

**Ubiquity of core virtues and character strengths
of positive psychology in African traditional religions:
A qualitative thematic analysis**

by
Sahaya G. Selvam

Word count:
15,953

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for Master's Degree (M.A.)
in Psychology of Religion

August 2009

Heythrop College,
University of London
United Kingdom

CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Chapter 1	
Background and research questions	3
1.1. Positive Psychology (PP): Core virtues & character strengths	3
1.2. African Traditional Religions (ATR)	6
1.3. The research question: Are character strengths ubiquitous in ATR?	9
Chapter 2	
Approach and methods: A qualitative thematic analysis	10
2.1. Understanding the method of thematic analysis	10
2.2. Application of thematic analysis in the present work	11
2.3. Relevance and limitations of the study	13
Chapter 3	
Identification of coding template & data set	15
3.1. Coding template: Character strengths of positive psychology	15
3.2. Data set: Ethnological research data from MIAS	22
Chapter 4	
Research findings: Emerging themes	25
4.1. Emerging character strengths in the data set	25
4.2. Convergence of character strengths of PP in the domains of the data set	35
Chapter 5	
Discussion: The Convergence of Character Strengths in ATR	38
5.1. It takes a village: The context and purpose of wisdom & knowledge	38
5.2. Abundant Life: African ‘Vitalogy’ as basis for integrity and vitality	39
5.3. There is one more place: African expressions of humanity	40
5.4. I am because we are: African citizenship	41
5.5. Maintaining communion: Reconciliation and regulation	42
5.6. Being notoriously religious: A spirituality of life	43
5.7. The African elder as the paragon of character strengths	44
Conclusion	46
References	49
Appendix: Sample data units and possible allusion to character strengths	54

Ubiquity of core virtues and character strengths of positive psychology in African traditional religions: A qualitative thematic analysis

Abstract

Positive psychology (PP) has relied on philosophical and religious traditions for its understanding and classification of core virtues and character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Based on their prevalence in religious literature and cultural expressions, researchers attempt to show the ubiquity of the six virtues and their corresponding character strengths. African Traditional Religions (ATR) have not featured much in this discussion. The objective of the present qualitative study was to examine if the core virtues are ubiquitous in ATR.

The 6 core virtues and 24 character strengths classified by PP were chosen as the coding template; ethnological data pertaining to 10 cultural domains collected and published by Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (Kirwen, 2008) were chosen as the data set for this thematic analysis. Using a hybrid approach of deductive data analysis and inductive theme development, the research project undertook the following steps: (a) identification of a coding template within the scheme of core virtues and character strengths; (b) identification of the data set by examining the background of the said ethnological data; (c) analysis of the data: applying the coding template to the data set, and identifying lexical and thematic equivalents; (d) corroborating or clarifying the identified themes by the use of other scholarly sources on ATR.

Findings indicate that out of the 24 character strengths of positive psychology, 17 were found to converge with one or more anthropological domains of the data set from ATR. Citizenship and spirituality emerged as the stronger themes, while elderhood rites featured as the most significant anthropological domain. A case is made for the African elder being a paragon of character strengths.

This work in the psychology of religion demonstrates the prevalence of core virtues and character strengths in ATR, while rendering ATR in the contemporary lexical and thematic discourse of PP.

Chapter 1

Background and Research Questions

There is an increasing awareness of the Western, Christian bias in psychology. Spilka et al (2003) blatantly own up: “When they said “religion,” most psychologists meant Christianity. Furthermore, when they said “Christianity,” most psychologists meant Protestantism. Thus, not surprisingly, the North American psychology of religion emerged as a psychology of North American Protestant Christianity – a bias that dominates the field to this day” (pp.341-342; also Gorsuch, 1988).

Coming from a non-Protestant, non-Western background, it was not difficult for me to notice in the psychology of religion the bias that Spilka and his colleagues talk about. However, it did not take long to realise that positive psychology offers other alternatives. Positive psychology not only provides a multidimensional theoretical framework for the psychology of religion (Maltby & Hill, 2008), but shows valid examples of cross-cultural, inter-religious empirical researches (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Biswas-Diener, 2006; Watts, Dutton, & Gulliford, 2006).

With an enthusiasm to contribute to the study of African Traditional Religions, working under the umbrella of the psychology of religion, I found the discussion on core virtues and character strengths in positive psychology to be a viable meeting point. It is from this point of departure that this research project was undertaken.

1.1. Positive Psychology: Core Virtues and Character Strengths

Positive psychology (PP) is about happiness. Happiness or wellbeing is seen as an outcome of pleasant life: “pursuit of positive emotions about the present, past and future”; good life: “using your strengths and virtues to obtain abundant gratification in the main realms of life”; and meaningful life: “use of your strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are” (Seligman, 2003, p.127). For a long time, psychology was focussed on understanding, treating and preventing psychological disorder. For instance, practice within psychiatry is guided by two major classification manuals: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) and the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD-10). The former is the *Magna Carta* of the

American Psychiatric Association, the latter is a consensual compendium of the World Health Organisation.

Positive psychology challenges this focus on negativity. It invites scholars and therapists to direct their efforts towards studying positive affect, happiness and wellbeing. This intellectual endeavour also needs a consensual classification system. Peterson & Seligman's (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, therefore, is an effort to answer that need. This 'manual of the sanities', or the Values in Action (VIA) as referred to in a later work (Peterson, 2006), has a list of what the authors call 'character strengths and virtues'.

Peterson & Seligman (2004) argue that virtues "are universal, perhaps grounded in biology through an evolutionary process that selected for these aspects of excellence as means of solving the important tasks necessary for survival of the species" (p.13). Virtues are expressed in character strengths. "Character strengths (CS) are the psychological ingredients – processes or mechanisms – that define the virtues. Said another way, they are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues" (p.14). In other words, CS is different from talents and abilities, but composed of family of positive traits. It is "a disposition to act, desire and feel," which involves the exercise of judgement and which lead to human flourishing (Yearley, 1990, p.13, as cited in Ong & van Dulman, 2007).

In generating entries for the classification of the VIA, Peterson & Seligman (2004) relied on traditional and contemporary cultures, on historical luminaries, and on scholars. They came up with the following criteria to scrutinise the candidate strengths. These criteria, which are the pertinent features of character strengths, also help us understand the meaning of CS in greater depth (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp.14-27; Park & Peterson, 2007, p.296; see also Peterson, 2006, pp.29-48):

1. Ubiquity: the strength is widely recognised across cultures;
2. Fulfilling: they contribute to various fulfilments that constitute the good life, for oneself and for others; fulfilment includes, but goes beyond, pleasure;
3. Moral Value: they are morally valued in their own right, even in the absence of immediate beneficial outcomes;
4. Non-threatening to others: "the display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people in their vicinity" (Peterson, 2006, p.31), that is, they do not jeopardise the possibility of a win-win situation;
5. Nonfelicitous opposite: the CS has obvious antonyms that are negative; this implies that the strength itself is really in positive terms;
6. Traitlike and measurable: CS is measurable in terms of individual's behaviour that includes thoughts, feelings and actions; this also means that the strength has "a degree of generality across situations and stability across time" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.23);

7. Distinctiveness: each strength is unique in its own right, and distinct from other positive traits;
8. Paragons: “a character strength is embodied in consensual paragons” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.24); traditional and popular cultures present ideal models of the character strength;
9. Prodigies: existence of prodigies with respect to the strength; larger society admires individuals, especially younger persons, who exhibit a high degree of a particular strength; however, this criterion may not be applied to all strengths;
10. Selective absence: contrary to the above criterion, the existence of individuals “who show – selectively – the total absence of a given strength” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.26);
11. Institutions: the larger society provides institutions and associated rituals for cultivating that strength, and sustaining its practice.

Some of the criteria in identifying universal character strengths demand cross-cultural studies. In an attempt to demonstrate the ubiquity of the core virtues the authors examine philosophical and religious traditions of China (Confucianism and Taoism), South Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism), and the West (Ancient Greek philosophy, Judaism, Christianity and Islam), looking for the directions each provide for the pleasant, good, and engaged life (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp. 33-52; Snyder & Lopez, 2007, pp.23-50)

This was a response to the invitation of Haidt (2003) to look “to other cultures and other historical eras for ideas and perspectives on virtue and the good life” (p.275). He supposed that world religions hold a great promise of a “highly developed and articulated visions of virtues, practices, and feelings, some of which may even be useful in a modern secular society.” In a similar vein, Maltby & Hill (2008) see religion as a fertile ground for positive psychologists to study systematically the “common denominators” of virtues and character strengths. In such endeavour they also hope that new channels of communication will be opened between researchers in PP and the psychology of religion. There have been other similar efforts in facilitating a dialogue between PP and various religious traditions, either in support, or in critique, of PP and its constructs (Watts, Dutton, & Gulliford, 2006; Sundararajan, 2005; Zagano & Gillespie, 2006). In all these, reference to African Traditional Religions (ATR) is minimal, apparently for reasons that I will discuss below. Even in research works carried out in South Africa (see Coetzee & Viviers, 2007; Eloff, 2008) ATR get no mention. Worthy of mention here, though, is the work by Biswas-Diener (2006) that evaluates the existence, importance, and desirability of character strengths across cultures. This study included a sample (N=123) of the Kenyan Maasai. Another study (Nansook, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006) drew data from 54 nations,

including four African countries. These researches reveal that ubiquity of CS is related to universal human nature showing that they are needed for a viable society.

The aim of this present qualitative study was to add data from Africa to this ongoing discussion on the ubiquity of CS across cultures.

1.2. African Traditional Religions

African

Politically, the adjective "African" is often used to refer to the whole continent of Africa (as also some historians do, see Mazrui, 1986, pp.26-29). On account of its diversities, this geographical identity is hardly proper in referring to ATR. Given the prevalence of the Mediterranean worldview in countries that lie to the north of the Sahara, which are quite different from those that are to the south, cultural anthropologists prefer to speak of the Sub-Saharan Africa as a cultural unit (see, Shillington, 2005). Despite their own linguistic, political, and historical variations, certain commonalities of culture and worldview are identifiable (Beugré & Offodile, 2001, p.537; Selvam, 2008, pp.212-213). These commonalities are strongly expressed in the beliefs and practices of the traditional religions.

Traditional

Often scholars refer to traditional religions as 'primitive' (Tylor, 1871/1958). It is perhaps because of this, that in the psychology of religion, African traditional religions are seldom mentioned. What could be meant by 'primitive' is that these religions and practices preserve the early stages of human religious consciousness and its expressions. While these religious expressions have evolved into various forms in other parts of the world, among peoples in Africa who lived in isolation, these religious expressions are preserved in their primeval form. Therefore, somehow the study of these religions offers us a possibility of understanding the human psyche in its primeval form (Lowie, 1936/1970).

It is little wonder then that Freud drew his concepts and terminologies from ancient mythology (though not African) to name the elements of the unconscious. Jung went even a step further. It is interesting to recall that Carl Jung visited Mount Elgon (bordering present day Kenya and Uganda) in October 1925, with the hope of understanding

‘primitive psychology’. The outcome of this trip, he considered, had greatly influenced his later work (Burlison, 2005).

However, in early scholarship, ‘primitive’ had a pejorative sense pointing to the ‘uncivilized realities’ (Tylor, 1871/1958; Spencer, 1896). This use of the term had strong imperialistic overtones making cultures and religions different from those of the Western civilization seem of lower grade. More terms were invented in Western scholarship, and laden with negative connotation, to classify categories that were not properly understood, like animism, fetishism, polytheism. Idowu (1973, pp.108-136) discusses at length the implication of the use of such terminology. In short, these expressions gave another reason to dominate other groups of people for political and economic advantage, while justifying the imposition of Western culture and religion on them (P’Bitek, 1970; Mazrui, 1980). Thanks to the early translations of the Hindu scriptures (by scholars like Schlegel and Muller) and similar interests in Chinese traditions that the definition of ‘religion’ began to have a broader meaning. Since the 20th century African religions have been considered ‘primeval’ (Lowie, 1970), shedding itself of its earlier pejorative sense. More recently, still less pejorative expressions like, ‘folk religion’ and ‘indigenous religion’ have been used (Cox, 2007). In this research project we simply refer to them as ‘traditional’. Though demographically only 18% of the population of Africa officially follows the ATR, its persistence and continuity cannot be denied even among the African adherents of other religions (Magesa, 1997, p16).

