This work is dedicated to my father, Raymond Odhuno, who from an early age inspired me to aspire to the higher echelons of learning.

It is also dedicated to my late mother, Mary Agalo Odhuno, whose love and care made me who I am.

COMMUNICATION RULES OF THE MAASAI AND THE AKAMBA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

by

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DECLARATION

"I declare that 'The communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba: A comparative analysis', is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

Signature:_____ Date:_____

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the communication rules in the family structures of the Maasai and the Akamba cultures with the aim of comparing the core symbols emanating from the rules.

The researcher used the qualitative design to identify and compare the communication rules of the rural Maasai of the Rift Valley Province and the rural Akamba of the Eastern Province of Kenya. The study focused on male and female adult individuals in family situations who were familiar with the traditional expectations of their cultures.

Data was collected through focus group and in-depth interviews. From the data it was concluded that although the Maasai and the Akamba are from two different ethnic groups of Africa, namely the Nilo-Hamitic and Bantu respectively, the core symbols of their communication rules that are similar far outnumber those that are different. This phenomenon was noted when comparing the different levels of relationship within the family structures, namely, communication between spouses, communication between parents and children, and communication between siblings.

One of the important findings of this study is that there are more similarities than differences in the cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba at family level. Therefore, the similarities of core symbols could imply that ethnic differences should not lead to the assumption that cultural practices will be significantly different.

However, similar cultural practices or core symbols might not necessarily rule out conflict, as was indeed the case with the Maasai and the Akamba.

Another finding was that the most outstanding core symbol in both cultures was respect, which was the fulcrum of most of the other core symbols in the communication rules.

Key terms:
Communication rules
Communication competence
Core symbols
Culture
Cultural dimensions
Family communication
Intracultural communication
Intercultural communication
Society
Rules theory

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an overview of the investigation into the communication rules of the rural Maasai and the rural Akamba who are two of the forty-two ethnic groups found in Kenya in East Africa. Both the Maasai and the Akamba practise aspects of urban and rural life. Those who live in urban areas have embraced modernity whereas those who live in rural areas still maintain the traditional way of life (Tribes and politics in Kenya 2008). The study attempts to identify the similarities and differences in the core symbols emanating from the rules of family relationships of the two ethnic groups.

The Maasai and the Akamba share a border marked by a railway line which runs from the port of Mombasa on the shores of the Indian Ocean to the port of Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria. The two groups live in their ancestral homes in the southern part of the country (see Figure 4.1). They also live in towns and cities where they interact with people from the other ethnic groups in Kenya. It is common for almost all ethnic groups in Kenya to own rural homes as well as urban homes. Office workers live in the urban areas and visit their rural homes during holidays (Tribes and politics in Kenya 2008).

The Akamba is the fourth largest ethnic group in Kenya and is therefore in a position to influence the politics of the country. The current Vice-President of the tenth parliament of the Kenyan nation is an Akamba. Although the Maasai is a smaller group than the Akamba, it is also in a position to influence national affairs. George Saitoti, a member of the Maasai group, was elected Vice-President in Kenya's eighth parliament that was in power from 1997 to 2002 (Tribes and politics in Kenya 2008).

According to history, the Maasai and the Akamba were on friendly terms up to the nineteenth century. The two cultures migrated gradually to their present bordering geographical areas (Munro 1975:17). The Maasai are believed to have migrated from the area west of Lake Rudolf (Jacobs 1975:410) whereas the Akamba are believed to have

migrated from the Mount Kilimanjaro area (Ndeti 1972:25) between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the advent of colonialism towards the end of the nineteenth century (between 1890 and 1963), and due to increasing interaction, relations between the two groups deteriorated into a state of almost continual hostility.

According to Lindblom (1920:353), the Maasai became the deadliest enemies of the Akamba because they carried out raids, plundering their homes and stealing their cattle. In the course of such raids, fights erupted and some lives were lost. These fights were occasioned by competition for women and cattle, since in both cultures women and cattle are important elements for subsistence as well as symbols of wealth and prestige (Munro 1975:17).

Conflicts were also related to droughts and other natural calamities. For example, due to the proximity of their geographical areas, the Maasai and the Akamba experienced droughts at the same time and sometimes infringed on each other's land in search of grazing for their cattle (Gilliam 1938:38). Cattle diseases also occurred in both areas at the same time due to the proximity of the regions. These situations constantly caused conflict between the two groups.

The current conflict between the Maasai and the Akamba exists because the Maasai have remained pastoralists whereas the Akamba have turned to crop farming. The situation has created competition for access to the limited land and other natural resources (Manundu 2006:6).

There is, therefore, a difference in the way the two groups have adapted to modernisation. The Maasai who live in the rural areas still uphold their traditional value systems and lifestyle and resist modernisation (Casal 2008). This issue is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4.

The Akamba, on the other hand, are more open to modernisation, for instance, Western education is valued not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas. However, those

who still value tradition regard Western education as encouraging urbanisation and weakening clan ties among the Akamba (Mutie 2003:24) (See Chapter 4).

1.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate and compare the intracultural communication rules and the ensuing core symbols which exist in the traditional Maasai and Akamba cultures. Intracultural communication rules allude to the rules that are used within a culture to enable its members to interact effectively (Collier, Ribeau & Hecht 1986:439). Past research on the relationship between culture and communication has been based largely on the intercultural communication theory, and use of this research has been made in this study. Therefore the current study could encourage speculation on potential problems in intercultural communication as a result of juxtaposing the intracultural communication rules of the two cultures.

People are influenced within a particular set of cultural rules which are transmitted from one generation to the other (Kottak 1991:37). As a result of this, difficulty of communication is engendered in intercultural encounters, since the rules of communication are different in various/assorted cultures (Samovar & Porter 1991:36). Sometimes the rules of a particular culture are quite incomprehensible until one understands the ideas behind them (Samovar & Porter 1991:37).

Although it is important to improve intercultural communication between the two groups, the foremost aim of this study is to investigate and gain knowledge of the rules that govern the intracultural communication within the groups in order to compare them effectively.

Kim and Gudykunst (1988:143) suggest that the comparison of cultures is valuable in explaining and reducing specific problems encountered by individuals who originate from different cultures. It is, however, notable that in order to compare two cultures one needs to study the intracultural communication within each of the cultures. This suggestion underscores the relevance of this study because the Maasai and the Akamba

are two different cultures which would ideally profit from effective intercultural communication if they were familiar with each other's intracultural communication rules. Knowledge of each other's intracultural communication rules and core symbols might help to identify problem areas and improve intercultural communication between the two groups.

The family structure is considered to be the most effective source of knowledge for intracultural communication rules because it is the core of any culture and tends to vary more among cultures than any other variable. It is therefore proposed that the family can be used as a foundation for intercultural comparison because the family structure is the major source of cultural differences (Samovar, Porter & Jain 1981:100). The family strongly influences the values, beliefs, behaviour and expectations of its members. It is also regarded as one of the most influential subsystems of society and nowhere is its influence on individual behaviour more profound than in the area of communicative behaviour (Koerner & Cvancara 2002:133).

Knowledge of the practices carried out in families in particular societies is valuable to increase appreciation of intercultural variability and uniformity within the family. The knowledge of what is practised in families augments objectivity and heightens awareness of the features of family behaviour in a person's own society (Kenkel 1973:5).

This thesis therefore focuses on examining the communication rules and the ensuing core symbols that govern different relationship levels within the family as a social institution. The latter alludes to, for example, the rules that govern how and what a man should communicate to and with his wife as opposed to his children. The information should elicit the core symbols in each cultural group, and these were the variables that were compared among the two cultures.

1.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study could enhance the knowledge of the communication rules and the ensuing core symbols of the two cultures through the in-depth understanding of intracultural communication within each of the two groups. The understanding of the two cultures could help in identifying potential problems and possible ways of addressing those problems. The study is therefore not confined to the knowledge of just one culture, but there is the possibility of depicting the similarities and differences across the two cultures (Marsh 1967:7; Frey 1970:181).

This study could also provide data to be used for comparisons with cultures other than the two cultures under discussion. The knowledge that is generated from the study could also be a means of enhancing an understanding of the theories of intracultural and intercultural communication. This knowledge could further be a source of information for those engaged in peace-building and reconciliation initiatives.

Furthermore, the current study could be used in the educational curriculum of Kenya in that the educational structure could endorse a system that requires the students to study other communities to ensure healthy relationships between future generations (Kipsang 2008:7). The current study might therefore be valuable to the extent that, if included in the curriculum, it might boost positive attitudes among different ethnic groups.

The importance of this study is further enhanced by the fact that it is addressing an area that is encountering a growing interest among scholars, namely, African communication practices and theory. According to the editors of the *African Communication Research* (2008), the journal was initiated as a result of a dearth of communication journals that are addressing African communication issues. The editors are looking for articles focusing on African theories and methods of communication which are enriched by genuine encounters with people of Africa. The research conducted in this study contributes towards the need for research and theorising on African communication.

1.4 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Although communication rules theory serves as the fundamental theoretical framework for the study, it is important to note that rules are a product of culture (Culture is the integrated pattern … 2009). Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour which is a result of the human capacity for learning. The knowledge that is generated is transmitted from generation to generation (Culture is the integrated pattern … 2009). The theme of knowledge and its transmission is further elaborated by the notion that culture is the integrated system of learned and socially transmitted patterns of behaviour which are perpetuated through rules. From communication rules emanate core symbols which are symbolic translations of the rules. The learned and socially transmitted patterns of behaviour are used as a tool for acquiring skills for the survival of society (Nida 1984:28).

From another angle, culture is regarded as the way people think, act, live and communicate. Communication is therefore a part of culture because a culture develops as a result of the interpersonal communication of its members. Culture results from the interaction or communication of the people, and the place and the time in which they live (Culture is the way a people think … 2009). The interaction of the people, which can also be termed intracultural communication, is facilitated by cultural core symbols which are symbolic systems that reveal both prescriptions and proscriptions for cultural behaviour (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau 1993). Core cultural symbols are therefore a central unifying force.

The awareness of the relationship between communication and culture draws attention to the reality that for a culture to thrive, its systems, one of which is the core symbols, have to be perpetuated by communication which can only be effective if the communication rules of the group are followed. Communication rules are reflected in communicative behaviour which is governed by socially agreed-upon norms or individual guidelines for behaviour, both of which may be called rules (Infante, Rancer & Womack 2003:354). Members of a culture evolve rules to facilitate competence in communication within their

culture. For the rules to facilitate effective communication, core symbols, which have been referred to as symbolic systems that reveal prescriptions and proscriptions for accepted behaviour in a culture have to be considered. Core symbols which are recurrent patterns of communicative behaviour that members of a culture identify with are therefore interpretations of rules. Core symbols are groups of systems which comprise rules or norms that reveal both prescriptions and proscriptions for competent behaviour among members of a cultural community. For example the core symbol of "respect" reveals the communication rules that govern how a wife should relate to her husband or how children should behave towards their father.

The theoretical foundation discussed so far reflects the connection between the concepts of culture, communication, rules and core symbols (concepts which will be elucidated further in Chapters 2 and 3). The theoretical foundation is therefore relevant to the aim of the study, namely to investigate the intracultural communication rules and core symbols of two cultures. As has been reiterated in the aim of the study, comparing cultures is valuable in reducing misunderstandings, and Gudykunst (1983:79) affirms that the rules perspective in communication provides a uniquely advantageous perspective for studying intercultural and cross-cultural communication.

1.4.1Rules as a human phenomenon

In the human experience, when a society is formed, the members initiate forms of control as a necessary measure of securing stability. Rules represent such forms of control. These controls are endorsed in the social contract for the mutual support, welfare, protection and survival of all members. It is important to note that maintenance and control alone do not ensure the perpetuation of society. This perpetuation can also be effected through cumulative collective experiences of the society. From infancy, people are instructed in cultural ways through the internalisation of the rules of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Folb 1985:121).

Human beings tend to have a deep-seated drive to produce and live by rules. This tendency is entrenched in the human propensity for rule-ordered structuring of behaviour

(Kraft 1983:136). Cultural behaviour, which in each society is taught from childhood, therefore consists of such rule-ordered structuring, reminiscent of the notion that all human behaviour is governed by rules. Communication, which is part of culture, is likewise rule ordered, hence the realisation that for any society to survive, it has to harness its culture by generating rules of communication, which are observed by its members (Littlejohn 1970:48).

Culture is therefore viewed as consisting of rules which are statements of ideal behaviour (Otterbein 1972:3). The rules then serve as motivation for the preservation of culture and not many will refute the idea that rules arise in cultures to regulate behaviour so that goals can be realised and needs satisfied to maintain social order. Systems of rules therefore create behaviour patterns which are functional in the different cultures. Consequently, as has been mentioned before, the rules of another culture are sometimes difficult to envision until one understands the ideas behind them (Argyle 1991:37). These ideas are often reflected in the core symbols.

1.4.2 The role of core symbols in culture

Core symbols form a central and unifying force which reveals the way people construct meaning and enact identity through communicative processes. They are solely defined by culture (Schneider 1976). They encompass both prescriptive and proscriptive rules to show how people should behave in order to be considered competent members of their culture and hence manifest communication competence (Hecht et. al 1993). These symbols can also provide knowledge of what the culture considers as acceptable rules of behaviour, moral standards and expectations for conduct. The core symbols which are shared by a group can be identified through recurrent patterns of communicative behaviour which are governed by rules generated by the society to enable members to communicate competently. Through mutual enactment, the core symbols create a sense of shared identity. The analysis and interpretation of core symbols are therefore viable ways of understanding cultural identity because they reflect interaction that occurs naturally in different types of relationships and contexts. The same analysis can also be a powerful framework for understanding the communication rules of a culture (Lindsley

1999). The relationship between core symbols and communication rules will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

1.4.3 The role of rules in communication

It has been reiterated that different cultures display distinctive ways of life. Each culture evolves rules of communication which contribute to the survival of the culture. When members observe rules, the communication of culture is propagated (Serpell 1976:9). Communication is a symbolic rule-governed activity which conveys rules that maintain social order. These rules are used to govern social behaviour since culture is responsible for individual repertoires of communicative behaviour and meaning, as has been mentioned before. The role of rules in communication will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

1.4.4 The role of rules in intercultural communication

The concept of rules is not only important in intracultural communication but also in intercultural communication because there are sets of appropriate behaviour in particular cultures that are defined by rules. Every culture has rules or procedures which are the fundamental sets of expectations about how things are supposed to be accomplished (Argyle 1991:53). Culture, however, differs regarding how closely a member is expected to fulfil his or her role expectations through the rules that accompany those roles (Infante et al 2003:317). Cultures also provide an implicit set of rules to govern interaction specifying the acceptable means to achieving the goals of social life in a culture. The means of achievement is encased in verbal and non-verbal codes which come with a set of cultural prescriptions for acceptable behaviour. Behaviour that is deemed acceptable therefore differs from culture to culture.

Rules of interaction are furthermore developed for reasons of expediency because they allow people within a particular culture to coordinate their activities more easily. The rules provide predictable patterns or structures for social activities and give relationships a sense of coherence (Lustig & Koester 1999:252). This knowledge assists people in their ventures to communicate across cultures.

People from other cultures are therefore expected to develop communication competence with the rules of the host culture because interactional rules in cultures are different. This difference is often caused by communication problems in intercultural communication situations (Argyle 1991:53). Individuals may be viewed negatively if they do not know the appropriate rule behaviours in another culture. It is expedient therefore to note that rules for social behaviour are more apparent in some cultures than in others (Infante, Rancer & Womack 2003: 317).

The violation of any cultural rule brings some form of sanction on the offender and the sanctions vary from a disapproving glance to the loss of life (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:58). When we communicate with people of other cultures our behavioural expectations may be violated with greater frequency. This situation is created because the people from the other culture probably learned different sets of rules in their cultures. The violation of expectations may result in negative reaction but may in turn actually cause people to scrutinise their own culture and gain insight into the rules within it.

Understanding the rules of another culture is determined by knowing the rule structure of your own culture and those of the other culture so that it becomes possible to predict, among other things, the likely sources of misunderstanding and conflict between the two cultures. That knowledge also exposes the likely difficulties in adjustment faced by a person of one culture moving to another culture (Noesjirwan 1978:314). The need to know how members of one culture communicate with strangers is paramount for anyone who moves from one culture to the other, and peaceful coexistence can only be enhanced by cultural awareness.

Cultural awareness can be acquired through competence in intercultural communication and the art of understanding how the host culture thinks and behaves. When this acquisition is realised, effective communication takes place (Starosta 2004:307).

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study of culture is to contribute towards an understanding of social action (Schneider 1976). The central problem in this study is therefore the communication behaviour of members of the Maasai and Akamba groups in Kenya. As discussed in the previous sections, social action (or behaviour) is governed by rules for interaction and the concomitant core cultural symbols, a notion that applies more specifically to communication within the family (Littlejohn 1970). Knowledge and understanding of the communication rules and symbols of these two groups can furthermore contribute towards an understanding of the intergroup communication behaviour between members of the group.

More specifically, this study represents an exploratory study seeking to investigate and compare the traditional rules of communication of the Maasai and the Akamba cultures at the family level so as to elicit core symbols associated with these rules. The problem of this study, therefore, is to identify and compare the core symbols that emanate from the traditional rules of communication that exist within the family structures of the Maasai and the Akamba.

1.5.1The sub-problems

The question that arises is how the traditional rules that govern family relationships compare between the Maasai and the Akamba and what the implications are for intracultural communication in the following relationships:

1. Between a husband and his wife or wives
2. Between a father and his son
3. Between a father and his daughter
4. Between a mother and her son
5. Between a mother and her daughter

6. Between siblings

Appended to these sub-problems is the question which core symbols can be derived from these rules.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A qualitative design was employed in this study. Berg (2001:2) proposes that qualitative research refers to the description of elements or phenomena; their meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors and symbols. This definition justifies the use of a qualitative approach since the study sought to identify and describe the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba within their family systems. Data was collected through focus group interviews. Eight focus groups, each comprising five people, were drawn from selected villages from both the Maasai and Akamba cultures. Participants for four focus groups were selected from the Kajiado district in Maasai land. There were two groups, each comprising five women and two other groups each comprising five men. Similarly, participants for four focus groups were contacted from the Machakos district in the land of the Akamba. Two groups comprised five men each and two comprised five women each.

Non-probability sampling was used because it is appropriate in qualitative designs. Neuman (2006:220) holds that qualitative researchers tend to use non-probability samples because they (the researchers) rarely determine the sample size in advance and they also have limited knowledge about the larger population from which the sample is drawn.

The data analysis was geared towards exploring the similarities and differences in the communication rules and their accompanying core symbols in the family systems of the two cultures under investigation. Specifically, the researcher's intention was focused on locating key phrases and statements that identified the communication rules and the core symbols. There was a need for the interpretation of the meanings of the phrases in order to reveal the essential recurring features of the phenomenon that was being studied (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:25), namely the core symbols.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

To facilitate understanding of the theoretical foundation of the study, the findings of the study and the interpretation of the findings, it was necessary to define the concepts of culture, intracultural communication and intercultural communication.

1.7.1Culture

Culture is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Bennett (1995:68) says culture is a complex term to define although it is universally recognised. The once renowned "father of anthropology" Tylor (1920) defines culture as a complex whole comprising knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. The complexity of culture is clear if one considers that it has given rise to at least 200 definitions (Kluckhohn & Kroeber 1963:3). For a more holistic view of culture, it is expedient to look at a few selected views.

Culture is the knowledge that people acquire and use to interpret and generate behaviour (Spradley & McCurdy 1975:2). The knowledge that is alluded to here is similar to what is encased in Tylor's (1920) definition of culture as a "complex whole". Culture is learned and is also a tool used by human beings for the acquisition of needs, one of which is the survival of society (Spradley & McCurdy 1975:6).

Culture is also a symbolic code in the sense that symbols in the cultural patterns are interpreted culturally. This interpretation of culture is viewed further as an integrated system of learned behaviour patterns, ideas and products characterising people in their social-historical and political context (Nida 1984:28). This definition is close to the view that reflects culture as an integrated system of socially transmitted behavioural patterns, including all learned, symbolic, patterned and shared behaviour (Kottak 1997:36).

Culture embraces linguistic, political, economic, social, psychological, national, religious and racial aspects, and thus represents what a group of people acquire in the course of generations through the strivings of the individual and the group. These acquisitions

include knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions (Samovar & Porter 1995:48).

Culture consists of the way mores and beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation (Ayisi 1988:4), and it is also a historically transmitted system of symbols, meanings and norms (Collier & Thomas 1988:102).

The notions of culture discussed so far reflect a recurrence of certain thematic views, namely that culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation, and that it is society's means of preservation and survival entailing the behavioural systems of a society. Certain reflections of culture have been enumerated by the authors who have been alluded to so far. These reflections are similar to those of Dodd (1998:37) who projects culture as a suitcase with numerous elements that individuals pick and apply as they interact in various situations. In the same vein, Mbennah (1999:24) sees culture as a patterned and shared way of life peculiar to a certain society. The patterns referred to are formed and developed within the social structure in that society. Within these patterns are systems of symbols whose meanings are transmitted internally.

Williams (1994) classifies culture into three perspectives, namely that of the ideal, the documentary and the social. The ideal perspective is a state of human perfection and universal values. These values are supposed to be a composition of the permanent references to the universal human condition. The documentary perspective is envisaged as that which reflects culture as intellectual and imaginative work, which entails human thought and recorded experience. Culture therefore equips its members with the know-how to communicate and interpret behaviour. This perspective also views culture as consisting of conceptual structures that create the central reality of a people such that any definition of culture that includes the intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards, meanings of symbols and behaviours, rules of language and shared organisation of ideas, falls into this category. The social perspective views culture as a particular way of life, which expresses values and meanings in institutions and ordinary behaviour.

Dodd (1998:37) identifies three layers of culture. The external layers consist of economic and work systems, kinships systems, health, politics, and religious and educational systems. The middle layer comprises roles and relationships, rituals, rules and recognition, food and dress, attitudes, space and time, change, ability, and the non-verbal aspects of living things. The innermost layer deals with identity, beliefs, values, world view and cultural history. Dodd (1998) argues that the above components are mutually interactive and function as a holistic set that defines a system.

Mbennah (1999:30) summarises culture as constituting three basic levels, namely the behavioural, the conceptual and the philosophical levels. The behavioural level entails social organisation, role distinctions, patterns of interactions, technology, dressing modes, as well as matters associated with sexual behaviour. These elements mirror overt behaviour. The second level is the conceptual level which encases general knowledge, accumulated information and experience of a people. It also includes specific values, legal systems and patterns of logic, self-concept and ethnic identity. It is at this level that cultures also evolve measures for the evaluation of vices and virtues, legal issues and aesthetics. The third level is the philosophical level which presents systems of values and beliefs; myths about man, nature, the universe and the supernatural; volitional commitments; language and meaning systems; notion of time; records of history; and the meaning of life.

It is expedient to note that all the deliberations about culture reflect a complex phenomenon culminating in the view that culture is the totality of the way of life of a society. However, that does not rule out the important perspective of cultural variability. It may erroneously be assumed that cultures are essentially the same. Although there are uniformities among cultures, there are large variations across cultural orientations (Mbennah 1999:129). The rules of communication, for example, in one culture may not be identical to those in another culture.

The analyses of Williams (1994), Dodd (1998) and Mbennah (1999) reflect particular similarities. They show that culture has far-reaching implications for communication,

both intracultural and intercultural. These implications are discussed in the following sections.

1.7.2 Intracultural communication

Intracultural communication is essentially how persons from within a cultural group interact with each other and how they attach meaning to the interaction in a way that makes them socially distinctive. A study of this kind of communication entails the examination of the extent to which members of the same cultural group define themselves in terms of their cultural background. A person's self-definition is a revelation of the type of messages used, the appropriateness of the messages in the culture, and whether the outcomes conform to or violate the expected standards of behaviour (Collier et al 1986:439).

In their comparison of the intracultural communication rules of Mexican-Americans, blacks and whites in the United States of America, Collier et al (1986) show how communication systems identify broad cultural similarities and differences bearing in mind that culture not only provides motivation for behaviour, but also delineates behaviour. Each culture therefore has its own rules for behaviour which are initially enforced at family level and extended to the rest of the society.

Another perspective of intracultural communication reflects the thought that apart from seeking to define themselves in terms of their cultural background, people also want to define themselves as members of their group and how they perceive intra-ethnic communication. Through this definition it is possible to identify the major patterns of thought of a cultural group (Hecht et al 1993:1).

It is further noted that intracultural communication in a dominant culture includes the concepts of hierarchy, power and dominance. In most societies, high status and attendant power are accorded to those who the society believes have special powers. These powers relate to wisdom or the possession of important, valued or vital societal resources. The combination of power, control and high status create the power elite. The power elite

comprise of those at the top of the social hierarchy who accrue and possess what the society considers valuable. The presence of the power elite is what designates an asymmetrical relationship among the members of the society. This kind of relationship is not only present in the society, but is also found at the family level (Folb 1985:121).

The concept of dominance consequently alludes to the power of those who dominate culture and who also influence what people believe and do in society. A situation like this means that the power elites influence rules of appropriate behaviour, thought, speech and action. The discussion of dominance is associated with the concept of non-dominance.

Groups of people who have not traditionally or historically had continued access to or influence upon the dominant cultures are considered non-dominant. The non-dominant people in a society also include those who in varying degrees and in various ways are regarded as people with no impact within their society and therefore go unperceived and unacknowledged. Sometimes they are assigned a low status and are viewed as stigmatised and different (Folb 1985:123).

Folb (1985) maintains that role prescriptions are linked to both matters of status and expectations and that the set of behaviour we ascribe to a given role is culture bound. Cultural prescription, therefore, keeps non-dominants in their place through a culture-bound collection of prejudices, stereotypes, values and beliefs to justify the world view of the people in that society.

Intracultural communication, as has been mentioned before, pertains to communication that takes place between people who belong to the same dominant culture but with slightly differing values (Samovar & Porter 1991:114; Sitaram & Cogdell 1976:28). Within the dominant culture there are subcultures, which are subgroups of people who hold a minimum number of values that differ from the mainstream, as well as from other subgroups. These differences do not add up to that which significantly deems them separate, but are diverse enough to set them apart from the culture at large (Folb 1985:119).

Subcultures are viewed as cultural symbol-based patterns and traditions associated with subgroups in the same society. They are variations in customarily learned patterns of behaviour practised by subgroups, acceptable or deviant, within the same culture (Kottak 1991:43). Although people in the same society may share the same cultural traditions or way of life, there may be others within that same society who reflect some variations. Although they may have shared learning experiences, they may also possess learning experiences that are not shared by the larger society.

A subculture is also viewed as a social community which exhibits characteristic patterns of behaviour sufficient to distinguish it from others within an embracing culture or society. Each subculture is a social entity that, although a part of the dominant main culture, is unique and provides its members with a set of experiences, backgrounds, social values and expectations that may not be found elsewhere in the dominant culture (Grunlan & Mayers 1979:42). It is evident therefore that the existence of subcultures within cultures creates a challenge in intracultural communication because of the diversities that have been cited.

1.7.3 Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication occurs whenever a message is communicated by a member of one culture to a member of another culture (Samovar & Porter 1988:31). It has, however, been observed that the growth of intercultural communication as a field of study has become increasingly important since people from one culture have experienced the persistent inability to understand and get along with people from other different cultures (Samovar et al 1981:4). When different cultures interact, there is believed to be some misunderstandings between the members which inhibit communication. Members of one culture may identify themselves as distinct from members of another culture in their cultural experiences. It is necessary to define cultural differences so that behaviour can be interpreted from cultural identities (Collier & Thomas 1988:100).

When members of different cultures communicate, complex effects take place. This situation is created because messages which are transported across cultural boundaries

are encoded in one context and decoded in another context. This interaction immensely increases the possibility of unexpected reactions and misunderstandings (Smith 1966:565). The uniqueness of intercultural communication as a study lies in its focus on the cultural factors that impede communication between persons or groups of differing cultures (Gudykunst 1983:46). When people live and work in cultures other than their own, they have to make adjustments for any adverse situations they might encounter (Brislin 1989a:441).

It is worth emphasising that when people communicate with other cultures with different communication rules, problems are bound to arise unless mutual understanding is created. Needless to say, the more people differ, the harder it is for them to operate in harmony. It is therefore important to learn from each other as part of multicultural collaboration and to learn to appreciate the unique but different cultures of others. Knowledge about the cultures of others will help in bridging cultural and communication barriers and developing skills in order to become a promoter of intercultural communication that transcends stereotypes (Hesselgrave 1991:146).

There are intercultural influences in the way people communicate, and in our consideration of cultural variance we should keep in mind the notion that many of our images of other cultures may not be accurate (Samovar et al 1981:24). Learning how people encode and decode messages is therefore the foremost problem in intercultural communication and this problem is sometimes influenced by gender roles in different cultures.

1.7.4 The role of gender in culture

All societies tend to categorise people by gender as well as by age. These criteria are also used for forming a variety of groups which fulfil certain purposes in the community (Howard 1989:178). Gender roles refer to the manifestation of attitudes and behaviour that are considered appropriate for either male or female members in a particular culture (Golombok & Fivush 1994:3).

People are often automatically divided into gender groups that serve certain purposes, for example, carrying out subsistence activities delegated to their sex. Within a single small-scale society, the various sex-based groups may vary in their cohesiveness depending on what the society depicts as values that contribute to cohesiveness. The variation of cohesiveness in the formation of sex-based groups could be ascribed to a range of contextual features which include kinship, residence and subsistence patterns. As circumstances change, it is possible that patterns of group formation may also change (Howard 1989:178).

Anthropologists note that in every culture there are socialisation practices that result in differences in typical patterns of male and female personalities. Cultures differ considerably in their conceptualisation of what is masculine and what is feminine. These conceptualisations are determined by culture rather than by any absolute dictates of biology. Each society has culturally patterned role expectations of males and females and these expectations are governed by rules (Crapo 1990:244). Role expectations of gender groups in particular cutures are therefore very important.

1.7. 5 Rules

Scholars in the area of communication have contended that rule as a concept has not had a definition with a definite consensus. This lack of a synchronised view of the concept has generated controversy among scholars. Despite there being no consensus, rules are however relied upon and are used in a wide range of fields. Some theorists have advanced their renditions of rules (Gottlieb 1968:11).

O'Brien (1978:53) for example, defines rules as a conglomeration of behaviours that have been agreed upon by a system and are deemed appropriate for an individual to use in specific situations for the smooth running of the system or the culture. Cronen et.al (1979:26) view rules as regularities in social action where people are aware of what they are expected to do and what they ought to do in order to regulate society.

Shimanoff (1980:41) defines rules as appropriate behaviors that delineates what must and must not be done and is therefore a reflection of the constraints on behaviour. She further talks about the prescriptive aspect of rules which indicate what behavior is obligated, preferred or prohibited in contexts of communication. The presupposition of human behaviour however dictates the notion that human beings have a choice in following prescriptions. Rules are therefore the society's prescription to its members to regulate appropriate behavior that keeps the society together.

1.7.6 Norms

Gudykunst and Kim (1992:57) refer to rules and norms interchangeably and believe that norms are rules of conduct. They define norms as cultural expectations which are actually blueprints of behaviour. The two authors define norms as socially shared guidelines for behaviour that are expected and accepted by the society which has delineated those norms. The violation of these behavioural rules or norms elicits some forms of sanction which differ according to various cultures.

Lustig and Koester (1999:83) also seem to refer to norms and rules interchangeably when they define norms as socially shared rules for behaviour which the society expects from its members. The norms include the expected communication behaviour and are part of the social routines that direct people's interactions when they engage in public and private functions. Norms also specify the acceptable means for the culture to achieve its goals and they consist of the prescriptions for acceptable behaviour (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:57). Norms therefore can be summarised as socially shared rules, guidelines or expectations that direct people's communication behaviour in achieving the goals of a culture.

1.7.7 Values

Values are conceptions of what is desirable in society. They guide social actors in evaluating people and events, and in explaining the events and the actions. They are also goals which act as guiding principles in life. Cultural values represent the explicitly or implicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right and desirable in a society. Cultural values like security, freedom and prosperity are the bases for the specific norms that inform people about what is appropriate in different situations (Schwartz 1994:25).

Discussing one of the dimensions of culture, long-term versus short-term orientation, De Mooij and Hofstede (2010) included perseverance, ordering relationship by status, thrift and having a sense of shame, as some of the values of that dimension. Values are the characteristics that the culture desires for the members of society and are regarded as explanations for the way in which people communicate (Lustig & Koester 1999:81).

Hall (2005:50) gives qualities like honesty, hard work, friendliness, ambition and equality as examples of values. Values are therefore resources for making sense in communication and for creating a community (Hall 2005:343).

