** as character strengths. **Social intelligence** emerged frequently from this group. Multiple direct and clear descriptions were identified and interpreted as indicators of social intelligence. **Perseverance** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...the horse threw her... then she wanted to go back to horse-riding"*, *"...when focused she does what she needs to..."*, *"...will then practice until she betters herself"*, *"...she is more focused (in class)..."*, *"When it comes to school she is always on top of her deliverables..."*, *"...sense of perseverance...will try something until she gets it right"*. **Honesty** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...expresses herself openly"*, *"...voices her dislike..."*, *"...has her own style and interests"*, *"...able to express her feelings..."*, *"...comfortable in her own skin..."*, *"...finds comfort in being able to express herself"*, *"...constant with who she is"*, and *"...she shows how she really feels"*. **Zest** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...does what she needs to with zeal and passion"*, *"...also likes to try new things..."*, *"...she is not afraid of new experiences and embraces it wholeheartedly..."*, *"...when she had to change ballet school she was up for it..."*, *"...bubbly..."*, *"...enjoys baking, singing, and dancing..."*, and *"...loud...free..."*. The following descriptions indicated the presence of **social intelligence**:

"...plays well with others and can make friends easily", *"...very pleasant and has to date not gotten into any trouble"*, *"...very considerate of them..."*, *"...has had good relationships with her teachers..."*, *"She plays well with children of all ages..."*, *"...and walks away when there is mischief happening so that she does not get into trouble"*, *"...well behaved with others..."*, *"...interacts well with children of all ages and adults"*, *"...finds it easy to communicate with all ages"*, and *"...differs in different situations"*.

No example of the character strength of **humility** was identified. The virtue group of **transcendence** showed the presence of only one character strength: **appreciation of beauty and excellence** (only once).

4.4 Character Strengths of the White Participants

Figure 19 through 23 provide an overview of the findings yielded for the individuals in this group. Figure 24 depicts the prevalence and weighting of the character strengths for the whole group of White participants.
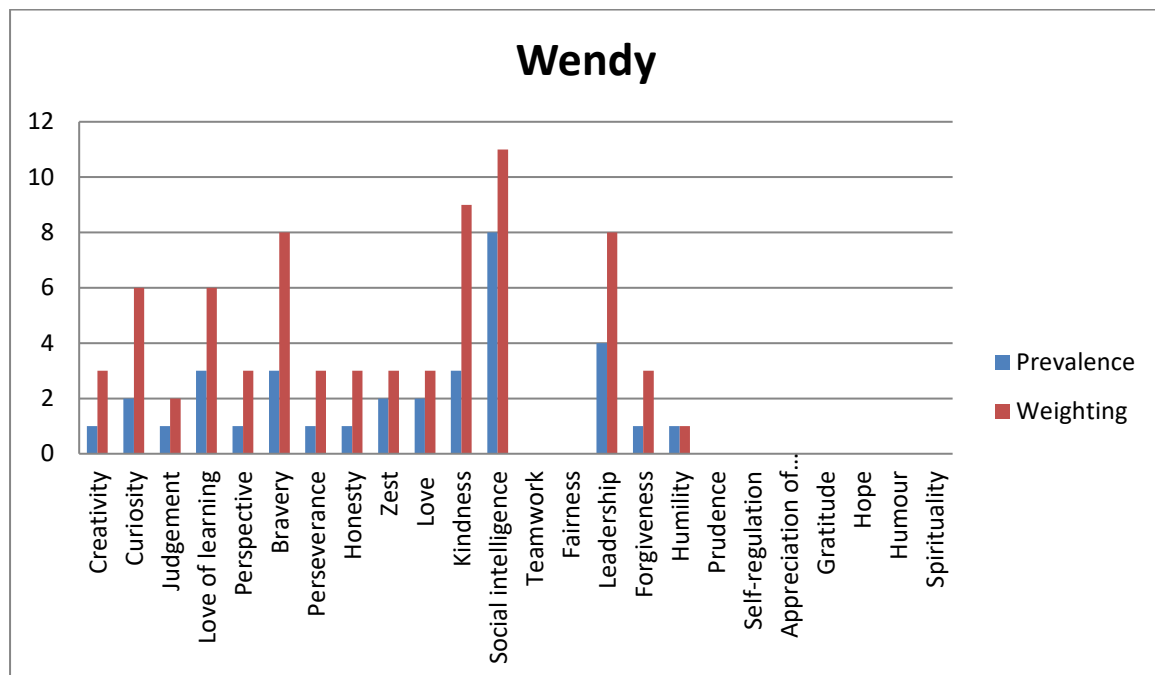
Figure 19. Wendy: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
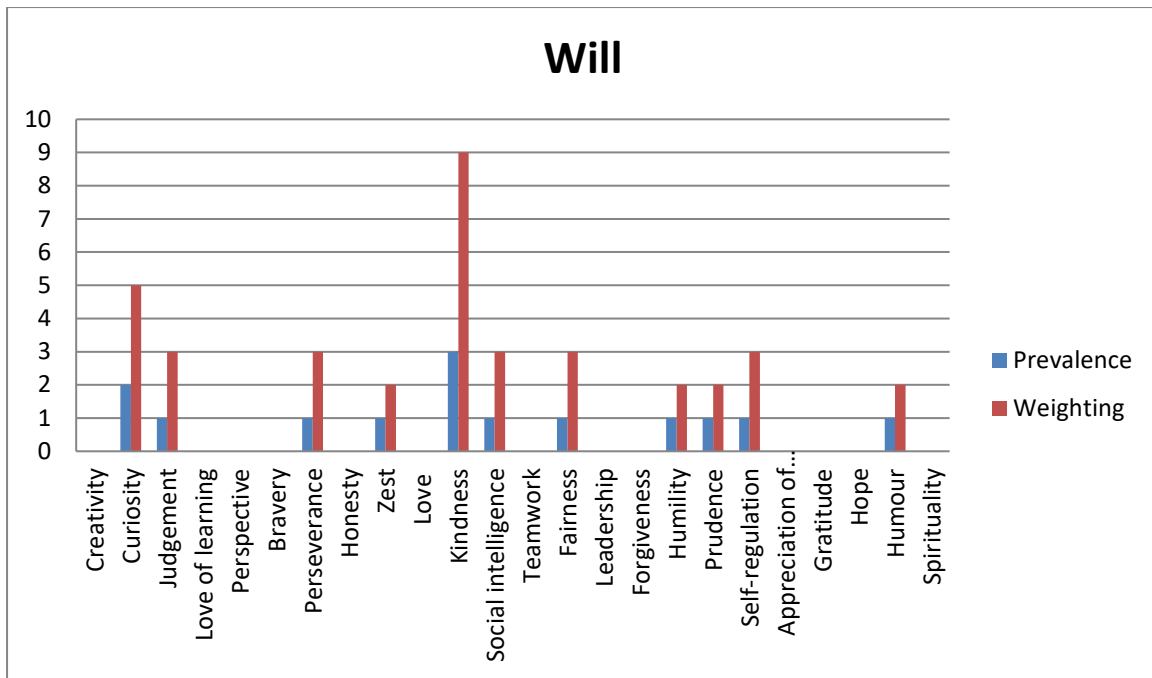
Figure 20. Will: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