Religions

“Africans are notoriously religious, each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it” (Mbiti, 1969, p.1). Therefore, the study of African religions opens a window to the worldview and the psyche of the African peoples. Mbiti (1969) prefers to speak of ‘religions’ in the plural, because there are about one thousand ethnic groups in Africa and each has its own peculiarities, while sharing certain commonality in the religious system. Therefore, ATR do not refer to a monolithic institution. It also needs to be acknowledged that there are other scholars who just speak of African Religion (Magesa, 1998, pp.24-27) or African Traditional Religion (Idowu, 1973; Shorter, 1978).

In any case, ATR can be defined as a collection of beliefs, codes and cults that encapsulate the primeval experiences and expressions of the African peoples in their

search for the sacred. Belief is a set of possible explanations for the mysteries of the origin of the world and humans, how humans may interact in the world of objects, people, and the supernatural. Beliefs in ATR are not seen in dogmas and doctrines. They are to be recognised in oral traditions that include myths, riddles, aphorisms, and the cult itself. If they are to be found in written form then they are due to the efforts of scholars since the beginning of last century. Code is the set of taboos and casuistry that ensure the preservation and the continuity of human life and its relation to the sacred (see, Magesa, 1998; Nkemnkia, 1999). Cult contains the various expressions of the relationship between the living and the sacred that includes the living-dead (the ancestors) and the yet-unborn. From the psychological perspective, cult also plays an important role in the smooth transition of individuals in their various stages of life-span development.

Many works in the psychology of religion use much space in discussing the difference between religion and spirituality (Hill & Pargament, 2003, p.64-65; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003, pp.8-11; Wulff, 1996, p.5.) Is ATR a religion or spirituality? It is spirituality insofar as it is not an organised religion with a well established centralized authority. However, spirituality as understood in today's parlance tends to be individualistic. ATR is far from being individualistic. The strong communitarian aspect and the attachment to deity provide a religious character to ATR.

For all the variety that is undeniable in the religious expressions found in Sub-Saharan Africa, one commonality that is crucial even for this research project is that in ATR there is no separation of the sacred and the profane (see Mbiti, 1969; Magesa, 1997). For Durkheim (1915) the separation of the sacred and the profane constitutes the very essence of religion. However, Evans-Pritchard (1965) repudiates this assumption of Durkheim, basing himself on anthropological research: "Surely what [Durkheim] calls 'sacred' and 'profane' are on the same level of experience, and far from being cut off from one another, they are so closely intermingled as to be inseparable. They cannot, therefore, either for the individual or for social activities, be put in closed departments which negate each other, one of which is left on entering the other" (p.65).

Because of the inseparability of religion and society among African peoples, scholars have often spoken about African philosophy and culture in conjunction with African religions (Taylor, 1963; Mbiti, 1969; Magesa, 1998). This inseparability in ATR, between the sacred and the profane, between spirit and matter, between religion and culture, justifies the use of ethnological data for this project in the psychology of religion;

this also paves the possibility for the use of religious traditions for research on the core virtues of PP.

1.3. Research questions

Drawing from anthropological sources already available, this study intended to verify the ubiquity of core-virtues and character strengths of positive psychology in ATR. The research questions were stated thus:

- (a) Can the ubiquity of core virtues of PP be supported by available ethnological data on ATR?
- (b) How can the 6 core virtues of positive psychology be understood within the discourse of ATR, while rendering ATR in the contemporary lexical and thematic discourse of PP?

Approach and Methods: A Qualitative Thematic Analysis

2.1. Understanding the method of Thematic Analysis

This research project used a qualitative method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Like any typical qualitative research, this study aimed at providing “descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation.” Counting of “occurrences, volumes, or the size of associations between entities” was kept to the minimum (Smith, 2008, p.1). “Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Often this approach goes beyond identifying and analysing to interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). In this way, thematic analysis is very flexible. Though akin to qualitative content analysis, it is distinct from other methods of qualitative research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Eto & Kyngäs, 2008).

In the present project, an adapted version of the hybrid approach of induction and deduction was used (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This approach is underpinned by the concept of ‘hermeneutic circle’ that Gadamer (1979) borrowed from Heidegger. No interpreter (or researcher), comes to the text (data) with a mind-set of ‘*tabula rasa*’. While theorists of qualitative research methods invite researchers to own up their ‘prejudices’ in a reflexive process, what this researcher did was to come to the data with an explicit theoretical framework. However, after the data were interpreted, the possibility for the transformation of the theoretical framework was also considered. This was an application, in the context of research in social sciences, of what Gadamer called, “the fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1979, p.273). Initially the theoretical framework acted as the template (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) to interpret the data. Having gone through this process, proposals were then made on how to improve the template.

Therefore, two distinct processes could be identified in this research project (Fig 2.1):

- (1) A deductive process: the data were analysed and interpreted using the templates from the theoretical background; this process is theory-driven;
- (2) An inductive process: a possibility for the data to contribute to the reformulation of some aspects of the theoretical framework was considered; and this process is data-driven.

Stage 1: Identification of the coding template

The paradigm of the contemporary qualitative research often presupposes that even the template of codes is evolved in the process of interpreting the data (Charmaz, 2008). Another approach is to allow the template to ‘emerge’ from the data based on a theoretical framework (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006) are sceptical of the passive role of the researcher in the analysis process. When the themes are said to ‘emerge’ from the data, “it denies the *active* role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes...” (p.80). Therefore, in this study the template was borrowed from positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and this is openly acknowledged.

Stage 2: Identification of the data set

There are several possible methods of data collection for the purpose of qualitative analysis (Haslam & McGarty, 2003, pp.361-64). The data used for the present analysis were ethnological. Instead of collecting data precisely for the purpose of this research, raw data previously collected and published in a book form (Kirwen, 2008) by Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, Nairobi, was used. It should be acknowledged, therefore, that in the collection of the ethnological data there has already been an influence of an anthropological theoretical framework (Kirwen, 2005), particularly in the formulation of questions (see Table 3.1).

Stage 3: Data Analysis

The analysis of the data consisted in applying the template of codes to the data set. Starting with the lexical list used by PP in the catalogue of 6 core virtues and 24 character strengths (Table 1.1), the data was marked, highlighting related conceptual and lexical equivalents. Next step consisted in matching the character strengths and the 10 domains in the data set. Sometimes one data-unit was used for more than one character strength (see Appendix). Special attention was paid to cultural institutions that ensure the continuity of character strengths in the African society.

Stage 4: Examination of the emerging themes

The final stage of this qualitative thematic analysis was to corroborate or challenge the findings in the light of the larger anthropological, theological and philosophical discourse of ATR (for instance, Mbiti, 1969; Magesa, 1998; Nkemnkia, 1999; Parrinder,

1976; Oruka, 1990; Ray, 1976; Idowu, 1973; Mosha, 2000). The aim of this phase of work was to examine the findings with the help of extra evidence, and to offer further explanation for the conceptual and lexical equivalence of PP found in ATR. This was also a way of testing the validity of the findings (Yardley, 2008, p.239). In this discussion, a possible contribution of ATR to the theoretical framework of positive psychology was also considered.

3.1. Coding Template: Character Strengths of Positive psychology

Positive psychology has proposed 6 core virtues (CV) and 24 character strengths (CS; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; see Table 1.1). In this section, I briefly define each of the character strengths, pointing out to their lexical and conceptual equivalents. The purpose of this is to identify the coding template for the qualitative study. Therefore, it is not within the scope of this section to review research findings on character strengths, nor to consider the details of their implications.

Based on the above criteria six core virtues are identified and their corresponding character strengths add up to 24 (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

	Core Virtues	Character Strengths
I.	Wisdom and Knowledge	Creativity (originality, ingenuity), Curiosity (interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience), Open-mindedness (judgement, critical thinking), Love of Learning, Perspective (wisdom)
II.	Courage	Bravery (valour), Persistence (perseverance, industriousness), Integrity (authenticity, honesty), Vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigour, energy)
III.	Humanity	Love, Kindness (generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”), Social Intelligence (emotional intelligence, personal intelligence)
IV.	Justice	Citizenship (social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork), Fairness, Leadership
V.	Temperance	Forgiveness and Mercy, Humility (modesty), Prudence, Self-regulation (self-control)
VI.	Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder, elevation), Gratitude, Hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future-orientation), Humour (playfulness), Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose)

CV(I). Wisdom & Knowledge

CS1. Creativity

Creativity can be observed in behaviours that exhibit, and ideas that express, great degree of originality and adaptive character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.110). Creativity may be seen as a mental process, expressed by certain individuals, and can be analysed in terms of tangible products (Simonton, 2005, p.191.) Studies on creativity also focus on expressions of creativity across life-span and the aspects of environment that contribute to these expressions (Simonton, 2000). In line with the central focus of positive psychology on wellbeing, creativity is to be valued not only in arts and sciences, but also in how individuals deal with their daily life. To achieve a true sense of wellbeing, overcoming exaggerations of creativity that can jeopardise other aspects of life, there is a need to balance creativity with wisdom (Bacon, 2005). Lexical alternatives of creativity include originality, ingenuity, adaptability, novel, surprising, unusual, and insight.

CS2. Curiosity

Curiosity represents “one’s intrinsic desire for experience and knowledge” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.125). Curiosity is particularly noticed when someone seeks knowledge that goes beyond the principle of “utility of the information to the agent.” It is as if information is sought for its own sake (Loewenstein, 1994, p.75). Thematic correlations of curiosity include interest, novelty-seeking, and openness to experience. While curiosity and interest are used interchangeably, novelty-seeking involves a propensity for new and exciting experiences, sometimes marked by a willingness to endure risks. In this way, novelty-seeking is also associated with courage. “Openness to Experience” is a higher order personality dimension included as one of the traits in the Five Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

CS3. Open-mindedness

This character strength consists in the ability to seek actively evidence against one’s own beliefs, plans, or goals. Open-mindedness can also be referred to as a sense of judgement and critical thinking. In simple words, open-mindedness consists in a constant effort towards the elimination of one’s own biases and stereotypes.

CS4. Love of Learning

Love of learning describes an individual's interest to acquire information and skill, and the way one engages new information and skills. Thus, it includes aspects of motivation, content, and methodology in engaging knowledge. People acknowledge the presence of a positive affect when engaging new knowledge. Students, for instance, are said to possess the strength of love of learning when they study not only for extrinsically oriented rewards like higher grades, but also for intrinsic values like the appreciation of subject-matter and personal interest (see Covington, 1999).

CS5. Perspective

Perspective or wisdom is conceptualised "in terms of wise processes, wise products, or wise people" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.182). It is distinct from intelligence, and represents a higher level of knowledge and judgement. Wisdom is closely related to self knowledge, meaning of life, and relationships. This special type of knowledge is used for the well-being of oneself and others. Kunzmann & Stange (2007, p.306) refer to this as intra- and inter-personal wisdom. The correlation between age and wisdom may also be relevant to our future discussion in this essay: findings suggest that wisdom related performance, as measured by Berlin Wisdom Paradigm, increases sharply during adolescence and early adulthood, then begins to stabilize thereafter (between 25 and 75 years). Peak performance is noted in the 50s and 60s. However, wisdom-related performance may begin to decline in old age, around the age of 75 (Baltes, Gluck, & Kunzmann, 2005, p.334).