This chapter entails a brief introduction of the cultures of the Akamba and the Maasai. A comparison of the intracultural communication rules of the two cultures is discussed, and the way that rules and communication are related is explained. The conepts of rules, norms, values and gender are also discussed.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The outline of the thesis is as follows:

Culture and communication as integral components of human existence and human societies are discussed in Chapter 2. The major dimensions of culture, the formation of language and communication and the formation of society can be subsumed under the concepts of communication and culture. Intracultural communication is discussed as it applies to family communication which entails the family system and the characteristics of the family in African cultures. The chapter further covers the characteristics of values and core symbols as they exist in African societies. There is also a discussion of rules prescriptions and norms and what constitutes communication competence. The perspective of competence is broken down into intracultural and intercultural

competence. The chapter culminates in the discussion of the approaches to the study of competence.

Chapter 3 is a review of the rules theory, which is a relatively new theory in the field of communication and is as yet not fully established as a basic communication theory. The chapter traces the development of the rules theory, starting with the definition of the concept of rules and leading up to other concepts like approaches to the rules theory; the functions and types of rules; research from a rules perspective; and the criticism of the rules theory. The notion of core symbols is closely related to rules and is discussed as a means of understanding cultural identity through identifying recurrent patterns of communicative behaviour which are governed by rules.

In Chapter 4 the existing literature on the cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba is summarised, focusing on the social organisation of the community life of the tribes. The chapter deals briefly with the histories of the two ethnic groups and goes on to summarise aspects of the family, the community, governance and economic structure, as well as the means of livelihood.

Chapter 5 outlines the research design that was followed in order to investigate the research problem. It discusses the qualitative approach, the population, the sample, and the ways in which data was collected and analysed.

Chapter 6 presents the data analysis process and the interpretation of the findings. These include the comparison of the data from the investigation of the Maasai and the Akamba. Similarities and differences in the rules of communication of the two cultures are discussed.

Chapter 7 entails a discussion and interpretation of the findings which are integrated with theoretical perspectives. The implications of the findings are identified and recommendations are made in view of these implications.

CHAPTER 2
SOCIETY, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an exposition of three concepts, namely, competence in culture, intracultural communication, and intercultural communication. These concepts were introduced in the previous chapter and the relationship between them is delineated in this chapter. The chapter also entails an exploration of how members of a society evolve rules of appropriate communication behaviour which are passed on from generation to generation to preserve the society. In the effort to perpetuate the learned attitudes and core symbols of culture, members of a society enforce social control through the rules of communication that they are supposed to adhere to. Since the family is regarded as the core of society, it is one of the channels through which social control is enforced, hence the discussion of family communication that is narrowed down to the concept of family in the African culture.

2.2 THE FORMATION OF SOCIETY

Maciver and Page (1962:8) observe that the concept of man as a social animal expresses man's absolute need of society. In every society there is the need for human beings to interact with one another and it is believed that the aspiration for this need leads to the formation of society. The formation of society then gives rise to learned patterns of behaviour and mechanisms for social control, the latter exemplified in the form of governmental systems. The society, for example, expects its members to pay taxes so that the economy can be sustained to enhance the society's survival. These mechanisms, also referred to as social rules, have to be communicated within the society as communication rules (Maquet 1971:14). Cultural identity is forged out of this build-up.

Hiebert (1976:32) states that when people live together in groups through structured relationships, they create and recreate social organisations. These organisations are perpetuated through learned patterns of thoughts, guides and controls of behaviour transmitted from generation to generation. This transmission is a self-perpetuating mechanism for maintaining society's identity over several generations. The same

transmission or communication helps society to defend itself from external dangers as well as internal forces of disintegration (Maquet 1971:14).

Dodd (1998:151) depicts society as a cluster of people who interact to make sense of their culture. They make sense by having a dynamic exchange of communication where there is interdependence and creativity between the members of the society. Each unit knows what the others are doing as a result of their frequent interaction. The frequent exchange of communication facilitates vital conduits of information (Hiebert 1976:159). People's activities are liberated and limited through social organisations which also establish standards for them to follow and maintain (Maciver & Page 1962:5). In other words, the communication rules that the society has agreed upon are the same vehicles that are used to limit or liberate the people's interaction. All societies consist of permanent groups of people with organised activities, and the totality of these activities assures the continuity of the group (Maquet 1971:14). It is therefore pertinent to say that human beings are dependent on society for nurture, comfort, protection, education, opportunity, equipment and all other definitive services (Grunlan & Mayers 1979:92). Both verbal and non-verbal communication indicate the factors that members of a society need to know based on past, present and future events and relationships (Maciver & Page 1962:5).

Whichever needs human beings depend on from the society can only be satisfied through communication, and this necessitates evaluating the roles of language and communication (Samovar et al 1981:11).

2.3 THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION IN SOCIETY

Culture and communication as components of human existence are the wheels that keep a society or social organisation in motion. Culture is the totality of a person’s way of life, summarised according to their world views, values and norms and it also depicts how a society's members will interact or communicate. Culture and communication have a reflexive relationship because each influences the other in the sense that communication is a component of culture, and culture is perpetuated through communication; the one is ineffective without the other (Hall 2005:56).

Hall (2005:56) continues to say that although cultures have discernible patterns of life, they allow for dynamic and situational (contextual) adjustments based on communication. For example, one does not dress in beachwear for an interview; neither does one use profanity in a church service. The adoption of guidelines for clothing and speech in these examples arises out of the fact that one's culture teaches one which behaviour is contextually inappropriate. The notions of clothing and speech are further embedded in the fact that culture is a set of rules that have been established for the purpose of conducting social interaction or communication among people of a certain society (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel 2006:14). These rules determine what the society deems acceptable communicative behaviour. Culture is therefore a code that people in a society learn and share, and the acts of learning and sharing can also be acquired through communication (Smith 1996:1). It has to be asserted again that culture and communication are learned, and that the culture of a society is passed on from generation to generation through communication.

The act of transmitting behaviour from one generation to the other is an act of communication, and the major tool that is used is language. Language, which is also an expression of culture, is a major means of communication among human beings, and language skills are learned within the context of one's society (Grunlan & Mayers 1979:96).

Culture affects how language is used to portray a picture of the world in which people live (Wahlstrom 1992:101). Consequently, changes in a culture will ultimately mean changes in its language. Changes in language could also occur as a result of encountering a different culture. It is indisputable to say that the way people communicate in one society is different from the way people communicate in another society. The way people communicate is the way they live and since culture is a persons way of life, it can be assumed that the way people communicate is a reflection of their culture.

Samovar and Porter (1991:56) posit the notion that one cannot study culture without studying how its components are communicated from generation to generation. Communication is the interaction of participants within a culture. It is the glue that keeps

society together since it is the tool that is used for the transmission of cultural ways. This tool is an indispensable means of perpetuating the survival of the society (De Fleur 1970:76).

Communication is fundamental to human beings; it is the core of human interaction and society cannot survive without it. As was mentioned earlier, society controls human behaviour, and the latter on the other hand is expressed through communication. It is therefore expedient to say again that no society can survive without communication (Hesselgrave 1991:27).

In order to develop the social nature that distinguishes one culture from another, members of a culture have to repetitively engage in acts of communication with each other (De Fleur 1970:76). Society provides the network of communication in which people make contact with each other, just as it also expresses a sense of community and belonging. The role of communication therefore becomes apparent in light of the fact that communication enables people to establish commonness with others through sharing information and ideas (De Vito 1976:11). The concept of sharing information and ideas is therefore an extension of the idea that man is dependent on society for the content of his thoughts, dreams and aspirations. Man cannot express his nature of creating and re-creating an organisation or society unless it is done through communication. Man also cannot carry out organised activities without language systems and other important tools of communication (De Fleur 1970:76).

Human beings need to interact with one another and the satisfaction of this need comes through the act of communication, a notion that highlights the role of communication in society (Samovar et al 1981:11).

The link between communication and society is underscored by the fact that society would not be able to continue unless its members interacted with each other. Every culture therefore creates a communication system to propel maximum exchange of information and ideas (Grunlan & Mayers 1979:84). In the communication ecosystem, culture plays a major role by providing the overall environment in which communication thrives (Wahlstrom 1992:101). It would be expedient to suggest, therefore, that

communicators work within the structures provided by culture in society (Wahlstrom 1992:105). A conclusion drawn from Hall (1959:69) and Smith (1966:1) is that culture is communication and communication is culture: the two are inseparable.

In this study, the term society is used interchangeably with the term community. Within the community there are (social) structures that have been put in place to enable the community to function. The structures include the hierarchical relationships among the members, for example, the elders in a community are part of the governing structure.

2.4 DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

In the discussion of the role of culture and communication in society, it is expedient to consider the major dimensions of culture as they were originally distinguished by Hall (1966) and Hofstede (2005). These dimensions entail high versus low context; individualism versus collectivism; masculinity versus femininity; power distance; uncertainty avoidance and long- versus short-term orientation. Each of these dimensions is discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 High versus low context

Hall (1966:163) and Hofstede (2010) analyse the relationship between communication and culture and organise cultures by the amount of communication implied by the context of the communication. For example, if specific words are spoken in the kitchen or the classroom, the question arises whether those same words will bear the same meaning in the two contexts. The concept of context refers to the environment in which the process of communication takes place and, according to Hall, cultures differ as to whether they are high or low context.

In high-context cultures, messages are encoded in a physical context or in a culturally prescribed catalogue of rules where the meaning is implied by the physical setting, and is presumed to be part of the individual's internalised values, beliefs and norms (Hall 1966:163). Very little is provided in the coded or transmitted part of the message because, for example, in a long-term relationship between two people, the people are often able to interpret even the slightest gesture or the briefest comment. Much more is taken for granted because of the assumption of the shared context. In high-context

cultures therefore, people in communication do not have to say or write much in order to be understood. This situation arises because the level of shared meaning is high since the people involved in the communication act and shares a common physical environment. Hall describes Japanese, African American, Mexican and Latino cultures as high-context cultures. In these cultures, since meaning is internalised, there is more emphasis on non-verbal codes. Hall describes these messages as almost programmed because the interpretations of the messages are not left to chance since the people are aware that in the context of the situation, the communicative behaviour will have a specific message.

According to Hall (1966), the German, Swedish, European American and English cultures are low-context cultures. In low-context cultures, the information is vested in the explicit content of the message and so the information needs to be explicitly and verbally transmitted. People look for the meaning of other people's behaviour in messages which are explicitly coded. Information is given in details which are expressed specifically and precisely. Low-context cultures are therefore informal and communication is direct (Infante et al 2003:318). The meaning is not determined by the context since the message is encoded in the explicit code or verbal message (Jandt 2007:61).

In comparison, high-context cultures tend to be reserved in reactions whereas low-context cultures frequently react in explicitly and readily observable ways. This difference is drawn from the fact that in high-context cultures, communication is supposed to promote harmony among the interactants. The dignity and social esteem of others are very important and must be protected (Lustig & Koester 1999). The comparison of the high-context and low-context cultures is what elicits the conclusion that rules for social behaviour are more apparent in some cultures than in others. As is relayed in the next section, high-context cultures tend to be collectivist whereas low-context cultures tend to be individualist.

2.4.2 Collectivism versus individualism

Collectivism versus individualism can be defined as people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty versus people looking after themselves and their immediate family only (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010).

Collectivistic cultures are high-context communication cultures where there is an indirect style of communication (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010). In collectivist societies, the interests of the group are more important than the interests of the individual, hence the power of the group has prevalence over that of the individual. Individualist societies, on the other hand, are those in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group (Hofstede 2005:74; Jandt 2007:171).

In most collectivist societies, the family in which a child grows up comprises parents and a number of other people living closely together, including other children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and possibly servants. People in such a family set-up distinguish themselves as the "we" group or the in-group. The in-group is the major source of one's identity and secure protection, and one owes lifelong loyalty to this group. Children in such a group learn to take their bearings from others when it comes to opinions. Since opinions are determined by the group, personal opinions are not encouraged. For every opinion that is sought, some family conference is necessary before a consensus is arrived at. Since loyalty is essential, resources are shared and a popular example is that of soliciting money to sponsor a member of the family or the society to study abroad. Obligations to the family are not only financial but also ritual, such that family celebrations are deemed very crucial (Hofstede 2005:87).

The concept of "face" in the expressions "saving face" or "losing face" was bred in the collectivist family. When the individual fails to meet essential requirements placed upon him by virtue of his or her familial or social position, he or she loses face (Hofstede 2005:89).

In collectivist cultures, the maintenance of harmony with one's social environment is of paramount importance, and this extends beyond the family. It is, for example, considered rude to confront another person directly, and therefore the word "no" is rarely used. Alternatively, the word "yes" is not necessarily an approval, but a way of maintaining the line of communication (Hofstede 2005:89).

In individualist societies, on the other hand, children are born into families that consist of two parents and possibly other children. In this nuclear family, individuals are expected

to distinguish themselves as "I", which they regard as their personal identity. In such societies, children are educated to stand on their own. By doing so the children are also expected to reduce their relationships with their parents in the process of growing up and sometimes even break off relationships with their parents altogether (Hofstede 2005:75). This practice reflects the fact that family ties are not as binding as they are in the collectivist society. Whereas confrontation is an anathema in the collectivist society, speaking one's mind is a virtue in individualist cultures. In individualist cultures, telling the truth about the way one feels is regarded as a characteristic of a sincere and honest heart. A clash of opinions is looked at as a healthy way of reaching a higher truth, yet the same clash is avoided in collectivist cultures as has been explained. The characteristic of dignity in collectivist cultures translates into self-respect in individualist cultures. Whereas dignity is defined from the group's point of view, self-respect is defined from the individual's point of view. Collectivists change themselves to fit the environment whereas individualists focus on changing the environment to fit them. Canadian, American and Western European cultures tend to be individualist whereas Asian, Latin American and African nations tend to be collectivist (Hall 2010).

2.4.3 Masculinity versus femininity

Masculinity versus femininity is defined as the situation where the dominant values in a masculine society are success and achievement whereas in the feminine society the dominant values are caring for others and quality of life (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010). Role differentiation is an important aspect of this dimension.

In every human society men and women are essentially regarded as biologically distinct and therefore their roles in biological procreation are also regarded as distinct and not interchangeable. A certain kind of behaviour is recognised as more suitable for males or more suitable for females, keeping in mind that gender roles vary from culture to culture. Cultures that strive for maximal distinction between what men and women are supposed to do, are labelled as masculine. A society is called masculine when gender roles are clearly distinct. In this kind of society, men are supposed to be assertive, tough, competitive and focused on material success. Women, on the other hand, are supposed to

be tender, modest and concerned with the quality of life reflected in taking care of the home (Hofstede 2005:120).

Cultures that permit the overlapping of social roles for the sexes are labelled as feminine. Both men and women are supposed to be tender, modest and concerned with the quality of life. They are also supposed to show concern for the weak and for interpersonal relationships (Hofstede 2005:120; Jandt 2007:171).

Of the five dimensions of national culture, masculinity-femininity has been the most controversial. This situation arises because national cultures differ greatly on the value issues related to this dimension. Masculinity and femininity can be identified in occupations in the sense that some occupations are mostly filled by men whereas others are mostly filled by women. However, research indicates that men in feminine occupations hold more feminine values than women in masculine occupations. It is notable that in male-dominated societies, women want male dominance and are comfortable with it (Hofstede 2005:127).

As was noted earlier, the family is the place most people receive their first socialisation regarding the roles of men and women. Gender roles in the family strongly affect the values about the appropriate behaviour for girls and boys as they anticipate becoming members of their communities.

2.4.4 Power distance

The dimension of power distance is defined as, the extent to which members of a society who regard themselves as less powerful accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Everyone has his or her rightful place in a social hierarchy in a large power distance culture. One’s social status must therefore be clear so that the others can show proper respect (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010).

The existence of different social classes in society depicts the presence of inequality. Classes differ in their access to the advantages in society. The other dimension across which cultures vary is power distance, which is the way cultures deal with instances of inequality. It is also the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally and the extent to which inequality is endorsed by both followers and leaders (Hofstede 2005:51).

In cultures where power distance is high, children are expected to be obedient towards their parents and other people in authority, unlike in those cultures where children are treated more or less like equals. Respect for parents and elders is regarded as a basic virtue. The parent-child power distance in the family is extended to the power distance between teachers and students in schools. In the workplace it exists between superiors and subordinates, and in the state between authority and the citizen (Hofstede 2005:58).

Power distance also depicts the extent to which power, prestige and wealth are distributed. In cultures with high power distance, power and influence are concentrated in the hands of a few people rather than throughout the population. In countries where this practice is prevalent, the relationships tend to be authoritarian and people may communicate in a way that limits interaction and reinforces the difference between the people (Jandt 2007:172).

2.4.5 Uncertainty avoidance

This dimension delineates the extent to which people in a culture feel threatened by uncertain, ambiguous or unknown situations and consequently they try to avoid these situations. In cultures where uncertainty avoidance is prevalent, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010).

Uncertainty avoidance is the measure of tolerance that the society exercises towards unstructured situations which are novel, surprising, unknown and different from what is regarded as usual. It is also the way the society programmes its members to be comfortable or uncomfortable about ambiguous situations. This feeling manifests in nervous stress or anxiety and evokes a need for predictability and for written and

unwritten rules to guide people. People therefore develop ways of alleviating anxiety through the maintenance of strict codes of behaviour reflected in laws and rules, safety and security measures and a belief in absolute truths (Hofstede 2005:165; Jandt 2007:174).

The domains of technology, law and religion encase the ways in which different cultures cope with the feelings of uncertainty. Technology helps in avoiding uncertainties caused by nature, for example, the building of dams to forestall the consequences of flooding or drought. Laws and rules are measures of preventing uncertainties due to the unpredictability of the behaviour of members of society when they inevitably interact with each other. Religion is a way of relating to supernatural forces that are assumed to control the future of man. Religion helps people to accept the uncertainties that they cannot defend themselves against. One example is the fact that some religions deal with the uncertainty about what happens after a person dies by offering the ultimate certainty of a life after death (Hofstede 2005:165).

Notions of uncertainty and ways of coping with them are culturally oriented and are transferred through the basic societal institutions like the family, the school and the state. Collective patterns of behaviour in the society stem from these notions and so may be aberrant to members of another society. People in high uncertainty avoidance societies tend to be emotionally motivated by inner nervous energy whereas uncertainty accepting societies tend to be more tolerant with opinions which differ from what they are used to. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance have more precise laws than countries which have low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 2005:166).

2.4.6 Long- versus short-term orientation

Long- versus short-term orientation is the extent to which a society acts upon a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a short term or a conventional point of view. The values that constitute long-term orientation are perseverance, ordering relationships by status, thrift, and having a sense of shame. The opposite is short-term orientation which constitutes personal steadiness and stability, and respect for tradition. There is therefore great emphasis on the pursuit of happiness rather than on the pursuit of peace of mind.

Those who embrace long-term orientation believe in investing in the future (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010).

The discussion of the six cultural dimensions enables one to appreciate the importance of knowing them in a bid to understand different cultures. The understanding of family communication also enhances the understanding of society.

2.5 FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Samovar et al (1981:100) contend that in a bid to compare cultures, the family would be the most appropriate starting point because the family unit still remains the organisation in which the majority of people continue to exist (Jandt 2007:253). Communication scholars also suggest that family communication shapes the way we communicate in many other contexts and also influences the way we communicate with other people in the social strata (Infante et al 2003:296). The family is one of the most fundamental units of human interaction (Vangelisti 1993:42). It is in the family context that most human beings learn how to think about communication, especially intracultural communication, which is the focus of this study. To a large extent we are socialised within the framework of the family, which underscores the contention that the core of any culture is its family structure (Samovar et al 1981:100). The family gives a person status, plugging him into the social network to prepare him for his social roles (Grunlan & Mayers 1979:153).

2.5.1 The characteristics of the family

Considering the role of communication as discussed so far, it is expedient to take into account six characteristics of the family communication context proposed by Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Bochner (1990). The characteristics referred to are non-volition, commitment and intimacy, development of self-concept, longevity of influence, dialectical tensions and interaction complexity. These are discussed in the section that follows.

Non-volition refers to the fact that whereas one can choose one's friends, one has no choice of the specific family one is born into. Furthermore, one has no choice of one's history, sets of relationships and the existing network of relatives within the family.

Commitment and intimacy occur more in higher relationship levels, namely among family members, than in any other relationship levels by virtue of the circumstances that knit the members together. Active participation and commitment are therefore necessary for a family to stay intact.

The development of self-concept grows out of the active participation or interaction with family members. An individual develops his or her self-concept as a result of family values mirrored by the rest of the family members.

Longevity of influence means that whatever a person learns from the family is embedded in the individual as an influence that endures for a lifetime. This knowledge lasts for a lifetime because traditions are passed on from generation to generation through the family which is the basic transmitter of culture.

Dialectical tensions are bound to occur when members interact in a family set-up and encounter frictions. Although people belong to a family, they remain distinct individuals with various idiosyncrasies. This truth makes dialectical tensions unavoidable realities in the family.

Interaction complexity is a conglomeration of the unique characteristics that have so far been discussed. This complexity is created by the notion that each family has a set of complex rules by which to operate. These rules, especially communication rules, are often understood only by members of the family, and on an ethnic level by family members of a particular ethnic group.

The six characteristics of the family that have been proposed by Yerby et al (1990) make family communication especially well suited for analysis from a systems perspective. The systems approach to family communication allows the investigation of family members' reactions to each other's communication and the way they coordinate their communication during decision-making. The systems approach helps to expose the interrelationships among the members of the family, like status, power or dependency (Infante et al 2003:299). The exposure of the interrelationships in the family is one of the sources of information in support of intracultural communication.

2.5.2 The family as a system

The Bowen family systems theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the interactions in the unit. It further suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but should be understood as part of the family which is an emotional unit (The family systems theory 2009).

Bowen's theory is corroborated by Bochner (1976:382) who describes the family as an organised relational interaction system with a confluence of interpersonal images that evolve over time. Littlejohn (1983:30) argues that the family is a system of interacting individuals who are constrained by the actions of other members in the system. These members are expected to respond to each other in a certain way according to their roles which are determined by relationship agreements. In a unit which has rules and where every member plays a critical role in the system, it is not possible that one member can change without causing a ripple effect or reverberations within the family system. These notions of the family reflect a system of interdependent and interrelated individuals who have a common bond.

Galvin and Brommel (2003:3) substantiate the idea of a common bond between family members by saying that the family is composed of people who are bound by ties of marriage, blood and commitment (legal or otherwise) and who share connected relationships. Just as every person is born into a type of family, every person is born into a culture (Hesselgrave 1991:102). The composition of family communication therefore consists of behaviour, rituals and events that express unity, value and the identity of the family group, which is a constituent of culture.

The idea of the family as a system is supported by Sieburg (1985:140]) who identifies certain levels in the system. Each member is viewed as a smaller system that exists within a greater system which can be identified as the nuclear family. The latter exists within still greater systems of the extended family, the tribe or the community. The community therefore reproduces itself through the communicative activities of its family members (Burleson, Delia & Applegate 1995:69). In essence, the community is a conglomeration of several families who agree to live together by maintaining a culture, that is, a way of

life that is evolved and agreed upon by the members. A culture thus evolved forges a group of people who identify with each other through a common heritage. This description of culture is similar to that of ethnicity which purports that an ethnic group is a group of people who share a common heritage based on culture, ancestry and history or even shared territory (An ethnic group is a group of people … 2010). By virtue of the connection that has been identified concerning family, culture and ethnicity, it can be concluded that the family is the transmitter of culture and the genesis of ethnicity. Ethnicity is a fundamental factor in human life and is a phenomenon that is inherent in human experience that applies to all cultures.

2.5.3 The family and ethnicity

Socha (2001:5) establishes a link between family communication, society and ethnicity by suggesting that family communication is the locus of construction for the ethnic identity of an individual and that communication, especially intracultural communication, educates the members of the society regarding communication with other ethnic groups. Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka (2004), however, note that African ethnic groups are not univocal, and boundaries of the different communities and the content of culture continue to be matters of conflict and negotiation.

Berman et al (2004:3) propose that the inevitable advance of modernity has not done away with ethnic communities and identities in Africa or the rest of the world. This situation is based on the fact that these ethnicities have been constructed from diverse indigenous ways of life which continue to be adhered to in the contemporary world. The strength of this statement engenders the view that any approach to development in Africa that does not recognise the diversity and dynamism of ethnic communities cannot succeed.

The role of the family in the ethnic group is reflected in Mbiti's (1969:106) notion of African traditional life. Mbiti holds that the individual does not exist without the community. Being part of the whole, the individual owes his very existence to the entire group, and whatever happens to the group happens to the individual and vice versa. The

family therefore forms the *raison d'être* of all social co-operation and responsibility and acts as social security for members of the group (Ayisi 1988:16).

In African societies the family is the basic unit of every social group, localised and bound together by biological and social ties (Ayisi 1988:15). The importance of the family group is underscored by the example of the Kikuyu ethnic group of Kenya who regards the tribe as the extension of the family by a natural process of growth and division (Kenyatta 1938:310). The corresponding view is that a person participates in societal affairs through belonging to his family and his ethnic group.

In the ethnic group the family constitutes the most basic and functional unit which allows for mutual dependability and symbiosis (Ndeti 1972:68). Each member is supposed to contribute to the welfare of the family which then has a stabilising effect on the individual. The family is the social unit which is the most important instrument of transmitting culture. The heritage, religion and ethical teachings, including all ideas of good human development, are carried out in the family (Ndeti 1972:97). Ndeti reiterates the importance of the family by saying that among the Kalenjin of Kenya, for example, a person who does not establish a family is seen as selfish and antisocial, without roots, stability and responsibility.

2.5.4 The family in African cultures

One of the most treasured values of the African people is the family. A man or woman is defined in terms of the group to which he or she belongs. A person acquires a sense of community through the family, the lineage, the clan and the tribe. The concept of family does not only consist of father, mother and children, but encompasses the extended family of the husband and the wife and their relatives. The family is the tool that keeps people together and in which every person has a place (Isizoh [sa]:1).

The spirit of oneness of the family is cultivated in the individual so that he or she does not feel alone in the world. A person is supposed to be surrounded by members of the family and is only complete to the extent that he or she is part of his or her family. This type of relationship creates a sense of community consciousness which is supposed to make one realise the necessity of contributing to the welfare of the group. This

consciousness is also supposed to engender concern for the weak members which include the sick, the old and children (Isizoh [sa]:1).

Another dimension of the traditional African family is that it is the vertical power structure through which the society is introduced and sustained as predominant over the freedom of the individual. This view is exemplified by an African child who is muzzled from the outset and drilled into submitting to authority by those who are above him or her. In the African context, one should submit to family and community authority and immerse oneself in and partake of all group values and norms (Nyasani 1997:129).

It has been established that the family is the focal unit of society and is ideally the context in which most people learn to communicate effectively. The society prescribes rules and norms which are upheld in the core symbols which have to be understood for effective communication to take place. For the latter to take place it is necessary to acquire communication competence in the family before acquiring it intraculturally in the society.

2.6 COMPETENCE

Competence is a salient and topical issue due to the breakdown of communication systems caused by an increase in intercultural encounters worldwide (Hecht et al 1993:114). People of the 21st century no longer have a choice with regard to interacting with people of other cultures as the population of most local spaces and countries have become multicultural due to the force of globalisation.

Most literature on intercultural communication postulates that effective intercultural communication depends on the attempt members of the different cultures make to understand one another's communication rules. At this juncture, the focus is on competence as a construct which applies to both intercultural and intracultural contexts (Collier 1988:122).

According to Infante et al (2003:90) the concept of communication competence has received increasing attention by communication researchers like Rubin (1982), Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) and Wiemann (1977). Martin (1994) further submits that substantial

progress has been made in conceptualising and measuring competent communication behaviour (Bostrom 1984; Spitzberg & Cupach 1984).

From a linguistic theoretical perspective, "competence generally refers to the individual's knowledge of the underlying structure of the language" (Chua 2004:33). Communication scholars, on the other hand, contend that competence is regarded as an individual's ability, skills and knowledge related to social and communicative rules, and the means to behave and communicate in an appropriate manner (Wiemann & Backlund 1980). Apart from appropriateness, Hecht et al (2003) add other variables of competence, namely, motivation, knowledge, skills and effectiveness. They explain motivation as a desire to communicate appropriately and effectively. Knowledge is the awareness or understanding of what needs to be done in order to communicate appropriately and effectively. Skills are the abilities to engage in behaviour that is necessary to communicate appropriately and effectively.

Gudykunst and Kim (1992) imply that competence is the synchcronisation of variables which describe the degree to which interactants attach similar meanings to messages to minimise misunderstandings. The three variables of motivation, knowledge and skills are reflected as components of effectiveness and appropriateness and can be applied to both the intercultural and intracultural contexts, as will be discussed later.

2.6.1 Communication competence

There is no single answer to the question of what intercultural competence is because it is a complex, situationally negotiated kind of judgement of behaviour. The term is applied by many people who attach different meanings to it. Consequently, one can expect the definitions to change depending on the angle from which people look at it (There is no one … 2009).

Although different scholars have proposed research approaches to the study of communication competence, the process by which it is learned is not well defined (Lustig & Koester 1999), and most existing models have been fairly fragmented (Spitzberg 1991). In fact, the literature indicates that there is yet no precise definition of competence that can be recognised, identified and measured (Chua 2004).

Generalising scholars' works, however, is limited because they focus on white Americans of European descent. Moreover, Hammer, Nishida and Wiseman (1996:267) maintain that intercultural communication competence has been investigated by scholars who have focused on individual communicators who interacted cross-culturally (Abe & Wiseman 1983; Gudykunst & Hammer 1984; Hammer 1989; Martin & Hammer 1989; Nishida 1985; Rubin 1983). Some of these writers have argued that variation in human behaviour can be accounted for most powerfully by examining the juxtaposition of individual level variables and situational factors.

When people with different identities interact, each of them is enacting the identity of his or her background or traditional culture (Hecht et al 1993:317). To create rapport there needs to be a point of compromise where each seeks to attain communication competence in the other culture. This need is based on the influence of the communicative acts that an individual might implement and these acts are determined by the communication rules of the individual's culture (Chua 2004).

As has been cited above, the interaction of people from different identities brings to the fore the identities related to their backgrounds and their traditional culture, their gender, their age group or any other relevant social category. To stop at the discussion of the interaction of people from different identities only, ignores multivocality within each cultural group. In her study of the enactment of communal identities in talk, Witteborn (2004:85) says that in identity as a relationship, people define themselves in their social relationship to others. People define themselves in multiple identities at personal, relational and communal levels and not just in terms of the primary ethnic cultural group, bit also in terms of gender and other social roles. In the current study for example, a female defines herself as a mother, a daughter or a sister. A male on the other hand can define himself as a son, a father or a brother. From the findings what was deemed appropriate and effective for each ethnic group was based not only on rules and outcomes, but also for the positions of males and females who belong to families where there are multiple wives. Birth orders and especially of particular ages were considered too. The relational identity that is created between the people is characterised by core symbols for example of respect, responsiveness, submission and authority. The

understanding of core symbols at the relevant levels contributes to communication competence.

Quoting the communication theory of identity, Witteborn (2004) goes on to say that core symbols are expressions of identity which have semantic properties and are therefore a communicative devise that expresses communal identity. From her study of the Arab women she concludes that being able to express oneself in the indigenous language which represents a form of identity, is a show of competence. She concurs with Hecht etal al (2003) and Schneider (1976) to propose that core symbols are particular words and phrases whose meanings reveal sets of norms, values, premises and beliefs about the world. This definition poses a semantic problem in the sense that whereas norms, values, and beliefs seem to be different entities, in the very next sentence the scholar says that values are beliefs about how the world should be and that norms are the manifestations of values in the form of social rules. The use of these terms interchangeably by different scholars makes it difficult to come up with conclusive definitions about these terms. One common factor is that they all refer to aspects of acceptable behaviour in a society that hence serves as a measure of competence.

Lindsley (1999:26), in her study "The Mexican Way" discovered that for the Mexicans in the Maquiladoras, the two most pervasive core symbols were stability and trust which influence interactive co-construction of identity and communication competency. These core symbols which are co-created through interactive behaviour are so important that they connect individuals, families, organisations and communities. The knowledge and analysis of core symbols which the scholar also refers to as core cultural symbols can be used as a means of solving problems in communication or cultural identity. Core symbols illuminate beliefs and also embody normative force which is a guide to behaviour among members of a society. Lindsley (1999:14) also refers to stability and trust as core symbols in one instance and as core cultural values in another instance. She says that the interrelated behaviours in core symbols can best be understood through an interpretation of the semantic dimensions of meaning in a society.

Communication competence can therefore be regarded as the ability to cope well across different cultures. It is an individual's capability to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication, that is, cultural differences and unfamiliarity, and accompanying tensions and conflicts in a different culture (There is no one … 2009).