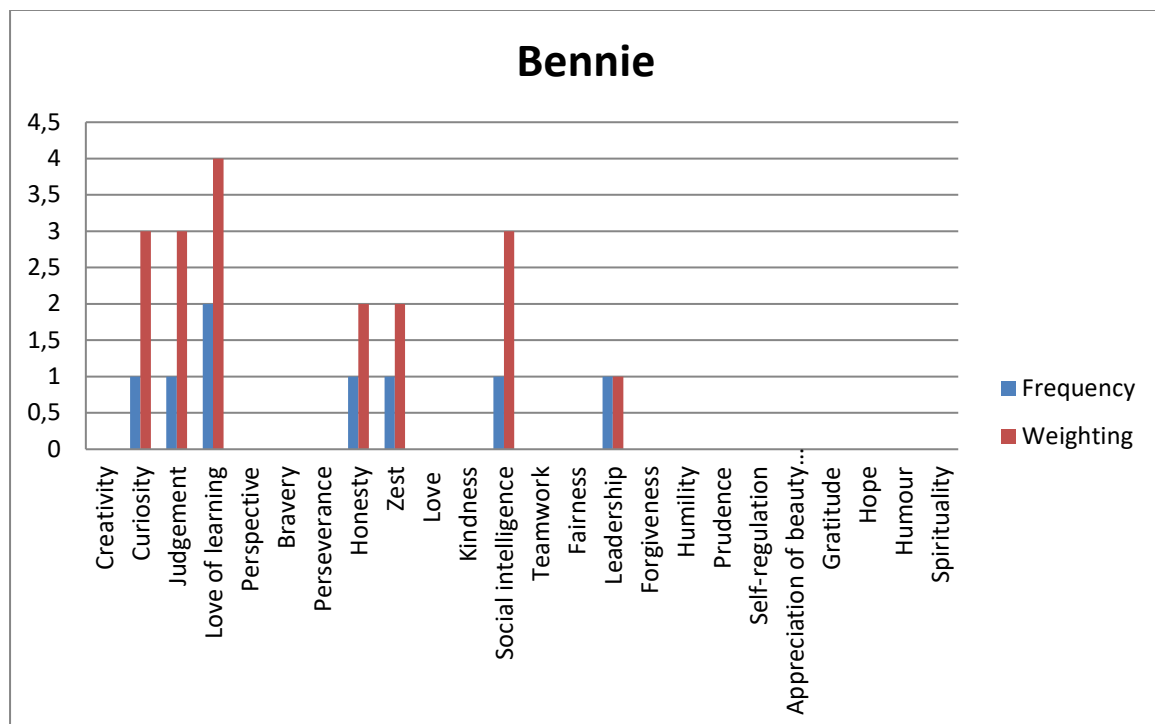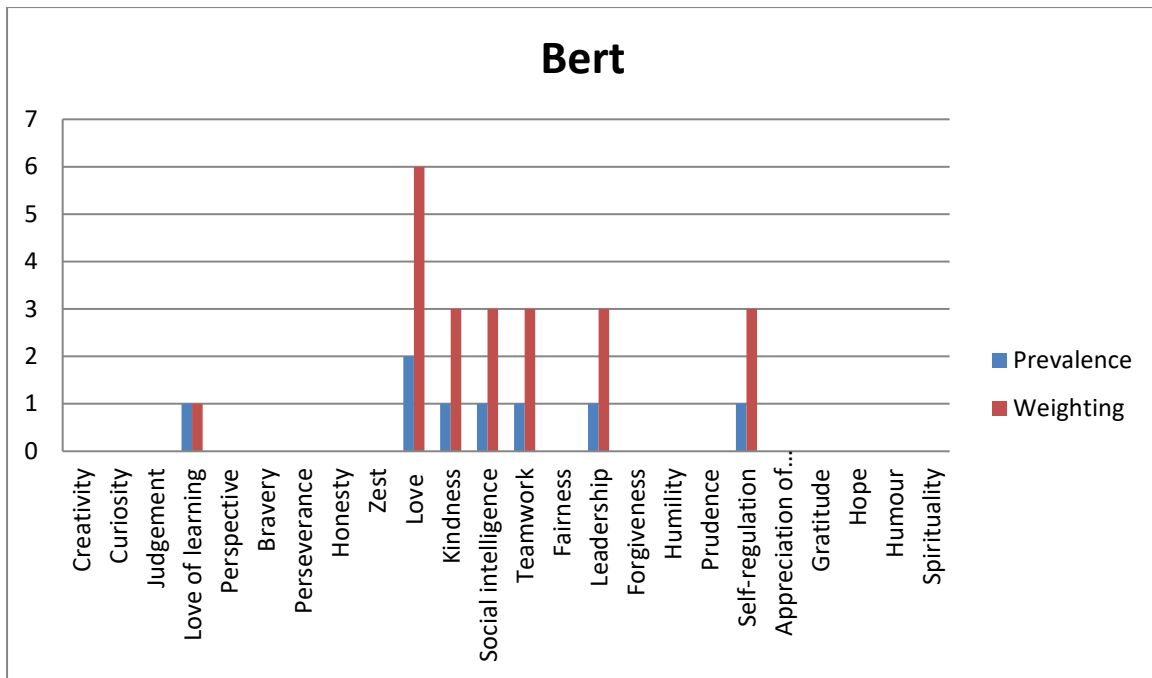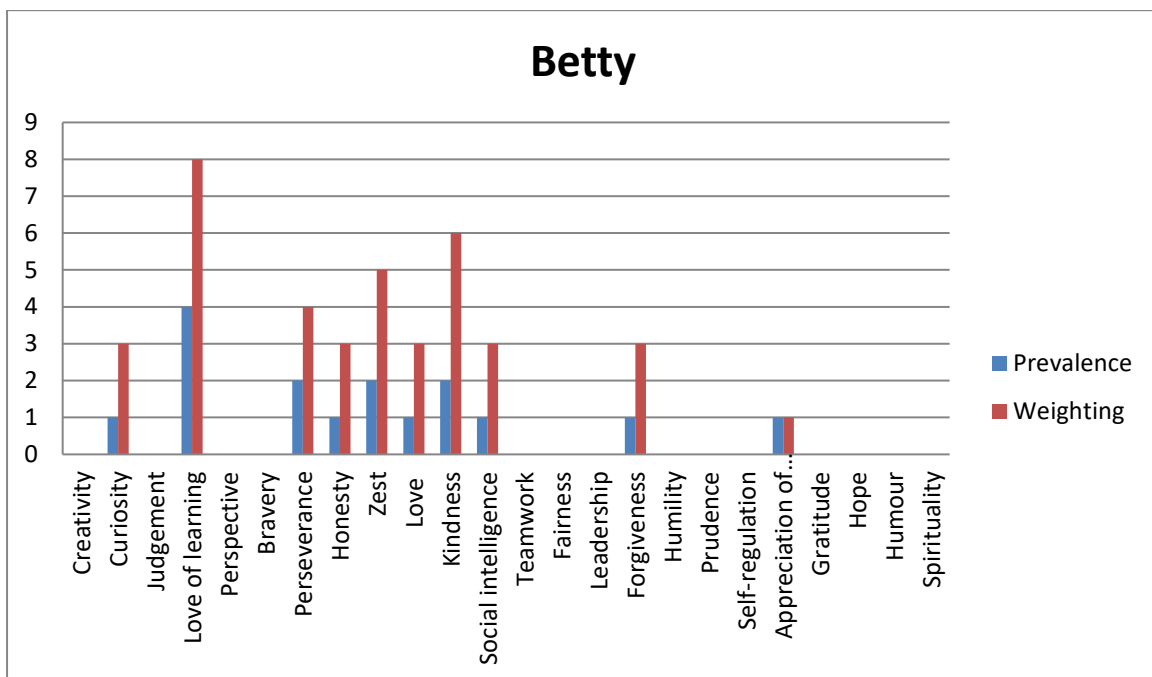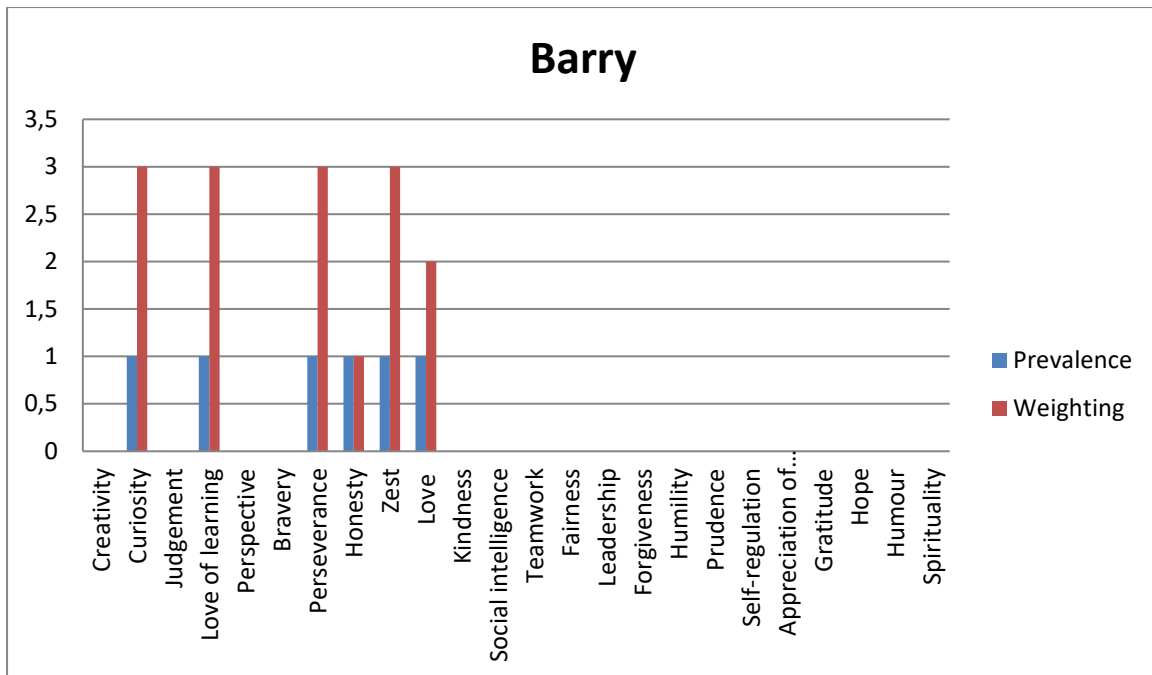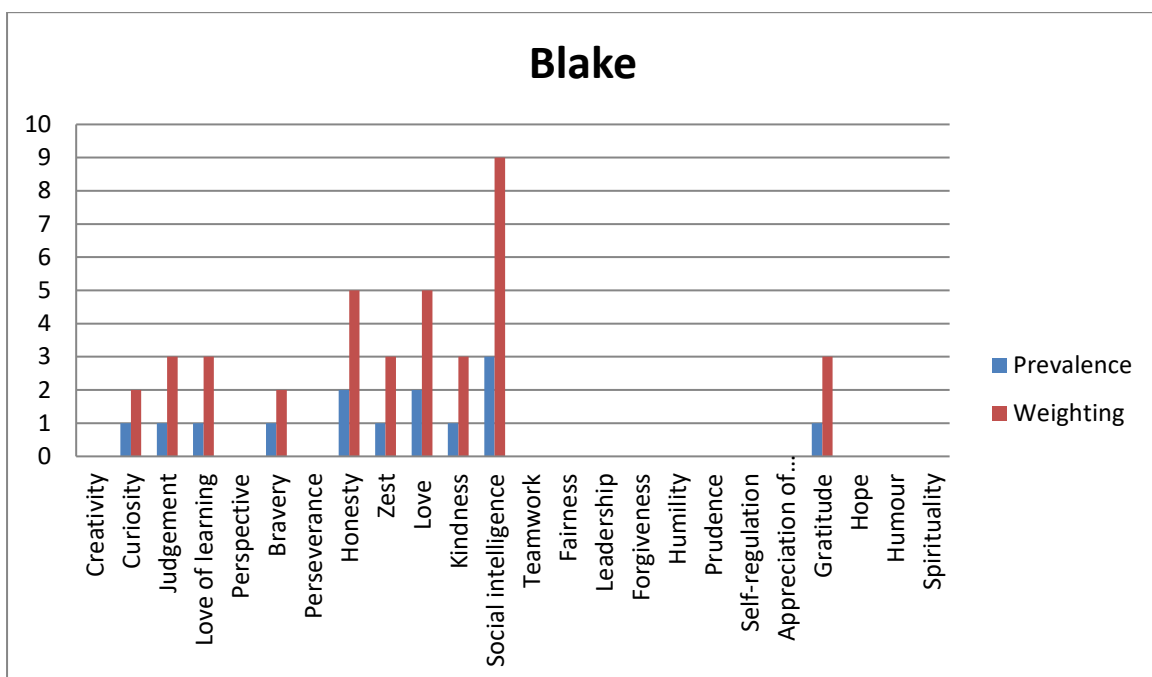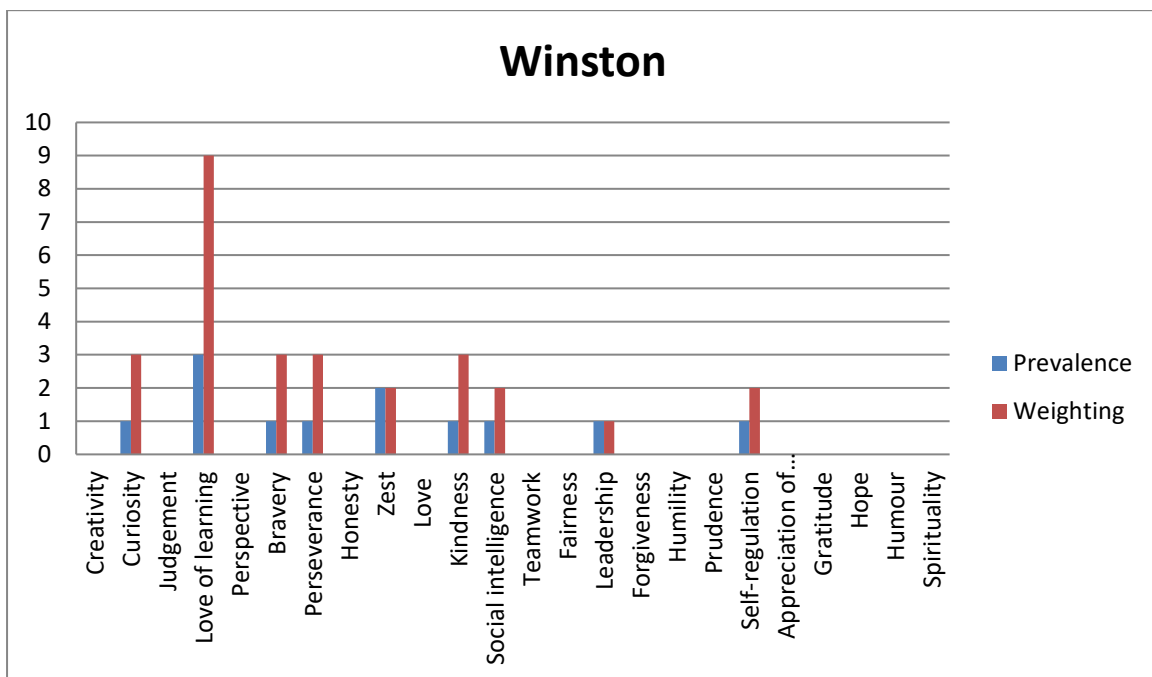*Figure 21.* Winston: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
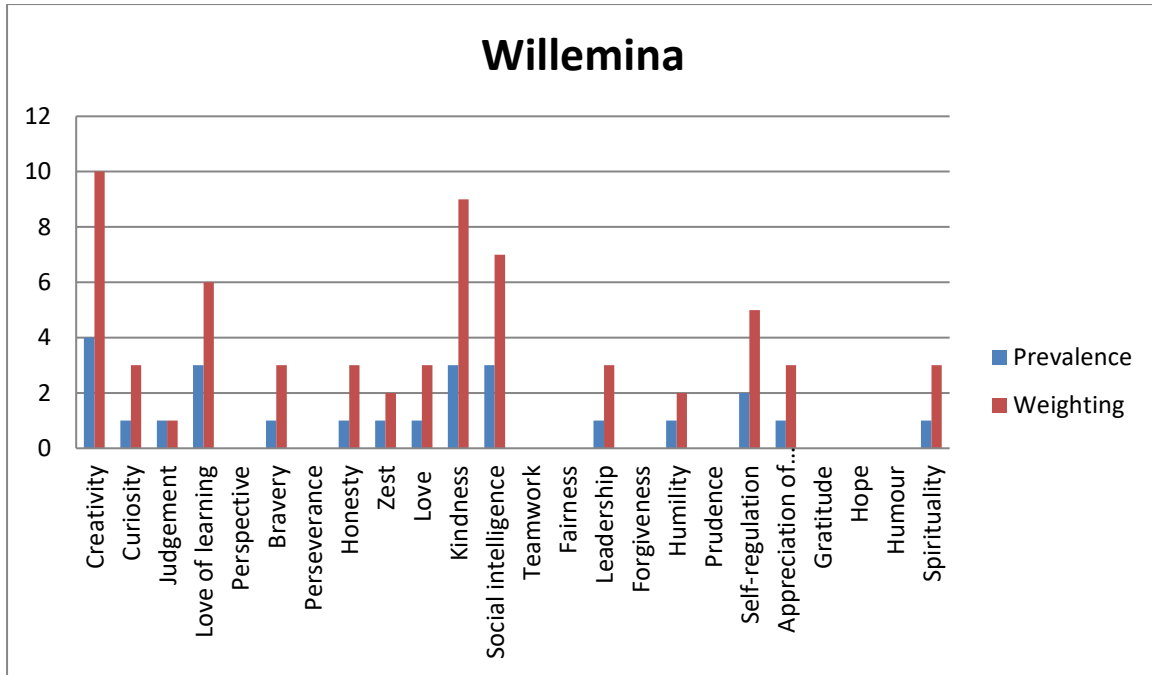
Figure 22. Willemina: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths
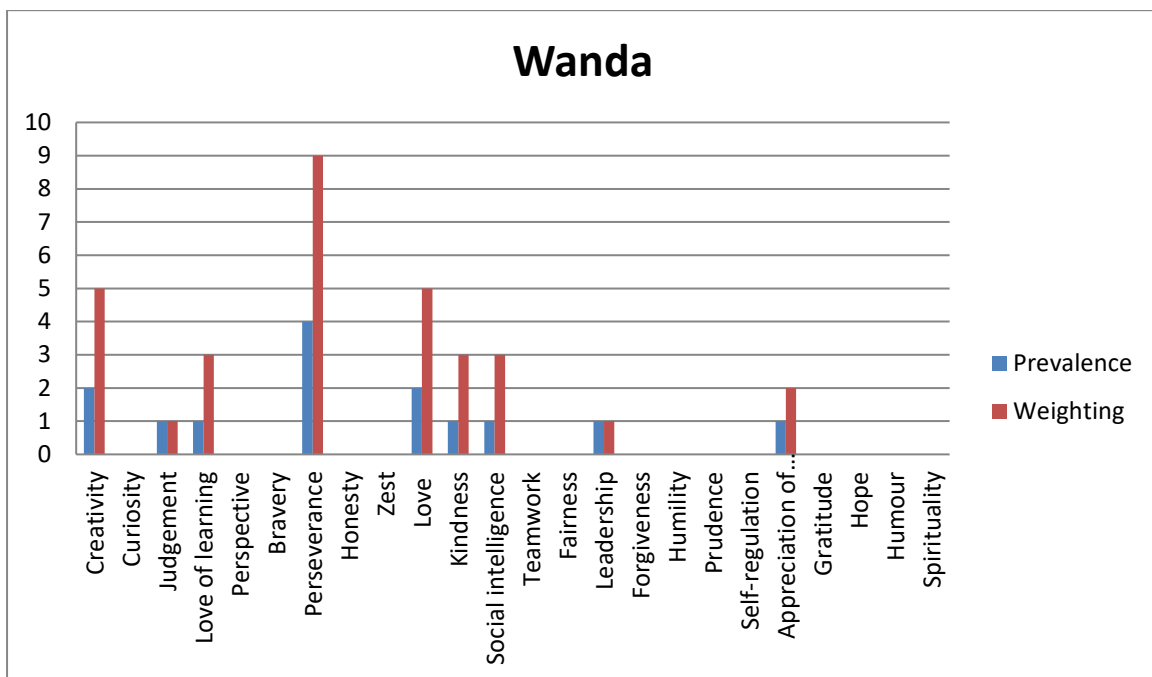
Figure 23. Wanda: Prevalence and Weighting of Character Strengths