CV(II). Courage

CS6. Bravery

Bravery or valour is seen in a voluntary action, which involves some danger, and which an individual undertakes after due understanding of risks involved. It also includes "speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular" (Peterson, 2006, p.32). Certain conditions are considered necessary to courage: freedom, fear, risk, uncertainty, an endangered good and a morally worthy end (Shelp, 1984, p.351).

CS7. Persistence

It is defined as “voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.229). Continuing to perform something that is fun and rewarding in itself does not entail persistence, though there may be some pleasure at the completion of the demanding task that is marked by persistence. ‘Persistence’ and ‘perseverance’ are used interchangeably, and sometimes, the term, ‘industriousness’ is also used. Industriousness denotes an attitude of consistently working at something (Eisenberger, 1992) even if there will be only a delayed gratification.

CS8. Integrity

Integrity, which is also related to authenticity and honesty, consists in being true to oneself, and owning up accurately one’s inner states, intentions and commitments (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp.251-2). While authenticity is perceived in the avoidance of pretence, honesty is refusing to fake reality (Locke, 2005, p.308; see also Harter, 2005). Rogers (1961) considered integrity as one of the traits of fully functioning person.

CS9. Vitality

Vitality consists in “approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or half-heartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated” (Peterson, 2006, p. 32). Other substitute terms for vitality would be zest, enthusiasm, vigour and energy. Vitality presupposes a physiological wellbeing – free from fatigue and illness, and a psychological wellbeing – integration of the self at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (See Ryan & Frederick, 1997).

CV(III). Humanity

CS10. Love

Love represents a cognitive, behavioural, and emotional stance toward others that takes three prototypical forms. One is love for the individuals who are our primary sources of affection, protection, and care... [like] a child’s love for a parent. Another form is love for the individuals who depend on us to make them feel safe and cared for... [for instance,] a parent’s love for a child. The third form is love that involves passionate desire for sexual, physical, and emotional closeness with an

individual whom we consider special and who makes us feel special (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.304).

This is also referred to as intimacy (Peterson, 2006, p.32), or as attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 2004) and is different from compassion or kindness, that is considered here below.

CS11. Kindness

Kindness, generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, and “niceness” are closely related terms that indicate “a common orientation of the self toward the other” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.326). Kindness consists in doing favours or good deeds to others, while compassion is more related to the emotion evoked at the sufferings of others. Compassion becomes significant when the troubles of the other person are serious, not self-inflicted, and the agent of compassion is able to picture oneself in the same predicament as the one in trouble (Cassell, 2005, p.435).

CS12. Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is a concept that is related to emotional intelligence and personal intelligence. Personal intelligence refers to the ability to “assess one’s own performance at a variety of tasks,” including the motives and emotions that accompany them; emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to identify emotional states of others, to understand how these states can influence relationships, and how best to manage emotions; social intelligence is the ability to get people to cooperate, being aware of the dynamics of such interaction, and to respond wisely in these situations (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp.338-339). In summary, this type of intelligence refers to the ability to be aware of one’s own motives and feelings, to be sensitive to that of others, and to discern how to handle them.

CV(IV). Justice

CS13. Citizenship

This character strength, which includes social responsibility, loyalty, and teamwork, represents a general commitment to the common good. Without the neglect of the self, it consists in going beyond self-interest, in the fulfilment of duty. It is also expressed in being loyal to friends, being a good team-player, having a strong civic sense, and contributing to social causes.

CS14. Fairness

In simple words, it is “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” (Peterson, 2006, p. 33). On a deeper note, fairness presupposes moral judgement – being able to determine what is morally right or wrong, and what is morally permitted or proscribed. Fairness includes the two psychological traditions in moral reasoning: the justice reasoning approach and the care reasoning approach. The former is an awareness that it is wrong to cheat, or to discriminate, or to use people; the latter consists in acknowledging that it is humane to be kind, and to respect everyone (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp.392, 394-396).

CS15. Leadership

Leadership is a personal quality that fosters the cognitive and temperamental ability to influence and help others. While working in groups, leadership is particularly noticed in the ability to motivate others to move towards the objectives of the group while fostering good relationships among members.

CV(V). Temperance

CS16. Forgiveness and Mercy

Forgiveness is a set of prosocial changes that needs to be understood in terms of what happens inside the person who has been hurt - intrapsychic consequence; and between the one hurt and the relationship partner -interpersonal consequence (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998, p.85) According to Enright & Coyle (1998, p.140) forgiveness consists in three steps: the injured person recognises an actual injustice; the injured person chooses willingly to respond with mercy rather than with justifiable retribution; and to be concerned with the good of the interaction. Forgiveness can be considered a particular expression of mercy; and the latter includes “kindness, compassion, or leniency towards a transgressor” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.446).

CS17. Humility

Although humility may falsely be equated with a sense of unworthiness and low self-regard, true humility is a rich, multifaceted construct that entails an accurate assessment of one's characteristics, an ability to acknowledge limitations, and a "forgetting of the self" (Tangney, 2000). Modesty, which is related to humility, “refers primarily to the moderate estimation of one’s merits or achievements and also extends into other issues relating to propriety in dress and social behaviour” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.463).

CS18. Prudence

Prudence consists in being aware of the consequences of one’s choices, and developing strategies in self-management so as to move towards the achievement of one’s goals. Prudent individuals also have a moderate and flexible attitude to life, and constantly strive to balance between their ends and means (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.478). Prudence is not to be identified with excessive caution, nor is it selfish, endless calculations. Haslam (1991) succinctly summarises the Aristotelian understanding of prudence as it is in the latter’s *Psychology of Action*: “Prudence is essentially concerned with the personal future, in the choice, planning, pursuit, and incontinent betrayal of far-sightedly virtuous ends. It also touches on self-continuity, moderation and flexibility, and the pursuit of self-interest vs social concerns” (p.151).

CV19. Self-regulation

As one of the character strengths of temperance, self-regulation can also be referred to as self-control or self-discipline. The expressions of self-regulation and its constructs refer to how a person exerts control over his or her impulses and behaviour so as to pursue their goals while maintaining their moral standards. It can also mean a rhythm of life that facilitates self-efficacy (Bandura, 1999). “Delay of gratification constitutes an important paradigm of self-regulation,” implying that a person with self-regulation is able to resist the temptation to choose an immediate, small reward in order to obtain a larger benefit, even if the latter was delayed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.500).

CV(VI). Transcendence

CV20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence

This character strength in transcendence consists in “noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience” (Peterson, 2006, p.33). Awe, wonder, and elevation are emotional states that accompany appreciation.

CS21. Gratitude

Gratitude includes an appropriate response to receiving gifts; gift is understood as a reward that was beyond what one worked for. This includes then being aware of, and thankful for, the good things that happen in life. The three components of gratitude proposed by Fitzgerald (1998) have been generally accepted by psychologists: (a) a warm sense of appreciation for somebody or something; (b) a sense of goodwill toward that person or thing, and (c) a disposition to act on what flows from appreciation and goodwill (see also Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.555; Emmons & McCullough, 2004, p.5.)

CS22. Hope

“Hope, optimism, future-mindedness, future-orientation represent a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance towards the future” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.570). In more precise terms, this stance consists in “expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about” (Peterson, 2006, p.33).

CS23. Humour

Humour can have at least two possible strands of meaning. First, it refers to the ability to recognise, enjoy and even create ‘comic’. Comic includes a whole range of harmless incongruent situations – jokes, comedy, teasing, sarcasm, satire, irony, fun, wit and so on. It could emerge out of a use of language, or the body, or arrangement of objects. In this sense, humour is an ability to have wholesome fun, it is related to playfulness, and is one type of aesthetics. The second meaning refers more to an attitude towards situations in life: being able to see the lighter side of things, being composed and cheerful even in the face of adversity, and maintaining a good mood. While in the first sense humour may be related to physical laughter, in the second sense it is more an internal attitude (see Martin, 2004).

CS24. Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose)

“Spirituality and religiousness refer to beliefs and practices that are grounded in the conviction that there is a transcendental (non-physical) dimension of life” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.600). These beliefs and practices may be expressed in having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits in the larger scheme; having beliefs about meaning of life that shape and provide comfort (Peterson, 2006, p.33).

3.2. Data set: Ethnological Research data from MIAS

Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS) is a member institute of Tangaza College - Catholic University of Eastern Africa, in Nairobi, offering graduate degrees in Anthropology and African Studies. MIAS is also affiliated to St. Mary’s University of Minnesota, USA. Based on field research carried out by its students and research assistants for over 17 years, the institute has identified 35 domains in cultural studies. These domains are further “delineated into four cycles, namely: (1) Individual life cycle, (2) Family and interpersonal relationships cycle, (3) Community and communal activities cycle and (4) Religious rituals cycle” (Kirwen, 2008, p.1). The present research project used the data available under the first cycle: Individual life cycle. This comprises of 10 domains (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Description of the Data Set

No.	Domains	Questions	N	E
1.	Pregnancy and Birthing Rites	Describe the circumstances of your own conception and birth. What was said, the care given to your mother, the expectations of the community? How is pregnancy related to the theme of Creator God?	72	13
2.	Naming Rites	Describe the rituals by which you received your name. Who were you named after? What was said and done in the process of naming you? Was your name changed at any time after birth? Describe the person after whom you were named and indicate in what matter you are similar to him/her in terms of your personality, attitudes, looks and vocation. How is the naming process related to the theme of Creator God?	75	15
3.	Attitudes to Sickness and Ill-Health	What do you think and feel when you are not well? What do you feel is the cause of the problem? What does your community feel is the cause? What remedy(s) do you usually apply? What if the problem continues? Are the services of a diviner ever contemplated?	67	19
4.	Formation and Education	How were you formed and educated both informally and formally? Name as many as you can of the persons who were most influential in your own development. Indicate why they were important.	66	16
5.	Initiation into Adulthood Rites	Describe how you were initiated into adulthood. How old were you, what were the rituals and rites that were performed? What was expected of you afterwards? How is the initiation process related to the theme of Creator God, and Lineage Ideology?	71	15
6.	Marriage Rites	Describe how you were married. How was your spouse selected, was there a person negotiating between your families, how was the bridewealth determined and paid, what were the various ceremonies and feasts that were held? (If not married, give the details of the ordinary marriage within your ethnic group.) How is marriage related to the themes of Creator God, and Lineage Ideology?	72	14
7.	Mourning Rites	Describe how you mourn and grieve at a funeral, and the effect it has on the living. What is the meaning of mourning?	69	18
8.	Inheritance Ceremonies	How is the property, status and wife(s) [if patrilineal] of the deceased man inherited? When is this done? Is there a second funeral ceremony? What is the effect of inheritance ritual on an individual?	64	20
9.	Elderhood Rites	Describe the rites by which a person becomes a respected elder in your ethnic group. How is one selected, what is said and done? What are the instruments used, how is the feast organized, who is invited, what is expected of the elder afterwards? How is this domain related to the themes of Creator God, Lineage Ideology, and the Witch?	70	14
10.	Funeral Rites	Describe dying and death of a person in your ethnic group. What is said to explain the death? What are the major rituals? Is there a difference in the rituals and the rites if it is a man, woman or child? How is the grave dug? What is said at the gravesite? Is there a memorial feast at some later date? How is dying and death related to the themes of Creator God, Lineage Ideology, and the Witch?	72	15

N= Number of participants; E=Number of ethnic groups represented in the sample.