Communication competence also entails the understanding of a variety of significant cultural experiences and achievements of individuals of different cultural orientations. It is the fundamental acceptance of people outside one's own culture and the ability to interact with them in a genuine manner, free of negative attitudes like apathy, aggression, defensiveness and prejudice. The core of intercultural communication competence therefore is a communicator's ability to encode and decode meanings that tally with the meanings of another communicator, resulting in the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another culture (Beamer 1992:285).

2.6.2 Appropriateness and effectiveness in intercultural/intracultural competence

It is commonly agreed that members of a community are said to act competently if they behave in an appropriate and effective fashion according to the communication rules of the culture (Hecht et al 1993:115). Communication competence basically hinges on appropriateness and effectiveness, two characteristics that are defined differently by different relevant scholars. It is evident that although definitions vary, most scholars agree that competent intercultural communication is rooted in the concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness.

Appropriateness reflects the knowledge of rules that pertain to proper and suitable behaviour (Lustig & Koester 1999:67) and means that the competent communicator can adjust to another cultural environment, having acquired the knowledge of what is going on and how to deal with it (Hecht et al 1993:115). The concept of adjustment alludes to a range of behaviours which includes that which is relevant to a change of environment. Adjustment also applies to appropriating communicative strategies to deal with problematic issues. In this sense the communicator is able to fulfil other people's expectations about what is suitable communication behaviour for the particular situation (Hullman 2004). Appropriate communication furthermore ensures that valued rules,

norms and expectations of the communication relationship are not overlooked (Spitzberg 1991) and that the parties involved do not lose face (Infante et al 2003). Appropriateness therefore alludes to behaviour that is acceptable within the particular cultural context.

A point of consensus among the scholars regarding the notion of effectiveness is that it refers to the extent to which communication accomplishes its goals, objectives and desired outcomes (Hecht 1978; Infante et al 2003; Lustig & Koester 1999; Spitzberg & Cupach 1984; Spitzberg & Hecht 1984).

An important underlying truth that should be taken into account is that effectiveness can only be culturally defined. This means that effective communication can only take place when one knows the communication rules of an ethnic culture that relate to the environment, standards and norms, and guiding evaluations and interpretations of rules of behaviour (Hecht et al 1993:115).

Appropriateness and effectiveness can be narrowed down from the discussion of competence at intercultural level (across cultures) to competence at intracutural level (within the culture). The principles that guide intercultural communication can be applied to intracultural communication (Gudykunst & Kim 1992).

Intracultural communication is a phenomenon that operates within any given cultural context, and that is why Sitaram and Cogdell (1976:28) define intracultural communication as the type of communication that takes place between members of the same dominant culture, but who have slightly different values. These different values are apparent in the non-dominant groups but the difference is not sufficient to declare them separate cultures.

The hierarchy of power dichotomises society into dominant and non-dominant groups. The mainstream culture represents the dominant group and the subcultures or subgroups found within that culture represent the non-dominant groups.

Non-dominant groups are categories of people who, traditionally and historically, have not accessed power to influence the dominant culture's social, legal, political, religious and economic structures (Folb 1985:125). Subcultures are regarded as part of non-

dominant groups and they are determined culturally. In the United States of America the minorities form the non-dominant groups and they include women, gays, non-white Americans and the physically challenged, to mention a few (Folb 1985:125). Different cultures have their different ways of determining who belongs to the non-dominant group. It should be noted however that the minority is not determined by numbers but by being regarded as having a lower status than the dominant group.

Gudykunst and Kim (1992:14) describe a subculture as "a subset of a culture having different values, norms and symbols that are not shared by members of the larger culture". Communication within the culture therefore might ignite stereotyping, which is the labelling of people before one gets to know them, hence the need for intracultural competence.

Hecht et al (2003) identify three primary categories of norms for the improvement of intracultural communication competence. They say that to achieve intracultural communication competence, one should follow the role prescriptions of one's cultural group, be polite and be able to express oneself clearly when interacting. Collier (1988:122) also supports the importance of knowing the content of the conversation and its expressiveness. It is also important to encode a message in a way that it can be understood, taking note of grammar and pronunciation. Additionally, one should be familiar with the topic being discussed and with the other person's language (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:230).

Gudykunst and Kim (1992) maintain that the process of intercultural communication is essentially the same as that of intracultural communication because the problems are similar in many ways. Collier (1988:122) also admits that limited research has been carried out in the area of intracultural competence hence the problem-solving principles used are similar to those used for intercultural communication. It can be concluded that the principles that guide intercultural communication can be applied to intracultural communication.

2.7 ACHIEVING INTERCULTURAL/INTRACULTURAL COMPETENCE

Members of one culture cannot communicate effectively with members of another culture unless they first attain competence in their own culture where people interact with each other competently. It is only after mastering communication competence in their own culture that people can appreciate the importance of communication competence and also acquire it. Communication competence therefore involves a social perception that is specific to the interpersonal relationships within which it occurs. Consequently, one of the ways of achieving competence is fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs (Spitzberg 1988:67).

Competence in interpersonal communication within a culture, which is the same as intracultural communication, results in behaviour that is regarded as appropriate. This means that the actions of the communicators fit the expectations and demands of the situation within the particular culture. It also means that people use the symbols that they are expected to use competently in a given context in the culture (Lustig & Koester 1999:64).

Competent interpersonal communication is also reflected in behaviour that is effective in achieving the desired goals of the culture. Intracultural communication competence, which is a result of effective interpersonal communication, is therefore a springboard to achieve intercultural competence.

Another way of achieving intercultural competence is to acquire considerable knowledge, suitable motivations and skilled actions (Lustig & Koester 1999:69). This can also be achieved through acquaintance with specific situations entailing rules and norms of behaviour in another culture (Chua 2004:133). Since competence is generally recognised as an indication of the quality of communication behaviour, it is judged upon subjective evaluations of what is deemed competent behaviour in a given context (Chua 2004:134).

2.8 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF COMPETENCE

This section discusses the approaches to the study of competence as it is viewed by various proponents of communication competence.

2.8.1 Lustig and Koester's four approaches

Lustig and Koester (1999) posit four approaches to the study of communication competence, namely, the trait approach, the perceptual approach, the behavioural approach and the culture-specific approach.

The trait approach identifies the personality characteristics and individual traits that allow a person to achieve success in communication encounters.

The perceptual approach identifies clusters of cognitions or perceptions that are related to communication competence, for example, psychological stress.

The behavioural approach suggests that one should go beyond what people think they will do in communication interactions and observe what they actually do.

The culture-specific approach refers to perceptions and behaviour which are peculiar to particular cultures (Lustig & Koester 1999).

2.8.2 The integrative approach

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) focus on a contextual notion of competence within one specific community, namely the white Americans of European descent, limiting the generalisability of research findings to other cultural groups. After reviewing some studies that were conducted to discover the essential features of intercultural competence, Spitzberg (1991) proposes a productive approach to develop an integrative model of communication competence.

Spitzberg (1991) proposes three different levels of analysis, namely the individual system, the episodic system and the relational system. These propositions can serve as an outline of a theory of interpersonal competence in an intracultural situation and also as a source of practical advice.

The individual system alludes to the characteristics an individual may possess that facilitate competent interaction in a social normative sense. At the individual system level it is stipulated that as the motivation of a communicator increases, communicative competence increases. In other words, the more a person wants to communicate

effectively, the more the person will view him or herself as competent and be viewed by others as competent. The reverse is true in that when the confidence of a communicator increases, the motivation also increases. Valued efficacy beliefs, task salience, communicator approach dispositions and relative cost-benefit ratio of a situation also increase. Whereas valued efficacy beliefs are what a person perceives their performance ability to be, task salience is what he or she perceives to be the clarity of what is supposed to be done. This clarity accelerates motivation. The relative cost-benefit ratio of a situation on the other hand addresses the least costly and most beneficial behaviour and approach dispositions to personality characteristics that prompt someone to esteem communicative activity.

At the individual system level, knowledge increases communicative competence, and contextual familiarity increases knowledge. Communicator knowledge is increased by task-relevant procedural knowledge. This knowledge is further increased by a mastery of knowledge acquisition strategies and also role diversity. Apart from knowledge, communicator skills can be increased by conversational coordination, conversational composure, conversational expressiveness and conversational adaptation. These are the components that make a person view him or herself as competent.

The episodic system refers to features of a particular actor that facilitate impressions of confidence on the part of a co-actor in a specific episode. Spitzberg (1991) argues that these features are episodic propositions in the sense that an actor influences the impressions of a co-actor in a specific episode of interaction. The ensuing propositions address the characteristics of the actor that predict the co-actor's impression of the actor's competence.

The co-actor's impression of the actor's competence is increased by the actor's communicative status; motivation, knowledge and skills; receipt of valued outcomes; the actor's fulfilment of the co-actor's expectations; and relational satisfaction.

The relational system, on the other hand, is based on the premise that relationships are not simply an amalgamation of episodes over a period of time. The relational system

pertains to proponents that assist a person's competence across the lifespan of a particular relationship, rather than in just a given episode of interaction.

Relational competence alludes to the level of communicative quality in a relationship that has been established by mutual satisfaction and adaptation. It increases as mutual fulfilment of autonomy and intimacy needs increase. Individuals seem to fluctuate between the two needs of autonomy and intimacy, but relational competence increases with the increase of mutual attraction and trust, access to social support, and relational network integration. The fact that individuals are simultaneously members of other relationships has to be accommodated.

2.8.3 The developmental approach

Brislin, Landis and Brandt (1984) propound the developmental approach to learning intercultural competence although its application seems to be culture-specific and is limited to sojourners. Gudykunst and Hammer (1984) also advocate the three-stage approach (mentioned earlier) which is another model that focuses on the sojourner.

Many scholars agree that the process of learning communication competence is developmental and is therefore acquired in stages (Beamer 1992:290). Brislin et al (1984:3) imply that when a person aspires to be competent in another culture it is necessary for the person to first study the past experiences of the target culture, then consider the role and norm differences and thirdly identify the relevant goals of intercultural training.

It is important to be aware of the target audience's world view, and a person should also be sure that he or she is able to fit in the target culture. This principle is applicable to the intracultural situation where there are roles, norms and rules and also goals of training in a culture. The implied premise is that learning is incremental and that the individual's internal perceptions are the starting point.

The competent communicator must know him or herself and initiate the positive attributes of self-concept, self-disclosure, self-awareness and social relaxation. Self-esteem is one of the most important aspects of self-concept. People with high self-esteem

are usually more likely to think well of others and show friendliness. They are also likely to perform better when they are aware that somebody is watching (Chen 1989:119).

Self-disclosure is a person's willingness to expose things to counterparts that he or she would not otherwise disclose. It is one of the most important elements for the development of an interpersonal relationship. Self-disclosure is one of the ways of achieving communication competence.

Self-awareness is the ability to be aware of oneself so that one can engage in conversation that reflects competent behaviour. This ability helps individuals to better adjust to people from other cultures. Individuals with high self-awareness will most likely be competent in interaction since they can adapt their behaviour to different situations.

Social relaxation is characteristic of individuals who reveal low levels of anxiety in their interaction with other people. Anxiety reflects a lack of security especially when one is in a new culture. In order to be competent in intercultural communication, one must be able to eliminate feelings of anxiety which are a stumbling block to communication (Chen 1989:120).

The communicator therefore achieves communication competence when he or she is able to encode and direct messages as if from within the new culture and can also decode and respond to messages from the new culture successfully (Beamer 1992:301).

Apart from the approaches that have been discussed, one variable that research has identified as an important element in the development of communication competence is social experience (Duran, 1983). Participating in varied social activities helps a person develop a repertoire of skills and knowledge of communication rules which increase one's level of communication competence. Social activities are therefore the arena of learning, demonstrating and evaluating communication competence which is based on the knowledge of communication rules. It should be reiterated that communication competence addresses appropriate and effective behaviour based on the rules of a cultural community (Spitzberg & Cupach 1984). Appropriateness and effectiveness, therefore, are measured by rule conforming and rule violating behaviour. What culture expects of its

members is relayed in rules that specify prescriptions for behaviour which are focused on the achievement of cultural goals (Collier et al 1986). It is therefore evident that communication competence is closely linked to communication rules.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter synthesises factors pertaining to communication and culture as the important factors that hold a society together. These factors have included discussions about the role of culture and communication in society featuring Hofstede's (2005) five major dimensions of culture. The family as system is featured as the vital unit of society, and the discussion of its characteristics confirms that it is a viable springboard for the focus on intracultural communication rules especially in the African society.

Intracultural communication is identified by core symbols which are clusters of symbolic systems that unify members of a culture through their communication interaction. They are particularly relevant to the current study since these are the vital items of comparison among the two cultures under study. Rules prescription and norms of conduct are the roots from which cultural values or expectations of the culture stem. In order to be competent one has to master rules prescription, hence the need to discuss approaches to the study of communication competence.

As has been reflected, the concepts of intracultural communication competence and intercultural communication competence address appropriateness and effectiveness of communication behaviour based on the cultural rules of the community. The society puts in place rules of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for the perpetuation of its culture. This perspective spells out the important link between communication competence and communication rules, hence the relevance of the rules theory.

CHAPTER 3
THE RULES THEORY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter highlighted the relationship between culture and communication in society. The focus of the current study is the analysis and comparison of the communication rules of two cultures, the Maasai and the Akamba. It has been noted that for the society to survive, rules of appropriate and inappropriate societal behaviour have to be put in place, especially when dealing with aspects of competence. This chapter discusses the various facets of the rules theory. It delineates views of different theorists about the definition of the rules concept and goes on to relay the different approaches to the rules theory. Further, a discussion is embarked upon of the different types of rules that are found in the society and how they function, including the degree to which members of the society are aware of them. The communication research from the rules perspective, culminating in the criticism of the rules theory, is also discussed.

The rules perspective became popular in communication circles during the 1970s when analysts of communication started developing a rules approach (for example, Cushman & Whiting 1972; Sigman 1980; Shimanoff 1980; Cronen, Pearce & Harris 1982). The rules approach is rooted in the discipline of philosophy in what has become known today as language philosophy. The other fields that deal with this approach are anthropology, linguistics, psychology, sociology, speech communication and general communication (Littlejohn 1983:61). Communication rules have become increasingly popular as a means of explaining human action at family and society levels. Combined with communication skills, rules become increasingly important because adhering to them contributes to the establishment and growth of relationships, whereas breaking the rules leads to the disruption or even the demise of relationships (Cahn 1987:99). The communication rules approach is also proposed as a viable approach for resolving problems in communication theory building, especially in the area of human communication (Lull 2010).

Since the rules approach is regarded as a loose conglomeration of ideas that are still evolving as a recognisable body of theory and research, the discussion of rules theory as a unified approach is hazy, creating an avenue for criticism, the most prominent critic being Delia (1977). Criticisms of the rules approach will be discussed at the end of the chapter, where this particular critic is discussed. However, criticisms have not deterred the development of several research programmes that emerged from the perspectives of the rules theory (Ervin-Tripp 1972; Nofsinger 1976; Philipsen 1975).

Cushman and Whiting (1972:218) claim to be the progenitors of the communication rules theory. They allege that prior to their contribution, no major communication theorist systematically and explicitly ventured into the field of rules as a fundamental concern in communication theory. They further proceed to reveal their intention to make communication rules an explicit focus of study, fruitful for developing communication theory.

3.2 DEFINING THE RULES CONCEPT

Theorists do not agree on what constitutes a rule. Several scholars have in fact argued that rule as a concept remains unclear (Shimanoff 1980:37). The concept of rules is therefore shrouded in confusion and controversy although this does not rule out the fact that rules are relied upon and used in a wide range of fields (Gottlieb 1968:11). Much as there seems to be no consensus on the definition of rules, a few theorists have advanced definitions that are plausible in the rules concept. Just as the many definitions of culture do not deter the authenticity of the concept, the same argument can be applied to the rules concept.

O'Brien (1978:53) defines rules as consisting of "those specific behaviours that are appropriate for an individual to use in a specific situation as perceived and agreed upon by members of a system". O'Brien's definition aptly lends itself to the purpose of the study which investigates the communicative behaviours among members of the family at different levels of relationship. The appropriateness of communication behaviour is a matter that is agreed upon by a culture.

From another perspective, Cronen et al (1979:26) view rules as regularities displayed in social action (even though persons may behave in unacceptable ways) where persons perceive an "oughtness" or "expectedness" in their social actions. The regularities concur with O'Brien's (1978) view of people acting in rule-consistent manners that are prescribed by their culture. Both O'Brien and Cronen et al are referring to something that occurs within a common social context.

When Shimanoff (1980:41) says that rules specify appropriate behaviour by stating what must and must not be done, she is replicating the idea of "oughtness" and "expectedness" of rules advanced by Cronen et al (1979:26). Shimanoff further declares that rules represent constraints on behaviour and she insists that prescriptiveness is a defining characteristic of rules.

Shimanoff (1980:57) also defines a rule as a "followable prescription that indicates what behaviour is obligated, preferred or prohibited in certain contexts". This definition encompasses both explicit and implicit rules and is consistent with presuppositions of the rules perspective on human behaviour which upholds the notion that human beings may choose whether or not to follow prescriptions. Shimanoff's definition also implies that following rules should result in behavioural regularities. The definition further includes all the relevant characteristics of rules, specifying what kind of prescription is appropriate to rules. Rules are, therefore, what the society prescribes to its members so as to regulate the kind of behaviour that keeps the society together. For example, the current study seeks to investigate what behaviour the Maasai and the Akamba societies require their members to observe so as to keep them together.

Although rules are purported to be directives stated in an imperative form, it has been pointed out that rules may sometimes be expressed in ways where the context implies their prescriptive quality. An example is saying that "We always wash our hands before we eat". Such statements pertain to behaviour, and are not only followable but also contextual (Shimanoff, 1980:75; Snyder 1971:163).

Cushman and Whiting (1972:228) contend that the structural characteristics of rules are not always easily discernible. They explain that participants must select symbolic

structures that they anticipate other participants will decode as intended. Decodable symbolic structures which are core symbols are therefore prerequisites for communication rules to be understood in the society.

3.3 APPROACHES TO RULES THEORY

Littlejohn (1970:48) proposes that for any society to survive, it has to harness its culture by generating rules of communication which are observed by its members. He corroborates this proposition by saying that people generate rules for interaction and use these rules to govern behaviour.

Various approaches to the study of the role of rules in communication have evolved. Some of these are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 Pearce's group of rules

One of the early proponents of the rules approach to communication is Pearce (1971). He presents three main groups of rule conceptions, namely, the rule-following approach, the rule-governed approach and the rule-using approach.

The rule-following approach

Rules are observed simply as behavioural regularities, so that when a pattern recurs it happens "as a rule". Pearce (1971:61) refers to such rules as weak laws for the reason that they are cast in the form of a statement of an expected happening under certain circumstances. Although this approach is highly descriptive it does not explain why particular patterns recur. It aims at cataloguing predictable behaviours. Pearce's (1971:62) reference to the rules as weak laws is picked up later by other authors as a point of controversy in the definition of rules and laws. Of all approaches to rules, the rules-following approach least supports the basic assumptions of the rules tradition.

The rule-governed approach

Rules are presented as beliefs about what should or should not be done in order for an objective to be achieved in a given situation. According to Pearce (1971), rules attempt to uncover people's intentions and hence define the socially acceptable ways in which people accomplish their intentions. This approach to rules presumes that people know the

rules and have the power to follow or violate them. It also assumes that people act consciously, intentionally and rationally. However, this approach would not work in an intercultural situation where the interactants do not know each other's rules.

The rule-using approach

This approach is consistent with the rule-governed approach, the difference being that the rule-using approach posits a more complex social situation. In the rule-using approach, the actor potentially has a choice of rules for accomplishing various intentions. This means that the individual is at liberty to follow some rules and discard others. The rule-using approach provides a basis for evaluating one's choices. This rules approach would not augur well in cultures where each member of the society does not have a choice as to which rules they will follow or not since the rules are predetermined by the society.

3.3.2 The meaning-centered approach

Whereas Pearce's (1971) approaches focus on behaviour and beliefs, the meaning-centered approach operates within culture as a whole (Cronen et al 1979).

O'Brien (1978:53) proposes that since people are supposed to act in rule-consistent manners within a culture, the meaning-centered approach maintains that an individual is part of a number of systems, each with its own set of interactional rules. In order for meaning to occur, the interactional rules have to be coordinated. The rules that govern the behaviour of participants have to be understood by each participant for meaning to occur. In other words, participants must develop a common understanding of the interactional rules. Each participant must also understand how his or her behaviour will affect other participants so that in the mastery of meaning the appropriate response will be elicited.

3.3.3 The integrative approach

Shimanoff (1980:57), one of the most prominent rules theorists, posits the integrative approach to communication rules by defining a rule as "a followable prescription that indicates that behaviour is obligated, preferred or prohibited in certain contexts". Essentially, society prescribes modes of behaviour that can be followed and behaviour that people are obligated to observe. This approach holds that there are two choices with regard to every behavioural act. One is preferred and the other one is prohibited. It is

expected that the individual should choose the preferred behaviour. The prohibited behaviour solicits either punishment or alienation from the society. Shimanoff (1980) further indicates that rules are an important part of social and cultural reality and are guidelines for action and meaning. Rules are therefore formed in the process of interaction within the social and cultural reality and they govern interaction simultaneously.

Littlejohn (1983) at one time considered Shimanoff's (1980) integrative approach as the best thinking in the field of communication. Essentially her approach does not incorporate other theorists' notions of rules, but it singles out her individual position compared to that of the other theorists. She defines characteristics of rules as being followable, prescriptive and contextual.

3.3.4 The contextual approach

The contextual theory argues that the contexts in which human activity takes place are crucial to the nature of that activity. The context refers to time, space and place in the sequence of events. The theory also assumes that actual contexts where social influence agents interact, determine the configuration of rules governing their persuasive actions (Contextual theory … 2009). The context can also refer to the setting, the participants and their relationships, their intentions, their communication content and their means of communication.

The context, which includes the situation, environment or circumstances in which communication takes place, is important in the facilitation of meaning. Since meaning is intertwined with the context, the context of a message is interpreted in rule-generated behaviour which generally recurs in similar contexts (Shimanoff 1980:103). Rules therefore prescribe what behaviour is appropriate in a particular context.

The different approaches to the rules theory that have been proposed by the different theorists in this section depict that rules are present in all interactive behaviour. These approaches also relay the point that rules guide what should or should not be done in communicative behaviour and that rules are society's prescriptions for modes of behaviour. Apart from guiding communicative behaviour, rules do have other functions.

3.4 FUNCTIONS OF RULES

Shimanoff (1980) moves from the discussion of the approaches to rules and proposes six functions of rules, namely, regulatory; as mechanisms for social action; as guidelines for behaviour; interpretive; corrective; and predictive.

3.4.1 The regulatory function

Rules regulate behaviour in order to facilitate the attainment of goals and the supply of needs in the society (Samovar & Porter 1991:36). Cultures therefore provide an implicit set of rules to govern interaction between members. Verbal and non-verbal codes which regulate behaviour are associated with a set of cultural prescriptions that determine how they should be used (Lustig & Koester 1999:252).

The behavioural aspect of rules is further articulated by Shimanoff (1980:83) when she gives an exposition of the functions of rules. As far as Shimanoff is concerned the functions of rules are to regulate, interpret, evaluate, justify, correct, predict and explain behaviour. The last item of her notion on the functions of rules is especially relevant in this section. She says that rules regulate behaviour by regulating activities that already exist, namely, those activities whose existence does not depend on the rules. For example, in the family the rules of how a father should relate to his daughter are regulative in the sense that the relationship between a father and daughter are pre-existent. Rules only come into play to regulate the behaviour in that relationship.

Adherence to rules increases the significance of coherence in communication (Cushman & Whiting 1972:217). This sense of coherence applies at the society level in the same way that it applies at the family level.

3.4.2 Mechanisms for social action

Rules are considered to be the mechanisms through which social action is organised. Rules affect the options available in a given situation, and the way they are interpreted in a context explains why some people will behave the same in similar situations whereas others will behave differently in the same situations. Rules therefore govern the structure of interaction, for example in a family situation where there are rules of interaction for various members (Littlejohn 1983:61).

Rules serve as guide posts to direct and indicate shared patterns of expectation in the communication acts of a social organisation. Rules also provide criteria for making choices where alternatives are presented. In the same vein, the establishment of communication rules helps in establishing common symbolic information processes to facilitate effective communication in the society (Cushman & Whiting 1972:218). The identification of the core symbols of the society is also facilitated.

3.4.3 Guidelines for behaviour

Whereas the theorists discussed so far reflect on the functions of rules in society, O'Brien (1978:53) includes the behavioural aspect of rules when she indicates that effective communication is based on rules whose function it is to govern not only communication behaviour but also other behaviour, for example that which depicts the level of the relationship.

3.4.4 The interpretive function

An interpretive rule is indicative of the meaning of a particular act or class of acts (Shimanoff 1980:85). Rules may be utilised to interpret behaviour by assuming that the actor is familiar with a particular rule. Because rules are used in society to prescribe the expected behaviour, they may be utilised to evaluate that same behaviour. Apart from evaluating behaviour, rules are used to evaluate the actors. Actors or communicators, who, for example, violate self-exposure rules by not revealing their true characters in conversation, are viewed as less attractive than those who follow the rules.

3.4.5 The corrective function

Shimanoff's (1980:86) definition of rules states that rules are preferred, obligated or prohibited. Because they have those attributes, one can justify one's behaviour by rationalising that one's behaviour is in accordance with particular rules. For example, if one asks a Maasai youth why he always proffers his head to an elder to touch in greeting, he may reply that he is supposed to do it out of respect. Whereas rules can be used to criticise behaviour, there are also rules that are utilised to correct behaviour (Shimanoff 1980:87). The corrective processes of rules are usually explicit. For example, a person

could be told that he is doing something wrongly, implying that there is a correct way of doing it, which the person might or might not be aware of.

3.4.6 The predictive function

Rules may also be used to predict behaviour (Shimanoff 1980:87). Predicting behaviour occurs in a situation where one has knowledge of the appropriate rule and believes that another actor also has that knowledge and desire to perform accordingly. The former actor may predict that the latter will perform the expected behaviour of the rule, because the latter is aware of the expectations. Thus rules could be used by actors and researchers alike to predict the behaviour of people within a community.

Rules theorists ultimately hope that they will be able to explain patterns of behaviour and the other functions of rules by appealing to rules and their prescriptive functions (Shimanoff 1980:87). The focus on rules is viewed as being important, as the protagonists of rules are trying to understand and explain action and behaviour. Communication scholars seem to be particularly concerned about this final function of rules of which the task is to explicate how the function of rules relates to communicative behaviour.

Rules may be related to behaviour in many different ways (Shimanoff 1980:117) because there are different types of rules to deal with.

3.5 TYPES OF RULES

Most rules scholars agree on the existence of regulative and constitutive rules although there may be variations in the way they define these two types. Pearce and Cronen (1980) explain that in communication, participants must develop a common logic of interactional rules and must also be aware of contexts of meaning within which communication takes place. The scholars use the concept of constitutive and regulative rules to refer to how one should behave within a given concept and they suggest that these two rules work closely together.

3.5.1 Regulatory and constitutive rules

Some scholars make a distinction between rules that regulate behaviour that already exists independent of the rules, and those that depict what acts of behaviour are dependent on the rules (Searle 1975:34). Shimanoff (1980:84) and other scholars make no distinctions, as will be seen later. In instances where distinctions are made, they are based on the assumption that constitutive and regulative rules are different (Cushman & Pearce 1977; Cushman 1977; Pearce 1977). Constitutive rules govern behaviour in situations where particular rules are regarded as appropriate for the situation. Regulative rules, on the other hand, are said to guide behaviour in the sense that the rules influence the behaviour of a certain actor (Shimanoff 1980:117).

Cronen et al (1979:26) explain that constitutive rules indicate how meanings at one level of understanding may count as meaningful at another level of understanding. One person, for example, may tell another that he is clever, and this may be intended as a compliment. This statement could be interpreted as being sarcastic considering the tone of voice in which it is said. It is therefore noted that constitutive rules depend on different levels of meaning. Regulative rules, on the other hand, are based on the understanding of the consequence of an actor's action.

Some scholars refer to regulative rules as procedural rules which are said to govern and guide how symbols are organised and how they affect the organisation of the participants in the communication system (Cushman & Whiting 1972:232). Cushman and Whiting use the concepts of procedural and regulative rules synonymously.

Shimanoff (1980:84) submits that it is futile to dichotomise rules as being constitutive rules or regulative per se. Her position is based on the fact that even Searle (1975:34), who is most associated with dichotomising constitutive and regulative rules, apparently has trouble keeping them apart, because he still proceeds to say that constitutive rules constitute and regulate an activity (Shimanoff 1980:84). Pearce and Cronen (1980) argue that constitutive rules are those that are observed within a given act whereas regulative rules refer to how one should behave within a given context (Cronen et al 1979:10).

3.5.2 Obligatory and prohibitory rules

Obligatory and prohibitive rules go together because the former refer to correct behaviour whereas the latter refer to incorrect behaviour. Labov (1972:218) refers to both as categorical rules which are rules that apply in all cases. In other words, obligatory rules prescribe what one must do, and prohibitive rules prescribe what one must not do. Shimanoff (1980:75) says that behaviour that is not obligated by a rule is in violation of the rule and subject to being sanctioned negatively.

Obligatory rules should result in the consistent presence of the prescribed behaviour, its absence being taken as a deviation (Shimanoff 1980:103). On the other hand, prohibitive rules should result in the consistent absence of the prescribed behaviour, its presence being taken as a deviation. It is appropriate therefore to admit that because prohibitive rules are inferred from consistently absent behaviour, they may be more difficult to identify (Shimanoff 1980:104).

3.5.3 Optional rules

Having considered obligatory and prohibitive rules, the existence of optional rules should furthermore be pointed out. Optional rules indicate which behaviour is permitted or allowed to occur. It seems contradictory to posit an optional rule since rules cannot be both prescriptive and optional, a position that describes indifference. This term therefore is only presented as a scientific hypothesis for the study of rules (Labov 1972:231).

3.5.4 Preferential rules

Preferential rules are those that result in the preferred behaviour occurring more often than not. Its non-occurrence is viewed as a deviation from the rule (Shimanoff 1980:104). Compliance with preferential rules may result in a positive evaluation whereas deviation may pass unnoticed (Shimanoff 1980:91). For example, if one is offered a meal by a friend, one should express one's gratitude at the end of it. This is a preferential rule, in that the behaviour alluded to above is preferred. If, on the other hand, one does not express gratitude, the friend may be displeased but the behaviour may not be punished.

3.5.5 Explicit and implicit rules

Rules may be related to behaviour in numerous ways and some rules are explicitly stated whereas others are implicit. The latter are unstated prescriptions for behaviour and are also inferred from behaviour. Ganz (1971:28) argues against the existence of implicit rules by saying that one cannot follow what one is unaware of, and so, behavioural regularities cannot be the result of implicit rules.

To counter Ganz's (1971) position, Shimanoff (1980) argues that there are behavioural regularities that cannot be accounted for should one argue that implicit rules do not exist. Some behavioural regularity cannot be explained by laws or explicit rules, but can be explained in terms of implicit rules (Shimanoff 1980:55). For example, it is not always possible to infer implicit rules from behaviour by observing only the explicit behaviour of the communicator. Apart from being implicitly stated, rules should also be explicitly stated.

Explicit rules are utterances or inscriptions that prescribe behaviour and have a reality of their own (Shimanoff 1980:54). For example, a rule is explicit when it can be verbalised and its specifications must be such that a communicator can have a conscious knowledge of them and be able to exhibit behaviour that complies with them. A communicator must also be able to articulate the rule and show some evidence that he or she referred to the rule when making a conscious choice (Collett 1977; Ganz 1971; Shimanoff 1980).

It is also necessary to remember that rules of interaction are not written and they are often not verbally shared, making them operational at unwritten and unspoken levels. These levels of operation, together with the fact that rules of interaction provide culture-specific instructions about what should and should not occur in social interactions, further compound the difficulty of comprehension (Lustig & Koester 1999:298).

3.5.6 Contextual rules

Pearce and Cronen (1980) explain that participants in communication must develop a common logic of interactional rules and must also be aware of contexts of meaning within which communication takes place. Contextual rules therefore prescribe which

behaviour is appropriate in a particular context. In other words, behaviour that is generated by rules recurs in similar contexts (Shimanoff 1980:103).