Group chart: White participants
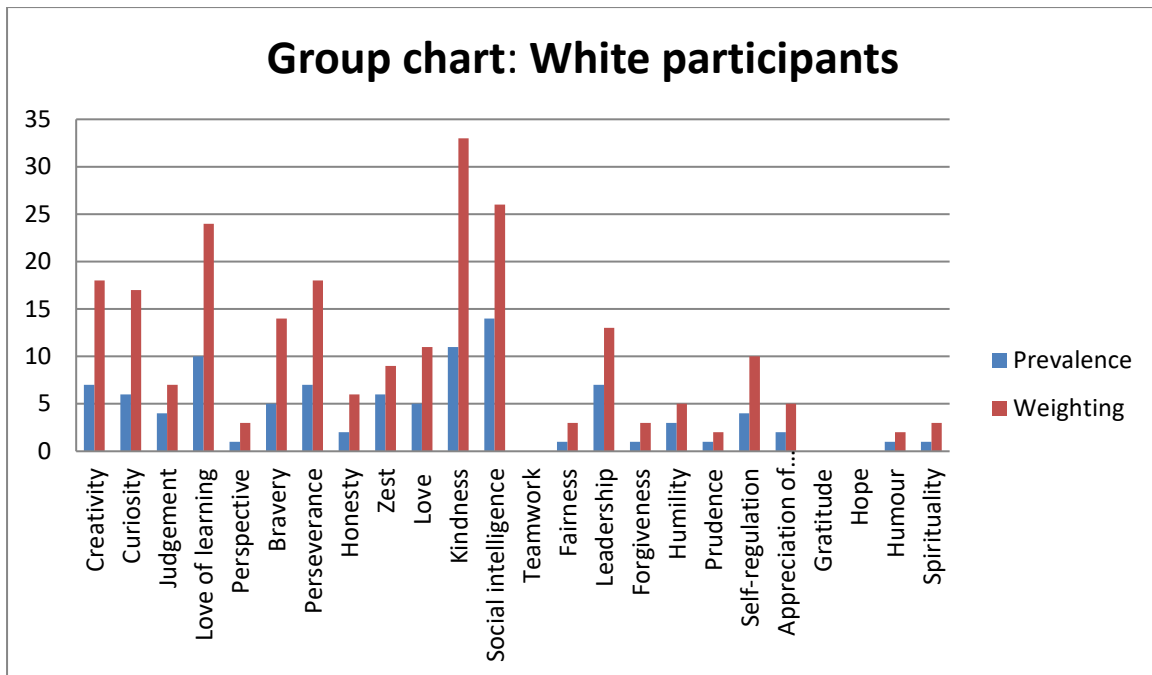
Figure 24. Combined Graph for the Total Group of White Participants

In total, 99 character strengths were identified within the five descriptions analysed for this group.

The descriptions of all five children in this group produced character strengths of **kindness** and **social intelligence**. **Love of learning** also frequently emerged from this group. **Kindness** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...bring us coffee in bed and makes her brother cereal"*, *"...when someone gets hurt she likes to play nurse"*, *"He feels that everyone should have a chance"*, *"He places his friends' feelings ahead of his own..."*, *"...will always give others an opportunity"*, *"...loves to do things and help out..."*, *"...faithful to her friends"*, *"...bringing us coffee or treats to help us feel better"*, *"...leaves notes around the house for family members with words of...encouragement"*, and *"She has a deep compassion and always comes to comfort and hold me tight"*. **Social intelligence** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...notices when another family member is feeling down"*, *"Will wait for his turn..."*, *"...always mothers them (babies)"*, *"...interacts with children from any age"*, *"...would get her class to calm down"*, *"...makes friends easily..."*, *"...sensitive to others..."*, and *"...strong personality and he tends to use it to his advantage"*. **Love of learning** was identified in descriptions such as: *"...wanted to do homework with her brother..."*, *"...wants to understand why..."*, *"...learns extremely quickly..."*, *"...loves learning something new..."*, *"...excels in school..."*, *"...enjoys learning..."*, *"...avid reader..."*, and *"...enjoys doing homework"*.

From this group the only description of the character strength **spirituality** emerged: *"…passionate and intense in her Christian beliefs"*.

4.5 Findings Pertaining to All 20 Participants
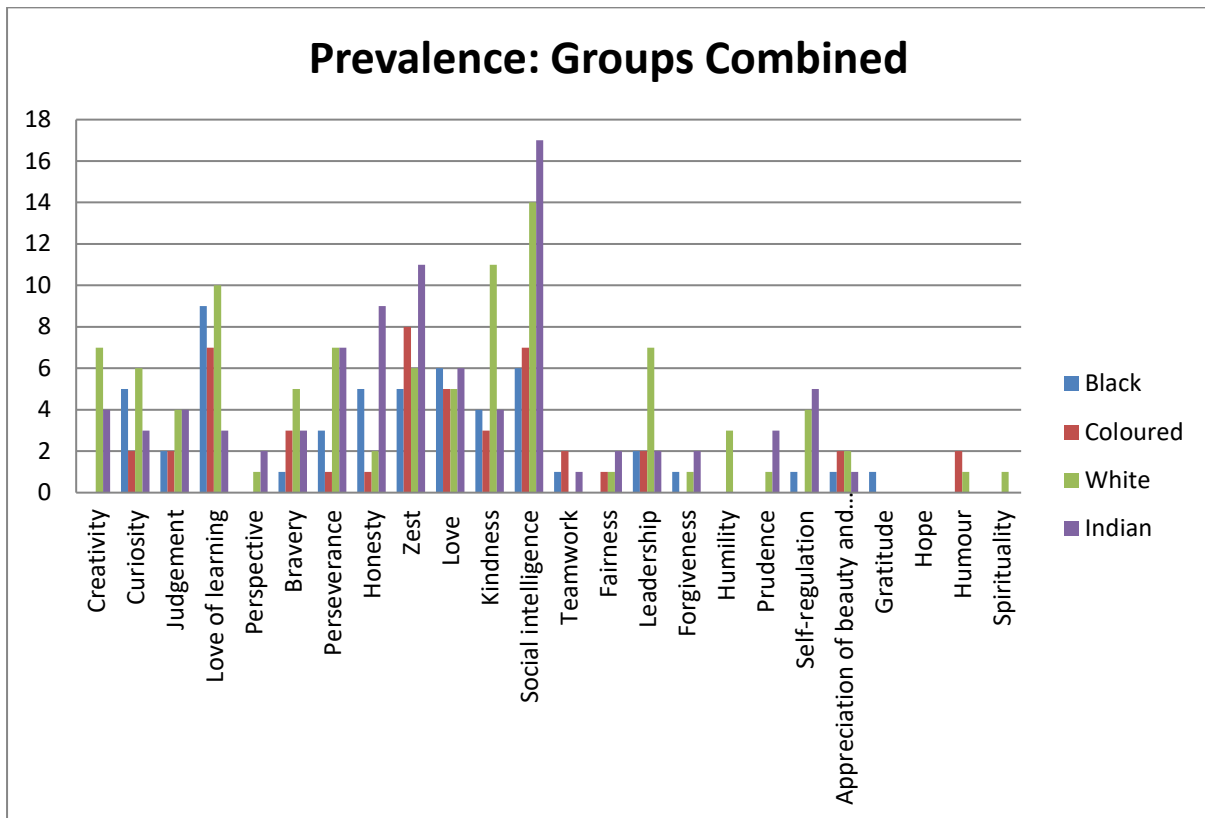
Figure 25. Prevalence Graph of All Four Groups

A total of 287 character strengths were identified across the 20 descriptions analysed.

From the 20 descriptions analysed the following character strengths and virtue groups were most prevalent. Table 7 illustrates the prevalence of specific character strengths, while table 8 illustrates the ranking of the virtue groups.

Table 7

Top Three Character Strengths: Prevalence

Ranking of prevalence	Character strength	Prevalence
1	Social intelligence	43
2	Zest	30
3	Love of learning	29

A total of 43 descriptions were found to indicate the presence of **social intelligence**. On average 2.2 mentions of social intelligence were made in each parental description. Descriptions related to socially appropriate behaviour, whether with figures of authority, towards different age groups, within differing contexts, and in instances of conflict and emotional expression, aided in the identification of social intelligence. The ability of the child to show awareness of other's needs and act accordingly also indicated social intelligence.

Zest featured in 30 descriptions, and **Love of learning** was identified a total of 29 times.

Table 8

Ranking of Virtue Groups

Ranking of Prevalence	Virtue group	Number of character strengths
1	Humanity	87
2	Courage	77
3	Wisdom and knowledge	70

The three most prevalent character strengths form part of the three most prevalent virtue groups. The character strengths of **gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality, perspective,** and **humanity** had the lowest prevalence for the four groups combined, but also for the groups individually. Similar to the most prevalent character strengths and virtue groups, the least prevalent character strengths correlated with the least prevalent virtue groups, as illustrated in tables 9 and 10:

Table 9

Lowest Three Character Strengths

Ranking of prevalence	Character strength	Prevalence
1	Hope	0
2	Gratitude	1
3	Spirituality	1

Table 10

Lowest Three Virtue Groups

Ranking of prevalence	Virtue group	Number of character strengths
1	Transcendence	11
2	Temperance	17
3	Justice	25
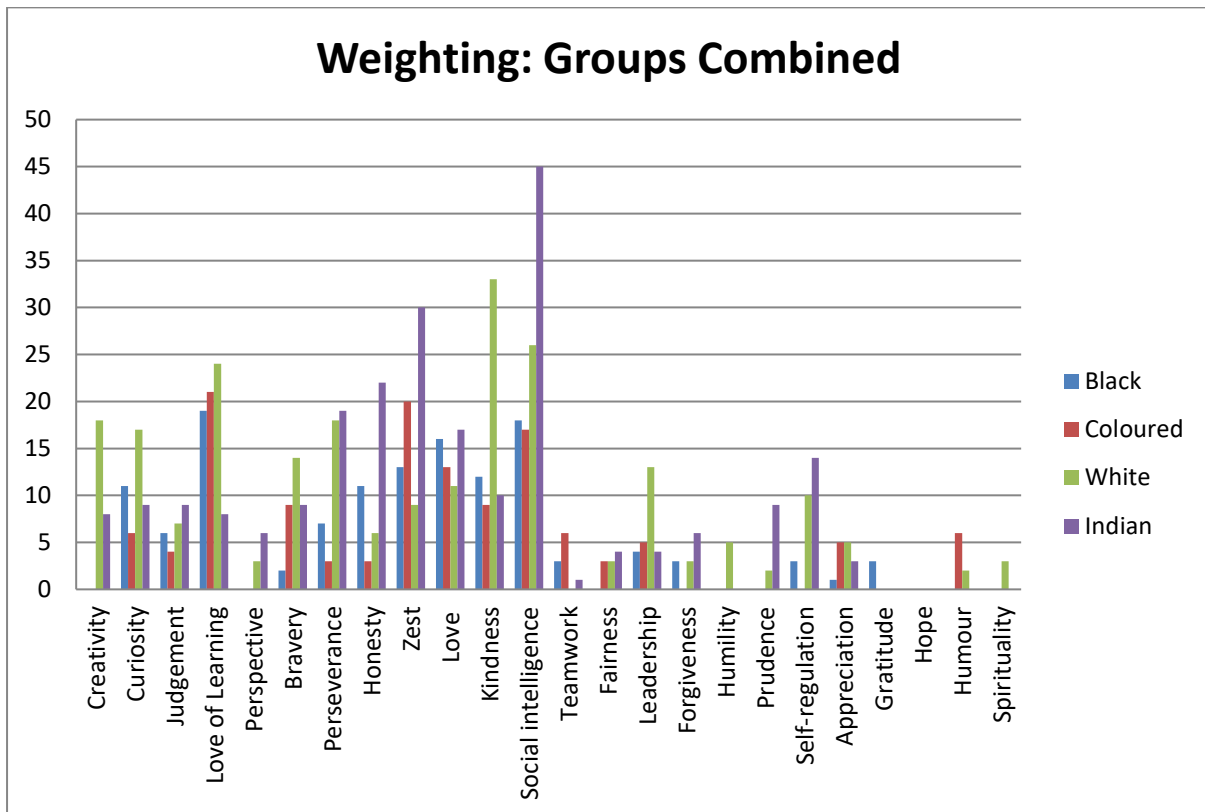
Figure 26. Weighting Graph of All Four Groups