The data were collected in English from graduate students during the MIAS academic programmes, not exclusively for this research project. “[T]he students are asked to reflect on and briefly write out the meanings of cultural domains within their personal lives and that of the cultures from which they come.... The data, therefore, are the spontaneous writings of field assistants and students, all of whom are university graduates,

the majority being Africans” (Kirwen, 2008, p.1). The responses, which form the data set for our study, were collated from worksheets between January and August 2003. The questions were answered also by non-African students; this was not considered for analysis in this study. The African respondents represented at least 20 ethnic groups hailing from 10 countries (Table 3.2). However, since the data were collected in Nairobi, majority of the participants were Kenyans. As regards language, except the participants from Rwanda and Burundi, others would have had their education in English at least starting from the secondary level; and most of them would be at least bilingual. It is natural that they were translating some of the traditional concepts from their local languages into English.

Table 3.2: Further description of participants

No.	Nations Represented	Ethnic groups represented
1	Kenya	Abagusii, Abaluhya, Aembu, Agikuyu, Akamba, Kipsigis, Luo, Nubian, Teso
2	Tanzania	Mwaarusha
3.	Uganda	Baganda Banyankole
4.	Zambia	Bemba
5.	Sudan	Dinka
6.	Nigeria	Igbo
7.	Eritrea	Tigrinya
8.	Rwanda	Tutsi
9.	Burundi	Tutsi
10.	Ghana	Akan

Data Analysis: Emerging Themes

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research findings. Using the template of the character strengths of positive psychology the ethnological data was analysed. The data set was read, domain after domain, highlighting the phrases and sentences that showed some resemblance to expressions in the coding template (3.1 above). The themes and patterns that were observed are presented here below. Some times one response was used to cull out phrases pertaining to more than one CS. Overall, extra care was taken to interpret the data within the discourse of the data itself. That is, in seeking to define certain term or concept used by one respondent, possible explanation was sought having recourse to the response of another respondent within the same data set. For the sake of completeness the list of character strengths is maintained even when no emerging theme was seen.

CS1. Creativity

Not evident in the present ethnological data set.

CS2. Curiosity

Not evident in the present data set.

CS3. Open-mindedness

Not evident in the present data set.

CS4. Love of Learning

A participant acknowledges the influence of his or her parents in instilling “love for learning” (p.76)¹ right from an early age. Generally, learning is related to wisdom or perspective.

CS5. Perspective

In the African context, growth in wisdom and knowledge is perceived as taking place in the context of a community (p.78). The community is referred to as the parents,

¹ All similar references with only page numbers refer to the ethnological data in Kirwen, 2008. Direct quotes from the data set are enclosed within inverted commas (“”); others are paraphrased.

family, siblings and playmates, village, clan, or just “the larger community” (p.76). True knowledge consists in learning how to be a member of the society. Initiation ceremonies and the preparations that precede them are aimed at imparting knowledge and wisdom.

Wisdom is also strongly associated with the fear of God and “the values of honesty and truthfulness” (p.76). One Tigrinya speaking participant (from Eritrea) offers a succinct summary of this core-virtue under the domain of ‘Formation and Education’ (p.76):

“Although the contribution of the larger community cannot be ignored, my parents played a critical role both in my informal and formal education. At an early age they taught me to fear God. They instilled in me the values of honesty and truthfulness, respect for elders, and love for learning and seeking wisdom.”

One of the clear criteria for the selection of elders (D9)², as acknowledged by most informants in the present data, is wisdom (or perspective). Wisdom is very strongly perceived in the African traditions as associated with increasing age. For instance a Luo informant (Kenyan) states, “In my tribe, one becomes a respected elder because of his sense of responsibility, his age and wisdom” (p.192). Another Kenyan from the Abaluyia ethnic group holds, “I have observed that age, respectability and wisdom are assets in a potential elder” (p.192). Wisdom here is understood as the ability to judge and to advice others. The elder is “expected to settle disputes” (p.193). And a Tutsi participant (Rwanda or Burundi) adds, “For you to join [the group of elders], you have to be in possession of wisdom that you can impart to the younger generation” (p.200).

CS6. Bravery

The descriptions of the elderhood rites (D9) in ATR allude to the understanding that the elder is an exemplar of bravery. During the official ceremony of the installation of the elder, in different ethnic groups the elder is presented with an object that becomes a symbol of elderhood: like three legged stool among the Kipsigis (p.191); flywhisk or walking stick among the Abagusii (p.191); skin coat among the Agikuyu (p.194). Among many ethnic groups, like the Luos and Agikuyu, the elder is given a spear and shield or bow and arrows (pp. 191, 194). This could signify the duty of the elder to protect his community, but often physical valour would be the pride of younger warriors. Therefore the type of bravery that the elder is expected to exhibit is like the kind described by Peterson (2006), “speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular” (Kirwen, 2008, p.32). This bravery would be seen in the

² These numbers refer to the domains in the ethnological data, see Table 3.1.

ability of the elder “to settle disputes or represent the clan in matters that required negotiation among [other] elders” (p.193).

CS7. Persistence

Not found in the present ethnological data set.

CS8. Integrity

In the ATR, Formation and Education (D4) consists not only in learning knowledge and skills, but also in acquiring values, especially of “honesty and truthfulness” (p.76).

In the selection of elders (D9) besides wisdom, as explained above, integrity is another important criterion. There is a very consistent voice among the respondents about “the moral uprightness” of the elder. “The elder was expected to live an exemplary life – no arguments or quarrelling, not greedy, not corrupt, above lies and having an enhanced ability of keeping his wife and children under control” (Agikuyu, p.195). In Kikuyu language the elder is ‘*Muthuri*’, “the one who sorts out or chooses the right from the wrong” (p.191). His “exemplary life” will make him “command a lot of respect and authority”(p.193); and make it easy for others, especially the young, to emulate (Teso, p.192). In general, an elder is looked at as a paragon of core virtues and character strengths.

CS9. Vitality

Vitality in PP consists in “... living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated” (Peterson, 2006, p.32). In the present data, it is the African attitude towards death, expressed in the funeral rites (D10), which brings out their attitude towards life. While “the death of elder is celebrated as the culmination of a life fully lived” (p.224), and that of a warrior or a leader is marked by “dancing and eating to send [him] off,” suicide is “handled very seriously with plenty of cleansing and destruction of the deceased’s home” (p.228). In fact, “a person who committed suicide is buried at night and mourning for him is discouraged” (p.227).

CS10. Love

Peterson & Seligman, (2004), speak of a form of love “that involves passionate desire for sexual, physical, and emotional closeness with an individual whom we consider special and who makes us feel special” (p.304). Love is not only encouraged but its

continuity is sustained by the support of the community in the African traditional marriage (D6; pp.123-135).

CS11. Kindness

Kindness in PP consists in doing favours or good deeds to others, while compassion, which is also related to kindness, is more related to the emotion evoked at the sufferings of others (Cassell, 2005). In the African traditional religions, mourning rituals (D7) powerfully express kindness and compassion. It is in this domain that a large manifestation of agreement is noticed among participants. These expressions of kindness and compassion range from being ‘nice’ to the dead to showing solidarity with the living. These twin aspects are affirmed by many respondents: “Talking nicely about the departed is a way of mourning” (p.151) and, “mourning is a sign of great loss and companionship to the bereaved family” (p.152). It is important to note that during the period of mourning the neighbours and relatives physically spent most of the time together with the bereaved, as a Dinka (Sudan) respondent voices: “[mourning] involves wailing and living at the home of the deceased for four days” (p.153). During these days, solidarity is further expressed as “the community members assist the bereaved with everything needed such as water, firewood, food, etc.” (An Agikuyu respondent, p.156).

CS12. Social Intelligence

One of the main tasks of the elder in the African society and religion (D9) is “giving advice to the community and solving conflicts.” This calls for social intelligence: to be aware of one’s own motives and feelings, to be sensitive to that of others, and to discern how to handle them. The elder “is selected on the merit of being straightforward” (a Tutsi respondent, p.196), on the other hand, the elder is also expected to be “mature, respectable, obedient, kind and loving” (An Agikuyu participant, p.197).

CS13. Citizenship

Though this was not directly implied in the question that the participants were asked under D4 – Formation and Education, most participants include a communitarian aspect of the content of the informal education that they received. On the one hand, formation and education is carried out by the whole community (see CS5 above); on the other hand, one of the primary goals of this education is to prepare the individual to be a member of the community. Typical responses are: My parents and family members “taught me how to live in the community” (p.78); “they introduced me to the ethos of my community” (p.81). A Dinka respondent (from South Sudan) elaborates, “I was formed and educated by different people in different ways. My mother nourished me and made sure I behaved well. My father taught me through the lineage and kinship line. My grandparents gave me my identity and values, while my friends and teachers and others helped me in socializing” (p.81).

Citizenship as a character strength in PP includes social responsibility, loyalty and teamwork, and represents a general commitment to the common good (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.370). This character strength is particularly highlighted in the African initiation rites (D5) and is one most expected from the initiated. One word that is so often repeated in the data pertaining to D5 is, ‘responsibility’:

- “I was initiated by being circumcised. I was then expected to take up the responsibilities of an adult...” (p.100);
- “I was expected to conduct myself as a responsible person...” (p.102);
- “I was initiated to adulthood through circumcision at fourteen years. I was secluded for one month for training to be responsible...” (p.103);

There are other rituals that accompany the initiation ceremony that reiterate the responsibility of the initiated adult. For instance, one of the additional rituals is the days of seclusion, as mentioned above, during which period the initiates are instructed on ‘citizenship’. Another is that the fresh initiates are expected to build a hut of their own. “It is the first cottage through which one shows a transformation into a responsible young man. Community expected me to behave well in spite of having a house for myself” (p.101).

Peterson & Seligman (2004) include patriotism as an expression of citizenship: “*Patriotism* is a sign of loyalty to one’s homeland or nation without the corresponding hostility to citizens of other nations implied in the concept of nationalism” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.371). Initiation in ATR provides a patriotic identity to the individuals.

In the absence of nation-states in the traditional African society, the loyalty was to one's tribe. This meant, for a Teso, "By this initiation you belonged to the Iteso community" (p.99), and to a Kikuyu, "I was expected to behave and live like an adult Kikuyu man" (p.101).

The themes that emerged in D5 are summarised by an Akamba (Kenyan) participant: "I was expected to make my own decisions concerning life and especially on matters of education and sexuality. I was also expected to be more responsible. Initiation processes are the rites of passage in life for one to become a fully responsible adult acceptable by society and pleasing to ancestors and creator God" (p.98).

African marriage (D6) is communal (pp.126, 133). In the parlance of our coding template we can say that marriage represents a general commitment to the common good. "Marriage is seen as a way of bringing a man and woman together to give the community children who will carry on the name of the family (clan)" (p.126). In all, through the different steps of the process of marriage in Africa, the two families and the clans are involved. The giving of bride-wealth to the father of the bride often involves the whole family. An Akamba (Kenyan) respondent referring probably to the sacrificial rituals associated with marriage, says, "shedding of blood is done as a sign of bonding the two families" (p.125).

Expression of citizenship can also be seen in the mourning rites (D7). A detailed discussion has already been presented above in connection to Kindness (CS11).

As a leader of the community, the elder (D9) is expected to excel in virtues of citizenship: social responsibility, loyalty and commitment to the common good (mentioned by several participants, especially on p.194). "What is expected of the elder [after the appointment] is to help solve disputes amongst people of the community, discussion of dowry and speaking on behalf of the community on matters concerning it" (p.192).