3.6 RULES CONSCIOUSNESS

Rules consciousness is the degree to which actors are aware of a rule when they are acting. It can range from subconscious, tacit knowledge to conscious reflection on the merits of the rule before acting. Rules consciousness is the ability to distinguish between the different levels of rule-related behaviour as it affects one's ability to predict and explain rule-related behaviour. Rules research, therefore, has focused primarily on inferring rules from behaviour, rather than attempting to highlight the relationship that exists between particular behaviour and the level of rule compliance in communication both within and between cultures (Shimanoff 1980:126).

It is not always easy to distinguish the role of rules in communication within and between cultures as separate entities since the concepts are intertwined and therefore interdependent. Lustig and Koester (1999:252) assert that cultures provide an implicit set of rules to govern communication, and Hall (2005:136) posits that there are communication rules in every culture which are in danger of being violated unless one understands the culture. Most people are aware of the way they are expected to perform within their own culture, but the rules are rarely stated and often unwritten and unspoken. Obedience to rules is reflexive and this is only true if one grows up in the culture where the rule exists and one internalises it from a very early age. Consequently, for people to follow rules in a culture other than the one in which they were raised, they are required to be mindful of their behaviour and to be familiar with the rules of the other culture (Gudykunst & Kim 1997:57).

In fact, the existence of different rules in different cultures is one of the main areas of difficulty in intercultural communication. This difficulty is created by the fact that since rules arise to regulate behaviour, different cultures generate different behaviours to attain their goals and satisfy their needs. Systems of rules therefore create behavioural patterns which are culturally functional, and it is therefore pertinent to say that cultures vary in the extent to which behaviour is a function of situations (Argyle 1991:36). As has been said

before, when one acts out of ignorance in another culture, one can create discomfort leading to difficulty in adjustment (Hall 2005:136).

To reiterate, it can be said that in each culture there are rules that govern behaviour, and the knowledge of the cultural differences in these social rules enables one to predict social action. As much as rules govern behaviour in culture they do the same in communication.

3.6.1 Culture and communication rules

Every society has its own way of viewing the universe and has therefore developed a coherent set of rules of social behaviour that reflect its own style of life (Barnlund 1988:13). Cultural rules tell society what to do and how to do it. This arises from the situation that cultures have shared rules which enforce the standards of social behaviour and social order. On the basis of cultural rules, ethnocentrism (the tendency to judge the behaviour of people in other cultures by the standards of one's own culture) is therefore unacceptable (Kottak 1991:43).Cultural rules are therefore an important premise for communication and they are also the springboard for communication rules.

As was reiterated earlier, the relationship between culture and communication is a complex one because the two are so intertwined that the one cannot be considered without the other. Cultures are created through communication because the latter is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics are created and shared. These characteristics include customs, rules, roles, rituals, laws and other patterns. Cultures are considered to be natural byproducts of social interaction and in a sense are the residue of social communication (The relationship between communication and culture … 2010).

Communication is a symbolic rule-governed activity, and rules maintain social order. These rules are used to govern social behaviour since culture is responsible for an individual repertoire of communicative behaviour which is also reflected through symbols. For the symbols to be understood they must have shared rules that are

understood by all the members of a society. Hence the importance of communication rules in society.

The society prescribes modes of behaviour that can be followed and behaviour that people are obligated to observe. Shimanoff (1980) indicates that rules are an important part of social and cultural reality and are guidelines for action and meaning.

It is apt to say that in culturally diverse communities, differences in the communication styles of the people may be expected. This situation therefore creates the necessity of observing rules of communication and culture and thus cross-cultural barriers, especially in communication, are allayed.

The following practical rules of communication across cultures have been suggested to minimise conflict:

- Avoid language that stereotypes people. One should, for example, avoid using images, situations and words that suggest that all or most members of a cultural group are the same. Stereotyping is exemplified when someone asks why a certain person is always late, and the answer is that "Africans cannot keep time".

- Avoid using qualifiers that tend to reinforce ethnic or racial stereotypes. When one, for example, refers to a girl as the bright African girl, it reflects the connotation that African girls are generally not bright.

- Avoid racial identification unless it is absolutely essential to communication. Language that has racist overtones, like saying "you people", should also be avoided (Using cross-cultural communication to improve relationships … 2010).

With respect to changing communicative behaviour which violates the cultural rules of others, the following strategies may be useful:

- Constant maintenance of eye contact during conversations violates conversational rules in some cultures where it is rude to look the person with whom you are conversing in the eye, so rules of attentiveness should be observed.

- Rules regarding the distance between speakers in conversation vary from culture to culture. In some cultures, for example, distance connotes respect. Symbols, objects and characters may reflect different beliefs or values for different cultural groups.

- Since cultures vary in what they consider humorous or taboo, they have in-group cultural rules and behaviour which should not be discussed with outsiders and this prohibition should be observed (Using cross-cultural communication to improve relationships … 2010).

In all cultures, there are different rules for taking turns, standards of loudness, speed of delivery, silence, time to respond to another's point of view and also for entering a conversation in progress.

In this section, it is therefore important to note that the rules for language and communicative behaviour differ from culture to culture (Using cross-cultural communication to improve relationships … 2010) and so can only be interpreted adequately with a proficient understanding of the culture.

Different ways of investigating communication rules have been suggested by certain scholars as is reflected in the ensuing section.

3.7 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH FROM A RULES PERSPECTIVE

From a rules perspective, communication research is designed to highlight communication rules and also to specify the relationships that exist between rules and behaviour. The research is also supposed to generate explanation, prediction and possibly the control of behaviour (Shimanoff 1980:137). Shimanoff discusses some of the methodological approaches that could be used in communication rules research. These include surveys, naturalistic observation, participant observation, quasi-experimentation and experimentation. Apart from discussing the methodologies, she also highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each. The methodologies are discussed in the following sections.

3.7.1 Surveys

Babbie (1989:237) says that survey research is the best method available to the social scientist who wants to collect original data for describing a population which is too large for direct observation. He further says that it is used for explanatory, exploratory and descriptive purposes. Shimanoff (1980) narrows the application down to the area of communication when she says that survey research is used where the researcher seeks to explore the communication rules in a society.

In survey research, questionnaires are used. The questionnaire survey involves respondents completing a printed questionnaire to facilitate the collection of data. The advantage of surveys is the ease of data collection. The data from surveys can be an aid to construct rules from the wealth of knowledge that the respondents have about how communication rules operate. Another advantage of rules generated from survey data is that more generalisability is possible since they are derived from the collective experience of many respondents whose reflections are resourceful (Shimanoff 1980:153).

One disadvantage of survey research is that it is not easy to determine the accuracy of the rules and the type of behaviour prescribed by the rules as identified by survey data. An additional disadvantage of the survey method is that it tends to produce only rules that reflect the collective consciousness (Shimanoff 1980:153).

3.7.2 Naturalistic observation

The term "naturalistic" is generic in nature and refers to any research method involving the investigation of people in social settings which constitute their normal life activity without manipulation by the investigator. Ethnographic study falls under the same description and both methods consist of observing and recording regularities from which rules are inferred. The researcher observes communicative behaviour in its originality, although the researcher exerts no control over the communication or the environment. In contrast to participant observation which is discussed later, in naturalistic observation the researcher does not participate in the communication exchanges that are analysed (Shimanoff 1980:154).

There are a few advantages to this method. The rules are inferred from actual interactions and the behaviour is actual rather than self-constructed. This method also makes it possible to identify tacit rules. The data can be rendered quantifiable, in that one can report when and how often a specific behaviour occurred, or did not occur, and one can account for conflicting evidence (Shimanoff 1980:154).

There are some disadvantages attached to this method of data collection in that getting enough data to infer rules can be long and tedious and may discourage the researcher. The method of naturalistic observation is further associated with qualitative rather than quantitative procedures. The haphazard data collection that is attributed to naturalistic observation can lead to a lack of contextual information about the subjects. This method is therefore limited to eliciting rules for relatively common behaviour (Shimanoff 1980:154).

3.7.3 Participant observation

In this method, the researcher is a participant in the interactions that he or she is observing. The main idea is to identify communicative regularities and rules among the subjects. The researcher can use field notes or electronic devices to record observations. The researcher may also participate or engage in interviewing informants, who should be knowledgeable members of the community. The researcher has the onus of describing his or her own role, status and personal biases regarding the study to enable others to gauge the accuracy of the judgements made. To facilitate a replication of the findings, the researcher should also specify procedures clearly and in enough detail (Shimanoff 1980:179).

It is argued that of all the methods that have been considered, participant observation is the most appropriate for rules research (Rushing 1976:5). One of the advantages of participant observation is the possibility to obtain the interpretation of an actor first-hand. The participant observer can also access one kind of data which is usually inaccessible to researchers using other methods. This data entails choices not made, an example being the rules that prohibit behaviour. For the researcher to infer these rules from behaviour,

he or she must have a sense of what the actors are not doing or avoid doing (Shimanoff 1980:181).

The potential disadvantages of participant observation are similar to those of naturalistic observation. Because of the researcher's participation, the actors may reflect rules that are biased in favour of the preferences of the researcher. This may end up with the researcher identifying rules which are applicable only if he or she is present (Shimanoff 1980:183).

3.7.4 Quasi-experimentation

In this method, respondents are drawn from two or more populations, for example, from two different ethnicities. The respondents are exposed to the same antecedent conditions and a particular response is measured to show whether respondents drawn from different populations will or will not respond in the same or a different manner to similar antecedent conditions (Shimanoff 1980:184). An example would be to measure the responses of boys and girls to a concept that demarcates the roles of males and females in a particular culture.

Control is the major advantage of quasi-experimentation as the researcher is more assured that, by specifying precisely which behaviour under what circumstances will be measured his or her comparisons between groups are accurate. By holding all conditions similar, the researcher can determine whether different rules hold for different populations. Because of this control over antecedent conditions, the accuracy of the rules derived from the study is improved.

Although control is the greatest advantage of quasi-experimentation, it turns out also to be the greatest disadvantage in that the data collected may be more artificial than that collected from naturalistic observations or participant observations (Shimanoff 1980:186). The artificiality may reduce the generalisability of the rules since the subjects are aware that they are being studied.

The use of pre-conceived categories to measure responses creates two disadvantages. By presuming that the researchers' categories are inherently accurate, the actor's interpretation is ignored. Secondly, by presuming that the researcher is aware of all the

relevant variables, an error could occur because the researcher may actually have overlooked some relevant variables or may not have dealt with all of them (Shimanoff 1980:186).

Quasi-experimentation therefore seeks to establish if the rules for different populations will be similar or different when they are subjected to the same conditions.

3.7.5 Experimentation

The next method discussed by Shimanoff (1980:188) is experimentation which is relatively new in the area of rules approach and is based on four main premises, namely, that all subjects are drawn from the same population; all subjects are randomly assigned to treatment groups; all other variables are held constant; and a particular response is specified and measured in order to determine whether the variations of the stimulus are systematically related to response differences.

The advantages and disadvantages of experimentation are very similar to those of quasi-experimentation. The former though, is magnified because of the additional control which features through the manipulation of the antecedent conditions in an experiment, where the aspiration of determining if different antecedents lead to different or similar consequences exists. In rules research the manipulation of the antecedent conditions implies trying to determine the scope of the conditions for a rule, that is, whether antecedents change when different rules become salient (Shimanoff 1980:191).

After considering the methodologies discussed in this section, it is expedient to note that different methods have different advantages and disadvantages. In order to maximise the accuracy and quality of research it would be preferable to utilise multiple means of data collection and analysis (Shimanoff 1980:198).

3.7.6 Focus group interviews

A method that has not been discussed by Shimanoff (1980) is focus group interviews. Focus group interviews are another method of data collection used in the area of rules approach and are facilitator-led discussions used for collecting data on a particular topic from a group of participants. The focus group interviews are normally conducted in a

small group setting where the respondents interact with each other around a pre-arranged topic. The group usually comprises people who possess certain characteristics and provide data of a qualitative nature. When carefully planned, a focus group can yield information on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. A skilled interviewer can make the discussion relaxed, comfortable and enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions (Krueger 1988:57).

The focus group method can help one become familiar with the behaviour of the people with whom one is not familiar. Furthermore, it can be noted that in a group, one person's knowledge, experience or idea is supported or opposed by another person, giving a wider perspective of the knowledge, experience or idea. The interchange of knowledge, experiences and ideas facilitates a wider perspective of the discussion (Brown, Collins & Duguid 1989:40).

Krueger (1988) says that the focus group technique is usually easily understood and the results also seem believable to those who are using the information thus accrued. The focus group method allows participants to offer their viewpoints relative to the viewpoints of others (Keyton 2006:276).

Berg (2001), however, mentions that focus groups are limited because they are not involved in truly natural conversation since the moderator controls the assembly, alters the pace of discussions, changes the direction of the comments and can interrupt or stop the conversations.

Focus group discussions have other disadvantages too, for instance, the domination of one member of the group resulting in the skewing of information. Participants in the group may furthermore come to a quick consensus if they are not able to express opposite opinions (Morgan 1997). Another risk of focus groups is the possibility of researchers over-generalising the findings.

Researchers must therefore balance their findings and carefully assess the degree to which the results of focus group studies can be applicable to others from the same or similar populations.

3.7.7 Some examples of research studies of the rules perspective

Some of the aforementioned methods have been implemented to carry out rules research and a few examples of such studies are discussed.

Carbaugh's study on a talk show

Carbaugh (1987) carried out an ethnographic study on communication rules in the discourse of the popular American talk show *Donahue*. According to Shimanoff's (1980) categorisation, this study would fall under the naturalistic observation method. The study included the viewing of over one hundred hours of *Donahue* over a period of three years. Carbaugh's (1987) study became the source of his four rules about the presentation of "self" in America.

Carbaugh's (1987) objective was to explain human conduct through the formulation of communication rules by extracting communication rules that determine social conduct. He explored communication rules of Americans that were relevant to discourses in *Donahue*. He obtained his data from people who watched the talk show and those who appeared in it through interviews. He generated the following communication rules from his study:

- The presentation of the "self" is the preferred communication activity and statements of personal opinions count as proper "self-presentations". This conclusion was drawn from the answers to the question "What are people expected to display when they speak?"

- Interlocutors must grant speakers the moral right to present the "self" through opinions. This rule guarantees the moral capacity of the "self" to speak and the availability of a public forum for being heard.

- The presentation of the "self" through opinions should be respected and tolerated as a rightful expression. This rule implies that it is right and proper to tolerate a variety of viewpoints.

- The assertion of standards that are explicitly trans-individual, or societal, is not preferred since such assertions are believed to (a) unduly constrain the preferred presentations of the "self", (b) infringe upon the rights of others, and (c) violate the code of proper respect.

These rules are derived from a background of human conversation and they focus on what Carbaugh (1987) calls "self-presentation". His purpose is to explicate some conversational functions that occur with the social use of the rules. The conversational use of these rules results in the accomplishment of either free expression or topical dissensus and the two values are based on a personal style of cultural communication (Carbaugh 1987:49). The analysis of the *Donahue* discourse is supposed to demonstrate how a rules perspective can contribute to the understanding of communication conduct.

Collier, Ribeau and Hecht's study of intracultural communication rules in three domestic cultures

Collier, Ribeau and Hecht (1986) implemented the survey method to investigate intracultural communication rules. They sought to describe the communication systems of three domestic cultural groups in America. Their study included African Americans, Mexican Americans and whites. In a survey questionnaire, respondents from the California University were asked to describe a recent conversation with someone from their own culture. Open-ended questions were used to elicit responses that would reflect cultural differences and similarities in rules for intracultural interaction. Rules were inferred from the descriptions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and conclusions were drawn from the ensuing explanations. These responses were analysed and the analysis produced five categories of rules, namely, politeness, role prescriptions, expression, relational climate and content.

Politeness was the most frequently mentioned category for all three groups. It referred to the rules of etiquette, rudeness and social niceties. Whites mentioned it proportionately more often. Rudeness was mentioned by all groups.

Role prescriptions refer to rules pertaining to professional, personal, sexual and cultural contexts. It was the second most frequently mentioned category for whites and Mexican

Americans. It was however, the third most frequent category among African Americans. All groups emphasised appropriate behaviour consistent with particular role expectations.

Expression refers to rules that deal with the manner in which communication is manifested with extra emphasis on open-mindedness, assertiveness and directness. It was the second most frequently mentioned topic among African American respondents but the least frequently mentioned category for the other groups. Assertiveness was the key category among African Americans.

Relational climate accounts for the relational and emotional atmosphere especially with regard to affiliation and control and was noted with some frequency only by Mexican Americans. The respondents stressed affiliation with the rule of friendliness, both verbally and non-verbally.

Content deals with support for arguments, topical relevance of verbal statements, and the use of criticism. It was the third most frequently mentioned category among the whites. The rule was about staying on one topic at a time and giving examples to support opinion. Mexican Americans had a similar rule whereas African American respondents placed comparatively more emphasis on support.

Through the use of this method, it was possible to note similarities and differences in rules and outcomes. The research addressed cultural similarities and differences of cultural communication rules.

Honeycutt, Woods and Fontenot's study of conflict resolution in the marital domain

Honeycutt, Woods and Fontenot (1993) used the survey method to examine the maintenance of relationships with regard to couples engaged or married for the first time. The study focused on how often they followed communication rules in managing conflict. The researchers used a rule-based perspective and a survey was administered concerning beliefs about rules for communication within the relationship. Questionnaires were given to couples to fill out without consulting their spouses and the information was supposed to identify the kinds of rules that enhance the maintenance of relationships (Honeycutt et al 1993:293).

The results revealed four main communicative rule dimensions dealing with conflict. These were positive understanding, rationality, conciseness and consideration. Positive understanding entails being engaged in positive actions and attitudes towards one's partner. The second category, rationality, reflects restrictive rules, for example not generating argumentative issues and not getting angry. The third category of conciseness refers to the actors being consistent and getting to the point quickly. Finally, the category of consideration indicates restrictive rules, such as not making the other person feel guilty, not pushing your view as the only view, not dominating the conversation and not being sarcastic, critical or judgemental.

According to the researchers, this rule-based study of marital expectations was useful in spelling out individual sentiments that are central to the maintenance of marriage relationships. The findings revealed how conflict management rules illuminate people's views of maintenance processes (Honeycutt et al 1993:294). What emerged from the study are rules of conflict management among married couples and those who are engaged to be married.

Collier and Bornman's study of core symbols in South African intercultural friendships

Collier and Bornman's (1999) study is another example of how focus groups can be applied in research into rules theory. They used a pre-group questionnaire which is usually used to gather information on the demographic details of the participants in a focus group. It can also be used to gather other information that the researcher deems important for the study and for the analysis of the data.

The researchers proposed to find out how cultural differences were managed and to describe rule violations that caused the terminations of friendships. The researchers conducted focus group discussions among British, Afrikaner, Asian, Coloured and African people in South Africa in which the respondents discussed the topic of intercultural friendships. The participants were asked to describe instances in which they managed cultural differences and to describe rule violations which would terminate

friendships. They were finally asked to make recommendations for appropriate and satisfying conduct that would maintain friendships with cultures other than their own.

The results included rule violations and recommendations for more appropriate conduct. They elicited the following themes with regard to intercultural friendships: for the Afrikaners, it was pride in cultural identity and decorum; for the British, it was individualism and future orientation; for the Coloureds, it was flexibility and relationship orientation; for the Asians, it was responsibility for actions and openness; and for the Africans it was honour and compassion.

What emerged from the study was a positive relationship between the level of social-cultural power in South Africa and the intensity and salience of ethnic identity.

Kramer and Hess's study on communication rules regarding the display of emotions in organisational settings

Kramer and Hess (2002) carried out a survey study to investigate the communication rules for the display of emotions that employees perceived as enhancing the functioning of organisations. The researchers also looked for self-reported perceptions of events which they deemed the best indicators of respondents' understanding of the rules on the display of emotions.

Communication students distributed questionnaires to employees of an organisation and received 86% of the completed questionnaires back. Since the knowledge of rules is increased by examining instances of their being followed or violated, the survey requested the respondents to describe examples of appropriate and inappropriate displays of emotion (Kramer & Hess 2002:70).

For each situation the respondents had to indicate which events expressed a particular nature of the perceived emotion, the felt emotion, the expressed emotion, the reason for considering behaviour appropriate or inappropriate and the impact that the display of emotion had on them or on others.

The researchers did not use predetermined categories in the analysis, but allowed the categories to emerge from the data. They did this because their goal was to identify the

primary rules people used and articulated. From the results, general communication rules for emotional displays were derived. The research therefore furnished the understanding of the dynamics of the management of emotion in organisational settings.

The following rules for the display of emotions in organisations were generated from the study:

- Emotions should be expressed professionally.
- Emotions should be expressed to improve situations.
- Emotions should be expressed to the right people.
- Emotions should be expressed to help individuals.
- Emotions should not be expressed for personal benefit to the detriment of others.
- Expression of particular emotions was regarded as always inappropriate, for example, workers oppressing their colleagues at the workplace because of domestic conflicts.

The study therefore advanced the dynamics of emotion management in organisational settings by exploring both appropriate displays of positive and negative emotions, and identifying rules for the displays (Kramer & Hess 2002:70).

Of the methodological approaches for the rules perspective cited in the previous section, the survey method of research seems to have been applied more often among the examples cited in this section. The ethnographic method of research is not discussed by Shimanoff (1980) because it is very similar to the naturalistic method, but it is also appropriate for the rules perspective.

3.8 CRITICISM OF THE RULES THEORY

The criticisms that have emerged concerning the rules theory are partly due to the fact that this theory is relatively new in the field of communication theory and that relatively little in the way of empirical research has been generated (Sanford & Roach 1986).

Littlejohn (1983) posits that criticism of the rules theory oscillates around two issues, namely, conceptual coherence and explanatory power.

3.8.1 Conceptual coherence

Littlejohn (1983) says that the rules theory is not conceptually coherent and that even its adherents admit that the rules tradition lacks unity. He refers to an earlier critic of the rules theory, Delia (1977:54), who strongly verbalises this view. Delia contends that the notion of rules is grossly defused and broad and imprecisely articulated. He further says that the meaning of rules is not constant either within or across domains and that the rules territory is, in fact, little short of chaotic. He reiterates that the idea of rules as a general construct of theory represents only a defused notion, lacking in specific theoretical substance. The researcher of the current study rebuts the views of Littlejohn and Delia by maintaining that the seeming lack of unity in the rules tradition is due to the fact that the theory is relatively new in the field of communication. As more and more scholars engage in the study, the unity is expected to be apparent.

3.8.2 Explanatory power

The controversy mentioned above rests on the fact that theorists do not agree about the definition of rules. Critics therefore generally believe that rules approaches cannot be explanatory as long as they fail to develop generic principles that cut across contexts. This arm of criticism can be countered by the researcher of the current study in arguing the fact that differences in the definition do not nullify the credence of a subject. The generic principles that cut across contexts are expected to emerge as more and more studies are carried out in the area of rules hence the importance of the current study.

Littlejohn (1983:37) argues that the exercise of identifying the rules in operation in a particular context, for example, is not sufficient to explain communication processes. By way of example, Shimanoff (1980) firmly states that a rule must deal with overt behaviour and not interpretation. For Pearce and Cronen (1980), on the other hand, rules apply not only to overt behaviour but also to internal meanings.

Berger (1977) holds that another perspective to the debate is that one must look beyond what rules are and ask why some rules are selected over others. He therefore agrees with

the critics who say that rules cannot be explanatory as long as they do not develop generic principles.

According to Littlejohn (1983) most rules advocates do not wholly agree with Berger's argument. Shimanoff (1980) points out that, contrary to laws explanations, most explanations according to communication rules are teleological in nature because they provide reason. Behaviour is explained in terms of its practical impact to the extent that it creates desired outcomes.

Pearce (1973), on the other hand, contends that explanation is made possible through the principles of necessity and generality. He reiterates that rule-following approaches tend not to be explanatory because they merely describe recurring behaviour without indicating any form of necessity, that is, where an antecedent event determines the behaviour of a subsequent event. Rule-governed approaches, on the other hand, provide explanation in terms of practical necessity, although their generality is somewhat limited. Although the rule-using approach is limited, Pearce (1973) believes that it has the highest potential for explanatory power in terms of both practical and logical necessity and generality.

Capella and Greene (1982) criticise Shimanoff on the point of overt behaviour. These scholars assert that Shimanoff limits the range of rules to overt behaviour thus denying the rules applicability to interpretive behaviour. Rules are therefore restricted to prescribing behaviour, a view that not all rules theorists would adhere to. In a rejoinder to this criticism, Shimanoff (1982) says that much as she views rules as prescribing behaviour rather than prescribing cognitions, she does not deny the applicability of rules to interpreting behaviour, as was alleged. She holds that while rules are not interpretations per se, they may be used to interpret behaviour (Shimanoff 1982:435).

Capella and Greene (1982), similar to most rules theorists, view Shimanoff (1980) as one who treats rules not as a way of constraining what acts are possible, but as explanations for particular acts of communication. In their opinion, Shimanoff's most obvious departure from orthodoxy concerning the domain of rules is her limitation of the legitimate range of rules to overt behaviour, denying their applicability to interpretive

behaviour. They say that according to Shimanoff, this limitation is necessary because people monitor other people's behaviour and they sanction deviations from prescriptive rules. Rules are therefore restricted to prescriptive behaviour. Not all theorists subscribe to this view (Capella & Greene 1982:431).

The researscher in the current study tends to agree with the notion that rules are restricted to prescriptive behaviour since people monitor other people's behaviour to sanction deviant tendencies. In the study of the rules of the Maasai and the Akamba this phenomenon is present but rules can also be used to interpret behaviour.

3.8.3 Lack of conceptual clarity

As was stipulated at the beginning of this chapter, although several rules scholars have attempted to demonstrate that communication rules could become a fundamental and controlling concern of communication theory (Cushman & Whiting 1972), areas of contention are still unresolved giving the impression that there is a lack of conceptual clarity.

Shimanoff (1980), whose contribution to the rules theory is regarded as particularly applicable to communication (Littlejohn 1983:62), admits that several scholars have argued that rules as a concept remains unclear (Shimanoff 1980:11). This is an echo of what Gottlieb (1968:11) has said, namely that the concept of rules is shrouded in confusion and controversy and yet, admittedly, rules are relied upon and used in a wide range of fields, including that of communication.

According to Capella and Greene (1982:431), Shimanoff's (1980) divergence is, however, balanced by her view that rules theories explain particular behavioural actions within specifiable contexts. Capella and Greene therefore contend that although Shimanoff's treatment of the rules theory is generally comprehensive, it lacks a discussion of multiple levels of explanation. Toulmin (1969) suggests that the complexity of human behaviour demands multiple, complementary levels of explanation. Such explanation would embrace both law-like and rules-based accounts, which Shimanoff's approach does not address.

According to the researcher of the current study, lack of conceptual clarity should not hinder any studies based on the rules theory. On the contrary it should be the motivation for scholars to embark on more studies in the area of rules in order to build a clearer concept. The investigation of the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba is meant to be a move to contribute towards making a clearer concept towards an African theory of communication rules.

The discussion of rules gives rise to the need for considering the prescription of rules in connection with norms of conduct.

3.9 CULTURE, RULES PRESCRIPTION AND NORMS OF CONDUCT

It is expedient to note that rules and norms are defined in a variety of ways. There are two trains of thought, one purporting that there is a difference between rules and norms, and the other one maintaining that the two terms can be used interchangeably. Olsen's (1978) view is that whereas rules are developed for reasons of expediency because they allow people to coordinate activities easily, norms, on the other hand, have an ethical or moral connotation.

Gudykunst and Kim (1992:57), however, refer to rules and norms interchangeably and believe that norms are rules of conduct and are cultural expectations encasing blueprints of behaviour. The two authors define norms as being socially shared guidelines for behaviour that are expected and accepted. The violation of these behavioural rules elicits some forms of sanction which vary culturally. Lustig and Koester (1999) share the same opinion when they refer to norms as socially shared rules for behaviour which reflect people's expectations. Norms also reflect expected communication behaviour and are part of the social routines that direct people's interactions at public and private functions to indicate, for example, how to engage in conversation, what to talk about and how to disengage (Lustig & Koester 1999:83). Gudykunst and Kim concur by declaring that rules perform the same functions as norms in that they establish coordinated activities in the society.

Part of our cultural experience entails learning about the kind of behaviour that enhances the perpetuation of society (Dodd 1991:43). That means that every culture has rules or

procedures which make up the fundamental set of expectations about how things are supposed to be accomplished. This view about what happens in every culture is supported by the view that cultural expectations about social behaviour are influenced by a set of rules (Lustig & Koester 1999:265). Furthermore, in every culture rules and norms specify the acceptable means to achieving the goals of culture and consist of the prescriptions for acceptable behaviour (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:57).

Cultures prescribe explicit and implicit sets of rules to govern social interaction (Lustig & Koester 1999:252), a view that is replicated by Dodd (1991:53) who in support of the implicit nature of the rules says that the rules of a particular culture are rarely stated but members are expected to develop competence regarding the rules of a particular society. These same rules facilitate social interaction. Rules also provide a predictable pattern of social activities. These activities, in turn, give relationships a sense of coherence and the coherence facilitates the continuity in societal establishment (Lustig & Koester 1999:298).

In considering cultural differences, Cushman and Whiting (1972) contend that rules vary along four dimensions, namely, the level of understanding, clarity, range and homogeneity or consensus. The more people want to coordinate their activities, the greater the need for accuracy in understanding the rules. In collectivist high-context cultures (see section 2.3.2) there is a greater need for clarity in coordination of activity. This situation is supposed to lead to a correspondingly greater degree of accuracy in the understanding of society's rules (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:60). Rules are more specific as regards the behaviour permitted or required in a situation in collectivist high-context cultures than in individualist low-context cultures.

The homogeneity of a rule refers to the degree to which accurate understandings or standard usages are evenly distributed among participants in a communication system or culture (Cushman & Whiting 1972:233). Due to the homogeneity of their culture, members of a collectivist high-context culture are more likely to exhibit coordinated activity than are members of an individualist low-context culture.

Rules and norms therefore prescribe behaviour or conduct that enables communication to take place in society. Since rules prescribe behaviour, they can also be used to control and interpret behaviour and predict communication episodes. Where a society has certain rules about certain modes of communication, the observation or violation can predict behaviour. Rules prescription and norms of conduct apply differently in different cultures. According to Cushman and Whiting (1972), when people use different rules to interact, misunderstanding often occurs. Each of the cultural participants brings different rules with rule variations to the intercultural interaction. These rules reflect the form and function of behaviour, assumption about the behaviour of others, and notions about the mutability of their own rules through negotiations (Sigman 1980:44).

3.10 CORE SYMBOLS AND COMMUNICATION RULES

A discussion of symbols in general and of communication as a symbolic rule-governed phenomenon is a prerequisite to the discussion of communication rules.

Symbols are objects, actions or words that stand for a unit of meaning within a culture. They enable the development of relationships among members of that culture (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:6). Symbols furthermore serve as instruments for labelling and manipulating ways of communication. There is no obvious, natural or necessary connection between a symbol and what it symbolises because symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for helping people conceptualise the objects (Gudykunst & Kim 1992; Hesselgrave 1991; Kottak 1991; Littlejohn 1983; Lustig & Koester 1999;). Symbols which are central to the communication process therefore allow a person to think in an abstract manner without the referent being immediately present (Littlejohn 1983:97). For example, it is possible to conceptualise a table without physically seeing it.

Communication, a symbolic rule-governed activity, also includes the transfer of meaning through the utilisation of symbols. Human behaviour and interaction are communicated through the use of symbols and for these symbols to be understood, there must be shared rules that are understood by all the members of the society. This understanding, which is vital to human development, is the binding force of society. The human capacity to utilise

symbols enables the development of relationships among people who create their own worlds through the use of symbols and meanings (Gudykunst & Kim 1992:6).

Whenever people communicate in an effort to create meaning, they must interpret one another's symbolic behaviour. Such behaviour, in turn, can only be interpreted within cultural contexts. Although the meaning of symbols is not bound by their contexts, the context, nonetheless, is very important in determining the meaning of the symbols (Hesselgrave 1991:131). People's behaviour is frequently interpreted symbolically as an external representation of feelings, emotions and internal states (Lustig & Koester 1999:25). This symbolic interpretation of people's behaviour evolves culturally, and when it is regarded as an identity factor, it becomes part of the rules that govern communication.

People of different cultures regard themselves as unique individuals with certain characteristics and traits and these traits crystallise into core symbols. The latter are a communicative device with semantic properties and are expressions of communal identity (Witteborn 2004:85). Core symbols, therefore, are groups of systems which comprise rules or norms that reveal both prescriptions and proscriptions for competent behaviour among members of a cultural community. The core symbols of a cultural group are identified through recurrent patterns of communicative behaviour (Hecht et al 1993).