Examination of the weighting of character strengths indicated the exact same distribution of character strengths based on weighting as based on prevalence in both the high and low range. Table 11 through 14 illustrate the character strengths and virtue groups with the highest and lowest weighting respectively:

Table 11

Top Three Character Strengths: Weighting

Ranking of weighting	Character strength	Weighting
1	Social intelligence	106
2	Zest	73
3	Love of learning	72

The average weighting awarded to the descriptions of **social intelligence** was 2.5 out of 3. An average weighting such as this confirms that manifestations and descriptions of social intelligence were clear and direct. Based on the total weighting of 73 it was calculated that an average weighting of 2.4 out of 3 was awarded to each description of **zest**. **Love of learning** showed a combined weighting of 72. After calculations it was established that each description of the character strength **love of learning** carried an average weighting of 2.5 out of 3. This proves that descriptions were clear and direct and was easily comparable to the description as set out in the VIA Classification of Strengths.

Table 12

Ranking of Virtue Groups

Ranking of virtue group	Virtue group	Total weighting
1	Humanity	228
2	Courage	191
3	Wisdom and knowledge	167

Table 13

Lower Three Character Strengths

Ranking of character strength	Character strength	Total weighting
1	Hope	0
2	Gratitude	3
3	Spirituality	3

Table 14

Lowest Three Virtue Groups

Ranking of virtue group	Virtue group	Total weighting
1	Transcendence	28
2	Temperance	42
3	Justice	56

An average weigting for the top three character strengths was found to be 2.5 out of 3.

The distribution of prevalence and weighting of character strengths showed interesting tendencies:

- **Social intelligence** is the character strength with the highest prevalence and weighting in the Indian and White group, and second highest prevalence and weighting in the Black and Coloured group.
- Although the **transcendence** virtue group is least prevalent, nevertheless the character strength of **appreciation of beauty and excellence** was identified in each group.
- **Hope** was not identified in any of the groups.
- In some groups certain character strengths were not identified at all, while some groups were the only group to portray a specific character strength.

Such examples include: Within the Black group, no character strength of **creativity, perspective, fairness, humility, prudence,** and **humour** were identified. Yet the character

strength of **gratitude** was only identified in this group. Within the Coloured group no **creativity, perspective, forgiveness, humility, prudence,** and **self-regulation** were identified. In the Indian group, no example of **humility** was identified. The White group lacked the character strength of **teamwork**, yet was the only group that showed the character strength of **spirituality**.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings yielded by this study. Graphs and tables were used to present the prevalence and weighting of character strengths for the individual descriptions, as well as the 20 descriptions in total. The most prominent finding were listed and will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5
Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the most significant findings identified in the previous chapter. These findings are discussed within the context of the literature that was presented in chapter 2.

Despite all four groups showing their own unique distribution of strengths, three character strengths were found to be present in all four groups. Interestingly, these strengths also yielded the highest prevalence when considered globally with regard to each group in combination with all groups. Additionally, when considering the individual participant groups as well as the combined group, the virtue of transcendence showed the lowest prevalence.

5.1 Finding 1: High Prevalence of Social Intelligence

To gain a better understanding of the character strength of social intelligence one can revisit the statements that are asked as part of the VIA online questionnaire relevant to this specific strength:

- I get along well with a variety of people.
- I let other kids talk about themselves rather than focusing the attention on me.
- I talk and behave appropriately in most social situations.

Early descriptions of social intelligence postulate that it is "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls – to act wisely in human relations" (Thorndike, 1920, p. 228). Social intelligence has been rooted in a variety of psychological branches including social psychology, developmental psychology and positive psychology. Social intelligence as a character strength was found to develop in the day-to-day experiences of the child, such as playing games requiring imagination and turn-taking, reading stories, and voicing what they like and dislike (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Social intelligence is of importance to the well-being and functioning of children. Interactions with other people are unavoidable and life is a constant and dynamic process of figuring out one's own position relative to that of another person. The focus on developing and building on children's character strength of social intelligence might be a worthy point of departure to ensure children's ability to function well in society.

5.1.1 Social intelligence through a social perspective.

Baron, Byrne, and Suls (1989) define social psychology as "the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior in social situations" (p. 6). Social intelligence refers mainly to how information about those in our direct social context is *used*. Social intelligence forms an integral part of human behaviour as it guides and determines the social interactions of individuals (Crisp, 2015).

When looking at the functioning of children from a social psychology perspective, it once again becomes apparent that social intelligence is avital skill to develop. According to Gottman (1983), the development of friendships is only possible if a child possesses a certain level of social intelligence. More popular children – those children with positive friendships – are able to share their feelings in an honest way, take part in play in an acceptable manner, and are in tune with other children's needs and interests (Breckler, Olson, & Wiggins, 2007).

Taking the above-mentioned in consideration, social intelligence plays a pivotal role in the development of and participation in friendships. Peer rejection has been shown to place children in middle childhood at greater risk of depressive symptoms (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004) and is linked to poorer academic performance (Woodward & Fergusson, 2000).

5.1.2 Social intelligence from a developmental perspective.

From a developmental viewpoint, social intelligence increases in parallel to the maturity of the child. Peterson and Seligman (2004) commented that social intelligence reaches its height in correlation with maturity. The age group that this study focused on is known for an increase in the importance, establishment and management of social relationships (Rathus, 2014). To manage these social relationships, children need to learn and understand the complexities of social interactions.

To be able to act in a manner that is consistent with social intelligence, the child needs to be aware of his / her own needs, as well as those of other (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). One ability that aids the child in doing this is theory of mind. Theory of mind has been found to play a probable role in social intelligence (Yeh, 2013) and is viewed by Bjorklund and Kipp (2002) as an inextricable aspect of social intelligence.

Additionally, during the age of seven to twelve years, children are also better able to comprehend the perspective of another person (Selman, 1975). Selman stated that between the ages of seven and twelve years the child enters a stage known as self-reflective perspective taking. This ability depends on the child's cognitive development and social context (Selman, 1980).

From the above literature it is clear that abilities such as theory of mind and perspective taking undergo considerable development during middle childhood. It therefore follows that the high prevalence and weighting of social intelligence could be indicative of the developmental phase of the participants in this study.

5.1.3 Social intelligence from a fortigenic perspective.

From a fortigenic perspective, social intelligence can be viewed as one factor that contributes to "the good life" of individuals. Shoshani and Slone (2015) have indicated that social intelligence acts as a protective factor against the negative effects of trauma and also plays an important role in children's attitude toward school; it subsequently influences their behaviour (Weber, Wagner, & Ruch, 2016; Wagner & Ruch, 2015).

Social intelligence can easily be confused with emotional intelligence; however, Chou (2016) differentiates between these two constructs by indicating that social intelligence assists more with the management of social interactions as opposed to emotional intelligence that is focused on the here and now by paying attention to the emotions and feelings of others and ourselves. Considering the VIA's descriptions, the strength of social intelligence refers to: "being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 29). It can be understood as the individual's ability to act appropriately within social interactions whether with peers, authority figures, or strangers. The findings of the current study yielded descriptions that adhered to the strength of social intelligence in that it illustrated the children's ability to be sensitive and in tune with other's feelings; being well-behaved and acting in socially appropriate ways; being able to identify those individuals with shared interests, and showing interest in others and understanding that they, too, have needs.

The highest prevalence of social intelligence was found within the Indian group. Interestingly, this group's mean age was also the highest of the participant groups. This could explain the higher prevalence of social intelligence as these children's cognitive and social development might be slightly more advanced than the other groups. According to Stephen (2016) it is a general norm in Indian cultures to view interpersonal relationships as priority. From a young age, children are exposed to community interests and involvement. As mentioned previously, social intelligence is dependent on the environmental context in which the child finds himself. Communication is mainly guided by context. Therefore what is said, how it is said, and to whom it is said determine the interaction.

In summary, the high prevalence and weighting of social intelligence are supported by the argument that children within this age group start to develop a greater awareness of other individuals, and can view the world from another perspective than their own (Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012). Lastly cultural influences can also play a role in the focus on and development of social intelligence.

5.2 Finding 2: High Prevalence of Zest

To gain a better understanding of the character strength of zest one may revisit the statements that are asked as part of the VIA online questionnaire relevant to this specific strength:

- I am usually full of energy
- I am full of enthusiasm
- I think that life is very exciting.

5.2.1 Revisiting zest as a theoretical concept.

Zest was found to be the second most prevalent character strength within the groups; in total 30 descriptions of zest were identified within the data collected. Descriptions that led to the identification of zest were centred around the child being outgoing in various contexts; finding enjoyment in activities; being high in energy; having an adventurous spirit; and taking on life with a sense of abandon.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) refer to zest in terms of synonyms such as vitality, enthusiasm, vigour, and energy. According to Peterson and Seligman (2004) zest refers to energy that does not detract from the individual's life, but rather adds to it. Furthermore, Ryan and Frederick

(1997) described vitality/zest as the individual's experience of having energy and feeling alive. Ryan and Deci (2001) presented a similar definition, additionally indicating that the individual with zest experiences himself to be psychologically well and wholly functional.

5.2.2 Zest in middle childhood.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) regarded children as fulfilling the criteria of being prodigal with regard to zest and enthusiasm. When one imagines a child in his/her daily activity, the idea of pure enthusiasm and energy effortlessly comes to mind. They further state that vitality depends on physical aspects such as health, a well-functioning body, and the absence of tiredness. According to Lavin (n.d.) the nervous system of a child at the start of middle childhood is still developing. Activities such as running, climbing and jumping contribute to the strengthening of the nervous system. Although movement becomes more deliberate and refined (Steinberg, Bornstein, Vandell, & Rook, 2011), children in this stage will continue to engage in high activity behaviour as this developmental stage requires them to gain new skills. Mastering physically challenging activities illustrates an inherent need and desire of the child (Hills, King, & Armstrong, 2007). High levels of enthusiasm and zest are the result of the child functioning from his innate needs and desires which speak directly to their true self. This indicates an engagement in virtue-congruent activities.

5.2.3 The protective qualities of zest.

Zest, and more specifically energy (psychological and physiological), are needed to manage and overcome the challenges and stressors brought on by life itself (Selye, 1956). Yet, if there is little or no life energy, the individual becomes increasingly vulnerable to damage (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It is therefore understandable that zest would play a role in children developing a greater value for life (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008), finding more pleasure from life (Park & Peterson, 2009a), presenting with less anxiety and depression symptoms (Park & Peterson, 2009a).Together with gratitude, optimism, and perseverance, children will have more positive school behaviour and experiences. Park and Peterson (2006) also found a high correlation between zest and happiness. By contrast, low levels of energy, little or no pleasure in activities and psychomotor retardation are – in conjunction with other symptoms – indicators of underlying psychopathology (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Firozi, Besharat, and Farahani (2011) stressed that limited interaction with peers often leads to depressive symptoms that gives way to the depletion of energy. Fatigue and low energy are similarly often seen in reaction to exposure to severe stress (Linnard-Palmer, 2018).

However, it must be mentioned that the presence of zest is not a prerequisite of happiness. A child can still be happy, without being zestful (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The development and strengthening of zest within children are clearly functional when taking the myriad of benefits into consideration. The high prevalence and weighting of zest in this study are supported by the argument that children within this developmental phase are biologically and developmentally inclined to approach life with energy and enthusiasm. This natural inclination is further needed to ensure that the child builds up the energy needed for daily activities of life, such as social interaction. Additionally it also assists in the better management of challenges.

5.3 Finding 3: **High Prevalence of Love of Learning**

To gain a better understanding of the character strength of love of learning one can revisit the statements that pertain to the VIA online questionnaire with regard to this specific strength:

- I am always interested in discovering more
- I get excited when I see there is something new to learn
- If there is a chance to learn something new, I jump right in.