CS14. Fairness

Fairness includes the two psychological traditions in moral reasoning: the justice reasoning approach and the care reasoning approach. The former is the awareness that it is wrong to cheat, or to discriminate, or to use people; the latter consists in acknowledging that it is humane to be kind, and to respect everyone (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp. 394-396). The theme of moral reasoning, particularly the justice reasoning approach, emerges very explicitly in the African attitude to sickness and ill-health (D3). Several responses in the data set show that someone who is sick would perceive a moral implication in their

condition, particularly examining their own moral role in the sickness, even if infection of some kind could be the immediate cause: “I have neglected my social responsibilities” (p.57); or “sickness is a curse which one receives after disowning certain rules and rites of the society” (p.58); “I wonder whether I have wronged someone” (p.59); “it is due to some mistake that I did or as a result of sin” (p.60). “The community will want to find out what mistake I have done and there are also feelings that someone is behind my sickness” (p.65). This ‘someone’ could be one who is offended by my actions, or one who is jealous of me, or just a malevolent force. Against this background, “the remedy is to take medicine, that is Western or herbal. If the problem persists, I may seek the services of the diviner” (p.62). The role of the diviner is sought not only to find the real cause of the sickness, but also to mediate reconciliation in such a way that the social order that was disrupted by the transgression, may now be restored.

CS15. Leadership

In positive psychology, leadership is defined as a personal quality, particularly seen in the ability to motivate others. In the domain of inheritance ceremonies (D8), a few participants make reference to inheritance of leadership itself (p.173). Generally, the elders oversee the inheritance ritual which, in most ethnic groups, take place at ‘the second funeral’ that marks the end of the mourning period.

Leadership in the African community is primarily exercised by the elder. In the description of the elderhood rites (D9), therefore, we get a glimpse of the understanding of leadership as a character-strength in ATR. Leadership (of the elder) is clearly defined in his ability to influence the community in its decision making (p.192). He exerts influence not by policing or threat, but by his ability to inspire people through his own moral standing (p.195).

CS16. Forgiveness and Mercy

Not found in the present data set.

CS17. Humility

Not found in the present data set.

CS18. Prudence

Not found in the present data set.

CS19. Self-regulation

As a character strength of temperance, according to PP, self-regulation is referred to as self-control or self-discipline. Self-regulation is also marked by a readiness for delayed gratification. In ATR, the preparation towards the initiation ceremony (D5) could be seen as a cultural institution to instil the need for self-discipline. The initiation ritual itself is accompanied by an element of physical pain: whether it is the most common ritual of circumcision, or the extraction of teeth (among the Luos and others), or tattooing (among the Teso), or making incisions on the head (among the Nuba). The young initiates are expected to be bold (p.103), to bravely pass through this immediate pain, so that they would be able to enjoy the privileges of being an adult in their community.

Discipline is considered as one of the salient virtues of an elder (D9). An Akamba respondent (from Kenya) affirms, “A person becomes an elder first by virtue of his age and discipline” (p.191, see also p.193).

CS20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence

The domain of pregnancy and birthing rights (D1) is associated with the core virtues of transcendence, particularly exhibiting character strengths of appreciation of beauty (CS 20), gratitude (CS 21), and spirituality (CS 24). Pregnancy is marked by a feeling of awe expressed also in joy and celebration. This sense of mystery accompanying pregnancy is particularly expressed in the fact that the pregnant woman is treated as “special”: numerous dietary taboos are in place to care for the health of the pregnant mother and the child; restrictions regarding the chores that she can perform ensure her safety; and other norms that regulate her behaviour and that of her husband act to appreciate pregnancy and birthing rites (D1) as special events in the life of the human person.

CS21. Gratitude

In the African traditional cultures and religions, gratitude seems to be an attitude that accompanies the different events of life. It consists in being thankful for the good things that happen in life. The domain of pregnancy and birthing rights (D1) is one such occasion, the first among the series of happenings in life. Pregnancy is seen as a blessing, and “the community is grateful to God for the gift of pregnancy and all children are a gift from God” (p.12).

CS22. Hope

Rituals found in the African mourning rites (D7) seem to allude powerfully to the African expressions of hope. Hope understood as “expecting the best in the future” (Peterson, 2006, p.33). Several respondents representing various ethnic groups mention “shaving of head” or “cutting of hair” as one of the rituals accompanying mourning (Abaluyia, p.151; Baganda, p.152; Kipsigis, p.152; Luo, p.153; Tigrinya, p.153, just to site the most salient). This ritual could be seen as a “form of self-punishing behaviour” (as noted by a Tigrinya respondent, p.153), or as “a sign of innocence, i.e., you have nothing to do with the death” – that is, you have not caused the death (as claimed by a Abaluyia respondent, p.151), or “as a sign of helplessness and weakness” together with smearing of ashes (as noted by a Luo respondent, p.156). However, this ritual could also be interpreted as a sign of hope: that the hair that is now cut will eventually grow again and life will go on.

The Luo people of Western Kenya express this even more powerfully. Their immediate reaction to the news of death is “wailing, crying” (p.151), “screaming” (p.152), “beating drums, blowing horns and whistles” (p.153), and “running around” (p.155). However, “mourning according to the Luo is like a celebration of life. It is marked with feasting and drinking. Mourning is not complete unless there is a bull (at the death of a man or a cow at the death of a woman) slaughtered and eaten” (p.152). Hope and celebration of life, then, seems to be the grateful acceptance of whatever human life offers.

Similar to what was said above in connection to mourning rites (D7) the African attitude of hope and optimism is seen also in their attitude towards death expressed in the funeral rites (D10). For instance, there is “no crying when someone dies at an advanced age” (Abagusii, p.233). On the contrary, “the death of an elder is celebrated as the culmination of a life fully lived” (Agikuyu, p.224).

CS23. Humour

Not evident in the present data set.

CS24. Spirituality

Spirituality is another character strength that featured very strongly in almost every domain of the data set. For instance, the respondents are almost unanimous in their claim that the African societies see pregnancy and birth (D1) as, “a blessing from God.” An

Akamba participant affirms, “Pregnancy is the start of life and it is sacred and the process is God given” (p.14). Applying the thinking of Peterson & Seligman (2004), we can say that this attitude clearly recognises the presence of “the transcendental (non-physical) dimension of life” (p.600).

In naming rites (D2) there are expressions of the individuals’ link with reality beyond themselves – in this case, the link to the generations past. Most respondents (N=75) acknowledge that they were named after someone from their extended family who is alive or dead. In the naming process and ritual, there is also the recognition of the sacred. One Aembu respondent offers a typical summary: “there is a comprehensive scheme of naming children after maternal and paternal relatives – dead or alive. Names give social identity of a child. Naming is a rite of incorporation in which the sacred is pivotal” (p.37).

Wisdom is associated with fear of God (D4). One respondent recalls that his or her parents played a critical role in their “informal and formal education. At an early age they taught me to fear God... [thus] they instilled in me love... for learning and seeking wisdom” (p.76).

Many of the initiation ceremonies described by participants in D5, relate to shedding of blood of the initiate. “The shedding of the blood [was] to unite me to the lineage” (p.101). This, together with animal sacrifice, can be considered as cultural institutions that express transcendence. “Sacrifices had to be made to appease the ancestors. There was slaughter of a goat of a single colour.... The initiation process involves a ritual in which the ancestors are invoked” (an Aembu respondent, p.98).

Again, in the understanding of marriage in Africa (D6), and the rituals that accompany it, there is an underlying conviction that there is a transcendental dimension of marriage, and that marriage is an event that fits into the larger scheme of life. “God is seen as the one who arranges marriage” (p.123), and “marriage is a gift (or a blessing) from God where life is expressed” (p.125). The sacredness (p.134) of marriage is particularly expressed in the sacrifice and libation performed (p.124), which signify the bridge that marriage is between God, the ancestors, the couple and community at large (the living), and the yet unborn (pp.131-132).

Expressions of transcendence are seen in the domain of mourning rites (D7) not in a direct relationship with God, but “mourning symbolizes companionship with the dead whose spirit is still believed to be around” (p.150). And some “people believe that there is

no death as such but [only] passing over to the spirit world” (p.153). These expressions allude to the unswerving faith of the ATR in a reality beyond the here and now.

On the one hand, during his life time, the elder (D9) is considered a representative of God (p.194); that is why, the installation of the elder involves offering of sacrifice and libation (p.195), and he is to be confirmed by the diviner (p.194). On the other hand, after his death he becomes an ancestor who continues to mediate between God and the people (p.193).

African spirituality is also demonstrated in the peoples’ attitude towards death (D10). Even if there is initial mourning, there is an acceptance of the event: “God is the giver and taker of life.” This concept is repeated in almost every page of the participants’ response to D10 (pp.223-235). This consolation comes from the fact that dead people, if they lived a virtuous life, are considered ancestors (p.226). Sacrifice and libation give the possibility for the living to commune with them (p.230).

4.2. Convergence of Character Strengths in the Domains of Data Set

As summarised in Table 4.1., out of the 24 CS, 18 of them have correspondence to 10 of the domains of the data set. Out of these, 8 CS have correspondence to at least one of the domains, and 10 of the CS show correspondence to more than one domain. The absence of some of the character strengths in the present data set does not indicate their lack in the ATR. It is important to be aware that the data was not collected for the purpose of study of the presence of character strengths. Besides, the data set used for the present study considered only the 10 domains of Individual Life Cycle (Kirwen, 2008). The Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS) has collected data for other 25 domains drawn from other 3 cycles namely: Family and Interpersonal relationships cycle, Community and communal activities cycle and Religious rituals cycle.

In general, two things emerge very clearly from the data analysis: (a) From the coding template, two character strengths (Citizenship – CS13 and Spirituality – CS24) show greater prevalence in the data set; (b) From among the anthropological domains, Elderhood Rites (D9) show greater match to the character strengths.

Table 4.1: Convergence of Character Strengths and African Cultural/Religious Domains

Anthropological domains of the data set from ATR		Coding Template from the core virtues of PP									
		D1. Pregnancy & Birthing Rites	D2. Naming Rites	D3. Attitudes to Sickness & Ill-health	D4. Formation & Education	D5. Initiation into Adulthood Rites	D6. Marriage Rites	D7. Mourning Rites	D8. Inheritance Ceremonies	D9. Elderhood Rites	D10. Funeral Rites
I. Wisdom & Knowledge											
1	Creativity										
2	Curiosity										
3	Open-mindedness										
4	Love of learning				X						
5	Perspective				XX	X				X	
II. Courage											
6	Bravery									X	
7	Persistence										
8	Integrity									XX	
9	Vitality										X
III. Humanity											
10	Love						X				
11	Kindness							XX			
12	Social intelligence									X	
IV. Justice											
13	Citizenship				XX	XX	XX	XX		XX	
14	Fairness			XX							
15	Leadership								X	X	
V. Temperance											
16	Forgiveness & Mercy										
17	Humility/Modesty										
18	Prudence										
19	Self-regulation					X				X	
VI. Transcendence											
20	Appreciation of beauty	X									
21	Gratitude	XX									
22	Hope							X			XX
23	Humour										
24	Spirituality	X	XX		X	X	X	X		X	X

Key: X indicates the presence of CS to some extent; XX – presence of CS to a large extent (that is, in more than one domain).

What might this imply? Perhaps the greater prevalence of spirituality (CS24) in the data set might have been a result of a bias created by the questions that the participants answered. Out of the 10 questions that were used (see Table 3.1 above), 6 questions had a precise mention of the Creator God, in this sense: How is this domain related to the theme of Creator God? As observed earlier, the data used for the present analysis was collected for a very generic purpose. Nevertheless, does the consistent prevalence of spirituality in the data set reflect the worldview of the general population?

Does the high prevalence of citizenship (CS13) say something significant about the worldview of ATR? Citizenship includes social responsibility and loyalty, and represents general commitment to common good. Is this CS really strong in the African religion and culture? And what is the significance of elderhood in relation to the CS of positive psychology? We will take up these questions in the discussion section in the next chapter.