By their nature, core symbols give insight into a cultural group by delineating the rules which are the moral standards and expectations for conduct. They also delineate what is acceptable behaviour. Core symbols as was mentioned earlier, are a central unifying force because they embody a normative force which guides the behaviour of a cultural group. The normative force is reflected in the communication rules of the cultural group since these rules are guides to communicative behaviour (Lindsley 1999).

Core symbols are core characteristics of concepts that are enmeshed in relationships in cultural situations. In their study of core symbols in intercultural friendships in South Africa, Collier and Bornman's (1999) intent was to find out from their respondents' instances in which they managed cultural differences and rule violation that would

necessitate the termination of friendships. The respondents also had to recommend appropriate and satisfying friendship conducts to people from different cultural backgrounds.

Collier and Bornman (1999) suggest that core symbols are the central features of the codes used to interpret the social world. Core symbols furthermore provide a holistic way of summarising themes that can juxtapose across cultures. As was mentioned earlier, Collier and Bornman (1999) held focus groups among Afrikaner, British, Coloured, Asian and African groups in South Africa and arrived at the following results. For the Afrikaner, the core symbols were pride in cultural identity and decorum. For the British, these were individualism and future orientation. The core symbols for the Coloured respondents were flexibility and relationship orientation, while for the Asian group they were responsibility for action and openness. African core symbols were honour and compassion.

Hecht et al. (1993:95) view core symbols as representing stylistic modes or tendencies in cultures. The core symbols are regarded as basic entities that are found in different cultures and they are often associated with the communication styles of those cultures and are especially prominent in the intracultural communication within the cultures. The communication styles are viewed as expressing these core symbols and in the process shaping and recreating them.

In juxtaposition, values are conceptions of what is desirable in society. Values guide social actors to evaluate people and events, to select actions and to explain the events and the actions. Values are also goals or trans-situational criteria ordered by importance as guiding principles in life. Cultural values represent the explicitly or implicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right and desirable in a society. Cultural values like security, freedom and prosperity are the bases for the specific norms that inform people about what is appropriate in different situations (Schwartz 1994:25). Values, therefore, are the desired characteristics of a culture and are regarded as explanations for the way in which people communicate (Lustig & Koester 1999:81). Hall (2005:50) mentions

qualities like honesty, hard work, friendliness, ambition and equality as examples of values.

Whereas Collier and Bornman (1999) suggest that core symbols are the central features of the codes used to interpret the social world, Schwartz (1997:7) suggests that values represent the explicitly or implicitly shared ideas about what is good, right and desirable in a society. Hecht et al (2003) define core symbols as particular words and phrases whose meanings refer to values, norms, premises and beliefs about the world. They also define values as beliefs about how the world should be, and norms as the manifestations of values in the form of social rules.

Values and core symbols, however, are resources for making sense in communication and for creating a community (Hall 2005:343). Cultural values and core symbols make up the most fundamental framework of a culture and they tend to justify why people of a certain culture think or act the way they do. They are a set of conceptions that distinguish the characteristics of one group from another (Chen & Starosta 2006:361).

There seems to be a very thin line between the way different scholars define core symbols and values. Schneider (1976) defines core symbols as symbolic systems that guide the way people construct meaning through communication processes showing how they should behave in order to be considered competent. Collier and Bornman (1999) define core symbols as central features of codes that are used to interpret the social world and that are enmeshed in cultural situations. The examples that Collier and Bornman have given, as has been cited earlier tend to indicate that they are also the indications of how people should behave in cultural situations. In comparison, the examples that Hall (2005) has given about values, namely honesty, hard work, friendliness, ambition and equality correspond very closely to those of Collier and Bornman which are openness, responsibility for action, honour and compassion, just to mention a few. Lustig and Koester (1999) define values as desired characteristics and are explanations for the way people communicate.

This section can be summarised through Schneider's (1976) perception that core symbols relate to the key constructs around which rules of appropriate conduct can be evolved.

Schneider goes on to imply that values relate to end states or processes which are desireable, good, right and acceptable to the interlocutors. It can therefore be said that core symbols are ways of communication demonstrating what is valued.

The relationship between rules and core values

In our cultural experiences we learn about the kind of behaviour that enhances the existence of the society (Dodd 1991:43). Therefore every culture has rules or procedures which make up the basic set of expectations about how appropriate goals for the society are supposed to be accomplished. These expectations are actually the cultural values which are the shared ideas about what is good, right and desirable in a culture (Schwartz 1994:25). Through values people can evaluate and explain events and select actions because there are rules that govern the events and actions. This view about what happens in every culture is supported by the view that cultural expectations, which are cultural values about social behaviour, are influenced by a set of rules (Lustig & Koester 1999:265). Rules, therefore, have to be adhered to, to enable values to be upheld in the society.

3.10.1 Core symbols and African society

Miller (2006) contends that African cultures as a group are considered to be collectivist. In her reference to the Kenyan culture, which is a constituent of African culture, Miller (2006) says that African culture is characterised by a high power distance. Power distance is significant in connection with core symbols because high power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of society view the unequal distribution of power as a normal part of life. This view is exemplified in the Kenyan cultures where, in the family for instance, respect and deference to parents and older relatives are obligations in life. The society does not expect children to make their own decisions or to contradict the decisions of their elders. Delineation of the power hierarchy exists in Kenyan families. The father is regarded and treated as the supreme authority whose word cannot be directly questioned. Following in rank is the mother, then frequently the oldest child, especially a male child (Miller 2006:238). This is an example of the core symbol of respect for authority.

Makgoba (1997:197) declares that people of African descent are linked by shared core symbols which are fundamental features of African identity and culture. The features alluded to include hospitality, friendliness and the emphasis on the community rather than on the individual. Nyasani (1997) goes further to add a cultural core symbol that he identifies as sociability, which encases tolerance, patience, sympathy and acceptance. To him, these core symbols serve as important landmarks in the general description of the African mind (Nyasani 1997:57).

The Senegalese philosopher Senghor (1963) views the traditional African society as being based both on the community and on the person. Since the African society is also founded on dialogue and reciprocity, the group has priority over the individual. Dialogue and reciprocity are therefore core symbols. Doki (2009) says that communication in traditional African society is central to administration, mobilisation and education of a people. He joins those who want to advertise indigenous channels of communication and folk media that in the past were relegated to the background where the modernisation paradigm is concerned. Through research on traditional plays he depicts the cultural traits of the people and their values as being justice and truth, status and respect (for community leaders), community approval, sexual discipline, disdain of worthless actions and physical beauty. These values are given cultural interpretation to help in communicating their cherished ideals to the outside world.

Another analyst, Vogl [sa], provides a reservoir of cultural values representative of African society in addition to the core symbols identified by other authors. He proposes ten important cultural values in African society, namely greetings, respect for elders, concern for the extended family, responsibility, integrity, honesty, responsibility, selflessness, entertainment, land, environment and time. He explains that in the African society, it is, for example, very important to greet everybody you meet, including strangers. Failure to do that is tantamount to rudeness. Elders must be accorded all the respect because they deserve it by virtue of their years of experience.

The extended family is an integral part of society and each member must be taken care of, especially the elderly, the young and the handicapped. This care is closely tied to the

value of responsibility where each person as a member of the community is supposed to be responsible for the welfare of all others and each person's acts have consequences related to the fate of the community. This consideration is connected to integrity which emphasises the importance of how a person behaves in the community, because it is believed that positive or negative behaviour will have positive or negative repercussions on the community. Honesty and selflessness are therefore the bedrock of the sense of community because they underscore the act of sharing. The values of responsibility, integrity and honesty are therefore integral to the family and the community.

Time is regarded as subjective and is not supposed to control people. If there is an event, for example, the time of arrival does not matter, because the event is more important than the time. The value of entertainment, on the other hand, should not just be an episode for filling time but should contain a moral message (Vogl [sa]).

Land and the environment are believed to belong to the ancestors and are therefore sacred and should be protected with one's whole being (Vogl [sa]).

Discussions propounded about African values are summarised by Isizoh [sa] who suggests that the African values emphasise the sense of community life, good human relations and the sacredness of life. The latter gives rise to the importance attached to the power of the word as words of blessing are regarded as a source of life whereas curses are believed to cause adverse circumstances or even death.

In this section, core symbols and values have been discussed and they warrant attention because they reveal the heartbeat of the society and furnish the arena for mutual understanding in an intracultural situation. Rules and norms of conduct are society's ways of perpetuating the core symbols and values and are prescribed by cultures to govern cultural behaviour. It is, however, important to note that the basic premise for learning about the rules and norms of behaviour is through family communication.

It was mentioned at the beginning that intracultural communication is a phenomenon that operates within any given cultural context and this operation applies to the level of communication in the family.

It is through the family that people learn about the core symbols which are regarded as acceptable communication behaviour. They also learn the rules and the norms that are put in place to uphold the core symbols.

3.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the rules theory, a relatively recent theory in the area of communication research, has been presented as an important theory that is making an impact on theory-building and research in spite of the criticism levelled against it because of its lack of clarity.

The rules theory is discussed as a means of explaining human action at family and societal levels, the growth of relationships and a viable approach for resolving problems in communication theory building.

The chapter discusses several theorists' definitions of the rules concept, ending with the conclusion that rules are what the society prescribes to its members. The survival of human beings in societal structure rests on the formation of controls or rules which are endorsed for the welfare of the members.

The chapter discusses several approaches to the rules theory shedding light on the fact that the study of rules can be approached in diverse ways and some of these ways are given as examples. As has been noted, the rules theory is relatively recent in the field of communication research, and its ability for generalisation is relatively polarised.

The discussion of the different types of rules and their different functions reveals that the rules are all related to behaviour. The functions of rules are to regulate, interpret and predict behaviour, and also to provide guidelines and corrective measures for behaviour. They are therefore mechanisms through which social action is organised. The types of rules are drawn from the functions, and they are, for example, regulatory, obligatory, optional, preferential and contextual. They therefore regulate and correct behaviour, and show what behaviour is permitted or preferred and appropriate in the context.

Apart from considering the types of rules and their functions, scholars cannot rule out the very important exercise of research. The chapter reflects the methodologies that are

proposed as possible ways of carrying out research in the area of rules. The advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies are deliberated upon and a few examples have been cited of theorists who have used them. Although the different methodologies have been recommended in different contexts, a combination of methodologies is suggested for better results.

In spite of controversies that accompany the rules theory, most of the rules scholars concur that the rules theory is emerging as an important theory in the field of communication research and should be seriously considered in the future. On the basis of this confidence, the researcher chose to use the rules theory in the current study.

CHAPTER 4

THE MAASAI AND AKAMBA CULTURES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The rules theory that was discussed in the previous chapter is the theory that has been identified to be appropriated for the discussion of the traditional cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba. This chapter discusses some general aspects about Kenya as the country that hosts the two cultures. It also discusses the cultural backgrounds of the two societies, including the social, economic and religious institutions. The family structures show the hierarchical relationships that exist within the families. The discussion of the community structures reveals the governance systems and how they are established to cater for the various needs of the society.

4.2 KENYA AS THE CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Kenya, one of the countries found on the east coast of Africa, is a diverse mosaic of ethnic groups which emerged from the generations of cross migrations in Africa. Kenya has thus become a multi-ethnic nation whose population is divided into more than forty ethnic groups, distinguished by a variety of languages and cultures. The biggest of the groups are the Kikuyu of the Central Province, the Luo of the Nyanza Province, the Luhya of the Western Province, the Akamba of the Eastern Province and the Kalenjin and the Maasai of the Rift Valley Province (Indigenous Kenyan people fall into three major linguistic groups … 2010).

The ethnic groups speak languages belonging to three major language groups in Africa, namely Bantu, Nilotic and Cushitic (New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1994:806). Although Kenyans speak a variety of languages, English is the dominant language in the towns and throughout the tourist industry.

Long before the arrival of the Europeans in Kenya, migrations took place over many centuries. The Cushites were the first to arrive from Ethiopia and Somalia around 2000 BC. To date, they continue to migrate south in sporadic waves. This move has been

occasioned by unstable political conditions in both countries. About 1000 years later, the Nilotic tribes followed from Egypt and Sudan, and then the Bantu from West Africa around 500 BC (Indigenous Kenyan people fall into three major linguistic groups 2010). Today, Kenya's population is almost exclusively of African descent, with small but economically influential minorities of Asians and Europeans. The population of Kenya is approximately 30 million and the growth rate of 3.8% is one of the highest in the world. The Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya ethnic groups comprise 50% of the population, while the Akamba and the Kalenjin comprise 10%. The rest is made up of the other ethnic groups which include the Maasai (Mulli 2006:6).

The country was formerly known as the East African Protectorate, and was renamed Kenya in 1920. The British took pride in the fact that the funds they provided for the building of the railway were instrumental in building up the present-day Republic of Kenya (Hazelwood1979:1). The building of the railway started at Mombasa in 1896 and reached the shores of Lake Victoria in 1902 traversing the country from the east to the west, facilitating the genesis of trading centres. Today, this railway is part of the boundary between the Maasai and the Akamba, the focus of the current study. The map in Figure 4.1 shows the districts of Kenya including Kajiado and Narok where the Maasai live, and Machakos and Kitui where the Akamba live. These districts are situated in the southern part of the country.

Figure 4.1 Districts of Kenya

4.3 THE MAASAI

The Maasai people, as has been mentioned, form part of the forty-two ethnic groups in Kenya. They speak the Maa language, one of the eastern Nilotic languages also spoken by the Arusha of Tanzania, and the Samburu and the Njemps of Kenya (Hurskainen 1984:9). The Maasai are widely known as an East African group because of their domination of the plains between Lake Victoria and the coast in the nineteenth century. They are one of the few migratory groups that are remaining in East Africa (Marks 1999). The population of the Maasai who traverse two countries, namely Kenya and Tanzania is

about one million (Gilbert 2000). The population of the Maasai of Kenya also referred to as the Central Maasai, is estimated as ranging from 350,000 to 500,000 (Coast 2002). They live in the Narok and Kajiado districts. Their homes are found around the game reserves marked as Maasai areas on the map, although these reserves have weakened the social bonds and cohesiveness that they used to enjoy. This situation is also a result of the government restrictions on the nomadic tendencies of the Maasai of moving from one area to the next in search of pasture for their livestock.

4.3.1 History

It is still not clear as to when precisely the pastoral Maasai emerged as a distinct people. They appear to have diverged from the Samburu as early as a thousand years ago (Jacobs 1975:410). The oral traditions of the Maasai suggest that they originated from the area west of Lake Rudolf and then slowly moved southwards into the central Rift Valley. While the Maasai expanded southwards through the richer grasslands of the central Rift Valley, other Maa-speaking groups tended to settle mainly along its new eastern and western fringes.

The Great Rinderpest epidemic ravaged the Maasai in 1890. There were subsequent smallpox outbreaks. These events resulted in a loss of cattle and also in the progressive loss of large areas of their richest and most important dry-season grazing to European settlement (Marks 1999). The Maasai signed away their land rights to the British and so were relegated to the seasonal grazing lands in the Rift Valley (Kantai 2007). Their African agricultural neighbours, including the Akamba, also encroached on this land in the early twentieth century. The famous "Maasai moves of 1904 and 1911" resulted in the Maasai being contained within a reduced, government-controlled "southern reserve" (Jacobs 1975:412).

The policies introduced by European settlement denied the Maasai access to much of their former grazing areas and also affected the quality of both their herd management practices and livestock. The Maasai used to occupy the fertile and well-watered grazing lands of Laikipia and the Rift Valley area around Nakuru before they were driven to

drier, less fertile plains to the south when they signed away their land rights to the British administration (Kantai 2007) as has been mentioned above. They were also chased off their land by the Kikuyu, the Akamba and the Nandi who occupied land to the north. That is how they landed in their current place of abode in the Kajiado and Narok districts to the south and south-west of Nairobi (Coast 2002; Jacobs 1975:412).

During the last fifty years, Maasai pastoral life began to have detrimental effects on local environments, due largely to overpopulation, overstocking and overgrazing. These three practices resulted mainly from the loss of high-potential areas on which their traditional herding systems were formerly based, as has already been mentioned.

4.3.2 The family structure of the Maasai

The basic unit of Maasai kinship is the family. The Maasai family possesses characteristics of what may be considered the make-up of a patrilineal society. The family structure is based on polygamy, which is regarded as the ideal, and a Maasai man is entitled to as many wives as he can afford (Ngunjiri 2001:2). He divides his herd among his wives so that each woman and her children have a separate herd of cattle, sheep and goats. However, he can take an animal from any of his wives without any explanation to her. The power of older men lies partly in accruing wives for themselves and partly in acquiring a reputation for wisdom in arranging suitable marriages for their children.

The father's authority

According to Spencer (1988:14), the father of a Maasai family wields power and authority over all his wives, sons and daughters. He makes all the decisions as the head of the family. His decisive role is well illustrated, for example, in the figurative use of Maasai terms. Men emphasise the dependence of women in general, even their own mothers, by referring to them as *inkera* or children. The verb *airrita*, which means to herd, tend or look after, implies the skilful use of a herding stick to keep the herd firmly under control, and it is in this sense that a man is expected to look after his family. It is regarded as despicable for a man to allow his wives to get out of control the way "a

herdsman lets his cattle stray" (Spencer 1988:14). Both the herd and the family have to be mastered as a condition for success.

Marriage broking of sons and daughters is pre-eminently the responsibility of the father. This practice is justified in terms of his greater wisdom and a wider social network to discern families that are worth marrying into. A father may accrue wives who are much younger than he is, because of the age-set system which will be explained later, while his sons have to rely on him to initiate marriages on their behalf when he sees fit. A father has authority over even his married sons in that the cattle that they own still belong to him, and the sons cannot dispose of those animals without his permission (Spencer 1988:214).

For a Maasai daughter, it is her father who determines her marriage to a man who is normally at least twice her age and occasionally even four times or more (Spencer 1988:26). This situation arises from the set-up where the girls are married at puberty whereas the men mostly marry after they have become *morans* (to be explained later) at about thirty years and older. Some of the girls are married off as fifth or sixth wives to men who belong to their own fathers' age-sets. A girl is usually offered no alternative other than to accept her obligation to honour her father's choice with his blessing, or risk his anger, which could lead to a curse – something that is dreaded in Maasai community. A girl might be eight years old when a prospective husband registers his interest. Once a particular suitor is selected, he and the father of the girl become stock-friends, implying mutual support. A girl is not told of the plan for her marriage until the plan is fully settled. Her father's power over her dominates all the activities of her life. As long as he lives, the father remains the key figure in the family and must be obeyed (Spencer 1988:29).

For a girl to become a wife there is a ritual sequence of removal from her father's village to that of her husband, symbolising a transfer of control over her. Negotiations over the transfer of a woman as a possession from her father, who reared her, to her husband who

will rule her, are entirely in the hands of the elders. Women are also exchanged for cattle in a system where accumulation of wives is essentially an investment.

The wife

According to Llewelly-Davies (1979:206), women's social and political inferiority is explicitly linked to childbearing in the Maasai mindset: a Maasai wife's major duty is to give birth to children. This mindset is expressed in the practice of *inkamulak oonkituak*, which is a ceremony held every four years to promote women's fertility. This ceremony is usually preceded by the *olamal*, a delegation of women who tour the countryside and levy fines upon men who are known to have violated women's rights, one example being that of wife beaters. This is the only time that they are allowed to protest against men's "injustice".

The senior Maasai wife is expected to build a house for herself and her children, and another house for her husband. The subsequent wives will build their own houses for themselves and their children. Women's other chores include herding the cattle, milking, fetching water and firewood and taking care of young children. It is believed that circumcised men become sick or even die if they perform certain women's chores, such as drawing water (Llewelly-Davies1979:211).

A prevailing Maasai belief is that women are innately dependent upon men and that they (women) are constricted in their outlook and abilities (Spencer 1988:39). A woman is treasured only because she is responsible for bringing forth life and for this reason she is to be protected together with her children. It is otherwise an undisputed right for men to own women as possessions. Due to this "right", a girl is brought up to accept that women have a restricted role, and there is no contradiction when she is expected to accept the arbitrary authority of her husband over domestic affairs in later life. From the outset of their marriage, it is the husband who holds the whip handle, bullying any negligent or defiant wife into submission, rather as he would control "a troublesome cow", as is expressed by Spencer (1988:198).

The children

Children are highly treasured and there is a unique gentleness in the Maasai view of the dependent young child. Due to a relatively high rate of infant mortality, a child that survives is perceived as a gift to the community (Spencer 1988:40). However, this indulgence towards infancy does not extend to freedom of expression. In a highly age-conscious society, children are relegated to the most junior position in society. They have to learn *enkanyit* (respect) for all those who are their seniors. They learn that privilege and the final word belong to the older generation. Boys are taught to accept the scorn of older mates, and girls are taught to avoid the elders (Spencer 1988:47).

A boy's upbringing is geared towards the care of stock, and from as young as five years old he goes out with the older herd boys to the cattle camp. Preference for boys is reflected in the saying that "Only a lucky man begets a boy, for a girl grows up and another man comes to take her away" (Spencer 1988:50). As girls are growing up, they are expected to spend time with their mothers and older sisters to learn all the chores of women.

4.3.3 Community structure

Enkutoto, the local community, consists of a local concentration in the network of interaction that is concerned with the mutual sharing of opinions and events. It has no boundary, but there is a collective rapport and a sense of identity that the conventional village normally lacks. It is the local community that has the moral authority to resolve all the issues that pertain to the lives of the people.

Community and governance structures are so intertwined that one cannot be discussed without the other, and this notion is reflected in the fact that the age system provides the central institution for political action (Spencer 1988:5). The age-set system is the most important and dominating feature of the Maasai unity and cultural structure. This system organises men into separate but interrelated hierarchies of sex and age groups (Llewelly-Davies1979:206). The system also delineates the different levels of social positioning.

The boundaries between the groups are marked by codes of conduct, which will be discussed later (Llewelly-Davies 1979:116).

The male hierarchy consists of three age categories; o*layioni* (the uncircumcised boys); *olmurrani* or *moran* (the circumcised young men who are the warriors of the community); and the o*lpayiani* (the junior and senior elders of the community). The female hierarchy consists of *entito* (the uncircumcised girls) and the *enkitok* (the circumcised women who through the act of circumcision are ready for marriage) (Llewelly-Davies 1979:116).

Circumcision

Emuratare, the circumcision, is the most important initiation in the Maasai community because it symbolises transition from childhood to adulthood, and it occurs every fourteen or fifteen years, depending on the section of the Maasai community to which one belongs. The elders control the 15-year cycle. The circumcision is usually preceded by the *enkipaata*, a ceremony organised by the fathers of the boys who are about to be circumcised. After the age of 13, a boy or girl is eligible for the next circumcision period.

For about four months the boys travel around the community announcing their new age-set. A homestead where the boys are initiated is chosen by the o*loiboni kitok*, the ritual leader. The elders recognise the new age-set by lighting a fire in a chosen place, hence the term *olpiron*, or “fire stick”. This term is applied to the senior age-set who are also refered to as "fire patrons". They are supposed to light a fire for the alternate age-sets. For example, age-set "A" lights a fire for alternate age-set "C", which is younger. In thirty years' time age-set "A" retires and age-set "C" lights a fire for age-set "E". This process creates a life-long relationship.

In Maasai life, each age-set that is circumcised every fifteen years has a definite name. For example, the age-set that was circumcised in 1911 is called *Dareto*; the set that was circumcised in 1942 is called *Nyankus*i and the one that was circumcised in 1970 is called *Ngorisho*. The names never change and they serve as reference points in the history of the

Maasai people, just like we in contemporary life refer to World War I and World War II as historical beacons (Spencer 1988:66).

The opening of a circumcision period is one of the most important events as far as the integrative function of the age-set system is concerned (Hurskainen 1984:129). *Enkipaata* ushers young boys into *moran*hood. Spencer (1988:68) describes the awe of this state when he says that *moran* occupy a cherished position, associated with the reputation of the Maasai as a warrior people. Everyone is enchanted in different ways by the ideal of *moran*hood as a climax of male virility. Boys eagerly look forward to this period; young wives are suspected of unfaithfulness because they are secretly attracted to the *moran;* mothers of *moran* dote on their sons; elders hark back to it; and the *moran* themselves bask in this limelight. They are held to excel all others physically and the symbol of their coveted position is a set of privileges denied to the boys. Boys are, for example, not allowed to cross the central corral of any village, dance with girls, yelp in the bush at night, hunt lions, slaughter an animal in the forest unaccompanied, or defend the area against cattle rustlers.

At circumcision, although there might be a considerable number of youth to be circumcised, the rituals are performed individually or in small groups. After a successful operation, the initiates go to recover in their mothers' huts. Each one is offered stock by various close members of the family. The initiation rituals last for three to four months. During those months the boys are in seclusion. After having participated in his first *olpul*, which is the warrior's training ritual, the youth is allowed to wear the regalia of a warrior as a symbol of his new status (Hurskainen 1984:134).

It is within a domineering father's power to deny his son *moran*hood and bind him down to meekly continue as a herding boy in the guise of "premature elderhood". The latter is a state whereby the son remains in an anomalous position until his peers have completed their *moran*hood. Premature elderhood is only justified when a wealthy father cannot manage the herd alone and has no other son to turn to (Spencer 1988:80).

The manyatta

After circumcision, the next step is to form the *manyatta*, or warrior's camp, which contains twenty to forty houses selected by the fire-stick patrons. The latter are expected to carry weapons such as spears, clubs and shields. The purpose of the camp is to keep men of the same age-set together, and it fulfils their role of being a military force, which is their crowning privilege. This is where the warriors learn about the age-set brotherhood, oratory skills and animal husbandry. The patrons appoint a talented and respected member of the *manyatta* as a spokesman, referred to as *olaiguenani*. Two patrons are chosen to act as "fathers" of the *manyatta* (Spencer 1988:85).

The eunoto

The *moran* spend up to ten years in the *manyatta* after which they perform the *eunoto*, the senior warriors' initiation ceremony. This ceremony signifies the promotion of the warriors to a senior stage. This initiation permits senior warriors to marry. One of the rituals performed is the cutting of the warriors' long ochre-stained hair. *Enkan*g *ekule* is the milk-drinking ceremony when the warrior is allowed to drink milk alone and not strictly in the company of the other warriors. *Enkang ekule* frees the warriors from constantly seeking the company of one another. During the festival, warriors are prohibited to carry weapons such as sticks, spears and knives (Spencer 1988:143).

Eenkangoo-nkiri, the meat ceremony that follows the *enkang ekule*, permits warriors to eat meat by themselves. A specially chosen bull is slaughtered and the women of the homestead prepare the meat. Through this event a husband also tests his wife: It is said that a wife who has engaged in an illegal sexual affair with a man of the younger age-set will fall ill when she gets into contact with the bull's skin. However, it is acceptable for a man to share his wife with other men of his age-set (Spencer 1988:254).

The olngesher

The last age-set's initiation is the o*lngesher*, which marks the status of a junior elder. Every man is honoured with an elder's chair, and in the early morning of the day of the event, he will sit on the chair and be shaved by his wife. If a man has more than one wife,

it is the senior wife's responsibility to shave the husband. The chair that the man is given becomes his "companion" until it breaks. If he dies before the chair breaks, his eldest son inherits it. After this ceremony, a man becomes an elder and gains full responsibility for his own home by moving away from his father's homestead to form his own homestead. His father, a senior elder, remains his advisor on matters of decision-making for as long as the father lives (Spencer 1988:182).

From what has been discussed it is evident that the community structure is heavily demarcated by the echelons of age. To the Maasai, therefore, the age factor is a very important component of their lifestyle. The governance structure equally lends itself to the age-set system as is evidenced in the next section.

Women's status

While the age-set is exclusively for initiated men, the status of women is defined by "age-grades". The latter are the successive statuses of individuals in the course of their lives. Uninitiated girls are normally in the company of warriors. Soon after initiation and through the female circumcision, they get married and assume the status of married women. During the female circumcision, the circumciser performs a clitoridectomy by cutting off a young girl's clitoris. After marriage, the senior wife usually has the privilege of building her hut on the right-hand side of the entrance to her husband's hut. The first wife or the senior wife has privileges that other wives may not have. She is the one who shaves her husband when he is initiated into the junior elders' level, as was mentioned earlier. Her son is the one who inherits cattle and other precious things, like the chair given to his father at the junior elders' ceremony (Spencer 1988:182).

Women never have full rights of ownership over livestock, so they must always be attached to the household of a male herd owner. When a woman gets married, she is allocated limited rights over a number of her husband's animals. She has milking rights and also the right to the use and sale of hides of all stock that die or are slaughtered. The animals that she is given at marriage are finally inherited by her sons. At her death, any unallocated animals pass directly to her youngest son (Llewelly-Davies 1979:211).

Women are excluded from almost all important decisions relating to the welfare of the herds. Since all important dyadic relations, including kin relations, are marked by the gift of stock from one party to the other, women are impoverished in their ability to consolidate social relationships. Women emphasise the importance of giving birth to many children, which to them is a compensation for not owning animals.

Divorce is not the concern of only the husband and the wife, but that of the whole society. A big meeting, *enkiguena*, chaired by *olaiguenani,* the headman of the husband's age-set, is assembled to adjudicate. Divorce concerns the transfer of the bride price encompassing the following rules. If the wife is childless, the bride price is returned to the husband after she goes back to her parents. If she has given birth to one or two children, more than half of the bride price is returned. If she has given birth to four or more children the entire bride price is not returned. The bride price is a symbolic legitimation of marriage regardless of the number of cattle given. It is also used as a reinforcement of kin relations (Llewelly-Davies 1979:212).

4.3.4 Governance structure

Hurskainen (1984:14) contends that the pastoral Maasai have never been organised as a single tribe under a unified political system. Traditionally, they have been divided into a number of sections, *olosho,* each with its own territory and autonomous political structure. Each structure is based on the age-set system. The two largest sections are the Kisonko in Tanzania and the Purko in Kenya. The two smallest sections are the Damat and the Dalalekutuk, both in Kenya.

The control of society

Whereas foreign analysts have customarily classified the Maasai into junior warriors, senior warriors, junior elders and senior elders, Hurskainen (1984:139) presents a different view. He identifies the following categories of warriors: probationary or junior elders, fire-stick elders, retiring elders and retired elders. The ruling *moran* are assigned different territories and each one has a mandate to protect his territory. Probationary elders are there to support senior elders. The fire-stick elders are the ones who preside

over ceremonies. They are the advocates of their community who establish the *manyatta* villages for the warriors and appoint *manyatta* spokesmen who are responsible for discipline in connection with the *moran* (Spencer 1988:104).

The retiring elders supervise the peace and security of their community and take care of the cattle husbandry section of their economy (Spencer 1988:20). The power of these elders lies partly in sustaining their reputation for wisdom in arranging suitable marriages. It is the elders, together with a girl's father, who determine who she is to marry. This situation arises because the elders have authority over marriage broking. Retired elders are regarded as extinct in the sense that they no longer participate actively in the affairs of the community.

The control of the society at large rests in the hands of the post-warrior age grades, *ilmoruak*, who are the elders. Most public affairs are in their hands. They also see to it that Maasai ways and customs are observed and respected.

4.3.5 Economy and means of livelihood

The economy of the Maasai people is intertwined with their way of livelihood. Most of their activities oscillate around cattle. The Maasai revere both cattle and grass as gifts from God, saying that "God gave us cattle and grass. The importance of cows to their culture is evident in their language (Lindijer 1999). “Cattle are in our hearts: their smell is sweet to us. I hope your cattle are well" (Bleeker 1963:229). The Maasai firmly believe that their neighbours of other ethnic groups stole their cattle from them. This is based on the legend that in the old days, God gave the Maasai all the cattle on earth. Any cattle found with other people are therefore either stolen or have strayed there. Therefore when the Maasai raid cattle, they believe they are not stealing, but merely retrieving what was originally theirs. They regard themselves as the rightful owners of all cattle hence the condoning of cattle raids (Galaty 1982).

The Maasai language is rich in words concerning cattle, for instance, cattle's colours and shades of hides, the shape and length of their horns and the height and sleekness of the

animals (Lindijer 1999). A man can therefore describe his cattle, sheep or goats in the minutest detail and can recognise them in the middle of any herd (Bleeker 1963:30). This attitude towards cattle stems from the fact that livestock has a subsistence role in providing the basic means of livelihood, a point that has already been discussed.

The Maasai do not waste any part of the animal. As part of their diet, they drink the milk and when the animal is slaughtered, they eat the meat and also drink the blood. This practice may seem gruesome to somebody from a different culture but it is comparable to the way the Maasai would find the diet of the French gruesome because the latter eat frogs. The hide is used as bedding, the horn is used as a cup and the dung is used to plaster walls or as firewood when dry.

Domestic animals and their products simultaneously serve as a means of exchange between individuals and groups so as to create, perpetuate and reinforce social relations. For instance, a man who is seeking to get married, has to pay a certain number of cattle to the family of the girl he intends to marry and this action creates a bond between the two families (Hurskainen1984:85). Cattle and sheep are essential in rituals as will be explained later in connection with religious practices.