5.3.1 Love of learning contextualized in the current study.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) argue that love of learning could be viewed as a) a general engagement in skills and new material and b) an individual interest of the person. Love of learning was present in most of the parental descriptions received. They also described it as indicated by, but not limited to, academic performance and other training/ teaching contexts. For this reason some descriptions in the data that were unrelated to academic material, were also categorised as the strength of love of learning.

Given the mean age (8.2 years) of the children in this study, their cognitive development could possibly explain their interest in learning not only academic skills or topics, but also with regard to more general material (Louw & Louw, 2007). It is also believed that younger children have a greater propensity to engage in new material (Piaget, 1966) and thus exhibit a greater prevalence of love of learning. Based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1959), children within this age group are in the stage of industry vs. inferiority. Thus, the drive to acquire new knowledge and skill is developmentally appropriate and positive feedback will

subsequently lead to higher self-esteem. However, multiple other factors such as parental involvement and the school environment could also play a role.

5.3.2 The optimal learning environment.

Bandura (1977) indicated that the social context of the child is the locus where learning most possibly takes place. Bandura argued that learning takes place as a child sees what is modelled to him/ her, and also through the feedback received. Thus, parents could play an instrumental role in the learning of new skills by their children, and possibly also in the attitude developed towards learning. Especially within this age bracket where industry is important, parents must respond to the child's learning (whether social or cognitive) by praising the child's accomplishments and interests so that learning is reinforced.

Within the educational context, various learning theories appear applicable. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1962), and more specifically the zone of proximal development, refers to the "sweet spot" of a child's learning. Based on this theory, the child is able to do certain tasks by themselves, while others are not yet able to do these tasks independently. Teachers, parents, and peers should purposefully challenge the child with skills and knowledge that are fractionally more difficult than what the child is capable of independently. Therefore imitation of what a teacher is doing might not be as effective since the child is not being pushed beyond their current capabilities. Again, when the child is challenged in accordance with their abilities, the child will feel satisfaction when they are better able to meet the academic expectations placed before them.

According to the above argument, it is clear that love of learning can be cultivated in environments that support the child and reinforce their drive to learn.

5.3.3 The benefits of love of learning.

Love of learning was found to be a predictor of well-being by Kaufman (2015), and was positively linked to academic performance and appropriate behaviour at school (Wagner & Ruch, 2015). Kaufman (2015) also stated that love of learning and curiosity are some of the character strengths that combine the best. Interestingly, in this study, a total of ten children exhibited love of learning as a strength; of these, nine also possessed curiosity.

According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), love of learning needs to be nurtured within a context that is conducive to a process of participation and partnership. They further postulate that culture could determine the approach towards cultivating love of learning.

In summary, the high prevalence and weighting of love of learning in this study are supported by the argument that children within this developmental phase are not only able to learn new information, but due to increased abilities also exhibit enthusiasm for broadening their knowledge base. This natural inclination to learn can be strengthened by an environment that is conducive to learning.

5.4 Finding 4: **Low Prevalence of Transcendence**

To gain a better understanding of the character strengths in the virtue group of transcendence one may revisit the statements that form part of the VIA online questionnaire relevant to the specific strength:

- I feel better when I see beautiful pictures or listen to great music
- I expect good things to come my way
- I often don't feel thankful.

5.4.1 General findings within transcendence.

The five individual character strengths of the virtue group transcendence aid the individual in his/her process of establishing meaning (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This virtue combines the strengths of appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, and spirituality. Character strengths within this virtue group were found to improve life satisfaction and well-being in adolescents (Gillham et al., 2011; Toner et al., 2012). According to Park and Peterson (2009a) gratitude is linked to academic achievement, while appreciation of beauty and excellence is linked to better recuperation after sickness, and spirituality correlates with finding a purpose in life. Transcendence showed the lowest prevalence of all the virtue groups within the data collected in this study. The individual strengths of gratitude, hope, and spirituality exhibited the lowest prevalence. Although not the only explanation for the low prevalence of transcendence, the developmental stage of these children needs to be considered. With most of the character strengths in the transcendence virtue group, cognitive and emotional development will determine the extent to which the child is able to exhibit a strength independent from external input.

5.4.2 Concrete thinking during the current developmental stage.

The character strengths of gratitude, hope, and spirituality require the ability to think in an abstract manner and take another's perspective in a situation (Fowler, 1995; Delamater, 2017). This ability only begins to develop during the current stage of development of the participants (Louw & Louw, 2007) and this may be a likely explanation why these character strengths have not yet developed in their entirety. In the sections to follow, concrete thinking is contextualized for each of the three lowest character strengths of the current dataset.

5.4.2.1 Gratitude.

Gratitude is defined as the individual who expresses appreciation for and takes delight in a concrete gift or an abstract experience (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Tudge, Freitas, Mokrava, Wang, and O'Brien (2015) observed the types of gratitude amongst children between the ages of seven and fourteen years. They found that these children expressed what the authors referred to as "concrete gratitude". They also argued that children within this age group would only express gratitude in a reciprocal manner. Such as extending a thank you upon receipt of a gift. Gratefulness therefore to the extent of these children's understanding does not necessarily extend to an appreciation of the person or deed. The reason for this could be that young children are not always able to think abstractly or view situations from another person's perspective (Fowler, 1995), also referred to as egocentrism (Piaget, 1923). Only from the age of 11 years and onwards, children become more abstract in their thinking and subsequently gain a better understanding of others' thoughts and intentions. The above literature provides a possible explanation for the low prevalence for gratitude found within this study.

5.4.2.2 Hope.

Snyder (1995) defined hope as "the process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation move toward (agency) and the ways to achieve (pathways) those goals" (p. 355). In their book, *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*, Peterson and Seligman (2004) reiterate the two elements of hope as set out above by Snyder (1995). Agency in turn is seen as the belief that goals can be achieved, while pathways refer to the individual's conviction that they can come up with plans to meet their goals (Snyder, 1995). Goals can be intangible and abstract constructs. Considering the cognitive abilities of the children within the age group of the current study, the concept of goal setting in and of itself might prove

challenging. As the children fit within the concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1923), their ability to think about and develop abstract constructs is limited. Thus, the fact that no character strength of hope was identified may also possibly be explained by the limited ability for abstract thinking of the children in this study.

Carr (2011) argued that hope does not necessarily develop in reaction to adverse events or disappointments. Rather, hope is dependent on the beliefs of the individual, as well as the reasons they ascribe to certain adverse events or situations (Carr, 2011; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Therefore, as mentioned previously, the ability to reason and set goals are important to the practice of hope as a character strength.

5.4.2.3 Spirituality.

Religion and spirituality are viewed as two distinct constructs. Religion is based on the shared beliefs of a group toward a higher power (Miller & Worthington, 2012) whilst spirituality extends to the journey to peace and well-being through the discovery of purpose and meaning in life (Delgado, 2005). Elkind (1964, 1970) and Fowler (1991) indicated specifically that religious development will be influenced by the general developmental stage of the child. According to Elkind (1964; 1970), children in middle childhood develop a better understanding of their deity, but it is mostly based on concrete actions such as rituals and prayer. Although the child will be able to explain what is being done, they will have limited insight into the beliefs underlying the actions. Fowler (1991) postulates that children in middle childhood will most probably accept a religion as it is presented to them without questioning its relevance or their perception of it. Based on this, it is possible that children's exhibition of spirituality and religiousness is nothing more than what is offered to them and thus to a certain degree still without independent and personal ownership.

In addition, gratitude, hope, and spirituality are character strengths that are not as easily observable as zest or social intelligence, since they are less likely to be directed outwards to the social context. Gratitude, for example, encompasses more than merely verbalising appreciation in response to a gift or an action. It also refers to an inner experience of gratefulness to life, a person, or a deity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Therefore it is possible that parents may be unaware of their children's personal experiences of gratitude as these are not verbalised by default. As mentioned with spirituality and more specifically religion, gratitude, hope and spirituality are mostly expressed in rituals during this developmental age.

A true understanding of one's place and purpose in the universe often does not develop until later. Therefore the possibility is very real that parents may only be able to provide descriptions of the activities their child engages in, rather than witness their personal experience of a power greater than themselves. It is also possible that parents might not place as much value on these character strengths since they do not appear to directly influence academic or social achievement such as for example love of learning and social intelligence.

The statements of the VIA survey differ greatly from the guiding question that was asked to parents participating in this current study. Statements asked in the VIA questionnaire related to the character strength gratitude and spirituality include: *I am a thankful person; I am very grateful for my family; I often don't feel thankful; I have a faith that I practice; I feel better when I pray; There is a Higher Power looking out for my best interests*. These statements are more abstract in nature and focus on the youth's personal experience. By contrast the guiding question presented to parents in the current study was more concrete and asked parents to identify and describe behaviour of the child in various contexts. This would also greatly influence the character strengths found to be prevalent.

The character strengths from the virtue group of transcendence were found to show a low prevalence as the children within this study have not yet fully developed the cognitive abilities to show an understanding of more abstract thought processes. Children within the age group of the current study are generally still able to think only on a concrete level that limits their ability to consider abstract material.

5.5 Discussion of Findings between the Four Groups

Although the findings of this study do not claim to be representative of all the children in South Africa, it still provides valuable and unique information. As indicated in chapter 2, many children in South Africa are exposed to trauma and adverse life events (Calitz et al., 2014; Swain et al., 2017). Although this study did not set out to do specific inter group comparisons, a few noteworthy tendencies deserve mention:

Upon comparison of the individual groups, it was found that little variance existed between the top and the bottom three character strengths exhibited. Thus, very similar findings in each group came to the fore. It was also found that the top three character strengths identified were each from a different virtue group and represented head strengths (love of learning), heart strengths (zest), and strength of others (social intelligence).

5.5.1 Intergroup prevalence of social intelligence.

While social intelligence was one of the top three character strengths for each group, the variation in prevalence between the African and White group was intriguing. The African group yielded a much lower prevalence of social intelligence than the White group. This is interesting in view of the assumption that most Black South Africans are predominantly collectivistically orientated, while most White South Africans are more individualistically inclined (Wissing, Wissing, Du Toit, & Temane, 2006). Triandis (1989) also argued that collectivism was most prevalent within African cultures, while Khumalo et al., (2008) likewise reported that a collectivistic culture was present under Black South African students that took part in their study. Social intelligence is often viewed as an important aspect of collectivistic cultures and also the main focus of socialisation within Black South African families (Kim & Choi, 2014). Black South Africans have clearer and more distinct rules when involved in social interactions. In light of this, it might also be possible that parents did not feel the need to mention their children's socially intelligent behaviour, as it is an expectation within the African group, and not regarded as exceptional behaviour.

Although the groups showed differences in social intelligence, it still showed itself to be the most prevalent character strength. Indeed, showing respect for others and being well-mannered in social interactions had been found to be values cherished by African, Coloured, Indian, and White parents for their children (Millford, 1999).

5.5.2 Slight intergroup differences.

The distribution of character strengths might have shown small differences, but in general very similar findings were recorded.

5.5.2.1 Normal developmental trajectory.

From a developmental perspective most children between the ages of seven and ten years exhibit an overlap with regard to a) their cognitive, emotional, and social abilities, and b) the developmental tasks set before them. Although all children are unique in their personalities and

abilities, their development follows a universal trajectory. Taking this into consideration it would seem obvious that the distribution of character strengths would be quite similar.

5.2.2.2 Culture and the esteem of character strengths.

Children's development is influenced by their interpersonal interactions, the institutions they are in contact with, their culture, and the unique historical period in which they find themselves (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This will explain the presence of not only different descriptions for similar character strengths, but also slight differences in the prevalence and weighting of individual character strengths.

The prevalence of character strengths were dependent on the descriptions submitted by the parents. The behaviours that parents chose to focus their descriptions on could also be viewed as those behaviours most valued by the specific parent or group. Moskowitz (2005) argue that we are inclined to pay attention to behaviours/ objects that we value and those that elicit a specific emotion within us. When one considers parents writing about their children it is plausible to assume that they would think about and record those behaviours that a) they value and b) make them feel, in most cases, proud of their child.

As an example of the argument posed above, a study conducted by Millford (1999) found that Indian mothers placed high value on their children being raised as respectful, well-mannered and socialised. Coincidently, social intelligence was found to be the highest character strength within the Indian group. As mentioned earlier the cultural context in which the child is brought up, will have a significant influence on the child's development. In the case of this study, it was even indicative of which character strengths are emphasised.

The findings from this study provide an opportunity for greater insight. Social intelligence, love of learning and zest were indicated to manifest in multiple contexts and in various ways within all four racial groups.

5.6 Other Studies Exploring the Presence and Prevalence of Character Strengths

The following studies presented with findings that were, to some extent, similar to the current one.