Discussion: The Convergence of Character Strengths in ATR

The purpose of this section is to explore further the themes that have emerged in the data set. This discussion intends to examine the presence of the character strengths in ATR even outside the considered data set, thus attempting to corroborate or challenge the present interpretation of the data. It makes an attempt to look at also some CS that showed no prevalence in the data set. The first six sections in this chapter represent the six core virtues of positive psychology summarising their relevant CS. The last section acts as a conclusion to this chapter. The contents of this discussion will explain at a deeper level the meaning of CS as understood in the context of ATR, and thus contribute to the enhancement of the scheme offered by Peterson (2006). This discussion pays special attention to the existence of cultural institutions that ensure the continuity of these virtues. The existence of cultural institutions, as Biswas-Diener (2006) argues, is an indicator of the importance given by that culture to the virtue. Virtue itself is defined in the African context as “that which brings harmony, happiness and goodness in society” (Oruka, 1990, p.101).

5.1. It takes a village: The context and purpose of wisdom & knowledge

When Hillary Clinton initiated a fresh discussion on welfare of children and family values she chose a West African proverb for the title of her book: “It takes a village to educate a child” (Clinton, 1996). The character strengths of wisdom and knowledge cannot be understood in the African context apart from the community. It is in the context of the community that an individual acquires wisdom and knowledge. As it has emerged from the data set, the process of acquiring knowledge is informal and done in the context of the family, though there are also formal moments like the preparation for initiation (Mosha, 2000). In any case, knowledge is for the purpose of the wellbeing of the community within which individuals find their wellbeing.

Wisdom is understood as practical knowledge about living well, for the good of oneself and the community (Magesa, 1997, p.94). Preparations towards initiation act as the cultural institution that ensures the imparting of this wisdom. African understanding of wisdom becomes even more eloquent in, what Odero Oruka (1990) called, “African Sagacity”. In an attempt to contribute to African Philosophy, Oruka interviewed African “sages” and gave voice to their wisdom. Some of the sages that he interviewed define what

Sahaya G. Selvam, Character Strengths in African traditional religion. 37

wisdom itself is. They see wisdom as distinct from cleverness, but related to the “craving for knowledge” (Oruka, 1990, p.156). Wisdom is perceived as search for truth (p.115), basically about one’s communal culture (p.83), and that contributes to harmonious life in the society (p.128).

One of the points of divergence between the empirical findings in PP and the ethnological data in ATR is in the correlation between age and wisdom. In some adult samples, relationship between chronological age and wisdom related knowledge was non-significant (Pasupathi, Staudinger, & Baltes, 2001). Other data have shown that wisdom related performance is at its peak at the ages between 50s and 60s, and begins to show decline at the age of 75 (Baltes, Gluck, & Kunzmann, 2005). Nevertheless, Kunzmann & Stange (2007) delineate wisdom in three approaches considering wisdom as: mature personality development, post-formal stage of cognitive development, and expanded form of pragmatic intelligence. All these three approaches allude to the maturity of the individual. Many respondents in the present study consistently related wisdom to mature age and elderhood. However, no mention of chronological age was made. On the other hand, some of the ‘sages’ that Oruka (1990) interviewed were in their 40s (Oruka, 1990, p.88). Moreover, any initiated person is potentially an elder (Magesa, 1998). Therefore, we can assume that in the African worldview wisdom is related to maturity and elderhood, not necessarily to chronological age.

5.2. Abundant Life: African ‘Vitalogy’ as basis for integrity and vitality

Placide Tempels (1959) in his groundbreaking work, *La Philosophie Bantoue*, had introduced the concept of “the vital force” (see also Taylor, 1963, p.51). While Magesa (1998) develops an African norm of morality based on the principle of “abundant life”, Nkemnkia (1999) proposes “vitalogy” as the central concept in African philosophy. According to positive psychology, the character strengths of courage are bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. In the African society and religion, these traits revolve around the twin meta-values of abundant life and community.

Bravery, another character strength of courage, has meaning only in the communal context, in protecting and enhancing life. The pain inflicted during initiation is an invitation to “the sublimation of pain” (Shorter, 1973, p.190). “An initiation operation gives a clear message that to be self-giving and to sacrifice oneself for the sake of the

community is an essential aspect of life, even if this means pain or may even demand extensive suffering” (Magesa, 1998, pp.97). In most ethnic communities the initiation marks are related to sexual organs because they are associated to fertility and the continuation of human life.

Among other things, dancing is an expression of vitality in Africa. Though dancing is mentioned in the data set as being part of celebrations, it did not feature strongly as an expression of any character strength. However, the observation of Magesa (1998) about dancing can support the proposition that dancing is a cultural institution that safeguards vitality and related character strengths. He asserts, “Dancing accompanies almost every event that affirms life – birth, initiation, marriage, induction into an age set, and so on. There is also dancing to ward off destructive forces during illness and death, in which context dance has a therapeutic power” (p.212). Dancing can also be an expression of humour and play that in PP form part of the character strengths of transcendence. The use of dance as play in social contexts, and as an expression of trance in religious context is well known (see Mbiti, 1969, pp.173-175).

5.3. There is one more place: African expressions of humanity

Taylor (1963) concludes his book with the assertion about the Primal Vision of the African world view: "Africans believe that *presence* is the debt they owe to one another" (p.188; italics mine). According to me, 'presence' is a one-word summary for the character strengths listed under the virtue of 'humanity': love, kindness and social intelligence. African society is generally inclusive and welcoming. Whether it is in the bus, or at table, there is always one more place for anyone. In African sagacity, happiness itself is defined as being open to all people (Oruka, 1990, p.112).

A concrete expression of this openness and presence is hospitality. When a friend or a relative arrives, even unannounced, members of the family drop everything to welcome the guest. The welcome is always spontaneous and generous. A meal is prepared, and everyone sits around for hours exchanging news and experience. Time is never a barrier. When a family has sat for meals one more person is always welcome. Even when the family has finished its meal, the woman of the family should see that some food is left over in the pots for a late-arriving guest. This is one of the values that a visitor among the peoples of Africa can immediately notice (Healey, 1981; Healey & Sybertz, 1996, pp.168-197), which I

propose could be considered for further research and discussion within the framework of positive psychology.

African sense of inclusiveness is not only in their hospitality towards strangers but also in the way they express their opinion. This can be considered the core of African social intelligence. During meetings points are not debated as in a parliament, but everyone adds data to the common search for truth (Donders, 1985, pp. 119-120). It is further explained here below.

5.4. I am because we are: African citizenship, leadership, and justice

As has been stated previously, the African identity and virtue – being and function – emanate from the context of the community. Mbiti (1969, pp.108-109) affirms, “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: ‘I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am’. This is a cardinal point in the understanding African view of man.” This view is rephrased by a Nigerian scholar, "I am because I belong" (Metuh, 1985, p.99), or as Taylor (1963) puts it, "I am because I participate" (p.85). In this context, the character strengths that are grouped by PP under the core virtue of justice, together with those under the virtue of humanity (discussed above) form the crux of the ATR.

In the data analysis, initiation rites were seen to be related to the character strength of responsibility (which is a lexical equivalent of citizenship). This is supported by Mbiti’s claim (1969, p.121) that through the initiation rites, “they enter into a state of responsibility: they inherit new rights, and new obligations are expected of them by society.”

As pointed out earlier, most African academic literature identifies leadership with the role of the elders. The observation of Magesa (1998, p.71) regarding African leadership in the context of African religion can be extended to understanding leadership as a character strength: leadership is concerned with enhancing life; it is communal - always bringing people together; it is caring for the whole of life – spiritual and secular.

The traditional African sense of justice, that includes the character strengths of citizenship, fairness and leadership, can be best demonstrated in the traditional style of decision making (see Donders, 1985, pp. 119-120). As stated above, decision making is

communitarian and egalitarian where every male adult has an opportunity to share his opinion. It is based on seeking consensus. There are no opinions expressed for or against the motion, but even apparent opposing opinions are considered only as adding data. Discussions go on until there is a common consent. The aim of arriving at the truth is not for its own sake, but to preserve life and to build communion. This can be considered a valid contribution of Africa to the understanding of the core virtue of humanity in PP.

5.5. Maintaining communion: Reconciliation and regulation

Though the data set used for the present analysis, prejudiced by the anthropological domains and their related questions, did not show any direct allusion to the theme of forgiveness, many other anthropological discussions on ATR do make reference to this theme. Reconciliation is seen as behavioural and attitudinal changes that are “intended to re-establish harmony and equilibrium of life” (Magesa, 1998, p.208). This process, even if only between individuals, is facilitated by the community through rituals and external signs. For instance, what is achieved in gesture and word, through the performance of a ritual called *kutasa* among the Taita of Kenya, has to be matched by the person’s inner state of freedom from anger (Harris, 1978, p.28). Similar rituals are reported among the Nyakusa of Tanzania (Wilson, 1971). Among the Chagga people of Tanzania, the exchange of the leaves of *Isale* - dracaena trees, as a sign of reconciliation is well known (Healey & Sybertz, 1996, pp.316-317).

Another common way reconciliation is facilitated is through “joking relationships” (*Utani* in Swahili) between individuals and ethnic groups (Magesa, 1997, p.107). Joking relationships make provision for fooling each other, sometimes even using otherwise offensive expressions, without taking offence, thus largely reducing conflicts.

Discipline and modesty, the other character strengths of temperance in Peterson’s (2006) rendering, also have their place in the African value system. Modesty is understood in the African traditions as appropriately acting out one’s role, even if this means exhibiting one’s strengths. A young man is expected to display his strength and courage, and a young lady is expected to exhibit her beauty and her proficiency in household skills (Magesa, 1997, p.232). Discipline is the ability to obey authority (Magesa, 1997, p.99). Modesty and discipline are best tested, and their values harnessed, during the time of initiation. Discipline is closely associated with the regulation of sexual

behaviour and is heavily laden with moral implications (Suda, 1996, p.71). The methods of imparting discipline could be severe, and though it is the prerogative of parents to inculcate discipline in children, the whole community takes responsibility for every child (Muyila, 2007, pp.23-24).

5.6. Being notoriously religious: A spirituality of life

As cited earlier, “Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. ... African peoples do not know how to exist without religion.” (Mbiti, 1969, pp.1-2). In the opinion of a non-African scholar, Parrinder (1954/1974), "What are the forces behind these surging peoples of Africa? One of the greatest forces has ever been the power of religion. 'This incurably religious people', was a phrase often on the lips of many old African administrators" (p.9). This has also emerged very powerfully in the present study. Almost all character strengths are seen to be related to spiritual realities. Positive psychology itself alludes to this overlap in its consideration of virtues (Joseph, Linley, & Matlby, 2006; Maltby & Hill, 2008; Cummings, O'Donohue, & Cummings, 2009). Nonetheless, religion and spirituality get special attention under the core virtue of transcendence, which includes the character strengths of appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope (optimism), humour and spirituality. Let us consider these CS, and see how they contribute to make up a 'spirituality of life' in the ATR.

In the study by Biswas-Diener (2006, pp. 300, 302) all (100%) of the Maasai participants (N=123) endorsed ‘appreciation of beauty’ as an existing virtue in their society, but they also endorsed that there is no cultural institution (0%) among them related to appreciation of beauty. While this calls for further research, we can point out to some instances of African peoples’ appreciation of beauty not only in artistic expressions but also in natural phenomena themselves. In the data analysis, we pointed out to pregnancy and child-birth as inducing awe in the African cultural milieu. The attitude to high mountains, among other such natural features, could be another clarion example of appreciation of beauty and its relation to transcendence (Mbiti, 1969, pp.80-85). The Agikuyu of Kenya associate Mount Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya) to their origin and consider it as the abode of *Ngai*, their God; Mt Kilimanjaro is referred to by the Chagga people of Tanzania, as “*kilima cha ruah*”, which simply means, ‘the mountain of God’. Similar attitude is seen among the Arusha people in their reverence for Mt Meru (in Tanzania), and

the Maasai for Mt Oldonyo Lengai. Such transcendental expressions of appreciation of beauty in nature is not only to mountains but also to rivers and deserts, and this is noticed not only in East Africa but in the whole of the continent (Clack, 2007; Mbiti, 1991).