The karsisisho

Maasai men usually strive to become rich. The concept of *karsisisho*, that is riches, embraces rights over women and children as well as over livestock. A man who attains old age surrounded by flourishing herds of cattle, wives, children and grandchildren is believed to be immortal (Llewelly-Davies 1979:211). Cattle are regarded as wealth and a man who owns large herds commands great respect (Bleeker 1963:30). The herd owner has overall responsibility for the herd and for the members of his household. He makes important decisions about the disposal of resources, and the sale, slaughter or gift of livestock. In association with other men of the village, or alone, he decides where the animals will pasture and where and when they will be taken to drink water (Llewelly-Davies 1979:211).

A man's herd comprises of formal gifts at birth, stock from what was originally allotted to his mother on her marriage, some that were presented to him at his initiation and others that are added as occasional encouragement for excelling in herding. The principal initiative for these gifts comes from the father, but any unmarried son can press his mother for more cattle (Spencer 1988:232). Even in later life, a young elder's cattle rights are based on his relationship with his father. Apart from livestock having a subsistence role in providing the basic means of livelihood, the animals also act as a means of exchange between individuals and groups to create, perpetuate and reinforce social relations, as has been mentioned before. One of those social relationships is marriage.

As has been stipulated earlier, the Maasai economy is ideologically one of subsistence where values are measured in terms of the number of domestic animals rather than in terms of money. Economically and socially the most significant transactions are those connected with marriage. Cattle are used as a form of bride price and are thus regarded as the strength of marriage ties. In some cases the bride may receive several cattle from her father as dowry in case the groom is not capable of providing enough cattle for the new home (Hurskainen 1984:106).

Land

Whereas land among the Maasai is administered in common by herd owners, livestock are owned by individuals. Roles in the production of crops are ideally determined by sex and age. Labour on the land is appropriated through individual herd owners on the basis of kinship (Llewelly-Davies 1979:211).

4.3.6 Religion

The Maasai believe in one god, *Enkai*, the originator, although they sometimes address two gods in prayer. They practise this belief because they have a dualistic perception of god. They believe that god is benevolent and brings grass for feeding the cattle and provides food for all living things. For this attribute they call him *Enkai narok*, the black god, because black is the colour of authority and sanctity. Alternatively, they refer to their god as the red god, because red (the colour of blood) is also the colour of

aggression. God is seen as a punitive being and as the originator of the hazards of the bush that threaten life. These hazards range from the unexpected encounters with wild animals to diseases that take their toll on both people and animals (Spencer 1988:48).

The Maasai perceive their god to have the dual attributes of bad and good, hence the reference to the colours black and red. This perception enables them to invoke his judgement in a curse and recognise his inscrutable will to be decisive, but to trust his providence above all. God is seen as "a powerful moral force and he appears to have many of the highly respected attributes associated with extreme age, but only more so" (Hurskainen 1984:175). God's name has a feminine prefix which denotes fertility. Females are the fertile ones, and the continuity of various species depends on them, hence femininity is attributed to the Maasai god (Hurskainen 1984:176).

Maasai men offer prayers when there is a special occasion or special need for supernatural help in a raid or war or when the seasonal rains are slow in coming. Women and children usually pray together. At dawn they address the morning star with the words: "I pray you who rise yonder to hear me. Keep our cows alive. Take care of our people" (Bleeker1963:49).

Soon after marriage, a young wife prays fervently for a child. Sprinkling milk from a gourd in four directions, she says, "Give me offspring, you who bring thunder and rain. We pray to you every day". When she gives birth, there is usually a prayer of thanksgiving offered by the other women around her (Bleeker 1963: 49).

The nomadic background of the Maasai conditions them to develop the practice of ancestor worship. This situation arose in the past because the dead had to be left behind as they moved along. Prior to governmental directives, they did not even bury the corpses but left them to hyenas and other predators. Persons of great reverence, however, were buried in the middle of the kraal.

In addition to *Enkai* (the Maasai god), the Maasai occasionally pray to some of their departed religious leaders, *iloibonok kituaak.* The chief religious leader is the *oloiboni* who is the prophet and healer in the community. He presides over major festivals like the *eunoto*, when a new age group is installed, and *olngesher*, the meat feast that unites an age-set. The prophet is both a ritual leader and a medical expert. The office of curing is institutionally entrusted to one sub-clan and therefore rivalry is limited to members of that group only (Hurskainen 1984:181). Apart from curing people, the *oloiboni* is also a rainmaker and has the ability to foretell the future. The Maasai believe that the power of the blessing and the curse is associated with legitimate authority. A curse will not take effect unless a wrong has been done. It is therefore compared with arrow poison placed on the skin, which will have no effect unless there is a cut.

Sorcery

Sorcery, which expresses forces of chaos and evil that undermine the social order, is believed in and regarded like poison in the hands of a malicious person. Whereas a curse can be revoked by a blessing when amity has been restored, sorcery can only be countered by the help of a person who practises divination (Spencer 1988:219). The Maasai therefore expect their people to adopt a lifestyle that would neither attract the jealousies of sorcerers nor the suspicion of others that they themselves might be sorcerers.

The religious face of the Maasai therefore incorporates the belief in god *Enkai* and the belief in other supernatural beings as discussed in this section.

This section has covered certain aspects of the Maasai, namely, their history, family structure, community structure, governance, economy and livelihood and religion.

4.4 THE AKAMBA

The Akamba are the most north-easterly Bantu people in Africa. Their area is shaped like a right-angled triangle. One side stretches from Mount Donyo Sabuk (Maasai name) to the Mumoni range. The second side stretches between the Kiu and Mtito Andei stations

along the railway line that leads to Mombasa. The third side is a range of mountains running principally in a longitudinal direction from the north to the south. They are bordered by the Kikuyu to the north-west and by the Maasai to the south-west.

4.4.1 History

One of the earliest theories about the origin of the Akamba was narrated by Krapf, an explorer of East Africa, who stated that the Akamba people's ancient home was somewhere in Giriama land near the coast (Ndeti 1972:25). Later they moved to a colony in the neighbourhood of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and settled there until the Maasai drove them to their present location and compelled them to cultivate the soil instead of being nomads. This theory is substantiated by the existence of a province around the Kilimanjaro area in the eastern part of Tanzania called Ukamba.

Like the Maasai, the Akamba also have a myth about their cattle, purporting that the first people (the Akamba) came out of a termite hole and settled around its mouth. They had no cattle, but one evening they heard their god's voice from heaven saying, "On the seventh evening, when you go to rest, do not shut your kraals". Some people obeyed but some did not. At night, cattle, sheep and goats came from the mouth of the hole and filled the kraals of those who had obeyed. A shared belief about the common origin of the Akamba, Agikuyu and the Maasai purports that they were all the original owners of cattle, but the Maasai were the first to keep cattle. Cattle-breeding was so important in the life of the Akamba people that the practice had given rise to numerous rites stemming from the belief that a herd of fine oxen was the pride of an Akamba man.

4.4.2 Family structure Ndeti (1972:94) posits that the Akamba family provides the initial training field for the practice of religion, because that is where the observance of family rituals, rites and religious acts are required of every member of the *mosie,* the home. Among the Akamba the family is the core of the *mosie*. The married man, *nthele*, is the head of the family and also assumes responsibility in the society. Every elder, *motumia*, expects obedience from his family members. He has absolute authority over his sons even long after they have their own families (Lindblom 1920:149).

The Akamba favour polygamy as a family style and the wives belong to the extended family. An old couple may marry a young girl to serve them. If the man is impotent, he may arrange with the nearest relative to father children for him with the young wife. The children then belong to him and not to the biological father. Making a second marriage is not restricted to men only. A wealthy widow who has no son to inherit her property can marry another woman. She can then engage the closest relative from her husband's line of descent to sirechildren for her. They take her name and regard her as their "father". Men whose last names are feminine belong to this type of marriage. Similarly, a wealthy father can buy a wife for his son even when the latter is a *kebese*, an uncircumcised boy. The son must, however, wait to be circumcised before he can take a wife (Ndeti 1972:67).

Marriage

According to Mutua (2001:42) the Akamba regard marriage as a unifying link in the rhythm of life of which different communities, ancestors and future generations are part. It is a space where people express familial, social, religious and cultural responsibilities; a space where little boys are trained to engage in manly activities such as making bows and arrows, and little girls learn to fetch water, firewood and cook like their mothers. Young adults are trained in cultural activities, for instance, they are expected to attend the *oathi*, a cultural dance that affords them the opportunity to meet their prospective marriage partners.

In a polygamous marriage, the first wife has authority over the co-wives. They call her mother and obey her, the way children would obey their mother. She superintends the other wives' work and relays the wishes of their husband to them.

In this polygamous set-up a woman is allowed to have lawful relations with other men from her husband's clan. She can do the same with a husband's friend who visits. A man, on the other hand, can sleep with his half brother's wives. When a man dies, his oldest brother inherits his widow. A young widow can be inherited by her late husband's eldest

son. A man, on the other hand, can divorce his wife if he thinks she is not industrious, not a good cook, or is unfaithful or barren.

It is family practice that when an animal is slaughtered the members of the family eat different parts of the animal. The mother and children eat the legs, stomach and ribs, while the eldest son eats the back. The father would eat the ham, the back and the meat on the shoulder blades, among other parts that are regarded as delicious. Eating regulations are observed and anyone who eats a portion that is not his or hers can be cursed (Mutua 2001:43).

In-laws

In-laws, *nthoni*, are all the members of the spouse's extended family and are accorded special treatment. Lindblom (1920:87) purports that an Akamba man and his mother-in-law must not mention each other by name – the man cannot even mention the name of another woman who bears the same name as his mother-in-law. Also, a woman and her son-in-law do not look each other in the face. A man may not enter his mother-in-law's hut as long as she is there – he talks to her from outside through an intermediary. If his father-in-law has many wives, *athoni* (plural), all of them and their oldest daughters are his *nthoni*. The ideas about the *nthoni* have modified with time, however, and a mother-in-law and son-in-law can communicate verbally with each other more freely. The gift of a she-goat can earn a son-in-law the right to sit by the fire in his mother-in-law's hut when she is away. This is called *thoa mwaki* or to buy fire. There is no *nthoni* between a man and his wife's younger sisters. *Nthoni* does exist between a young wife and her mother-in-law, her husband's eldest wife and his sisters, and the young wife communicates with them with timidity. She also does not eat in their presence as a sign of respect. In order for her to have the right to sit on the hearth with her mother-in-law, she must give gifts, for example, bananas.

A woman does not mention her husband's name neither does she mention his *thome*, the place where he spends a great deal of his time talking, drinking beer and making tools and weapons. She just refers to the *muumaloni*, the place from where one comes.

The term *nthoni* communicates a number of mutual observances between certain individuals of the opposite sex who are in some ways connected by marriage. *Athoni* (*plural nthoni*) may not touch each other's belongings; neither do they sit on each other's chairs. The customs around *nthoni* are aimed at preventing undue sexual relations.

4.4.3 Community structure

The concept *mosie*, which literally means the home or the family, is of central importance to the Akamba community. Each member of the extended family contributes to its welfare. According to Ndeti (1972: 68) the *mosie* is a basic institution that carries all the vital functions of human development. It is a composite of family education, religion and adaptation to the environment. The *mosie* is conceived, for example, as a means by which the Akamba religious principles are carried out. This basic institution focuses special attention on women and children since they are the most vulnerable to "evil eyes" or witchcraft. The women and children also wear charms for protection. Elderly persons, parents and grandparents make sure that *mosie* is untainted by any object or event that may disrupt its structure. Occasionally a sacrifice is offered to *Molungu* the god on behalf of *mosie.*

The mbae

The larger system that envelops the *mosie* is the *mbae* which is a clan organisation. It traces its line of descent from a known hero, and ensures that there is no interclan marriage. From birth to burial a person's life is patterned according to the framework of the society. A traditionally acceptable person is the one who has gone through the age cycles and participated in and performed all the rites and initiations required (Ndeti 1972:82).

Spirits of the departed ancestors are supposed to create and shape the child in the mother's womb. They also determine whether it will be male or female (Lindblom 1920:11). Three days after a child is born, a ritual called "returning the child to the womb" is performed. A charm in the form of an iron chain called *ipa* is put around the

baby's neck by the father. This act is mediated by a sexual union of the father and mother of the child. Before the union is engaged in, the child is believed to still belong to the world of the spirits and be intimately connected with their world (Ndeti 1972; Lindblom 1920). Lindblom (1920:82) agrees that the coitus ritual mediates practically all conditions of life among the Akamba.

Age cycles

The Akamba identify certain age cycles that depict the different stages of life. Lindblom (1920:143) and Ndeti (1972:82) point out that an infant up to the crawling stage is called *okenge,* and then moves on to the next stage, *kana*, which means child. This stage lasts three years after which the child becomes a *kebese* if it is male and a *keletu* if it is a girl. All the adults in the *mosie* are responsible for the welfare of the *kana*. It is also important to note that a married woman who does not give birth is referred to as *mwetu* or little girl. The stage of *kebese* and *keletu* lasts up to 13 years, that is, until the signs of puberty begin to appear, after which the sexes are isolated.

A *kebese* graduates to the stage of *mwanake,* namely a warrior or unmarried man. When a *mwetu* gets married, she becomes *kibeti* or wife with children. A married man is called *nthele* and remains in that age grade until he reaches fifty years of age after which he becomes an elder or *motumia*. The *nthele* assume leadership of the society and are in charge of protection, organisation, fighting, planning and providing. To be a *motumia* is the most prestigious position for a man and is regarded as the pillar of wisdom and knowledge and the head of the *mosie* and *mbae.* He is consulted in all matters concerning morality, marriage, rites, legalism, purification, prophecy and divination, and he also decides who should marry whom, when and how.

Lindblom (1920:143) explains that anyone who wants to be a *motumia* (elder) must make a payment to those who are already *atumia* (elders), members of the *nzama* (a local assembly of elders) and acquire a distinctive stool called *mumbu,* which he carries everywhere he goes. All *atumia* are not on the same level. The highest in rank are the *atumia ma nzama* and *atumia ma ithembo,* those who administer the government of the

land and watch over religion respectively. The different ranks of *atumia* eat different parts of slaughtered animals which are killed at public feasts and on places of sacrifice.

Attainment of a higher grade is effected through the payment of goats and bulls. Clubs (*kisuka*) of *atumia* or *nthele* meet for amusement and to eat meat and drink beer. Outsiders and women are not admitted into these *kisuka* meetings. The women are not even allowed to prepare the meat that is consumed at these open-air feasts. This is reminiscent of the Maasai *moran* warriors who eat meat out in the fields where no woman is allowed to be present. Unlike the Maasai, age-sets have no connection with circumcision, and division into age classes is defined by adornment and attire.

Ranks among women

Rank classes among the women single out the wives of *atumia ma nzama* and *atumia ma ithembo*. They have the right to administer the cult on the places of sacrifice consecrated to the spirits of ancestors. Apart from this these women go through life calmly and quietly in subservience to their husbands. Their most important work is to look after the fields, with their chief duty being that of bearing children. Once in a while, women gang up against an issue that is hazardous to the community, comparable to the excessive wife beating of the Maasai people. At such times they beat drums and carry boughs for men to pay attention to them (Lindblom 1920:144).

The circumcision

The circumcision and initiation rites of the Akamba differ from those of the Maasai. *Nzaiko,* the word for circumcision, connotes two kinds of initiation rites. The first one, *nzaiko ila nini* (real circumcision), is the least important. Like the Maasai, both boys and girls have to submit to it, but unlike the Maasai there is no fixed age. It is believed that when the parents have sexual union on the second night of the circumcision it accelerates the healing of the boys and girls.

The second rite, *nzaiko ila nene* (the great circumcision), is a ceremony that signifies the Kamba man's graduation from childhood to manhood and his assumption of

responsibilities. The conductor, *mwaiki*, instructs the young people in preparation for matrimony. The third circumcision is an oath of secrecy among the men, and wives do not have access to it. One who goes through this becomes *mundu wa nguma*, a man of reputation, and has a safe claim to the *motumia* dignity. The conductor of this *nzaiko* is usually one of the respected elders.

To summarise, the Akamba community structure is closely knit, revolving around the *mosie,* a focal point of the community. The *mosie* extends to the larger system, the *mbae*, which is a clan organisation, tracing its descent from a known hero. It is evident that age is an important factor in identifying the echelons in the community. Circumcision is another practice in the community that identifies the above-mentioned echelons (Lindblom 1920:144).

4.4.4 Governance structure

In the Akamba society, the operations of government are diffused throughout the community to the extent that it is not possible to pinpoint the locus of political power. The government is a system of social control, which is conceived to take care of the problems of communal life, inside and outside the society. If, for example, in the old days, there was a sudden attack from neighbouring enemies like the Maasai, an *ita*, an army with well-equipped armourments and trained military leaders would be organised. Another example was that any ordinary citizen who disobeyed the customary laws was publicly punished. The Akamba government, therefore, was a collective responsibility where each individual was answerable to the community (Ndeti 1972: 97).

In view of the above, political matters to the Akamba became the business of every man in the society. Politics, therefore, was integrated with all other ways of life to the extent that each person was a ruler as well as a servant.

As was mentioned earlier, the Akamba society consists of different levels of organisation. *Mosie,* (the home), one of those levels, constitutes the most basic unit in which all ideas pertaining to the total development of the community are taught to the children by adults.

It is also indicated that *mosie* is an institution through which the heritage of the Akamba, their religion and ethical teachings are carried out. Through the *mosie*, the centre of learning, elders teach the beliefs and the practice of living with other people (Ndeti 1972:98).

Mbae is an extension of the *mosie* and it is the clan level at which a person adapts and applies what is learned from the *mosie*. A person is expected to carry out his or her responsibilities, failing which he or she is liable for punishment. The members of the *mbae* are both the judges and the recipients of judgement, just as every member of the society is both a ruler and a servant. For example, when an individual becomes a menace to the society by practising witchcraft, he or she is lynched in public.

So far, the discussion has revolved around the general idea of the Akamba government and its fusion with all other aspects of life. Hobley (1924) and Lindblom (1920) both present gerontocracy (veneration of old age) as being the nucleus of the Akamba government. This view claims that the *nzama*, the council of elders, is actually the executive branch of the invisible government which acts as a court and maintains religious matters although it has no special leader.

Ndeti (1972:99), on the other hand, regards the view about the *nzama* as only partly true because *nzama* deals mainly with legal cases pertaining to breaches of customary law and feuds. He goes on to say that the major function of the *atumia*, elders who constituted the *nzama* (council), is to supervise the conduct of family and public rituals. They share this task with the old women. If a man beats up his wife unreasonably, for example, such a case will be presided over by a *musili*, a local judge who is a member of the *atumia*.

Nthele, the young married men, and *anake*, the warriors, are the ones who actually carry out the government operations. They however make use of the *atumia*'s experience and wisdom. They run the affairs of the community by virtue of their age cycles and strength, but with the blessings of the *atumia*. To illustrate, the example of cattle raids on the Maasai for certain reasons can be mentioned. The Akamba as well as the Maasai perceive cattle as representative of food, wealth, ritual and prestige.

The age groups that take part in the raids mentioned above are the *nthele* and *anake*. The preparation of the *ita*, fighting divisions, is done by the *asileli*, the leaders who are old warriors. Before beginning preparation for the raids the *asileli* seek permission from *atumia ma nzama*, the elders of the region, after which they (*asileli*) assume absolute control over everyone in the region capable of fighting. Even with this kind of control, the *asileli* cannot act until they have consulted the *mondo moe*, the traditional priest-doctor, to find out whether or not it is the proper time to undertake the raid. The matter is cancelled altogether if the *mondo moe* does not consent.

Old age

In the Akamba society, old age is cherished because it is regarded as the time when an individual has attained seniority. An old man is rewarded by his society, his peers, the warriors and the *nthele* for all the services that he has rendered to the community, which include taking part in both public and private rituals. He becomes a consultant for the different phases of the Akamba life. The reverence that is accorded a *motumea*, an old man, is dependent on the fact that by the time he reaches that age, he has served the community in most ways prescribed by the Akamba tradition. As a warrior, he has defended the community against enemies. He has increased the wealth of the community through cattle raids. He is an asset to the community by having wives and children who look up to him as a source of authority.

Therefore, old age represents a unique veneration and the elders are regarded as the seat of wisdom for the community by virtue of their various experiences in life (Ndeti 1972:104).

4.4.5 Economy and livelihood

The Akamba concept of wealth lays emphasis on the possession of a large number of livestock, many wives and many children. The wives and children are cherished because they increase the number of people the man of the home has authority over (Lindblom 1920:7). A man's ownership of many wives depicts his wealth, hence his importance in the community.

Breeding of cattle

The Akamba, like other cattle-owning people, are very fond of their cattle, as they represent real wealth as was mentioned earlier. Cows provide milk and fat, and oxen are seldom killed except in emergency cases, like when an ox is sick. Oxen are used mainly for ceremonial occasions, for example when there is a need to offer a sacrifice. The meat that is eaten by the people in the community comes from sheep and goats (Lindblom 1920: 482). Women rear chickens and these fowl are always part of a homestead, however poor the latter is.

The love of cattle makes the man ready to risk his life in the event of an attack, which in the past invariably came from the Maasai. In the event of such an attack on the grazing herd, it is regarded a great shame and dishonour for a herdsman to abandon his cattle in order to save himself by flight (Lindblom 1920:482). The love of cattle is enhanced by the fact that the marital transaction, *ngasia*, is carried out with livestock (Ndeti 1972:99), as has been mentioned, and if a man does not have livestock it will curtail a very important transaction in his life. Since there are not always enough cattle to go around for everyone, any opportunity to acquire more is welcome. This opportunity manifests itself through the raiding actions. Raiding operations are known as *otabi* and are often executed on the Maasai. Such raids are sanctioned by the whole society.

Agriculture

Although the rearing of cattle is of great importance to the Akamba, agriculture is their principal occupation since they rely chiefly on the products from the field. The ownership of land, especially ancestral land, is therefore very necessary. Agricultural work is left exclusively to the women except for the breaking up of new ground, which is the duty of the men. The crops that are grown include maize, sorghum, leguminous plants, beans, sweet potatoes, yams, manioc and several kinds of pumpkins (Lindblom 1920:501).

Bee-keeping

Apart from cattle rearing and agriculture, the Akamba are also involved in bee-keeping, which is a widespread practice in the society. A single person can own two to three hundred hives. Honey is extracted two to four times a year and is eaten and used for brewing beer (Lindblom 1920:487), a favourite of old people. The larvae of the bees are regarded as a delicacy and the honey is a special diet for pregnant women.

Division of labour

Work is distributed among the sexes. The women are in charge of the art of pottery. Pots are important articles in the lives of the Akamba because they are used as cooking utensils. Some of the women's chores include grinding maize flour, crushing maize into powder for porridge, chopping wood, fetching water, growing vegetables and cooking for the family. Men's chores include building houses, fencing kraals, buying livestock, selling ivory, making beehives and making weapons (Lindblom 1920:543).

During colonial days in Kenya, the Akamba took pride in the dignity of labour and distinguished themselves by the kind of jobs they sought and occupied. In the government of Kenya, both the police force and the army had a substantial number of Akamba people. To them these jobs carried dignity because a soldier was the defender of his country and his people. The police force and the army were regarded as centres of power (Ndeti 1972:148).

Many rivers in the land of the Akamba contain ferriferous sand, so iron is forged by Akamba smiths and sold in open-air markets to the neighbouring groups. Iron is used to forge numerous articles for home use and for agriculture. The use of metals for stools is found to be more effective than wood. Copper and brass, which are also available, are used for making decorative articles like chains. Chain-making is a specialised craft among the Akamba, and they are also known as competent wood sculptors. Their wood carving ability contributes positively towards the economic development of Kenya. Akamba artisans provide significant foreign exchange for the Kenyan government (Ndeti 1972:136).

4.4.6 Religion

Ndeti (1972:172) paints a picture of the Akamba as being cosmological in outlook. The family is the venue for religious training. The observance of rites, rituals and religious acts of the cosmological year are required of every member of the society. It is believed that profane life can cause *keumo*, a curse, which could result in the destruction of the *mosie*, the *mbae* and eventually the entire Akamba people. As a result of this belief, every member of the community is supposed to engage regularly in general purification ceremonies.

Belief in God

The Akamba believe in a supreme being referred to as *Molungu* or *Mumbi* meaning the creator. His third name, *Ngai,* depicts an attribute such that the people avoid direct contact with him, hence the mediation through diviners and *aimo,* the spirits of the dead. In times of crises, *mondo moe,* a person who practises divination, will intervene and prescribe the desires of *Molungu* through the intercession of *aimo*. Ndeti (1972:175) says that *Molungu*, therefore, is an extremely impersonal force which is rarely invoked for gains or losses of a personal nature. Molungu's origin is a mystery, but according to myth, *Molungu* lived very close to the Akamba, just above them and within reach. Whenever women pounded cereals in their mortars, their pounding sticks would poke *Molungu*. So, he decided to move right up into the skies, so far from the people, that the latter needed mediating spirits, *aimo*, in order to reach him. The Akamba believe that *Molungu* is worshipped at the landmarks of his creation, such as the mountains, rivers, great rocks and other places that have unusual features. The Akamba believe that *Molungu*'s vantage points are Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya from where he observes man's affairs (Lindblom 1920; Mutua 2001; Ndeti 1972).

Other spirits

Man consists of three elements according to the Akamba, namely the dead, the living and the unborn. It is considered that the living are the focus of active communication. The dead and the unborn are realities with which the living have to cope in all matters of existence, and the welfare of the living is affected and influenced by the dead. It is

imperative for the living to consult the dead in difficult matters of life, piety, sacrifice and the worship of *Molungu*. The above practices spell out the reason why *aimo*, the spirits of the ancestors or the spirits of the dead, are a very important part of the religion of the Akamba. It follows therefore that death is considered as a transformation of the living into *aimo* to play a different role once they cross to the other world (Ndeti 1972:174).

As mentioned earlier, the *aimo* have the significant role of mediating between the living and *Molungu*. They assume forms like wind, fire, animals, plants, clouds or any other natural forms and pay visits to the living. They dwell in large trees, caves, forests, valleys and high places, and like *Molungu* they choose places that have unusual features (Ndeti 1972:175).

Lindblom (1920:209) holds the view that the Akamba worship the spirits. Ndeti's (1972:174) viewpoint is contradictory. He believes that, although the Akamba venerate and revere the spirits of ancestors, they do not worship them. Lindblom (1920:214) submits that sacrifices have to be made to keep the spirits happy and he also makes a distinction between *aimo* (spirit*s* of the dead) and *mbebo* (evil spirits from the neighbouring tribes like the Maasai and the Kikuyu). *Mbebo* cause bad things like mental illness and plagues, therefore they have to be driven away.

Forms of worship

Sacrifices and offerings are part of the worship system. The sacred places of sacrifice are known as *ethembo* where sacrifices are offered a few times a year. The exception is when there has been a catastrophe like a flood or an epidemic. The roles of the seer, *mothiani*, and the diviner priest, *mondo moe*, who preside over the sacrifices, are to alert people constantly about *Molungu*'s place in society. The seer and the diviner priest offer sacrifices since that ensures the continuous contact with *Molungu*. As Mutua (2001) purports, sacrifices and offerings are two important acts of worship for the Akamba. Sacrifices involve shedding of animal blood, whereas offerings include the casting of foodstuffs into shrines or on the by-ways. Sacrifices are made for the atoning of wrongdoings and the appeasing of *Molungu* and *aimo*, the spirits. Sacrifices are also

offered as signs of the consummation of the union between families or clans, for example in marriage transactions.

During the dry season, *thano*, from the end of August to early October, *Ngolano*, a worshipping assembly of women, go to the seer, *mothiani*, to petition for rain from *Molungu*, while men, children and young adults stay at home. It is believed that women's sexual power is the force that mediates for rain, which is called "the sperm of heaven". Women's sexual power also mediates for the fertility of *nthe*, mother earth.

Lindblom (1920:214) reminds us that many activities among the Akamba are preceded by sacrifices and these include both individual and public activities. The time for sacrifice is decided upon by *mondo moe*, the person who practises divination, and it is officiated by *atumia ma nzembo*, the religious council of elders.

In conclusion, the discussion of religion is an apt description of what Mbiti (1983:67) says about the Akamba. He says that religion is "from within them, from their blood and their heart".

In this section, the histories and cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba have been highlighted. For better understanding, it is also necessary to discuss their contemporary lifestyles and relationships.

4.5 CONTEMPORARY MAASAI AND AKAMBA RELATIONSHIPS

The relations between the Maasai and the Akamba have always been hostile, as was mentioned in the first chapter, and this situation has been aggravated by differences of ideologies, such as the Maasai's belief that they own all the cattle in the world. To the Maasai, this belief justifies their raids on the Akamba. The Akamba often expect the Maasai's raids especially after the latter's circumcision ceremonies. The Maasai believe it is proof of their prowess, and for the same reason there are also incidents of the Akamba raiding the Maasai's cattle. The hostility between the Maasai and the Akamba concerning cattle is captured in a story about how a dying Kamba man advised his sons not to fight with their neighbours over cattle. The dying man was referring to a myth which stated

that the friendship between the Akamba and the Maasai had died because of conflict over cattle (Lindblom 1920:535).

The terms that the Maasai and the Akamba use to refer to one another are relics of the negative attitudes and relationships that existed and still exist between them. The Maasai refer to the Akamba as *lungu* (dirty people) and the Akamba refer to the Maasai as *akavi* (enemies), although they no longer raid each other's cattle.

During the pre-election periods in Kenya in 1992 and 1997, there were political clashes among the people because of their different political ideologies as represented by the different political parties. These political parties comprised different ethnic groups and so the clashes turned out to actually represent ethnic clashes. An example was the utterances of a minister of local government, a Maasai, who justified the Maasai attacks on migrant ethnic groups in the Rift Valley Province which is their home, and also the home of the Akamba, on the grounds that "the Maasai were fighting for their rights"(Mulli 2006:3).

The current conflict between the Maasai and the Akamba arises from the fact that the Maasai remain pastoralists whereas the Akamba have turned to farming, relying mainly on crop production. The basis of the conflict is the competition for access to the limited land and other natural resources, water being the main source of contention (Manundu 2006:4). This conflict situation has paralysed the society in the Narok District in Maasai land, splitting it into two hostile camps: the indigenous Maasai against migrant communities, such as the Akamba (Manundu 2006:6). In order to get more insight into the relationship between the Maasai and the Akamba it is necessary to compare the influence of modernisation on them.

4.5.1 The influence of modernisation

Modernisation is one of the forces of change that has been putting a lot of pressure on the traditional way of life of the ethnic groups in Kenya. Many have succumbed, including the Akamba, leaving the pastoralists like the Maasai behind to wage a lone battle (Tribes and politics in Kenya … 2008).

The Maasai

The Maasai are a closely knit society and their community is still governed by a commonly held traditional value system. Their lifestyle is based on their own rules and they are known to be independent and resistant to modernisation. They take great pride in being Maasai and living according to tradition. Although they are able to move to the cities, settle there and change their lifestyle, they enjoy being in their villages and are said to be at their happiest when they mingle with their families and their cattle (Maasai marathon…2008). The goals of their indigenous education include maintaining a cohesive society and ensuring the survival of their migratory lifestyle. The elders socialise the children with the cultural values of the Maasai which include respect for elders, positive relations with others, tribal cohesion and collective ideology (Bogonko 1992).

The fact that the Maasai tenaciously hold on to their culture is unusual but commendable and this tenacity should be protected. The Maasai have distinctive tribal customs, and they are essentially stock farmers whose herds are central to their lives. To date they continue their nomadic lifestyle to the extent that during times of drought their cattle are brought right to the city of Nairobi (Go to Africa … 2008).

They have managed to maintain their way of life in spite of the decades of modernisation which have changed the ethnic groups around them. They have resisted the government's wishes that they settle in and develop one place instead of moving from place to place in search of pasture. This resistance has led to people from other ethnic groups romanticising the Maasai way of life and painting them as a people who live at peace with nature (Wonderful tours … 2008).

Today, the Maasai have to struggle to keep their land and their identity (Ole Saitoti [sa]). They are under threat with the government attempting to develop and modernise them (O'Neill 2008). Their way of life is further threatened by increasing urbanisation and also the fact that the areas that used to be their grazing land have been declared game reserves (Go to Africa … 2008).