5.6.1 Exploring the validity of the VIA Inventory of Strengths in an African context (Khumalo, Wissing & Temane, 2008).

Khumalo, Wissing, and Temane (2008) conducted a study with university students across the three campuses of the North-West University. The aim of the study was to establish the validity of the VIA Inventory of Strengths. They found that within the African context, the original six virtues of the VIA Strengths of Character existed in three factors. Factor 1 includes all the character strengths in the virtue groups of wisdom, knowledge and courage (excluding zest), as well as perseverance and social intelligence. Factor 2 was found to include all the character strengths in the humanity and transcendence virtue groups, as well as zest. Finally, factor three included honesty, and the character strengths of the virtue groups justice and temperance. The top three character strengths were found to be in Factor 1 (love of learning and social intelligence) and Factor 2 (zest). Findings from the study by Khumalo, et al., (2008) indicated a high prevalence of curiosity, creativity, gratitude, hope, and spirituality. The findings from the current study also showed prevalence of curiosity and creativity, although to a lesser degree. Gratitude, hope and spirituality were found to be the character strengths with the lowest prevalence in the current study.

5.6.2 Character strengths and happiness among young children: Content analysis of parental descriptions (Park & Peterson, 2006).

Park and Peterson's study (2006) yielded different findings with regard to the prevalence of character strengths. In their study, love, kindness and creativity were found to be the three most prevalent character strengths. Social intelligence, zest and love of learning, which were found to be the top three character strengths of the current study, were placed 9th, 11th, and 6th out of 24 respectively by Park and Peterson (2006). As confirmed in the current study, some character strengths did not present in children of a younger age. However, gratitude, hope, and spirituality (showing little or no prevalence in the current study) were placed 23rd, 19th, and 16th out of 24 respectively by Park and Peterson (2006). The above-mentioned rankings of character strengths indicate that, similar to the current study, it showed low prevalence in the Park and Peterson study. This could be viewed as a slight similarity between the findings of the two studies.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the most prevalent findings of the study were discussed. Social intelligence, zest, and love of learning were found to be the most prevalent character strengths, while the virtue group of transcendence showed the lowest prevalence. The developmental stage of the children, their culture, as well as which character strength were most noticeable to parents, were presented as possible explanations for the findings.

Chapter 6
Summary, Limitations, and Recommendations

This final chapter serves to conclude the study. A summary of the findings, together with the limitations and recommendations will be provided.

6.1 Summary of Findings

A total of 20 parents from the African, Coloured, Indian, and White racial groups took part in this study. Each parent wrote a short descriptive essay of their child aged between seven and ten years. A total of 284 descriptions of character strengths were identified. An average weighting of 2.5 out of 3 was assigned to each identified character strength. A mean weighting such as this indicated that parental descriptions were rich, clear, and direct examples of character strengths. The prevalence and weighting of the top three character strengths showed a similar distribution across all four groups.

This study found **social intelligence**, **zest**, and **love of learning** to be the top three character strengths most prevalent among the 20 participant children from the above-mentioned four racial groups. In previous studies, social intelligence was linked to positive classroom behaviour, a positive feeling towards school, thriving, and also served to minimize the effects of trauma (Wagner & Ruch, 2015; Weber, Wagner, & Ruch, 2016; Benson, 2009; Shoshani & Slone, 2015).

It was also highlighted that according to literature, **zest** is associated with a positive feeling towards school (Weber et al., 2016), a sense of well-being in adolescents (Toner et al., 2012), better academic performance (Park, 2004), improved behaviour in the classroom (Wagner & Ruch, 2015), and a higher incidence of happiness (Park & Peterson, 2006).

Finally **love of learning** was discussed and the link was made with academic achievement (Wagner & Ruch, 2015). Love of learning was also found to indicate a link with curiosity, as most of the children that exhibited a love of learning also exhibited the character strength of curiosity.

A character strength such as social intelligence proved to follow a natural and informal developmental course, and especially in the Indian group, cultural expectations might aid in

the development of social intelligence (Stephen, 2016). This author indicated that character strengths that require the ability to think abstractly and take on another's perspective have been argued to develop in accordance with the cognitive and emotional development of the child.

The character strengths within the virtue group of **transcendence** showed the lowest prevalence and weighting. Furthermore, the character strength of **hope** was the only strength that was not identified in any of the descriptions of the children. Two factors were considered as explanation: The age of the participants and the importance that the parent placed on these character strengths.

Comparison between the groups indicated that the three most prevalent character strengths of the study are associated with the most prevalent character strengths of the individual groups. **Social intelligence** was present among the top three character strengths of each participant group. **Zest** was found to be present among the top three character strengths of the Black, Coloured, and Indian groups of participants. Finally, the character strength **love of learning** was found to feature under the top three character strengths of the Black, Coloured, and White groups of participants. It is also clearly noticeable that exactly the same tendency was present with regard to the weighting of the character strengths than with the prevalence. This result confirmed that those strengths most prevalent were also those that would most likely manifest the clearest.

6.2 Limitations

During the process of conducting this study, the researcher became aware of certain obstacles and subsequent limitations to the study. The specific limitations, possible explanations, as well as suggestions for future research will be highlighted. Limitations to the study are delineated below.

6.2.1 Limitations with regard to participant information.

The information sheet and informed consent form contained all the ethically relevant information. However, feedback from participants brought to the fore that an even better and more refined information pack would have been beneficial. The request was possibly unclear or unexciting, which might have deterred potential participants from following through on the request of participation. It should be considered that potential participants could have been more inclined to take part in the study, should they have felt better prepared by the researcher.

In this regard, literature on what character strengths are and the positive impact on children would have set the context for the research more clearly. When participants read the guiding question, they would have had a better understanding of what was expected of them. However, the researcher was cautious to elaborate on information to the extent that it might lead the parents to think in a specific way.

Still with regard to the information provided, it came to the researcher's attention that no specific space was provided for participants' contact information. Although the researcher did manage to gather all the necessary information from the contact made with the participants, a formal document requesting participants' contact details, would have made the information more comprehensive.

Experience obtained through conducting this study made the researcher all the more aware of the importance of a deadline on self-report instruments. The researcher gave no indication as to when the essays were expected to be submitted. Due to this fact, control over the timeframe of data collection was severely limited. A clearer indication of the deadline for completion would have streamlined the research process much more. An additional default refusal to participate in the research could also have been attached to the deadline.

During the data analysis and process of writing up findings the researcher became aware of the importance of additional demographic information that had not been required from participants. The researcher is of the opinion that understanding the religious or spiritual perspective of the parent and child would prove helpful. A better understanding of the prevalence and weighting of certain strengths in specific racial groups could have been better understood, had more comprehensive background information such as religion been gleaned.

6.2.2 Difficulties related to the recruitment of participants.

During the process the researcher was surprised at the difficulty experienced in recruiting participants. An approximate total of 62 individuals were contacted either directly by the researcher or nominated by colleagues and friends. However, in total only 38 potential participants responded with descriptive essays. Although the option for referring a third party participant was provided, only one participant had made use of this. After contacting the identified potential participant, no response was received. Consequently a significant limitation was placed on the recruitment process as it had been intended that snowball sampling be used.

The researcher considered whether recruiting participants from a potentially participant-rich environment, such as a school for example, might not have been more beneficial. Approaching the recruitment process in this manner could possibly have assisted in obtaining more participants, as well as richer data. However, additional ethical clearance from the Department of Education, and other relevant parties, would have had to be obtained.

The number of respondents who participated in the study might be viewed as a limitation. In the light of this being a qualitative study, and as the quantity of participants was not the first priority, it could still have added to richer data on character strengths. Furthermore, it was established that some essays held little to no information on character strengths. For this reason a larger number of essays would have provided the researcher with the opportunity of selecting cases with sufficient descriptions of character strengths. Should future research be aimed more specifically at comparisons between racial groups, it is suggested that a longer period of time be allocated for the process to ensure optimal participant recruitment, and a sufficient number of essays.

6.2.3 Challenges experienced during the data gathering process.

Parental descriptions of children were used as the only data gathering method. It has been established through the review of literature that different character strengths will manifest in different contexts and are subsequently observed by the individuals in that specific context. In the current study, making use only of parental descriptions, the researcher was limited to only one observer of the child, and descriptions were restricted mostly to the home context. Although probably more labour-intensive, the researcher would suggest making use of parental as well as teacher descriptions of children. A teacher might probably be able to provide a description of character strengths that manifest within the educational context.

Making use of written parental descriptions was useful in many ways. However, the researcher found that, to a certain extent, the descriptions provided by participants were influenced by their perspective of the child as a whole, and not necessarily as an individual with strengths. A few descriptions of children were predominantly negative to the extent that little to no character strengths could be identified. Thus, it is possible that many character strengths inherent to the child went unnoticed and unmentioned.

6.3 Recommendations

After careful reflection and the considerations of the limitations discussed, the following recommendations are offered:

- It is recommended that comprehensive information be provided to participants. It is recommended to make the information sheet more participant friendly by adding a short biography of the researcher to ensure that participants feel comfortable with whom they are sharing information about their child.

- Literature on character strengths and the positive contribution it makes to the lives of children could be added to the information pack to provide context and a short example together with the guiding question to provide participants with a better understanding. The researcher further recommends that it be emphasised that there is no "wrong" or "right" description of a child.

- Participants should be provided with a space on the informed consent form to place their contact information. Crucial information such as this will allow for following up should information be unclear.

- It is also recommended that demographic information such as religion be captured. Through this the researcher will be able to form a better idea of the context within which the child functions.

- A one-week deadline for submission of the parental descriptions is recommended. This information could be placed in the information pack. It is further recommended that participants be informed that failure to meet the one-week deadline will result in automatic exclusion from the study. This will ensure that the data gathering process is better managed.

- Through conducting participant recruitment in participant rich environments, more participants could be reached and subsequently more data could be gathered. It is therefore recommended that a school (or schools) be approached to assist in the recruitment of participants.

Future research may consider a greater emphasis on:

- The development of character strengths and its relation to the well-being of children. Once a clear understanding of the unique and complex process of character strengths development is gained, programmes can be implemented to ensure that children's existing strengths may be developed. During the process the researcher questioned whether character strengths followed a similar trajectory to that of the child's development. It appeared as though character strengths in the virtue groups of temperance and transcendence developed in accordance to the child's developmental abilities.

- A study that aims to explore the presence of character strengths among a larger, more representative group will be helpful. This will bring more certainty whether character strengths truly show such similar distribution, or whether greater differences are present between racial groups.

- The final recommendation is that the results of this study should be viewed as a baseline for future research and programme development. The results hold the potential to enable future research and/ or educational/ parenting programmes to expand on certain character strengths necessary for optimal health and well-being, as well as a variety of interventions intended for children exposed to trauma.

6.4 Personal Reflection

Reflecting on the research process over the last year and four months brought various thoughts and emotions to the fore. The reality of the project in front of me was, at times, overwhelming. The most significant question of all was how to stay motivated? As I think back to introductory classes of research and initial contact sessions with my supervisor, I remembered that one variable always presented itself: Your research needs to be interesting enough to keep you going when you are burning the midnight oil. It is with complete honesty and transparency that I can say that this research project continued to intrigue. I found the knowledge that I gained through my readings on character strengths, children, culture, and so many more "stumbled upon" topics, extremely valuable.

My belief and mantra in life have always been that all people deserve a "good" life. In my previous occupation as a social worker, I came to realise reluctantly that life is not always good to people. Nevertheless, character strengths might just be the key that allows people to live a

"good" life despite life itself not being good. What better place to start with this process than to attempt to develop and build on the character strengths of children?

Not only do I feel a sincere connection to this study, but the process of research was exciting, insightful, at times excruciating, and inspiring. I was reminded of the worth of behavioural activation every time I finished a sentence, paragraph, and chapter. Completing one task encourages one to finish more. In time, feeling overwhelmed was replaced by a sense that the research was coming alive to me. Seeing multiple descriptions of parents become singular words, then numbers, then graphs, and then a discussion, was a thrilling experience. It felt as if many of the things that I had read up in preparation of my proposal and study suddenly became real and tangible.

I am convinced that this study achieved the aim that was set and that greater insight has been gained into the prevalence of character strengths in a small group of South African children. It is my sincerest hope that this research will inspire further studies aimed at developing these character strengths so necessary for our children to navigate the challenges of life within the South Africa of today.