Other aspects of transcendence, like optimism, hope, and humour, are also seen in ATR, but due to lack of space I will only make a few quick references. “Hakuna Matata”, a Swahili phrase popularised by the Disney film *Lion King*, means, “there are no problems”. This is not just a jargon, but an attitude in Africa. African greetings consistently and explicitly make use of positive phrases (Healey, 1981, p.156). Almost every aspect of life is considered to be a blessing from God right from conception and childbirth (Magesa, 1997, p.82). We interpreted the cutting of hair in mourning rites as a symbol of hope. This is supported by scholars like Magesa (1997): hair is a symbol of life because of its continued growth. “When the hair grows back – and this is what the ritual also says – the life of family and clan, now aided by the new life-force of the deceased relative, must continue and thrive” (p.150).

In summary, as it has emerged from the data analysis (Table 4.1), the core virtue of transcendence is traceable to almost every domain of ATR, and religion permeates almost every aspect of life. This has been acknowledged by a recent policy paper on development (Blair et al, 2005, no.36), “Religious beliefs, movements and networks cross the lines between material and spiritual experience. They affect all aspects of how people live, including the social, economic and political parts of their lives.”

5.7. The African Elder as the paragon of character strengths

Another interesting finding that has emerged from this qualitative research is the figure of the African elder and its association to character strengths. The domain of the elderhood rites (D9) shows association with at least eight of the character strengths, stretching across all core virtues (Table 4.1). The elder is expected to be endowed with wisdom. This wisdom is an outcome of experience and reflection. There is a Swahili expression used while referring to a wise person - usually an elder, “*amekula chumvi nyingi*”;” literally, “he has eaten a lot of salt.” This means he is well experienced, and hence, wise. In this context, it is meaningful to recall our earlier discussion on age, maturity, and wisdom.

The elder is also an exemplar of courage, especially in “speaking up for what is right” (Peterson, 2006, p.32). The elder is also known for his integrity: upright, exemplary

and refined in his dealing with others. This moral standard provides him the authority to advice others – a trait of social intelligence. In a possible leadership role, the elder is able to influence the community in decision making and be able to inspire others. In short, he is the paragon of character strengths.

As Magesa (1998, pp.67-71) states, the African elder is not necessarily a leader in a social or political sense. Since, as it has been reiterated above, in the African traditions, religion is not separate from society, the elder could also play the role of a diviner, a priest, or a medium. In the world of the living, he mediates between God and the community. And at death, he joins the living-dead and becomes immortal. He lives in the memory of the community as an ancestor.

CONCLUSION

Relevance and limitations of the study

Norenzayan & Heine (2005) propose cross-fertilization between anthropology and psychology in the study of “psychological universals.” They acknowledge the importance of strategies that will facilitate cross-cultural discourse, while respecting the “idiosyncrasies of psychological research” (p.766). This research project was meant to be a modest contribution to the ongoing discussion on the ubiquity of core virtues and character strengths as proposed by PP, drawing evidence from cross-cultural data. This study also aimed at making a contribution to the discourse of ATR insofar as this project reinterprets the beliefs, codes and cults of ATR in the contemporary parlance of psychology. However, the qualitative approach used in this study might seem an aberration given the strong quantitative bias of PP. Ong & van Dulmen (2007, pp.292-323) do consider the possibility of integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in positive psychology. Besides, as Robbins (2008) contends, “Eudaimonic happiness cannot be purely value-free, nor can it be completely studied without using both nomothetic and idiographic (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) methods in addressing problems of value...” (p. 96; brackets original). This gave confidence to this researcher in the use of qualitative method.

In qualitative studies the subjective influence of the researcher cannot be ruled out. This student researcher being a non-African, though having lived 16 years in East Africa, perhaps even unconsciously has brought his own worldview into the processes underlying this qualitative study. On the one hand, being a non-African has brought in a certain scholarly indifference to the interpretation of the data set; on the other hand, his lived experience in Africa did help in understanding the African worldview latent in the ethnological data.

Many qualitative research projects involve more than one researcher at different stages of work, especially in coding and analysing the data. This ensures the analysis to be more rigorous. This research project being part of the requirements for a graduate degree in psychology of religion reduced the possibilities for the involvement of more than one researcher. However, since both the coding templates and the data set came from previous scholarship, this limitation may not be very crucial.

In conclusion, I would like to make a few general remarks pointing out to the implications of the findings that have emerged from this qualitative study. These implications pertain to two sets of questions: (a) those that still remain unanswered considering the implication of character strengths in the daily life of the African people – individually and collectively; (b) and those that might need further research.

Positive psychology focuses on wellbeing and happiness. But it does not pretend to be an ostrich with its head buried in the sand. Peterson (2006, p.39), in his classification of strengths does point out to the negative implications of the absence, opposite and exaggeration of each character strength. For instance, absence of citizenship would be selfishness, its opposite is narcissism, and its exaggeration, chauvinism.

Viewing African Traditional Religions (ATR) from outside, how can the African practices of what seems to be witchcraft, magic, divination and sorcery fit in the discussion on wellbeing and happiness? Witchcraft and magic apparently seem negative, but they could have their role in establishing harmony and wellbeing within that system. Taylor (1963) offers an insight,

A man's wellbeing consists, rather, in keeping in harmony with the cosmic totality. When things go well with him he knows he is at peace and of a piece, with the scheme of things, and there can be no greater good than that. If things go wrong then somewhere he has fallen out of step. He feels lost.... The whole system of divination exists to help him discover the point at which the harmony has been broken and how it may be restored (p.67).

Another issue that has emerged from the present data set concerns the status of women in ATR. Since this is not the main concern of this essay it suffices to quote a few examples. In D1, for instance, many respondents mention that their community and parents would have preferred a boy child (Kirwen, 2008, pp. 12,15,17,18, 19), though one did mention that their parents expected a girl (p.16). Another respondent remarked, “The mother is usually treated with respect especially if the child is a baby boy (p.13). Interestingly these respondents represent various ethnic groups. There are also numerous mentions about other issues like, Female Genital Mutilation (D5), bride-price (D6), and widow inheritance (D8). The discourse surrounding the African elder (D9) is usually andro-centric. There are clear variations in the funeral rites for men and women (D10). It is true that many of these rituals and practices have their own meaning and function within

the context of the African social fabric, and most of these can be anthropologically explained. However, the question that is worth asking, from the theoretical framework of positive psychology is, what is the implication of these practices on the wellbeing and happiness of women?

As we said earlier while talking about hope and optimism, “*Hakuna Matata*” has become a proverbial expression of a “problem-free philosophy.” The most common greeting in East Africa goes this way: one enquires, “*Habari?*” – literally, “News?” The other replies, “*Nzuri*”, meaning, “Good”. Even a sick person would tend to affirm that everything is good (see Healey, 1981). This optimism of Africa was also seen in the data set used for this research. No negative criticism of ATR was found. Does the rest of the world have the same optimism and hope about Africa and its future? News about Africa, as reported in the global mainstream media, is often not good! Is this just the result of bias in the media? Or if the bad news about Africa is indeed real, are there factors that influence current events that go beyond the worldview of the peoples of Africa? And finally, what role does this worldview, which is so ingrained in the psyche of the African peoples, play in providing them the resilience in maintaining wellbeing? These questions could be worthwhile subject for further psychological researches in Africa.

Besides, the present work studied only the first volume of data pertaining to Individual Life Cycle, collected by MIAS, Nairobi, covering ten anthropological domains. MIAS has data in three other volumes, pertaining to Family and Interpersonal Relationship Cycle, Community and Communal Activities Cycle and Religious Ritual Cycle, covering thirty-five domains in all. It would be fruitful to expand this present work further to analyse data from all domains. The proposed project will shed more light on the understanding of character strengths in a traditional context.

Peterson (2004) agrees that the VIA (Table 1.1) is still a tentative list. Therefore, of particular importance would be the study, within the framework of positive psychology, of specific concepts that have emerged in the present study. For instance, could hospitality and ‘presence’ be character strengths within the core virtue of humanity? Again, some character strengths that have direct moral implications like integrity (CS8) and fairness (CS14) are found to be classified under core virtues of courage and justice respectively. During this study it was found that, on the one hand, the core virtue of ‘courage’ does not best represent the character strengths that are listed therein, on the other hand, integrity might need a shift to the core virtue of justice. This needs further examination.

In general, this qualitative study has demonstrated that more cross-cultural studies are needed on the VIA so as to reformulate the list, and to add a universal value to it.

References

- Bacon, S. (2005). Positive Psychology's Two Cultures. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 181-192.
- Baltes, P.B., Gluck, J., & Kunzmann, U. (2005). Wisdom: Its structure and function in regulating successful life span development. In C. R. Snyder & S. L. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 327–347). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. In Baumeister, R. (Ed.), *The self in social psychology* (pp. 285-298). New York: Psychology Press.
- Baumeister, R., Exline, J.J., & Sommer, K.L. (1998). The victim role, grudge theory and two dimensions of forgiveness. In Worthington, E. L., Jr. (Ed.). *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspectives* (pp.79-104). Philadelphia: Templeton.
- Beugré, C., & Offodile, O. (2001). Managing for organizational effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa: a culture-fit model. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(4), 535-550.
- Biswas-Diener, R. (2006). From the Equator to the North Pole: A Study of Character Strengths. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7(3), 293-310.
- Blair, T., et al (2005). *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa*. www.commissionforafrica.org. (Retrieved on 10/06/2008).
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development*. London: Sage.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Burleson, B. (2004). *Jung in Africa*. London: Continuum.
- Cassell, E.J. (2005). Compassion. In C. R. Snyder & S. L. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 434–445). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded Theory. In Smith, J.A. (Ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Clack, T. (2007). *Memory and the mountain*. Michigan: Archeopress.
- Clinton, H.R. (1996). *It takes a village*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Costa, P.T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory: Professional manual*. Florida: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Covington, M. (1999). Caring about learning: The nature and nurturing of subject-matter appreciation. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(2), 127-136.
- Cox, J.L. (2007). *From primitive to indigenous: The academic study of indigenous religions*. Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing.