Surrounded by a quickly modernising world, the Maasai have to reckon with the inevitability of change especially in the area of education. More and more Maasai children, for example, are attending school and acquiring knowledge that exposes them to modern ways of life. To this effect, Martinez and Waldron (2006) reflect the need for the Maasai to negotiate their cultural identity in the face of globalisation. In their study on the effect of education on the Maasai culture, the two scholars found that to some Maasai the imposition of formalised school signifies the demise of what they know and value as traditional culture. School attendance is seen as an element that is eroding traditional Maasai cultural values. Whereas Maasai identity has been linked to respect for family, others and cooperation, schools on the other hand are seen as reinforcing hierarchy and competition. In the conclusion to their study, Martinez and Waldron (2006) recommend that traditional culture and modern identity should co-exist so that there is an integration of Maasai cultural traditions and modern ways of life. An example of this in their opinion would be the merging of the Christian culture and the Maasai culture in the area of religion and to integrate Maasai ways in the school curriculum.

Sironka (2010) corroborates the scholars' view when he claims that the Maasai culture has not been in conflict with either his faith or the western education since the culture acknowledges the existence of God who is refered to as *Enkai*. He maintains that the Maasai life is governed by one major unifying theme of conduct which is respect. He reiterates that no matter how successful a Maasai may become, he will not enjoy life at the expence of others. This notion is echoed in the words of a Maasai mother who says "An educated child has two brains; one for the Maasai and one for education" (Martinez & Waldron 2006: 412).

The tribesmen who share the above view are now seeking conventional employment in the cities, and the majority of them who belong to the lower class work as night guards (Maasai warrior … 2008). This occupation is in keeping with the view that the Maasai command respect and fear because of their renowned strength, bravery and discipline (O'Neill 2008).

It is evident that the outside world is slowly encroaching on the Maasai's way of life – even their women are generating income from selling colourful beadwork to people outside their culture.

Some of the Maasai who have acquired education are gradually trying to introduce ideas of modernity to their communities. A case in point is Ole Karbolo (2008) who is involved with the Ikerin Loita Integral Development Centre. His mission is to assist the Loita Maasai pastoralists to acquire skills which will help them to develop and improve their lives in relation to their culture, their land and their livestock. He employs an indigenous approach to development which introduces development through indigenous values and realities. He does this by engendering cultural values, community spirit, cultural dignity and identity and cultural solidarity based on their way of life (Ole Karbolo 2008).

What Ole Karbolo (2008) is trying to do is in line with Mutie's (2003) view on bringing about development through culture. Mutie argues that the positive power of culture is useful in developing an indigenous development paradigm. He adds that cultural aspects should be harnessed as positive factors and forces for development. The Maasai are fighting hard to keep their traditions alive in spite of the fact that pastoralism is dying everywhere else. It is fashionable for the Maasai to show the rest of the world that in spite of urbanisation, formal schooling, modern dressing, Western medicine, diversification of subsistence economy and changed eating habits, they have not lost their roots. The Maasai who have taken part in modern involvements like going to school and travelling widely, still support the notion of being traditional and express remorse for breaking with the past (Mutie 2003:85).

The notion alluded to so far is summarised by Mutie (2003:85) when he says that "Uncowed by their neighbours, colonial conquest or modernisation, they stand in proud, mute testimony to a vanishing African world". As a result of their cultural resilience, the Maasai have become a tourist attraction and their image has been used to represent African identity and a means to create awareness about African culture (Mutie 2003:97).

The Akamba

The Akamba are more open to modernisation than the Maasai and because of the openness, the Akamba pose as agents of modernity and claim to be pacesetters to the Maasai. The Akamba allege that they have played a part in bringing transformation to Maasai land (Mutie 2003:76). The Maasai, in contrast, as was reflected earlier, are often cited as an example of conservation and resistance to development.

Nzioka (2000:2) reiterates a point that was made in an earlier discussion of the Akamba to the effect that the family is the most focal unit and is basic to the economy, production, consumption and investment of the community. Its structure is, however, changing from the extended family to the nuclear family partly as a result of the influence of Christianity and Western education. Education is valued and Akamba parents take great pride in their children who have a higher level of education than their parents. Such children are expected to seek jobs in the city in order to support their parents financially.

Mutie (2003:24) argues that urbanisation has weakened the clan ties among the Akamba and that many of them are losing their culture. The influence of modernisation among the Akamba is reflected in the professions that they hold in the present society. Many of them are teachers, agriculturalists, traders and artisans. They are well known for their basketry and pottery but above all for their woodcarving. Their carvings are a great tourist attraction and it is notable that in these carvings they do not appropriate the Akamba way of life, but rather the theme of the Maasai way of life, including the traditional dress and weaponry, because this is what sells internationally. They maintain this theme because, as

was said earlier, the Maasai are a tourist attraction and carvings of the Maasai sell faster than any others (Mutie 2003:178).

In the political arena, the Akamba is one of the major tribes of Kenya and is capable of influencing who becomes the president of the nation. Honourable Kalonzo Musyoka, the current Vice-President of Kenya, comes from the Akamba tribe, and in the last election in 2007 he was a presidential candidate. Although, due to their number, the Maasai have not yet fronted a presidential candidate, George Saitoti, a Maasai, rose to the level of Vice-President in the eighth parliament (Tribes and Politics in Kenya … 2008).

Modernisation has affected the Maasai and the Akamba in varying ways. In spite of the fact that culture is dynamic, and that the world around them is quickly becoming modernised, the Maasai have continued to hold tenaciously to their traditional value system and their nomadic lifestyle. Their cultural resilience is, however, beginning to wear out since members of their society are beginning to engage in some practices pertaining to modernity. Women, for example, are getting involved in generating income by selling beads, and many children are now attending school.

To summarise, the Akamba have been more open to modernisation than the Maasai. Urbanisation has weakened clan ties and the influence of Christianity and Western education has changed the focus from the extended family to the nuclear family. Education has acquired value because educated people are the ones who can become teachers, agriculturalists, artisans and traders. These are the professions that are esteemed in the community.

4.5.2 The current relationship between the Maasai and the Akamba

One cannot discuss the Maasai and the Akamba without alluding to their co-existence as communities that share a common border.

As was discussed earlier in the chapter, the Maasai and the Akamba have a history of strained relations, and modernisation has had little influence on the prevalent negative

attitudes among them (Mutie 2003:65). They still portray each other as enemies who compete for farmland, cattle, pastures and water. The conflict is fanned where resources are limited and demands are high, like at water points (Mutie 2003:217). Current conflicts are based on products of modernisation like schools and health centres which have been established in border areas. Modern business rivalries are another source of conflict.

Mutie (2003:278) maintains that in Kenyan politics, successful election campaigns based on issues across ethnicities are almost impossible. This situation is caused by the fact that Kenyan politics is executed on an ethnic divide, hence the clamour for ethnic autonomy evidenced between the Maasai and the Akamba.

The 1993 Kitengela Declaration, which urged the Akamba and the Maasai to co-operate for their common good, was the result of ethnic clashes in the wake of multi-party politics in 1992. Kenya, which until then had had a one-party government, was going through a period of adjusting to the multi-party system. This system had created ethnic loyalties resulting in the clashes.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses some background information about the Maasai and the Akamba. It starts by mentioning the early migrations of ethnic groups into Kenya from Ethiopia, Somalia and West Africa. In the course of these migrations, the Maasai and the Akamba also migrated to their present areas of settlement.

The chapter discusses the family structure of the Maasai that is based on polygamy and delineates the different roles of the different members of the family. The father is depicted as having authority over every member of the family whereas the wife is primarily treasured because of her childbearing ability. The children, who are also treasured and treated with indulgence at infancy, are later relegated to submission that renders them voiceless in the family.

Community structure is presented as focusing on the age-set system which is the most important and dominating feature of the Maasai cultural structure. Circumcision is featured as the most important initiation in the Maasai community, followed by the *eunoto*, the senior warriors' initiation ceremony. It is noted that community and governance structures are heavily demarcated by echelons of age, and the status of women is characterised by the denial of rights over livestock which are the most important possessions of the Maasai. It is also noted that their economy revolves around livestock and their land is administered in common. The attitude towards land is connected to the religious belief in the worship of the god *Enkai* who can either bless or curse the land depending on how the people relate to him.

The family structure of the Akamba, on the other hand, is reflected as being founded on the *mosie* concept where the husband is the head of the home. Like the Maasai, polygamy is the accepted system of marriage, and the family is considered as the important factor that unites the community. Unlike the Maasai, the Akamba venerate their relationships with their in-laws, hence the presence of rules and taboos concerning these relationships.

The community structure is based on the two concepts of *mosie*, the home and *mbae*, the clan. Compared to the age-set system of the Maasai, the Akamba have age cycles that depict the different stages of life. Unlike the Maasai, circumcision is not a determinant of age-sets and the initiation rites differ from those of the Maasai. In relation to governance, there is no locus of political power because power is diffused throughout the different levels of relationship within the community. The veneration of old age, therefore, is the nucleus of the Akamba government.

In their religious practice, the Akamba, unlike the Maasai, worship ancestors, and their worship system is more elaborate than that of the Maasai.

Contemporary Maasai and Akamba relationships reveal that although the hostility from historic times has been tempered, its relics are still evident in the negative attitudes demonstrated in the political arena.

The chapter closes with the discussion of the influence of modernisation on the two cultures highlighting the fact that whereas the Akamba have embraced modernisation to some degree, the Maasai have continued to be tenacious about their traditional value system.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the general background of the Maasai and the Akamba cultures. This chapter deals with the methodology that was used to gather data about the two cultures depicting the core symbols within the communication rules of the two cultures. The chapter therefore discusses the overall design of the study, the population, the sampling technique, the data collection tools and the data analysis procedures that the researcher implemented.

The study aimed to identify and compare the rules of intracultural communication that exist within the family structures of the Maasai and the Akamba of Kenya. The study also sought to explore specifically the rules that govern interactions of family members at the different levels of relationship within the family unit in order to establish the core symbols emanating from those rules.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-PROBLEMS

In his comment on social structures of which the family is a component, Hesselgrave (1991:46) asserts that the conventions of social structure dictate which channels of communication are open and which are closed. The conventions dictate who talks to whom, in what way, and with what effect; and when one communicates, which type of message is conveyed. The main research question therefore seeks to establish the core symbols that emanate from the rules of communication that exist in the different levels of relationship in the family structures of the cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba.

The sub-problems deal with the rules that govern family relationships in the Maasai and the Akamba cultures. The traditional rules that govern the communication in the following relationships are investigated:

- Between a husband and his wife or wives
- Between a father and his son
- Between a father and his daughter
- Between a mother and her son
- Between a mother and her daughter
- Between siblings

Appended to these sub-problems is the question which core symbols can be derived from these rules. The following section deals with the research procedures that were followed to investigate these research questions.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative design was employed in this study to provide answers to the research question and the sub-problems. Whereas qualitative research aims for subjectivity, quantitative research aims for objectivity. Subjectivity, for the purposes of this study, is preferred because it enables the researcher to use interpretive research processes to arrive at meaningful interpretations (Anderson 1996). Since qualitative research holds that multiple interpretations are possible, it differs from quantitative research which is based on the tenets of objectivity and absolute truth (Keyton 2006:59).

Researchers using qualitative methods are interested in the context in which the interaction occurs and they rely on research participants for their understanding of the research context. Qualitative researchers seek to explore how people co-construct and co-experience interaction within social life and the rules for this interaction (Gubrium & Holstein 2000).

Whereas in quantitative research the interpretation of data is pegged on numbers, qualitative researchers are interested in how people understand and interpret communication processes. Qualitative researchers therefore use interpretive lenses to capture and explore how social experience is created and how meanings can be derived and be developed from people's experiences (Keyton 2006:60).

Qualitative research entails the description of events or phenomena, their meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors and symbols (Berg 2001:2). The most characteristic aspect of qualitative research, compared to quantitative research, is the nature of the data. In qualitative research, data is referred to as "soft", whereas in quantitative research it is referred to as "hard". "Soft" data is expressed in the form of words, sentences, impressions, photos and symbols which dictate the different strategies of research. "Hard" data is expressed in the form of numbers (Neuman 2006:151).

Since it was necessary in this study to gather data in the form of words and expressions, it was appropriate to use the qualitative design as one of the methods of conducting research (Anderson 1996:13). Words, stories, incidents and events make it possible for a researcher to understand the world of the respondents (Patton 1990:24).

This study therefore seeks to explore how people give meaning to their daily lives, as expressed in their experiences, knowledge, feelings and opinions in order to obtain an in-depth insight into the communication rules. It further engenders the notion that qualitative techniques enable researchers to share in the perceptions and understanding of others (Berg 2001:7). In order to obtain insight into the communication rules, it was necessary to conduct focus group and individual in-depth interviews.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:382) purport that qualitative research is an inductive method which seeks to ask questions for understanding within an area of study. Qualitative research can therefore be regarded as one of the most appropriate approaches when dealing with the complexity of intracultural communication as is the case in the current study.

When discussing the advantages of qualitative research, it is important to consider the disadvantages. Robson (2002:5) refers to qualitative research as flexible research inthat it is more difficult to pin down fixed designs, and the problem of subjective interpretation is also encountered. Keyton (2006:70) says that if a researcher uses herself or himself as the data collection instrument in qualitative methodologies, he or she must consider carefully whose interpretation is being imposed on the data. This consideration is important because the interpretation must reflect the perspectives of the people being studied.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that the process of qualitative research could lead to multiple interpretations, therefore establishing credibility is essential. The onus is therefore on qualitative researchers to assure others of the quality of their interpretations by, for example, including quotations. Instead of asking whether the data is reliable and valid as is the case in quantitative research, the issue to be pursued in qualitative research is credibility which alludes to the trustworthiness of a research or the assessment of the believability of the research findings. Credibility is the extent to which interpretations can be judged as correct, true and dependable and is also the criterion used to measure the accuracy and effectiveness of the findings from the data.

The criteria of credibility refer to establishing that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Qualitative validity 2009). Patton (1990) says that credibility depends more on the analytical abilities of the researcher and the richness of the information gathered than on the sample size.

Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) say that where the academic researcher does not understand the language of the participants, it is advantageous for an indigenous research assistant to help in collecting the data. In the current study the researcher used focus group interviews as a qualitative methodology and engaged indigenous research assistants to collect data in order to facilitate a better understanding of the two cultures that were investigated.

5.3.1 Focus group interviews

A focus group is a facilitator-led discussion used for collecting data from a group of participants. The data is usually about a particular topic gathered in a limited amount of time, usually from a group comprising five to ten people (Krueger & Casey 2000:10).

According to Krueger (1988:27) focus group interviews are normally conducted in a small group setting. Respondents usually interact with each other around a pre-arranged topic. Typically, the group can be described by five characteristics or features. "A focus group is (a) people, who (b) possess certain characteristics, and (c) provide data (d) of a qualitative nature (e) in a focused discussion" (Krueger 1988:27). Krueger further maintains that a carefully planned focus group can yield information on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. A skilled interviewer can make the discussion relaxed, comfortable and enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions.

Janesick (2004) suggests that the focus group method is appropriate in a situation where a researcher is new to an area or topic of research because the information obtained from the participants can help identify issues that need to be addressed. The method can help the researcher to become familiar with the behaviour of the people with whom he or she is not familiar.

Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989:40) note that groups facilitate insights and solutions that would not come about without corporate effort. In a group, one person's knowledge, experience or idea, is corroborated or opposed by other participants. The interchange of knowledge, experience and ideas facilitates a wider perspective of the topic under discussion.

Krueger (1988:45) says that the validity of data collected through a focus group process has been confirmed by many different researchers, as long as the process is used for a problem that is suitable for focus group inquiry. The focus group technique is usually easily understood and the results also seem believable to those who are using the information thus accrued. The unique advantage of the focus group method is that it

allows participants to offer their viewpoints relative to the viewpoints of others (Keyton 2006:276).

All in all, one can conclude that focus groups are an appropriate research method for particular research purposes, because from them the researcher is able to generate information about the same topic from different people. A focus group helps the researcher to become familiar with the language and behaviour of respondents, especially if the researcher is new to studying the communication of the respondents (Janesick 2004). When administered properly, focus groups are extremely dynamic and interactions among and between group members can stimulate discussions in which one group member reacts to comments made by another (Berg 2001:111).

Berg (2001), however, says that a focus group is in essence not a truly natural conversation situation since the moderator controls the group, alters the pace of discussions, changes the direction of the comments, and can interrupt or stop the conversation. The moderator's influence therefore creates some limitation on the truly natural conversation.

Other disadvantages of focus group discussions include the possibility of one member dominating the group resulting in the skewing of information. Participants in the group may furthermore come to a consensus too quickly if they are not able to express opposite opinions (Morgan 1997:15).

Therefore, researchers must carefully assess the degree to which the result of focus group studies can be applicable to larger populations from the same or similar populations.

The discussion format allows conflict or consensus to emerge and gives the participants an opportunity to refer to other participants' comments in order to confirm or challenge a statement (Keyton 2006:277). Through the exchange of viewpoints they are able to share their ideas and perceptions because they are stimulated by the responses of other participants (Krueger 1988:18).

Neuman (2001:407) says that field research in a different culture is usually more difficult because of what he calls "courtesy bias", which is what occurs when strong cultural

norms cause respondents to hide anything unpleasant about their culture to foreigners. The respondent may even give answers that he or she thinks the interviewer wants to hear. Neuman's observation is relevant in the current study where the researcher carried out research in a different culture.

The focus group method was chosen for data collection because the study was investigating cultural rules that govern communication and these rules are agreed upon by communities. As communities consist of groups of people, focus groups are an appropriate method to investigate communication processes within communities.

The problems under investigation that concern the Maasai and the Akamba are suitable for focus group inquiry because their communication rules were generated by the whole society and not by individuals. The focus group discussion was therefore appropriate because the discussion was going to relay the views of many people and not just those of one individual. It allowed participants to offer their viewpoints relative to the viewpoints of others. It gave rise synergistically to insights and solutions that would not be arrived at without them. Each person's knowledge, experience or idea was corroborated or opposed by other participants as a means of facilitating a wider perspective of the discussion. However, the danger that participants could hide information could not be ruled out.

Since Janesick (2004) suggests that the focus group method is appropriate in a situation where a researcher is new to an area or topic of research, the researcher implemented this method because she was new to the topic of the study. The information from the participants would help in identifying issues that needed to be addressed. The method would help the researcher become familiar with the behaviour of the people with whom she was not familiar.

The researcher identified two indigenous research assistants, one from the Maasai community and the other from the Akamba community. The research assistants' interaction with the people from their respective cultures was a way of allaying the effects of the "courtesy bias". The choice of these research assistants was necessary in order to facilitate the use of vernacular languages which would enable the participants to express themselves more freely.

5.3.2 In-depth interviews

An in-depth interview is a dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee. Lofland and Lofland (1995) believe that the goal of this kind of interview is to obtain rich and detailed data. In normal circumstances, only one person is interviewed at a time.

Although an in-depth interview may lack the interaction between participants, it provides more depth of information. In focus group interviews the results could differ due to the interaction within the group (Kumar 2005:124). The theoretical roots of in-depth interviewing are in what Taylor and Bogdan (1984:77) term as the interpretive tradition, whereby the encounter between the interviewer and the interviewee encourages a rapport which enhances a better understanding of the experiences and situations which are under investigation. This kind of interaction could produce accurate and in-depth information (Kumar 2005:124).

One advantage of in-depth interviews is that the interviewee is with the researcher for an extended time, giving opportunity for deeper probing and the pursuit of relevant unplanned questions on the topic which avails the possibility of modifying the line of enquiry (Keyton 2006:275).

Personal in-depth interviews have an advantage over focus group interviews in that they eliminate the possibility of group-think, a phenomenon that sometimes features in focus group interviews. Group-think occurs when individuals in a group are eclipsed by the group for fear of being different. On the other hand, one of the disadvantages of in-depth interviews is that it is time-consuming and expensive to conduct (Keyton 2006:275).

The motivation for also using personal in-depth interviews was to gather additional data to the focus group interviews and gain further insight into the research questions of the study (Keyton 2006:298). It was also a viable way of getting detailed data and a better understanding of situations and experiences which were being investigated. It was an opportunity to explore the topics through unplanned questions. Open-ended questions were used because these kinds of questions draw out responses that permit one to understand the world of the respondent.

5.3.3 Population

The population comprises all the units of the universe, whether people or things, possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Keyton 2006:119). One of the target populations for the current study was the Maasai of the Loitokitok district in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya.

The accessible populations were the people living in the Loitokitok district, shown in Figure 4.1, in the villages of Namelok Ormakau and Namelok Engumi. A Maasai homestead or kraal is a compound that is enclosed by a circular thorn bush fence called the *enkang* that is built by men. Inside the compound are loaf-shaped mud houses (*inkajijik)* which are built by the women using a mixture of mud, grass, twigs, cow dung and cow urine.

A Maasai household consists of a man, his wives and their sons and daughters. The fence surrounding the homestead has a gate. At the right side of the gate is the hut of the man and at the left side is the hut of the first wife, and the huts of the other wives complete the circle. The homestead is usually interspersed with trees under which the men sit when they come home after looking after the cattle. The huts are dark during the day because they do not have windows apart from a hole that lets out smoke. People therefore choose to sit outside under trees which provide shade from the sun.

The area around the homestead is covered by acacia trees which are also found in the compounds and used as shade during the hot seasons. The cattle kraal is also situated in this compound and is surrounded by thorn bush fencing to keep away wild animals like lions which prowl around at night. There are no roads and the paths are muddy during the rainy season. There is no electricity and no tap water. People use water from rivers during the rainy season and during the dry season the intermittent rivers dry up and people walk far distances to look for water.

The second target population for the study is the Akamba living in the Machakos district in the Eastern Province of Kenya. The villages that were included were Kithini and Kathiani. The Machakos district is shown in Figure 4.1. The Akamba rural homestead comprises separate buildings for sleeping, cooking and a pit latrine. Buildings are made

of mud walls, and roofs are thatched with grass or straw. There is usually a separate building made of sisal wood used for storing food. There is also a separate cattle shed which is an enclosure of thorn bush where sheep, goats and cattle are kept overnight. Donkeys are also kept for carrying heavy items. There are no roads except paths that become very muddy during the rainy seasons. In the dry seasons the intermittent rivers dry up and the people from the villages have to walk far to look for water.

Rural populations were chosen over urban populations because older people who are basically found in the rural areas tend to be more familiar with traditional practices than the younger people. This was also the reason why children were not interviewed since they did not have competent knowledge of traditional ways.When the older people retire from their urban jobs they usually retreat to their rural homes. People in the rural areas also practise the traditional lifestyle whereas in the urban areas the metropolitan experience shrouds information on cultural issues because of modernisation, urbanisation and the intermingling of cultures.

Babbie (1989:82) contends that in social scientific research there is a wide range of what or who should be studied. The "what or who should be studied" are technically the units of analysis. The units of analysis are therefore the individual members of the Maasai and the Akamba societies.

As units of analysis, the researcher selected individual adults who were members of the society, had families and also had children. The children were, however, not investigated for reasons that were cited earlier. This therefore meant that the units of analysis were adult male and female individuals who had families. Since the respondents were supposed to be familiar with the traditional expectations of their cultures, they were chosen to belong to an older age group, that is, not below forty-five years of age.

5.3.4 Selection

Since the current study is qualitative in nature, non-probability sampling was used, namely, purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling usually depends on the judgements of the researcher whose duty it is to hand-pick the participants to be included in the sample (Keyton 2006:129).

Non-probability sampling was deemed appropriate because the research participants who were selected were people from both the Maasai and the Akamba cultures who were proficient in matters concerning their cultures and were therefore the appropriate sources for the desired data.

The sample in this study comprised twenty respondents from the Kajiado district and twenty respondents from the Machakos district. From each district ten men and ten women were selected for the study. In each district four focus groups were conducted, namely two male and two female groups, a total of eight focus groups. The ages of all the participants ranged from forty-five to eighty-six years. The number of participants in each group was justified based on the proposition that a discussion group should have five to ten people (Krueger & Casey 2000).

5.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected during August 2005. The choice of the month of August was based on the pattern of seasons in Kenya which is divided into the dry and rainy seasons. The weather is very hot and dry between December and February. The long rains fall between April and June whereas the short rains fall between October and December. The months of July and August are dry and much cooler. Apart from the dry and the cool spells, the month of August is favourable because there is less vegetation which makes it easier for those who walk along the footpaths. For those who have to walk from village to village like the research assistants had to do, the paths are not muddy during this time of the year. This is also the time when it is easy to find people in the rural areas at home (except for cattle herders) because they are not out working in their fields.

5.4.1 Focus group interviews

The principal method for collecting data was through focus group interviews. Since the researcher did not understand the languages of the participants in the focus groups from the rural areas, she employed research assistants competent in the indigenous languages to conduct the interviews in vernacular languages. The researcher, however, conducted the in-depth individual interviews in English.

The research assistants were university graduates who had worked with non-governmental organisations as research assistants and were familiar with the practice of conducting focus group interviews. The researcher trained them further in conducting focus group interviews before sending them into the field. They were conversant with both English and their respective vernacular languages since they were natives of their respective areas. Both research assistants were familiar with their cultures, and were available to spend time with the researcher. It is to be noted that the researcher was not present at the discussions in the villages because these were conducted in vernacular languages. However, the researcher facilitated the individual in-depth interviews which were conducted in English.

The choice of the research assistants was a limitation of a kind. Given the strong gendered and age-related rules of behaviour among the Maasai and the Akamba the differences between the interviewers and the interviewees were important to note. The gender and age differences between the interviewers and some of the respondents have hindered open and frank discussion. However, most of the respondents were accustomed to this kind of academic occurrence and they regarded the interviewers as their “children” with whom they could share cultural information.

The role of the research assistants was that of collecting data through focus group interviews in the villages. The field notes that they made entailed making arrangements for the focus group meetings and relaying the problems that they encountered duritng the fieldwork and not the proceedings within the group. They first translated the interview guides, which were in English, into the Maasai and Akamba languages because they were going to carry out the interviews in the vernacular languages. The research assistants

conducted the interviews with the participants of the different focus groups using tape recorders to collect the information, after which they translated the information into English and transcribed it. The researcher made notes from the transcriptions.

5.4.2 Akamba research assistant

The research assistant among the Akamba was a postgraduate student at Daystar University who had studied Communication at undergraduate level at the same institution. He was born among the Akamba and was conversant with the language and the culture of the Akamba. He was selected because he had assisted other researchers and was proficient in the work. For instance, he had assisted Dr Ann Miller who was a lecturer at Daystar University and whose doctoral work won the top award in the part of the United States where she currently resides. Her work is quoted in the current study since it was done in Kenya. The research assistant was also selected because he was available at the time that this study was conducted.

He met the focus groups in the evenings before sunset. The venue for the two women groups was in the church premises and for the two men groups, one was in an abandoned building and the other was in an unused shed in an eating house. The research assistant met with the group members in a round-table set-up, and asked guiding questions which the members discussed. The discussions lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour.

The research assistant used a cassette recorder to record whatever was said and he also took notes. All the people who were interviewed were married and had families. Their ages ranged between forty-five and eighty-six years old.

The research assistant recorded some challenges and obstacles that he encountered as he was collecting data in the rural areas. One of the problems was the means of transport. It was difficult to reach some of the villages because of the scarcity of vehicles, causing him to need to walk long distances on foot.

Accommodation was another problem because in the rural areas there are no guest houses or restaurants, so the research assistant stayed in his former teacher's house at one stage. Whenever accommodation was available, it was often in mosquito-infested rooms.

Mobilising respondents for the focus groups was difficult because people would promise to come and yet not appear at the appropriate time. In one instance, for example, some church elders promised to mobilise respondents but failed to do so. Getting respondents to participate in the focus groups was also a difficult task because the majority of them, who were much older than the research assistant, were suspicious and sceptical. When they eventually agreed to participate, it was difficult to control them because they wanted to give a lot of information that was not directly related to the focus of the study.

5.4.3 Maasai research assistant

The research assistant who conducted the focus group interviews among the Maasai was a woman. She was also a graduate of Daystar University who at undergraduate level had majored in Community Development and had also studied Communication. She was selected because after graduating she had worked as a research assistant in several non-governmental organisations, one of which was an international organisation. She was selected because she had been born in Maasai land and knew the way of life and culture of her people. At the time of the study she was also available to do the work partly because she was not married.

She met the women groups under trees in their compounds between eleven o'clock in the morning and two o'clock in the afternoon. The age range of her respondents was between forty years and eighty years old.

The Maasai compound or homestead is usually made up of the hut of the man and the huts of his wives in a circular arrangement.

The women were interviewed outside their huts because they wanted to monitor activities in the vicinity of their huts, especially the movements of their children. For the women, the interviews had to be over by two o'clock in the afternoon in time to prepare lunch for their husbands who would be coming back from looking after the cattle in the fields. They also stayed around their huts for fear of their husbands, from whom they had to get permission before they could participate in the interviews. The respondents were suspicious at first and thought that whatever was recorded on the tape recorder was going to be used against them. It took a lot of persuasion to get them to participate in the focus

group discussions because initially they expected to be paid. The research assistant had to explain that the exercise was for academic purposes.

The men were also interviewed under trees outside their huts. Maasai compounds comprise a fenced area with several huts, belonging to a man and his wives. The men's interviews were conducted after four o'clock in the afternoon because in the morning hours they were out in the fields taking care of their livestock.

Since the interviews were conducted outdoors, there was interference from the wind and from other people especially children who were playing and making noise. These interferences sometimes made the interviews longer than anticipated.

Another challenge was created by the scarcity of transport which meant that the research assistant had to walk long distances in order to reach the participants in the villages.

5.4.4 Interview guides

The questions that were used in the interview guides for the focus group interviews were derived from the six sub-problems of the study. These six categories of questions depicted the six levels of relationship in the family structure, namely: questions 1 to 8 – the communication between husbands and wives; questions 9 to 11 – the communication between fathers and sons; questions 12 to 13 – the communication between fathers and daughters; questions 14 to 15 – the communication between mothers and sons; questions 16 to17 – the communication between mothers and daughters; questions 18 to 19 – the communication between brothers and sisters; questions 20 to 25 – general questions touching on the society's expectations of members of the family.

The interview guides for the individual interviews comprised six questions that were summarised from the above-mentioned categories because they were administered by the researcher who could steer the discussions towards the information that was required.

5.4.5 Individual interviews

The in-depth personal interviews were conducted by the researcher who used a notebook and a cassette recorder to record the data. The interviews were conducted in English since the respondents who were selected could communicate in this language.

A total of eight people were interviewed, that is two men and two women from the Maasai community, and two men and two women from the Akamba community. The people were selected because the researcher needed a first-hand involvement with the target population apart from the information received from the focus group interviews as the data of the focus groups was translated from the vernacular languages. The people were also selected because they had been born and brought up in the relevant areas of the Maasai and the Akamba although they were living in town at the time of the interview. They were conversant with the village life since they still visited their villages when they were on vacation.

Through the unplanned questions they provided more insight and more detailed information about the reasons why members of their communities upheld certain communication rules.

All the interviews were conducted in the people's homes in town. Open-ended questions were used because these kinds of questions often draw out responses that permit one to understand the world of the respondent. Each of the interviews lasted about thirty minutes.

5.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

As was mentioned earlier, the interview guides for the focus group interviews were translated from English into the two vernacular languages and were used for data collection. Tape recorders were used to record the proceedings of the focus groups. The data which were collected in the languages of the Maasai and the Akamba were translated back into English, after which they were transcribed.

Keyton (2006:290) says analysing data in qualitative research is the process of identifying themes and the processing should be done in a meaningful and useful manner.

For the process of identifying themes, Tesch (1990:58) suggests four basic categories that a qualitative researcher could use to describe his or her approach. The categories could be identified based on interest in the –

- characteristics of language;
- discovery of regularities;
- comprehension of the meaning of text or action; and
- reflection.

The researcher chose to focus on the discovery of regularities owing to the fact that the study sought to discover the communication rules that were present in the two ethnic groups under study, the Maasai and the Akamba, and the core symbols that emanated from those rules.

The primary goal of the analysis of qualitative data is to look for patterns in the data and to note the similarities and the differences between the variables being studied (Marlow 1998:210). In this way, data analysis attempts to bring order, structure and meaning to all the information collected (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003:203). Marlow (1998:213) suggests that data should be analysed according to categories of responses found in the data themselves. The analysis in this study was influenced by the insights and perceptions of the researcher.

Kumar (2005:244) suggests that data can be analysed manually or with the help of a computer. Although he goes on to say that even qualitative and descriptive information can be analysed with the help of the computer, the researcher of the current study chose to analyse the data manually.

The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and or behaviour. In this type of analysis, the first step is to collect data and elicit patterns of experiences from the transcribed

conversations (Spradley 1979). Direct quotes and paraphrases of common ideas can also be selected.