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Appendix A

EXAMPLE OF CODED ESSAY

ROW	WENDY	STRENGTH
1	Wendy is <u>7 years old</u>, grade 1 and younger of two children.	
2	She is <u>bright, upbeat, busy and bossy</u>. 1 LL 2Z	Love of learning Zest
3	According to her teachers, they are able to <u>send her to</u>	
4	<u>any one on the school grounds</u>. She is <u>not scared to go to</u> 3 SI 2 B	Social intelligence Bravery
5	<u>another teacher</u> and she relays messages accordingly.	
6	She <u>can be trusted</u> and she is a <u>natural leader</u>. She has 2 H 4 Le	Honesty Leadership
7	away about her that silently <u>demands respect</u> and she 5 Hu	Humility
8	beams with authority. She would <u>get her class to calm</u> 3 SI 4 Le	Social intelligence Leadership
9	<u>down</u>. Her teacher says it will always look like she is busy	
10	with something else, but when asked to relay what was	
11	said or to answer a question, <u>she was listening the whole</u>	
12	<u>time and she is able to answer</u>. She <u>loves singing and</u> 5 SI 1 C 2 Z	Social intelligence Creativity Zest
13	<u>dancing and plays in the concerts / revues</u>. At the end of	
14	Gr. R, her teacher gave me a public speaking form and	

15	said she would do great with it as <u>she likes debating</u>, 4 J	Judgement
16	<u>talks a lot and is able to argue her point of view</u>. 1 P	Perspective
17	She has a temper and loves things to go her way, she is	
18	stubborn. Although she is 11 months younger than her	
19	brother, it is like she is the elder one. <u>She takes charge</u>. 4 Le	Leadership
20	At times I am surprised at how <u>"grown up"</u> she can be for 3 SI	Social intelligence
21	her age. She is very <u>caring</u>, with a big attitude and a 3 K	Kindness
22	<u>small heart</u>. She <u>questions a lot of things</u> and always 1 Cu	Curiosity
23	<u>wants to understand why something should be done</u> and 1 Cu 1 LL	Curiosity Love of learning
24	how. <u>She would bring us coffee in bed and make her</u> 3 K	Kindness
25	<u>brother cereal</u>. A tiny scratch or scuffed knee pains her	
26	for days and she would complain about it a lot. But if	
27	<u>someone else gets hurt, she likes to play nurse</u>. Cleaning 3 K	Kindness
28	it, bandaging it. She <u>loves hugs and cuddles</u>. 3 L	Love
29	She is a very smart girl, even before she started school,	
30	<u>she also wanted to do homework with her brother</u> when 1 LL	Love of learning

3 1	he started Gr. R. she will struggle with something, get	
3 2	upset, but she <u>will not give up until she gets it right</u>. She 2 Pe	Perseverance
3 3	<u>makes friends easily</u>, but has no special friend in 3 SI	Social intelligence
3 4	particular. She <u>interacts with children from any age</u>. She 3 SI	Social intelligence
3 5	loves babies and always <u>"mothers" them</u>. Playing with 3 SI	Social intelligence
3 6	them, watching over them under supervision of others.	
3 7	She <u>does not stand back for any challenge</u>, Judo was 2 B	Bravery
3 8	one of her favourite sports. <u>She grows attached to</u> 3 L	Love
3 9	<u>someone easily, forgives fast</u>. 5 Fo	Forgiveness
4 0	She loves animals and would mother her dog by carrying	
4 1	him around. She gets upset if he gets hurt, but once	
4 2	again, the <u>authority in her voice</u> makes even the bull 4 Le	Leadership
4 3	terrier obey her commands. When her cat died (due to	
4 4	the bull terrier) her first reaction was to scream and cry	
4 5	like it was her that got hurt and then she was furious at	
4 6	the dog.	

47	She is my surprisingly strong child. <u>Physically strong,</u> <center>2 B</center>	Bravery
48	<u>strong willed</u>, outspoken, dominant, <u>yet sensitive to</u>	
49	<u>others and animals</u>. Loving and caring. <center>3 SI</center>	Social intelligence

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), hereby confirm that I understand the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation in this research study, as explained by the researcher. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate inthe study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am therefore freeto withdraw at any time during the study, without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will remain anonymous and may be included in a research report, journal publications and/ or conference proceedings.

I have also been informed that, should I at any time experience psychological distress, I can contact the following counselling psychologist who will provide three free sessions of psychotherapy:

Mrs Adelle Lottering
012 344 4000 / 083 279 2325
155 Relly Steet, Sunnyside, Pretoria

Please contact Charné Vercueil of the Faculty of the Humanities, Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Free State, at 051 401 7083 or vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za should you have any questions or concerns.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____Date:_____

Full name of researcher: Christina Magdalena van der Walt

Contact number of researcher: 071 3300 765

Signature of researcher: _____ _____ Date: _____

Full name of supervisor: Dr. Lindi Nel

Contact number of supervisor: 051 401 2732

Signature of supervisor:_____ _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

INFORMATION SHEET

Study: **Parents' descriptions of the character strengths of their children**

The aim of this study is to identify the character strengths of children aged 7 to 10 years. Character strengths present in the way in which individuals choose to behave, their thoughts, and also their feelings. Character strengths in children are of importance as it influences various aspects of their functioning. Certain character strengths have been linked to academic performance, and even as a buffer against psychological trauma.

As a means of identifying these character strengths, this study will look at parents' descriptions of their children. Parents/ care givers of children aged 7 years to 10 years will be asked to write a descriptive essay about their child. They will be asked to provide information pertaining to the child's behaviour, thoughts, and feelings in various contexts.

By taking part in this research, parents/ care givers can help generate relevant data that will be used in multiple areas of child development. Through this research the potential exists to generate more studies. Subsequently data may be generated to utilise in our education system, and to develop child development programmes.

Your participation in valuable research such as this is appreciated.

ESSAY – GUIDING QUESTION

Please write a description, in essay form, of your child as he/she behaves in various contexts (at school, at home, with friends). You are welcome to refer to the way your child interacts with others, and also how he/she reacts to certain situations or events. Please limit your essay to one page. At the end of the essay I should just have a better understanding of your child.

Thank you.

Appendix D

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent BENNIE	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	13	"very inquisitive"	3
	13	"he asks a lot of questions"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	13	"is very analytical"	3

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows.	23	"doing well in his academic tasks"	3
	18	"intelligent child… finishes his homework quicker"	1
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	27	"likes sticking to school rules"	2
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	7	"loud at home"	2

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.			
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	23	"He mingles with other kids well"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	26	"he is very competitive"	1
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
		TRANSCENDENCE	

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix E

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent BERT	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	18/19	"he is a bright kid… able to read and write"	1
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.			

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	18	"enjoys his new friends"	3
	23	"love his siblings"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	24	"like to share everything with them"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	22	"When I talk to him he responds in a good manner"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a	29	"like to play football"	3

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	25	"He is the leader of their topics"	3
	TEMPERANCE		
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.	16	"presents his work to me even before I ask"	3
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix F

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent BETTY	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	8	"she is a curious child she asks questions about everything and anything"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	2	"she doesn't want to miss school"	2
	1	"bright kid"	1
	23	"at school she is excelling"	3
	5	"she likes maths more… english second"	2
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	27	"does not want to be disturbed when busy with her class work"	1
	1	"dedication to her school work"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	10	"she just speaks it (her mind) like that"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	8	"bubbly child"	2
	14	"loves playing… forgets bath time"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	21	"Her and her little sister have love for each other"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	22	"doesn't like to see her little sister crying or upset"	3
	25	"likes helping other children"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	23	"reserved around me because I sometimes tend to be a serious mom"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;	12	"then five minutes she forgot that you were angry at her"	3

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			
	5	"likes maths"	1

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix G

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent BARRY	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	23	"keen to learn new things"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	23	"keen to learn new things"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	24	"When given an assignment at school he makes sure it is done"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	18/20	"still bedwetting… promise never to do it again"	1
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	9	"He is always busy outside playing with friends"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	9	"He is always busy… playing with his friends"	2
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.			
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix H

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent BLAKE	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	18	"He talk to people eg. Ask people about themselves, what they enjoy"	2
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	29	"challenges and solutions to the problem"	3

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	27	"always like to talk a lot about school work"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	22	"he speaks his mind accordingly"	2

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	21	"When with the family he speaks his mind accordingly"	3
	23	"When he feels bad about something he will say it out"	2
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	21	"such an extrovert"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	13	"enjoys himself with friends"	3
	10	"spend more time with friends"	2
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	31	"Where there is a need to assist he is always ready"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	13	"enjoys himself with friends who have similar interests and values"	3
	19	"ask them (people) about themselves"	3
	23	"feels bad about something he will say it out"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.	26	"always appreciates the help provided by the teachers"	3
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix I

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent CIARA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	11	"baie oop kop kind" (*open minded child*)	2

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	12	"hou daarvan om hard te leer" (*enjoys studying hard*)	3
	10	"gee haar beste om goed in al haar vakke te doen" (*gives her best to do well in all her subjects*)	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	14	"laat nie maklik op haar kop sit nie" (*doesn't allow people to sit on her head*)	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	10	"gee haar beste om goed in al haar vakke te doen" (*gives her best to do well in all her subjects*)	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure;	15	"hou ook daarvan om aan die skool se aktiwiteite deel te neem" (*likes taking part in the school's activities*)	2

feeling alive and activated.			
HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	4	"liefdevolle kind" (*loving child*)	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	6	"baie saggeaard" (*very caring*)	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.			

JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	13	"baie sterk karakter" (*very strong character*)	2
TEMPERANCE			

Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			

		TRANSCENDENCE	
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles	4	"baie van grappe hou" (*like jokes a lot*)	3

to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix J

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent CLINT	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	6	"en leer baie goed" (*studies well*)	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	14	"vra soms omvergifnis as hy iets verkeerd gedoen het" (*sometimes asks forgiveness when he has done something wrong*)	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	2	"een wat nie kan stil sit vir 'n rukkie nie" (*one that cannot sit still for a time*)	3
	15	"hy hou baie van speel" (*he likes playing a lot*)	2

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	18	"hy is vol liefde" (*full of love*)	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	6	"hy tree baie goed op by sy maats" (*he behaves well with his friends*)	2
	10	"met sy klasmaats vriende gemaak en die ander uitgelos" (*made friends with his classmates and left the other alone*)	1

JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.	17	"vra sy boetie om hom te help as hy die jard wil skoon maak" (*asks his brother for help when he wants to clean the yard*)	3
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			

Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling			

one's appetites and emotions.		
TRANSCENDENCE		
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.		
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.		
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.		
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles		

to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix K

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent CLIFF	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	15	"keeps up with the latest trends and music"	3
	20	"he does well in school"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	5	"very protective whenever their nephew tries to bully his little brother"	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	2	"wild and care free"	3
	19	"bussiest in class"	2

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	4	"younger brother… who he loves dearly"	2
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	5	"very protective whenever their nephew tries to bully his little brother"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	16	"he is a people's person"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	17	"He has a strong personality, leader of the pack"	3
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix L

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent CAIN	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	11	"Hy is intellektueel nuuskierig" (*intellectually curious*)	3
	17	"Hy is nuuskierige agie en vra gereeld hoekom" (*he is curious and regularly asks questions*)	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to	18	"Hy is baie prakties en realisties" (*he is practical and realistic*)	2

change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	16	"hy hou baie van skool" (*he likes school a lot*)	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is			

opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	2	"Hy het hope energie" (*he has loads of energy*)	3
	1	"Hy hou daarvan om alles op 'n groot manier te doen" (*he likes doing things in a big way*)	3

		HUMANITY	
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	10	"Hy hou daarvan om nuwe maatjies te maak" (*he likes making new friends*)	2
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	14	"Hy is sensitief en in voeling met ander se gevoelens" (*he is sensitive and in feeling with other's feelings*)	3
	12	"Hy kom skaam en gereserveerd voor vreemdelinge voor" (*he is shy and reserved with strangers*)	2

JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.	21	"Hy hou daarvan om deel te neem aan sport and span aktiwiteite" (*he likes taking part in sport and team activities*)	3
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group			

activities and seeing that they happen.		
TEMPERANCE		
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.		
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.		
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.		
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels		

and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.	3	"Hy is gek oor die buitelewe" (*he is crazy about outdoor life*)	2
	7	"Hy hou van mooi goed" (*he likes pretty things*)	3
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is			

something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix M

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent CLAIR	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	6	"van die top achievers by die skool" (*one of the top achievers at school*)	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	3	"sy hou daarvan om op te staan vir ander wat nie hulself kan verdedig nie" (*she likes standing up for others who cannot defend themselves*)	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	1	"baie vriendelik, lag en praat baie" (*very friendly, laughs and talks a lot*)	2

		HUMANITY	
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	6	"Sy hou baie van maatjies" (*she likes friends a lot*)	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	2	"klein hartjie kan baie simpatiseer met ander ingeval iemand dalk hartseer of nie goed voel nie" (*small heart can sympathise with others if they sad or does not feel well*)	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	2	"klein hartjie kan baie simpatiseer met ander ingeval iemand dalk hartseer of nie goed voel nie" (*small heart can sympathise with others if they sad or does not feel well*)	3
	7	"kan baie vinnig in pas" (*can fit in quickly*)	3

JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.	3	"sy hou daarvan om op te staan vir ander wat nie hulself kan verdedig nie" (*she likes standing up for those who cannot defend themselves*)	3
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group			

activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels			

and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is			

something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.	1	"Als is altyd baie snaaks" (*everything is always very funny*)	3
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix N

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent INA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	32	"ballet school"	1
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	20	"and walks away when there is mischief happening so that she does not get into trouble"	2