- Crabtree, B., & Miller, W. (1999). A template approach to text analysis: Developing and using codebooks. *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 163-177). California: Sage Publications.
- Cummings, N., O'Donohue, W., & Cummings, J. (2009). *Psychology's war on religion*. Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen.
- Dahlsgaard, K., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths Across Culture and History. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(3), 203-213.
- Donders, J.G. (1985). *Non-Bourgeois Theology: An African Experience of Jesus*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Durkheim, E. (1915). *Elementary forms of the religious life: a study of religious sociology*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Eisenberger, R. (1992). Learned industriousness. *Psychological Review*, 99(2), 248-267.
- Eloff, I. (2008). Editorial--Positive psychology: Celebrating strength and well-being in the cradle of humankind. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18(1), 5-8.
- Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E. (2004). *The psychology of gratitude*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Enright, R.D. & Coyle, C.T. (1998). Researching the Process Model of Forgiveness Within Psychological Interventions. In Worthington, E. L., Jr. (Ed.). *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspectives* (pp.139-161). Philadelphia: Templeton.
- Eto, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.
- Evans, P., & White, D. (1981). Towards an empirical definition of courage. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 19(5), 419-424.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1965). *Theories of Primitive Religion*. Oxford : Clarendon, 1965.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Fitzgerald, P. (1998). Gratitude and justice. *Ethics*, 109, 119-153.
- Gadamer, H. (1979). *Truth and Method*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Gorsuch, R.L. (1988). Psychology of religion. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 39, 201-221.
- Haidt, J. (2003). Elevation and the positive psychology of morality. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.) *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association. (pp. 275-289).
- Harris, G.G. (1978). *Casting out anger: Religion among the Taita of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harter, S. (2005). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder & S. L. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 382–394). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Harvey, J., & Pauwels, B. (2004). Modesty, humility, character strength, and positive psychology. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 23*(5), 620-623.
- Haslam, N. (1991). Prudence: Aristotelian perspectives on practical reason. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 21*(2), 151-169.
- Haslam, S.A & McGarty, C. (2003). *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (2004). Attachment as an Organizational Framework for Research on Close Relationships. *Close relationships: Key readings* (pp. 153-174). Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
- Healey, J. G. & Sybertz, D.F. (1996). *Towards an African narrative theology*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications.
- Healey, J.G. (1981). *The fifth gospel: In search of black Christian values*. London: SCM Press.
- Hill, P.C. & Paragament, K.I.. (2003). Advances in the conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality: implication for physical and mental health research. *American Psychologist, 58*(1), 64-74.
- Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.
- Idowu, E. B. (1973). *African Traditional Religion: a definition*. London: S.C.M. Press.
- Joseph, S., Linley, P.A., & Matlby, J. (2006). Positive psychology, religion, and spirituality. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 9*(3), 209-212.
- Kirwen, M.C. (2005), (Ed.). *African Cultural Knowledge: Themes and embedded beliefs*. Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies.
- Kirwen, M.C. (2008), (Ed.). *African Cultural Domains: Life Cycle of an Individual*. Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies.
- Kunzmann, U., & Stange, A. (2007). Wisdom as a classical human strength: Psychological conceptualizations and empirical inquiry. *Oxford handbook of methods in positive psychology* (pp. 306-322). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kunzmann, U., & Stange, A. (2007). Wisdom as a classical human strength: psychological conceptualization and empirical inquiry. In Ong, A.D., & van Dulman, M.H.M. (eds). *Oxford handbook of methods in positive psychology*, (pp.306-322). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Locke, E. A. (2005). Setting goals for life and happiness. In C. R. Snyder & S. L. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 299–312). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Loewenstein, G. (1994). The psychology of curiosity: A review and reinterpretation. *Psychological Bulletin, 116*(1), 75-98.
- Magesa, L. (1998). African religion: the moral traditions of abundant life. Nairobi: Paulines Publications.
- Maltby, L., & Hill, P. (2008). 'So firm a foundation': What the comparative study of religion offers positive psychology. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion, 19*, 117-142.

- Maltby, L.E., & Hill, P.C. (2003). 'So firm a foundation': What the comparative study of religion offers positive psychology. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 19, 117-142.
- Martin, R. (2004). Sense of humor and physical health: Theoretical issues, recent findings, and future directions. *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research*, 17(1-2), 1-19.
- Mazrui, A. A. (1980). *The African condition: A political diagnosis*. London: Heinemann.
- Mazrui, A. A. (1986). *The Africans: a triple heritage*. London: BBC Publications.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Mbiti, J.s. (1991). *Introduction to African religion*, 2nd ed. London: Heinemann.
- Metuh, E.I. (1985). *African religions in Western conceptual schemes: The problem of interpretation*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Pastoral Institute.
- Mosha, R.S. (2000). *The heartbeat of Indigenous Africa: A study of Chagga educational system*. London: Routledge.
- Muyila, J.W. (2007). *African values and the problem of the rights of the child: a search for explanation*. Copenhagen: The Danish Institute of Human Rights.
- Nansook, P., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2006). Character strengths in fifty-four nations and the fifty US states. *Journal of Positive Psychology* 1(3), 118-129.
- Norenzayan, A., & Heine, S. (2005). Psychological Universals: What Are They and How Can We Know? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(5), 763-784.
- Ong, A.D., & van Dulman, M.H.M. (2007). *Oxford handbook of methods in positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oruka, H. O. (1990). *Sage Philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African Philosophy*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- P'Bitek, O., (1970). *African religions in Western scholarship*. Kampala: East African Literature Bureau.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2007). Methodological issues in positive psychology and the assessment of character strengths. In Ong, A.D., & van Dulman, M.H.M. (eds). *Oxford handbook of methods in positive psychology*, (pp.292-305). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Parrinder, G. I. (1954/1974). *African Traditional Religion*, 3rd ed. London: Sheldon Press.
- Pasupathi, M., Staudinger, U., & Baltes, P. (2001). Seeds of wisdom: Adolescents' knowledge and judgment about difficult life problems. *Developmental Psychology*, 37(3), 351-361.
- Peterson, C. (2006). Values in Action (VIA): classification of strengths. In Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I. S (Eds.). *A life worth living: contributions to positive psychology*, (pp.29-48). U.S.: Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ray, B. C. (1976). *African Religions: Symbols, Ritual & Community*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Sahaya G. Selvam, Character Strengths in African traditional religion.

- Robbins, B. (2008). What is the Good Life? Positive Psychology and the Renaissance of Humanistic Psychology. *Humanistic Psychologist*, 36(2), 96-112.
- Rogers, C.R. (1961). *On becoming a person: a therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Ryan, R., & Frederick, C. (1997). On Energy, Personality, and Health: Subjective Vitality as a Dynamic Reflection of Well-Being. *Journal of Personality*, 65(3), 529-565.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2003). Positive psychology: Fundamental assumptions. *The Psychologist*, 16(3), 126-127.
- Selvam, S.G. (2008) A capabilities approach to youth rights in East Africa. *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 12(2), 205–214.
- Shelp, E.E. (1984). Courage: a neglected virtue in the patient-physician relationship. *Social Science & Medicine*, 18(4), 351-360.
- Shillington, K. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Africa History*. San Francisco: CRC Press.
- Shorter, A. (1973). *African Culture and the Christian Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Shorter, A. (1975). Problems and possibilities for the Church's dialogue with African traditional religion. In Shorter, A. (Ed.) *Dialogue with the African Traditional Religions*. Kampala: Gaba Publications.
- Simonton, D. K. (2000). Creativity: Cognitive, personal, developmental, and social aspects. *American Psychologist*, 55, 151–158.
- Simonton, D. K. (2005). Creativity. In C. R. Snyder & S. L. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 189–201). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, J.A. (2008). *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Snyder, C. R. & Lopez, S. J. (2007). *Positive psychology : the scientific and practical explorations of human strength*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Spencer, H. (1896). *The study of sociology*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Spilka, B., Hood, R.W., Hunsberger, B., & Gorsuch, R. (2003). *The Psychology of religion: an empirical approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Suda, C. (1996). The centrality of women in the moral teachings in African society. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 5(2), 71-82.
- Sundararajan, L. (2005). Happiness Donut: A Confucian Critique of Positive Psychology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 25(1), 35-60.
- Tangney, J. (2000). Humility: Theoretical perspectives, empirical findings and directions for future research. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 19(1), 70-82.
- Taylor, J.V. (1963). *The primal vision: Christian presence amid African religion*. London: SCM Press.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871/1958). *Primitive Culture*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sahaya G. Selvam, Character Strengths in African traditional religion.

- Watts, F., Dutton, K., & Gulliford, L. (2006). Human spiritual qualities: Integrating psychology and religion. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 9(3), 277-289.
- Wilson, M. (1971). *Religion and the transformation of society: A study in social change in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wulff, D.M. (1997). *Psychology of religion: classic and contemporary*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Yardly, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In Smith, J.A. (Ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Yearley, L.H. (1990). *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of virtue and conceptions of courage*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Zagano, P. and Gillespie, C.K. (2006). Ignatian spirituality and Positive Psychology. *The Way*, 45(4), 41-48.

APPENDIX:
Sample Data Units and Possible Allusion to Character Strengths

(This appendix includes one significant data unit from each domain, pointing out to the identifiable CS in that data unit.)

Anthropological Domain	Select Data Units	Identifiable Character Strength(s)
D1 p.12	The <u>community was grateful to God for the gift of pregnancy and all children are a gift from God.</u> My mother was relieved off heavy duties like carrying water and heavy loads. The community was expecting a baby boy, as this was the second pregnancy (Agikuyu).	CS21: Gratitude CS24: Spirituality
D2 p.40	I was named after three days. Since two of the first children had died and evil was considered the cause of death, I was given the name ‘Onyoni’ meaning a bird to be spared from death. Life comes from creator God and it continues in the children of the family – perpetuity (Abagusii).	CS24: Spirituality
D3 p.65	When I am not well I am tired, worried and need a solution to my state of sickness. I may feel that the sickness is the result of something I did not do right. <u>The community will want to find out what mistake I have done and there are also feelings that someone is behind my sickness.</u> A fortune teller or <u>diviner is consulted to find out the cause of the sickness</u> (Dinka).	CS14: Fairness
D4 p.76	Although the contribution of the larger community cannot be ignored my parents played a critical role both in my informal and formal education. At an early age they taught me to fear God. <u>They instilled in me the values of honesty and truthfulness, respect for elders, and love for learning and seeking wisdom.</u> Certainly, my parents make many significant financial and material sacrifices to make sure that I got solid formal education. My parents’ tangible efforts were greatly augmented by a few of my elementary school teachers who played the role of authentic educational models for me (Tigrinya).	CS4: Love for learning CS5: Perspective
D5 p.98	Through circumcision in the hospital when I was fifteen years old. Members of the family and the community came around with gifts i.e., clothing, soap, sugar, etc. <u>I was expected to behave as an adult, have good behaviour and be responsible.</u> Initiation (circumcision) <u>is God given.</u> The Agikuyu male have to be circumcised before they marry (Agikuyu).	CS13: Citizenship CS24: Spirituality
D6	Marriage being the <u>union of two people</u> of the	CS10: Love

p.134	opposite sex is basically for procreation, accompaniment and <u>God's good will to man as the creation story says</u> . Bridewealth binds the couple and legitimizes children born of the union. <u>Children in the union create a wider space for relations and foster peace among the communities of the man and the woman</u> . Marriage fulfils lineage ideology through continuity which is blessed by God the father. Children are God's blessings to a community (Abaluyia).	CS13: Citizenship CS24: Spirituality
D7 p.150	People mourn and grieve by crying, wailing at times and singing songs. It has a sad feeling of <u>loss to the living</u> . Mourning is an expression of sorrow when any member of the community dies (Abaluyia).	CS11: Kindness CS13: Citizenship
D8 p.173	Property is shared equally among wives. In many cases you find that the deceased leaves a verbal will that is binding. The eldest/first wife usually gets a relatively larger share than the others. The symbols of leadership are given to the person who assumes that position. These are shields, bows, and arrows. <u>Leadership was passed on among the men in the lineage, as my community is paternal in nature</u> (Abagusii).	CS15: Leadership
D9 p.193	One becomes an elder after considering certain qualities. Mainly age, marital status, <u>discipline, wisdom</u> , wealth/success and experience which goes with the age. <u>The community and also the existing elders choose an elder</u> . Before one becomes an elder, he passes through certain rites of passage and rituals. At a certain point a ceremony is organized to welcome him to the council of elders. Afterwards he is given the <u>responsibility of being in charge of the community</u> . <u>Elderhood enhances the life process and directs the community to the creator God, lineage and protects the lineage from witchcraft</u> (Akamba).	CS5: Perspective CS8: Integrity CS13: Citizenship CS15: Leadership CS24: Spirituality
D10 p.228	Death may be due to the witch or supernatural causes. Rites differed depending on whether an individual (deceased) was married or single. The <i>tipo</i> or spirit of the deceased was appeased. A woman was buried beside her husband in the house. Symbolic burying of a log was done for unrecovered bodies. <i>Suicide was handled very seriously</i> with plenty of cleansing and destruction of the deceased's home. The themes [<u>Creator God, Lineage ideology and the Witch</u>] are <u>fundamental to a complete individual and community cycle</u> (Luo).	CS9: Vitality CS24: Spirituality

Notes:

All page numbers refer to Kirwen, 2008; Select data units are direct quotes of those that were used in the Data Analysis section.