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.			
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is	34	"the horse threw her… then she wanted to go back to horseriding"	3

opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	34	"the horse threw her… then she wanted to go back to horseriding"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	19	"voice her dislike when I mention that we shoud visit there again"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	28	"also like to try new things"	3
	31	"she is not afraid of new experiences and embraces it whole-heartedly"	3
	32	"when she had to change ballet school she was up for it"	3

		HUMANITY	
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	3	"she enjoys conversations with my husband and I"	2
	14	"she loves her friends"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	15	"very considerate of them"	3
	15	"always wants to draw pictures for them"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	13	"very pleasant and has to date not gotten into any trouble"	2
	14	"plays well with others and can make friends easily"	3
	15	"very considerate of them"	3
	15	"she also has a good relationship with her teachers"	3
	17	"likely to play with children she is meeting for the first time"	2
	20	"she plays well with children of all ages"	3
	20	"and walks away when there is mischief happening so that she does not get into trouble"	3
	22	"behaves herself when she goes to visit her granparents"	3
	42	"well behaved with others"	3
		JUSTICE	

Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done	37	"does not hold grudges"	3

wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.	20	"and walks away when there is mischief happening so that she does not get into trouble"	3
	38	"tries to avoid confrontations and ugliness"	3
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.	19	"if she dislikes someone she will not show it"	3
	23	"not demanding"	2

TRANSCENDENCE		
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.		
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.		
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.		
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles		

to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix O

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent IRENE	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.			
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	15	"hardworking"	3
	21	"when focused she does what she needs to do"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	30	"have her own style and interests"	2
	30	"able to express her feelings"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	21	"does what she needs to with zeal and passion"	3
	3	"bubbly, demonstrative"	3
	15	"friendly, interactive, talkative"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.			
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	13	"often give in to the baby to avoid a fight"	2
	16	"interacts well with children of all aged and adults"	3
	30	"able to express her feelings"	2
	32	"good company to children and adults"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	3	"demonstrative"	1
	TEMPERANCE		
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.	13	"often give in to the baby to avoid a fight"	3
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
	TRANSCENDENCE		

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix P

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent IRIS	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	16	"enjoys baking, singing, and dancing"	3
	18	"wanted to become… singer"	1
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	1	"I have heard more 'but why mummy?'"	3
	9	"more she asked, more she learnt"	3
	14	"not afraid to ask questions"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	19	"open-minded when it comes to accepting other cultures and religions"	3
	21	"ask for clarrification on the subject at hand"	2

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	7	"eager to learn"	3
	9	"more she asked, more she learnt"	2
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.	19	"open-minded when it comes to other cultures and religions"	3
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	14	"not afraid to ask questions"	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	15	"will then practice until she betters herself"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	10	"comfortable in her own skin"	2
	17	"finds comfort in being able to express herself"	3
	20	"strong values and opinions"	1
	23	"constant with who she is"	2
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	16	"enjoys singing, baking, and dancing"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.			
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	18	"wanted to become a doctor"	2
	21	"kind hearted and caring"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	11	"finds it easy to communicate with all ages"	3
	17	"find comfort in being able to express herself"	2
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.	19	"open-minded when it comes to accepting other cultures and religions"	2
	20	"doesn't find the need to impose her belief on anyone"	2
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;	21	"she is… forgiving"	3

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
		TRANSCENDENCE	

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix Q

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent ISLA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	21	"enjoys carrying out maths and english"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	11	"expresses herself openly"	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	21	"more focused"	1
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	11	"expresses herself openly"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	10	"At home my little girl is very loud"	3
	11	"free"	2
	25	"enjoys outdoor activities"	2

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	17/18	"has one or two close friends and tends to stick with them"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	5	"differs in different situations"	2
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	15	"can take on the leader role"	3
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix R

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent IVA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
span		**WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE**	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	30	"very creative and loves art"	3
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	7	"shows enthusiasm once she sees logic"	2

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.			
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.	28	"engages in the most perceptive and intelligent conversations"	3
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	1	"when it comes to school she is always on top of her deliverables"	3
	30	"sense of perseverance… will try something until she gets it right"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	10	"she shows how she really feels"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	27	"can have fun"	2

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	20	"very loving to animals"	3
	27	"loving relationship with friends"	3
	27	"very attached to us"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.			
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	23	"is very reserved until she has managed to form an opinion of a person"	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a	3	"needs assistance she will ask"	1

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.	2	"she manages her time"	3
	2	"keeps track of what she needs to complete"	3
	12	"she is easy going and does not throw tantrums"	3
TRANSCENDENCE			
	30	"very creative and loves art"	3

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix S

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent WENDY	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	12/13	"loves singing and dancing and plays in the concert/ revue"	3
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	22	"questions a lot of things"	3
	23	"wants to understand why… something should be done"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	16/17	"like debating"	2

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	30	"wanted to do homework with her brother"	3
	23	"wants to understand why"	2
	1	"bright"	1
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.	16	"able to argue her point of view"	3
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	4	"not scared to go to another teacher"	3
	37	"does not stand back for any challenge"	3
	47/48	"physically strong and strong willed"	2

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	32	"will not give up until she gets it right"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	6	"can be trusted"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	2	"bright, upbeat, busy, bossy"	2
	12	"loves singing and dancing"	1

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	28	"loves hugs and cuddles"	2
	38	"grows attached to someone easily"	1
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	21	"very caring"	3
	24/25	"bring us coffee in bed and make her brother cereal"	3
	27	"someone gets hurt… like to play nurse"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	4	"send her to anyone at school"	1
	35	"always mothers them"	1
	34	"interacts with children from any age"	2
	8	"would get her class to calm down"	3
	33	"makes friends easily"	2
	48	"sensitive to others"	2
	12	"listening whole time and able to answer"	1
	20	"grown up"	1
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	6	"natural leader… demands respect"	3
	8	"class to calm down"	2
	19	"takes charge"	1
	42	"authority in her voice"	2
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;	39	"forgives fast"	3

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.	7	"silently demands respect"	1
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
	TRANSCENDENCE		

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix T

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent WILL	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	30	"iets hom nou intereseer sal hy verseker vrae vra tot hy nie meer kan nie" (*if something interests him he will start asking questions until he can't anymore*)	3
	25	"vragies begin vra" (*start asking questions*)	2
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to	23-25	"Hy sal dit eers bietjie na dink en dan vir homself 'n prentjie probeer skep en dan sal hy al sy vragies begin vra en sy mening lig daaroor" (*He'll think about it first and try to form a picture for himself after which he will ask questions and form his own opinion*)	3

conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.			
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			

Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	22	"doen ook 'n ding en kry klaar as wat hy moet wag" (*does something rather than wait until it is done*)	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			

Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	32	"gemaklik om te gesels en te speel" (*comfortable with talking and playing*)	2
HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.			
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	8	"Hy voel dat almal ook maar net 'n beurt wil hê" (*feels that everyone just want a chance*)	3
	13	"Sy maats se gevoelens kom altyd voor sy eie" (*His friends' feelings always comes before his own*)	3
	14	"ander altyd eerste geleentheid sal gun" (*will always give others the first opportunity*)	3

Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	5	"sal sy beurt af wag" (*will wait for his turn*)	3
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.	17	"iets sien as net reg of verkeerd" (*will see something as only right or wrong*)	3

Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.			
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.	8	"ook maar net 'n beurt wil hê" (*just want a chance*)	2
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not	6	"hy wil nie graag konflik veroorsaak nie" (*he does not want to cause conflict*)	2

taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.	5	"Hy sal sy beurt af wag net soos al die kinders" (*he will wait for his turn just like the other children*)	3
TRANSCENDENCE			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen;			

taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.	14	"Hy is maar vriendelik van self en lekker laf as hy om sy maats is" (*he is friendly and funny when he is with his friends*)	2
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape			

conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix U

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent WINSTON	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE			
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.			
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	9	"loves learning something new"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light			

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	7	"learns extremely quickly"	3
	9	"loves learning something new"	3
	6	"excels in school"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
COURAGE			
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on	11	"push him only so far till he says no more"	3

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	5	"does not take no for an answer"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.	1	"very active"	3
	14	"loves the water"	3

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.			
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	7	"loves to do things and help out"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	3	"strong personality and he tends to use it to his advantage"	2
JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a			

group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	1	"everything is a competition"	1
	TEMPERANCE		
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others;			

giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.	10	"does not show his pain or anger unless it bothers him"	2
TRANSCENDENCE			

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.			
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix V

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent WILLEMINA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	1	"creative, artistic nine year old girl"	3
	2	"she enjoys dance"	3
	5	"passionate and intense in creative interests"	2
	16	"teaching her school notes to he younger brother"	2
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.	25	"enjoys figuring things out for herself"	3
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to	25	"She enjoys figuring things out for herself, or by quitely observing others"	1

change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	16	"enjoys learning"	3
	24	"avid reader"	2
	28	"teach her younger brother to do things"	1
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
	COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is	11	"seems to take life's pressures in her stride"	3

right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.			
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.	20	"leaves notes around the house for family members with words of apology"	3
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure;	1	"found pleasure"	2

feeling alive and activated.			
HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	13	"committed friend often giving more than she received"	3
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	14	"faithful to her friends"	3
	19	"bringing us a cup of coffee or treat to help us feel better"	3
	20	"leaves notes around the house for family members with word of… encouragment"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	20	"leaves notes around the house for family members"	2
	18	"notices when another family member is feeling down"	3
	14	"exaggerate their (her friends) strong points to make them feel good about themselves"	2

JUSTICE			
Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	28	"she always has to be in charge"	3

TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.	14	"exaggerate their (her friends) strong points to make them feel good about themselves"	2
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being	23	"she calms down by reading or listening to music"	2
	12	"can handle other disappointments well"	3

desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			
TRANSCENDENCE			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.	1	"found pleasure in music and dance"	3
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			

Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			
Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.	5	"passionate and intense in her Christian belief"	3

Appendix W

Descriptions of Strengths According to the VIA	Row number and code	Direct description of parent WANDA	Amount Strength of quote 1: direct and certain 2: fair interpretation 3: vague
		WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE	
Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it.	19	"she loved dancing"	3
	20	"part of the junior choir… learnt to enjoy it"	2
Curiosity: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.			
Judgement: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light	32	"she knows that she will have time for fun and relax following days"	1

of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.			
Love of Learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the rendency to add systematically to what one knows.	31	"enjoy doing homework"	3
Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that makes sense to oneself and to other people.			
		COURAGE		
Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on			

convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.			
Perseverance: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.	9	"then (after trying) she becomes confident"	1
	31	"earnestly wants to finish her week's homework"	3
	42	"normally with patience she mostly gets it right"	2
	32	"feels the gratification of a task done"	3
Honesty: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions.			
Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.			

HUMANITY			
Love: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.	6	"friends so like and enjoy her a lot"	3
	23	"death of a loved one has had a deep emotional effect on her"	2
Kindness: Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.	26	"she has a deep compassion and always comes to comfort and hold me tight"	3
Social Intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.	26	"she has a deep compassion and always comes to comfort and hold me tight"	3
JUSTICE			

Teamwork: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.			
Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.			
Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done, and at the same time maintaining good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.	6	"take the lead in some activities"	1
TEMPERANCE			
Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done			

wrong; accepting shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.			
Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.			
Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.			
Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does; being desciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.			

TRANSCENDENCE			
Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/ or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experiences.	34	"she loves her maths"	2
Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.			
Hope: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.			
Humour: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making jokes.			

Spirituality: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.			

Appendix X Combined Table of Data

Strengths	Indian		White		Black		Coloured		Total		
	Frequency	Weight	Frequency	Weight	Frequency	Weight	Frequency	Weight	Frequency	Weight	
Creativity	4	8	7	18	0	0	0	0	11	26	Wisdom and Knowledge
Curiosity	3	9	6	17	5	14	2	6	15	34	
Judgement	4	9	4	7	2	6	2	4	12	26	
Love of learning	3	8	10	24	9	19	7	21	29	72	
Perspective	2	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	9	
Bravery	3	9	5	14	1	2	3	9	12	33	Courage
Perseverance	7	19	7	18	3	7	1	3	18	44	
Honesty	9	22	2	6	5	11	1	3	17	41	
Zest	11	30	6	11	5	13	8	20	30	73	
Love	6	17	5	11	6	16	5	13	22	57	Humanity
Kindness	4	11	11	33	4	12	3	9	22	65	
Social intelligence	17	45	14	28	6	18	7	17	43	106	
Teamwork	1	1	0	0	1	3	2	6	4	9	Justice
Fairness	2	4	1	3	0	0	1	3	4	10	
Leadership	2	4	7	13	2	4	2	5	13	25	
Forgiveness	2	6	1	3	1	3	0	0	4	12	
Humility	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	0	3	5	Temperance
Prudence	3	9	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	10	
Self-regulation	5	14	4	10	1	3	0	0	10	27	
Appreciation of beauty and excellence	1	3	2	5	1	1	2	5	6	14	Transcendence
Gratitude	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	3	
Hope	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Humour	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	6	3	8	
Spirituality	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	
TOTAL	89	234	99	236	53	135	48	130	287	712	