Thematic analysis or thematic interpretation is the practice whereby themes are identified in the textual data. A theme is a conceptualisation of an event, a relationship or an interaction (Keyton 2006:295). Themes are also considered to be defined units that are derived from patterns like conversation topics, meanings, vocabulary, feelings and recurring activities (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:131).

Recurrence is identified when at least two parts of a report have similarities in meaning. Recurrence is not necessarily repetition of the same words or phrases but different wording resulting in the same meaning. Repetition on the other hand alludes to the explicit repetition of key words, phrases or sentences (Keyton 2006:295). Forcefulness which is the other component for analysis could not be used for identifying the themes as the data collection was not video taped. Video copies of the proceedings were therefore not available.

The researcher transcribed the contents that she had recorded during the individual interviews by means of a cassette recorder. The researcher went through the texts which were derived from the transcriptions of the audiotapes from the focus group interviews and the in-depth interviews, and categorised the information about rules into types of interaction in the family system. The types entailed relationships between a husband and a wife; a father and a son; a father and a daughter; a mother and a son; a mother and a daughter and between siblings. The categorisation was based on the sub-problems of the study. The sub-problems dealt with the rules that governed interaction between family members at the six different levels of relationship that have been mentioned above. The recurring themes were respect; authority; male supremacy; female subservience; the family and society; wealth; inheritance; patriarchal loyalty; circumcision; and wisdom.

The second step entails identifying all the data related to the already classified patterns, for example, in this study, the core value that is expected to exist between a husband and a wife, and a father and a son or daughter. All the responses that fit the specific pattern are identified and placed with the corresponding pattern (Aronson 1992).

In the third step, the related patterns were combined and catalogued into sub-themes and in the fourth step valid arguments were built for choosing the themes. When one gathers sub-themes to obtain a comprehensive view of information, one begins to see a pattern emerging.

At each level the researcher recorded the respondents' information about the mode of communication behaviour prescribed and expected in family relationships. The researcher also recorded why this communication behaviour was prescribed by the society.

As the researcher was recording the description of the communication behaviour of the different types of interaction at the different levels of relationship in the family, she examined the rationale behind each category. These were attributes, for example, of respect and male supremacy, forming the core symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba cultures.

This being an interpretive study based on subjective interpretation, it is necessary for the researcher to briefly describe her cultural background and positioning. She belongs to the Luo culture, one of the five largest ethnic groups in Kenya. Although the Luo have the same Nilotic roots as the Maasai, their cultural practices are different.The three significant core symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba, namely, community, family and respect, also hold the same position in the Luo society although they are practiced differently. The factors that might affect the subjectivity of the interpretation of the communication rules include the facts that the researcher is female with a tertiary education. The researcher could therefore be influenced by a modernised feminist perspective. The findings from the different levels are discussed below.

After establishing the core symbols which were generated by the respondents from each culture or ethnic group, the researcher compared the rules and the generated symbols in each level of relationship. This comparison is discussed in Chapter 7.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter reflects on the problem of the study, namely the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba, and the qualitative research design that was chosen to gather the data. It also discusses the methods that were employed to acquire the data. These methods were focus group and individual interviews which provided data from the Maasai and Akamba populations. It further explains the way in which the sample was selected from the villages of the two communities, and describes the manner in which the data was collected and analysed. The results and the conclusions based on the data analysis are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the research methodology used to identify and compare the communication rules that exist within the family structures of the Maasai and the Akamba. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the investigation through the results of the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews.

As was described in the previous chapter, the data analysis was based on the communication in the different categories of relationships that exist in the family structures of the two cultures under study. The data from the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews provided a number of core symbols that were reflected in the communication rules for family communication within the Maasai and the Akamba cultures. The core symbols of the two cultures were compared to identify the similarities and differences that existed. It was noted that the core symbols within each culture overlapped.

The findings from the in-depth interviews were similar to those from the focus group interviews with very few differences so they were assimilated in the discussions of the focus groups.

In the ensuing sections the findings from the different levels of communication within the family are reported. The Maasai and the Akamba cultures are high context cultures where the meaning of messages are interpreted without much explanation.This situation arises due to the fact that each individual has internalised the values, beliefs and the norms as a result of sharing a common physical environment. In each of the levels of relationships discussed in the rest of the chapter, people are able to interpret even the slightest gesture or the briefest comment.

6.2 COMMUNICATION AMONG THE AKAMBA

This section discusses the findings of the communication rules that exist at different levels of relationship between family members, namely, between the spouses and between the parents and their sons and daughters.

6.2.1 Communication between husbands and wives

A traditional Kamba man marries for status and position and not for companionship because, as one of the respondents said, "The marriage status is a strong point that defines a man of honour in the society and earns him respect". Since the husband is regarded as the sole authority of the home, communication between him and his wife is of a one-way nature and the general rule is that the husband initiates communication. One of the male participants said that the husband speaks to the wife as someone who is "inferior" and "junior" to himself since he is the chief decision maker.

The core symbols that are reflected here are marital status and authority. The fact that the husband speaks to the wife as a person who is inferior to him points out the core symbol of male superiority and female subservience. Marital status is another core symbol since it earns a man honour and respect. Honour and respect are offshoots of the rule that a wife must honour and respect her husband, so they can also be distinguished as core factors.

When a husband and wife wake up in the morning, they regard it as unnecessary to greet each other because they have slept together in the same place. If the husband has other wives, he will greet them because he did not spend the night in their houses. He is, however, the one who initiates the greetings, and although he greets each wife individually, he addresses her in the plural. The husband is always the one who initiates communication because he is believed to be the owner of the house, according to one female respondent. The husband was also referred to as the lion or the bull of the house by two different respondents. When he comes home, his wife and children have to wait for him to initiate greetings. The reason given for this is that he is the "cock" of the house, as one female respondent put it, and that it is a sign of respect and recognition of

his authority. A wife does not initiate greetings, because she is regarded as "a guest who comes from another home". If the husband comes home and does not greet anybody, then it communicates the fact that things are not well and the wife is expected to humbly serve him with food first and then find out what is wrong. Men are feared and revered by their wives and children because they beat these members of their families in adverse situations.

The core symbol of authority is reflected in the fact that the husband is the initiator of conversation and is referred to as the "lion" or the "bull." This authority commands respect laced with fear, two other core symbols that pervade the culture of the communication system in the relationship between the wife and her husband. It is important to note that respect, fear, submissiveness and reverence result from the situation that non-compliance by the wife and the children results in their being beaten.

When a husband comes home from a long journey or from herding livestock the wife is supposed to receive him in a jovial mood and ask about his welfare. This mood is expected of her no matter what hardships she has encountered in his absence.

There is a rule in the society that when a wife commits an offence, for example, not preparing food for the husband at the right time, she is beaten. When a wife commits an offence that cannot be dealt with through beating, for example unfaithfulness, she is sent back to her parents to await a verdict. Most of the time, the verdict is that she is to be punished by the clan. A disrespectful wife is punished very severely by the clan who ties her up, beats and tortures her. If a husband, however, decides to send his wife away, it is his right that the children remain with him.

Whenever anything goes wrong in the family, the woman is blamed even if it is really the husband's fault. It is always said that the woman or wife has provoked him. She has to acquiesce or else face a beating. This is another reflection of the core symbol of female subservience manifested in the kind of punishment that is meted out to the wife and the fact that even the husband's faults are blamed on her.

Although the society allows a man to beat his wife, it does not allow her to express negative feelings like anger towards the husband or even fight back because she could earn a curse for doing that. The rule of the society is that it is a taboo for a wife to lift a finger against her husband. She is supposed to control herself and if she is displeased she should report it to her mother-in-law or another elderly woman. One participant said that this kind of rule has been installed by society to protect the man's ego, because according to another respondent, a man would be stigmatised and lose face if his community learned that his wife fought with him. This incident is another example of female subservience.

Another instance that exemplifies stigma is that a husband who asks for and receives advice from his wife will never admit that it is her good suggestion for fear of being teased or being looked down upon during beer parties. There is the danger of him being told that "he is married by his wife", which is a terrible insult to a man.

As a rule, a disagreement between a man and his wife is supposed to be settled secretly and not before the children. The same secrecy is supposed to be observed if a man beats his wife. If in the course of the beating the wife runs out of the house, the husband is not supposed to follow her because it is prohibited for a man to beat his wife in public. This prohibition reflects the core symbol of respect for society. On the other hand it could mean keeing male domination hidden, and keeping family relations private. The latter could also reflect respect for the family. This respect is reflected in the part of a song that goes, "Among ten wives, only one belongs to the man, the one who knows his stomach, while the rest belong to the clan".

Men as a rule do not express their positive emotions verbally, for example thanking the wife for work well done. They perform something good instead, for instance by telling the wife that he will give a cow to her for milking. A husband can also express his happiness by slaughtering a goat for his wife and her children during one of the festivities.

Levels of confidentiality between spouses

One male respondent said:

> Although women build their homes together with their husbands, they cannot be fully trusted. They gossip and talk ill of their husbands and even expose the situation of lack of food in their homes.

This utterance is an example of the negative level of confidentiality that exists between a husband and wife. As a rule, men do not discuss male jobs, like hunting, with women. When a man is preparing hunting poison he should not discuss it with his wife because it is believed that if a wife sees or touches the poison, the husband will not succeed in his hunting expedition. Women are therefore regarded as a source of misfortune. The mistrust of women demonstrates the need to control women since they are a potential threat to the male's face in front of other males.

In the Akamba culture, boys are regarded as superior to girls. Boys can, for example, beat a girl if she passes where they are gathered, and they will not be reprimanded for it. This behaviour is another example of male dominance that come to the fore even in the relationship between children. During times when there were clashes between the Maasai and the Akamba, the men kept it top secret when they were planning an ambush. No woman would be given any information about it because women were considered to have loose tongues. It was feared that they could sell their men to the enemies, even unintentionally, because of their loose talk.

It is a rule for men to discuss their secrets in the *thome*, the men's fireplace, to make sure that the women are not given access to men's secrets. It is, for example, believed that if a man has sex with his wife on the eve of honey harvesting, the bees will vacate the hive and nothing will be harvested. This belief is again attributed to women being the source of misfortune. To exemplify this belief, one man said, "I do not reveal my income from the market to my wife otherwise she will destabilise my financial plans".

If a witchdoctor inserts some "potions" for good fortune in a man's body, the wife is not supposed to know because she might tamper with it at night. For this reason the husband does not allow his wife to see him naked.

Women are believed to be the agents that destroy homes, so some family secrets are kept from them. Husbands do not give wives access to secrets concerning family treasures like land, cattle and money, because they believe that women do not have leadership qualities or enough knowledge to handle wealth. A wife may not know about the husband's wealth until the time when the man senses that he is about to die and reveals the information. Then he might say that "So and so owes me such and such an amount of money" or "They took our land in such and such a place and ought to give it back." This is to prevent his property being scattered without the knowledge of his wife and children if he dies suddenly. A husband does not disclose his extra-marital activities and may surprise his wives and children on his deathbed by revealing that "so and so in such and such a home is my son and has a right to my wealth".

A husband is supposed to tell his secrets to his brothers and eldest son only. The reason was given by one male respondent who said that "It is very dangerous to tell your wife where you have distributed your wealth because she may open her mouth carelessly". The implication is that the wife cannot be trusted since she might gossip and divulge the secrets. A husband can also deliberately withhold information from a wife who is disobedient or disrespectful.

In the foregoing paragraphs examples are given of instances where women are regarded as sources of misfortune because they are seen as "guests" who have come from a different community to join the husband's clan. As one participant said, "Women are spoilers and so must not be allowed into secrets pertaining to important issues". This attitude towards women implies female inferiority.

When it comes to decision-making the husband's decision is not questioned as a rule and he has certain distinctive areas of authority. This is another instance of male authority. The husband allocates duties to his wives who in turn allocate duties to their children. He makes decisions concerning his sons' and daughters' marriages, including settling the

bride price and overseeing the arrangements. He dictates when and where the son should build his hut in the compound and when that hut should be consecrated before the bride can enter. He also decides on matters concerning the circumcisions of the sons and the daughters. In matters related to livestock, especially the purchase and sale of cattle, he is the sole decision maker. The same applies to family finances entailing income and expenditure. The wife has no say in these matters and any objection from her calls for a beating. If she is deeply hurt by her husband she should go back to her parents to report it and a meeting is planned to judge the case. Otherwise she can report to her mother-in-law or another elderly lady in the family as was mentioned earlier.

There are, however, certain areas regarding her own household where a wife can make decisions. She wields authority over all the kitchen matters and can also counsel and train her daughters and daughters-in-law about marriage. Some of the things that she discusses with them are kept secret. She could, for example, secretly counsel her daughter to refuse an arranged suitor. This is a risky thing to do because if discovered she could be punished severely since daughters are not expected to refuse their father's choice of a suitor.

There are rare occasions when the husband and the wife make decisions together. If a child or daughter-in-law is rebellious, the two can discuss the issue, summon the culprit and rebuke him or her together. As a rule, coitus between a husband and wife is required before certain events are performed and this is one of them. Also, before moving to a new house or before the circumcision of their children, a man and his wife have to be involved in sex. This is supposed to prevent any misfortunes befalling their children. If a child is sick, the husband and wife deliberate upon the kind of treatment to be administered or the medicine man to be consulted.

Spouses in a polygamous situation

A man communicates with his wives communally unless one wife has a peculiar problem, in which case he will communicate with her individually. Each wife and her children represent a "house" and the husband issues decrees and orders to the different houses. This is another instance of the core symbol of male supremacy.

One male participant said the following:

> For a man to bring in a second wife there is a reason. The first wife might not be feeding him well or she might not be obedient. He realises that if he does not act quickly he will die of starvation.

A husband favours the wife who is obedient, not rebellious, does not talk ill of him, and who receives and treats him well (especially when he comes home drunk) and whose children are well behaved. This is another example of female subservience. She carries out his orders precisely and serves good food on time. This comment about food is reflected in the saying that "A man of ten wives listens to the one who understands his stomach". When food is brought to his hut (*thome*) by the sons from the different wives, he samples the dishes and whatever he does not like he gives to the boys. The boys in turn report to their mothers about whose food was accepted or rejected by their father.

There are signs that communicate a husband's favouritism towards one wife. These include the fact that he spends more time with her and her sons, sleeps in her house more often and brings her special pieces of meat from the animals slaughtered in his honour at a place he has visited.

The husband's act of favouritism is always a source of conflict among the wives, although a husband is supposed to reconcile warring wives. The relationship between the co-wives is often fraught with jealousy and competition to the extent that a wife will use witchcraft to "steal" the husband's heart and make him come to her house more frequently than to the other houses. It is important to note that although the first wife is the most respected of all wives, she may not necessarily be the favourite of the husband. For instance, he may favour the last wife who is more sexually active.

Rank order among wives is displayed in the sense that the first wife in a polygamous family has a unique level of communication with the husband because she is his "deputy". Although wives normally do not initiate communication, the society allows her to do that because she is the mouthpiece of all the other wives and reports to the husband

whenever something goes wrong in his absence. She can command the junior wives and allocate them duties.

The first wife is respected because of her age and the fact that she has shared life with the husband for a longer time than the other wives and therefore understands him better. By virtue of this knowledge she is able to advise the others about his wishes. She communicates the traditions and roles in the family to the other wives according to the husband's decrees. She supervises the discussion of family issues in or about which the other wives can participate or make decisions.

The culture allows a wife to conceive a child out of wedlock if the husband cannot father children or if he does not have a son. The woman chooses a close relative of her husband's and keeps his identity secret even from her husband. Sometimes this child is used as a buffer against a deadly curse, *kithitu*, which is directed towards the family. It is believed that since such a child is an "outsider", the child will not be affected by any curse and will survive to carry on the family lineage. Fear of the curse as a core symbol is reflected here.

If a family member dies when a woman is having her menstrual period, she is supposed to have sex with a man other than her husband and keep it a secret. This act is believed to stop a string of deaths in the family. The woman is only expected to do it once. This is another instance where fear of the curse is a core symbol.

6.2.2 Parents' relationships with their children

Asked about the relationship between parents and children, a female participant said: "Parents and children are not age mates so they are not allowed to share intimate feelings".

Child subservience to parents is reflected in the rule that children are not allowed to initiate conversation and make decisions concerning the family. Even after they have married, their parents have the final say. As far as the daughters are concerned their parents choose who they must marry. The sons are not allowed to make decisions in this area because they "own nothing in the home." If by chance a girl insists on getting

married to a man and she threatens to commit suicide if she is denied the marriage, she will be allowed to get married but will also earn a curse, a phenomenon that is feared in the community. This shows that one who does not adhere to the rules of the society is doomed to a curse if the society does not have another way of meting out punishment.

When children are summoned by the parents they are supposed to approach the latter and enquire in humility why they have been summoned. Humility emanating from the "lesser" person is one of the core symbols in the society of the Akamba and also applies to the relationship of children to parents.

Children, as a rule, never address the older people by their names. They are expected to talk humbly, stand at a distance and answer questions with respect. When the parents get old their children are expected to take care of them. Failure to execute this duty is expected to bring a curse on the children, something that is dreaded. The fear of the curse as a core symbol recurs here, and the core symbols of parental authority and filial piety also feature. The latter term reflects total and unconditional obedience to and unquestioning compliance with parents' wishes, as well as submission, humility and respect on the side of the children towards their father.

According to the culture, a man is supposed to treat all the children of his many wives equally. When the children are ill-mannered their mothers are blamed, but when they achieve things their father is credited. When a man sends his wife away, the children remain with him because they are regarded as his property. For this reason a wife must never deride the husband in the children's presence nor cause them to disrespect their father by talking ill of him in his absence.

From the above it is clear that a father treats his sons and daughters differently. Perhaps the core symbol that is depicted here is gender preference.

Father and son in communication

By virtue of his age and position, the first son of the first wife occupies a higher position than all the other sons and this is an example of rank order among children. The first son is the heir of his father's estate by being the overseer when the father dies. If the

relationship between the oldest son and his father is not good, the first son of the second wife takes his place.

Another example of child subservience is reflected in the rule which declares that sons should talk to their fathers in the *thome* (the father's personal hut) and discuss issues such as land, livestock and other family assets but should do so with an attitude of submission, humility and respect. They are taught about war, how to protect the community, how to deal with women and prepare to be men. The son is expected to submit to the father and let him have his way even if the son disagrees with the issue at hand. If the son is displeased with the father's actions or words, he is not allowed to reproach the father in any way but should approach him in the *thome* with deep respect and humility in order to present his case. The scenario stems from the fear of a curse from the father which will have a devastating effect as far as the standards of the culture are concerned. Fear of the father and the subsequent curse as a core symbol features once again.

If a son offends the father, he is called alone to the *thome* and questioned. If the mistake is not intentional, the father forgives him and warns him against repeating it. If it is intentional, the son receives a beating. He cannot oppose his father for fear of a curse. Before circumcision a son speaks freely with his mother and can discuss most subjects with her. However, there has to be a social distance after circumcision because a son who is too close to his mother is despised and referred to as "a coward" or a "woman".

A son does not initiate conversation with his parents except when he is old enough to get married. He approaches his father at the *thome,* the father's hut, and announces his intention, after which the father discusses the matter with the mother and starts looking for a suitable girl.

The son is also allowed to initiate conversation when reporting a negative incident that has occurred at home in the father's absence.

A son is supposed to take care of his elderly father. One participant exemplified this concept when he said that "I am seventy-five years old today and before my father died he was living in my house. He was very old but I had given instructions that if my wife could not feed my father on time then she should not serve me".

This illustration underscores the importance attached to looking after a parent.

Mothers and sons in communication

Sons are treasured not only by their fathers, but also by their mothers because they legitimise their mothers so to speak. A woman without a son could easily be sent away whereas one who has a son has a better chance of staying. A son is also a mother's "pillar" because he will look after her when his father dies.

When the boys are growing up they are taught that women are weak and not very clever, so some information should be withheld from them, even from their own mothers and sisters. However, when the boys are very young and before they are circumcised, they can converse more freely with their mothers by sitting with them in the kitchen and sharing jokes. Their mothers are often their mouthpieces and relay their requests to the father when the sons are too scared to speak up.

Fathers and daughters in communication

Daughters have the farthest social distance from their fathers and this distance spells out the inferior status of a daughter. As a rule, a daughter is never allowed into her father's *thome*. A daughter does not initiate communication but will wait for her father to greet her first, and she stands at a distance while waiting to be greeted. A father was asked why his daughter was so apprehensive about asking for permission to go and see her friend, whereupon he said, "Because I am very harsh. If I come home and find her missing, when she comes back she will have it rough".

One respondent narrated:

> During my time as a young girl, I never came near my father at all. When he greeted me, *wakya*, I would answer *aa* and obey his instructions without a question.

During her monthly periods, a daughter is even kept away from the community. The social distance accorded a girl is interpreted as respect, a core symbol that is valued by the society and regarded as a way of averting incest with a father or brother. A daughter has no right to make decisions, because it is believed that if she gets to participate in decision-making she will become stubborn and disobey her husband one day. According to one participant, a daughter has "no voice and no right to anything". If, for example, there is a dance in the village in the evening, a son can go at will but a daughter must ask for permission from the father through her mother who always acts as her mouthpiece. A suitor is chosen for her when her time for marriage comes. She will be cursed if she marries without her father's consent.

The only time a daughter is allowed to talk to her father is if she has problems in her marriage, but she has to do this with humility. Very often she will be reprimanded and told to go back and obey her husband. A female participant said that "If a girl engages her father in quarrels and arguments, she should be reproached and beaten by the society". It is a taboo for a daughter to engage her father in an argument or a quarrel because this is tantamount to acquiring a curse, something that is regarded as dreadful especially when it comes from a parent. This is a crime so severe that it is punishable by her receiving a beating from members of the society. Such a disrespectful act is a sure way of losing face in the family, among the peers and in the society.

One female participant said:

> Personally I was a very good dancer and so I was my father's pride since I was the talk of the village. He used to tell other men openly that he would sell his goats and buy me ornaments and beads because I was a source of honour to him.

When a father appreciates his daughter, for example, for being a renowned dancer in the village, he does not commend her personally but boasts about it in the village square to show that she is a source of honour to him. A daughter is also regarded as a source of wealth for her father because when she gets married the father receives livestock as a bride price, and that is why a male participant said that "When I look at my daughter, Syokau, I only see cattle and goats".

One of the participants told the story of how a daughter was "sold off" by her father to one of his beer-drinking friends. The father used to meet his friend at beer parties where the friend bought him beer, and one day the friend announced that the beer he had been paying for was the bride price for this father's daughter. The father agreed and announced this to his daughter. This is another example of female subservience as a core symbol coupled with the core symbol of wealth or property. The fact that a daughter can be sold off in exchange for beer shows that she is regarded as property. This corroborates Spencer's (1988:29) notion that marriage negotiations over a girl are tantamount to the transfer of a possession from the father who rears her to the husband who rules her.

Mothers and daughters in communication

Mothers and daughters communicate freely at any time. A mother is the go-between of the daughter and the father. The mother instructs the daughter about the ways of life and counsels her concerning marriage. The daughter is also often instructed by her grandmother.

Communication between siblings

Siblings are free to communicate at any time when they are young. As they grow older, the communication becomes more and more restricted. This restriction is meant to prevent possible incest. In the words of one respondent: "A Kamba wife never trusts any

man with her daughter, not even her husband or her son". It is a rule for girls to behave respectably in the presence of their brothers. Respect for age is reflected in the rule that younger siblings must respect the older ones. If there is a big difference in age, the younger siblings must accord the older ones the kind of respect that they would accord their parents. Respect as a core symbol applies even at the level of relationships between siblings.

6.2.3 Inheritance in the family

The Akamba treasure land because they believe that their present location was given to their ancestors by *Mulungu*, their god. Although in the course of migration they began as hunters who kept some livestock and cultivated the land a little, they settled down in their present location and became agriculturally oriented.

A daughter inherits nothing from her father or mother because it is argued that she will get married and move away from the home. The son is the heir to his father's property and wealth, especially land. The eldest son of the first wife takes over as the leader of the homestead when his father dies.

For the Akamba, land is valued and viewed as ancestral property and part of their fundamental cultural identity. Land is valued because as the population has continued to grow, it has been repeatedly divided among those who are heirs. For this reason each family has had to survive with less and less land. Whatever her husband's occupation, a woman works the plot of land which is given to her upon joining her husband's household. When a woman works the land, it is regarded as a source of economic security. This land is supposed to supply the bulk of the food that is consumed by her family. The most common crops produced include maize, millet, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, beans, pigeon peas, green vegetables, arrowroot, cassava and yam. A mother's role is to bring up children on this land and for this reason she is so revered that she is called *mwaitu*, "our only one". As a rule, children are expected never to contradict her wishes and any child who does that earns a curse, and a mother's curse is considered the most lethal of all curses.

There is a saying that a wise man divides his estate before he dies. This action is meant to forestall strife among his wives and their sons after his death. The cultural rule is that a man divides his possessions equally among all his wives before he dies, and that the eldest son of each wife takes care of what has been given to his mother. Each wife's portion, basically the land which is given to her upon joining the husband's household, is divided among her sons. Even after her husband's death a wife is not allowed to share the family land or allocate it to another person. This exercise is done by the husband's brothers or close male relatives. However, when a man dies he is buried on his first wife's piece of land. The core symbol of value for land is apparent from this discussion.

It is also apparent that sons are more treasured than daughters and so the themes of male supremacy and female subservience as core symbols continue.

6.2.4 General comments

Asked about what society values in a man, the participants said that he is expected to be honest and truthful and bring up obedient and disciplined wives and children. He should be diligent in acquiring wealth, which entails land first and foremost, then wives, children and cattle. He should also control and take care of his family and be a husband of an honourable wife or wives and a father of well-behaved children. He should not be involved in witchcraft and should work hard, provide, defend and judge wisely.

As far as a wife is concerned, the respondents said that society values one who has no witchcraft background, cares for the husband, gives birth to children, takes care of the land and maintains harmony at home. She should be submissive, humble, diligent, generous, faithful and hard-working. She should not gossip or be quarrelsome. She looks after the children, shows respect towards her husband and the clan and brings joy to the society.

Society disdains any man or woman whose background has a history of curses, misfortunes, laziness, barrenness or witchcraft.

The responses raised several reasons why the Akamba people have maintained the communication rules in the society. The most common response was that the rules were

part of their culture and had to be adhered to. Some respondents said that when communication rules were followed the results were harmony and direction in the home and in the society, the fulfilment of societal expectations, controlled relationships and maintenance of order. The communication rules are therefore maintained because they facilitate the protection of the male ego, the alleviation of clashes, the prevention of incest and the preservation of the family. The rules also help in preventing curses.

Greetings

One core symbol that stands out among the Akamba is respect. The importance is reflected in the significance of the greeting *wakya* and its response *aa*. All the people in authority say *wakya* to those who have less authority. The people who are older say the same to those who are younger, and the males address the females in the same way. Age, however, supersedes all the situations and positions. The word *wakya* implies, "What do you lack to make you happy or make you who you want to be?", and the response *aa* implies, "I lack many things so share with me what you have".

The significance of this greeting enhances the onus on the strong to take care of the weak, for example, the males are supposed to take care of the women and their children. The older people, who are also supposed to be wiser, should take care of the younger ones. When people are old, their children should take care of them, and people who have possessions should take care of those who are in need. Beyond the material needs, members of the society who are in privileged positions should cater for the psychological needs of their subjects, hence the necessity of the question "What do you lack to make you happy?"

This greeting generally communicates care in the society, that people are "each other's keepers". The greeting embodies the significant core symbol of goodwill to keep people together. This notion is further enhanced by the severity of the punishment of those who transgress the core symbol of respect especially from wife to husband or child to parent. Punishment for deviant behaviour through a curse is also a core symbol.

From an investigation of the rules of communication in the family set-up of the Akamba, the researcher identified the following core symbols: respect and humility; male

supremacy (dominance and superiority); female subservience; parental authority; filial piety (total and unconditional obedience, unquestioning compliance with parents' wishes); age and gender; parental authority; social harmony; fear of a curse; supremacy of the family; wealth; and veneration of society.

6.3 COMMUNICATION AMONG THE MAASAI

This section discusses the findings of the communication rules that exist at different levels of relationship between family members, namely, between the spouses and between the parents and their sons and daughters.

6.3.1 Communication between spouses

As a rule, the husband is the initiator of communication and the one who will greet the wife first, and he will do that orally. He does not shake his wife's hand until after the ceremony *olngesher* which is the last initiation of people who belong to the same age-set. The husband greets the wife by saying *takuenya* which in essence is an enquiry whether she is happy. The wife greets him back with the word *sopa* which means "Do you have life?" thereby enquiring whether he is well enough to perform the duties of life. Greetings in Maasai society are very significant. They reflect one of their key core symbols which is societal solidarity, which in itself embodies other core symbols like respect and submission.

The husband initiates communication as a rule because according to the participants he is the leader and owner of the family. He is the head and manager of the household and its programme, and he controls and directs the wife and children. He has so much control that his wife is not allowed to get pregnant without his permission. He does this by observing her monthly periods very keenly.

It is a rule that as the head of the family, the husband makes all the decisions except when he is away, in which case his eldest son becomes the decision maker. The husband allocates duties to his wives and sons and makes decisions on major family matters especially concerning livestock. Once in a while he may ask his first wife's opinion which he will reject if it does not concur with his. This is another example of male dominance and female subservience.

The more wives a man has, the more he becomes the sole decision maker to neutralise a situation where one wife's decision might undermine the other wives. This is a reflection of family solidarity, one of the core symbols of the Maasai. One female participant voiced one of the reasons why a woman is usually not allowed to make decisions. She said:

> A woman will never make decisions in the family except in her house, among her children and her household utensils because her husband considers her as his child, and children do not make decisions for the family.

The husband has authority over the marriages of his sons and daughters. He is the final decision maker concerning these matters. He decides who his daughter's suitor will be and which woman will be his son's wife. He has authority over the son even after the latter is married. There is a Maasai saying that "A boy whose father is alive is not circumcised", where circumcised refers to social and not physical circumcision. The saying means that as long as a father is alive he still has authority over the son, and therefore the son is not socially emancipated. This notion reflects the strength of the core symbol of authority.

The husband gives instructions to his wives collectively as a group, and although the wives may not be in agreement with one another they have to heed their husband's instructions. The husband communicates individually with the wives as he makes his rounds in their houses depending on his schedule.

The wives can discuss family issues in connection with their children, livestock and wealth among themselves. As a rule they are not allowed to discuss their relationships with their husband because he is feared and revered, and this is part of the core symbol of respect for male authority.

The culture allows the wives to gather once in a while to talk about matters such as the way their husband offended them by drinking too much and beating them. This talk, however, is done in the presence of an elder. Every year the ceremony of *alamal* is observed. *Alamal* is a delegation of women, representative of the society that goes out to

punish a man who has gone beyond the boundaries, for example, by bullying the wife or beating her too often or committing incest. The society allows the women to beat the man physically. If the man learns about the intended "visit" before it occurs, he usually runs away. Punishment also entails paying a fine in the form of a cow. The man is then socially stigmatised (Llewelly-Davies 1979:206).

The only time a wife is allowed to initiate communication is when she is in her monthly period or when she is about to give birth. She is also allowed to initiate conversation when giving a report on what has gone amiss in the family in the husband's absence. She phrases her report by respectfully saying "Father of so and so, that and that happened in your absence" to tell him about lost or sick livestock, her sickness or the children's sickness, for example, and in that order of importance.

The *alamal* ceremony demonstrates that although it seems like the women accept male supremacy and female subservience, they do long to rebel or be liberated. The culture makes some kind of room for "wives' rights" that seems not to be the case with the Akamba.

A husband must show his authority over his family by not allowing his wives to display negative emotions towards him or question his decisions. Whereas a husband may scold his wife and beat her, she is not supposed to fight back. It is a taboo in the society for a wife to raise a hand against the husband because it will attract a curse which could lead to death. The core symbols of male authority, female subservience and fear of the curse are reflected here.

Some of the reasons why wives are beaten may be negligence, especially in connection with livestock or getting pregnant without the husband's permission. In observing the rule of respect, a wife must speak respectfully to her husband and not answer back. The more respectful she is, the more predisposed the husband will be to cater to her needs. Rudeness will only earn her a beating.

Communication in a polygamous set-up

Although all the wives are equal in a polygamous family, the first wife is respected because she is the co-owner with the husband of the homestead. An event where the first wife's seniority is apparent is on the day of the ceremony that marks the status of her husband as a junior elder. Every man is honoured with an elder's chair, and in the early morning of the day of the event, he will sit on the chair and be shaved by his wife. If a man has more than one wife, it is the senior wife's responsibility to shave the husband. The chair that the man is given becomes his "companion" until it breaks. If he dies before it breaks, his eldest son inherits the chair. After this ceremony, a man becomes an elder and gains full responsibility for his own home by moving away from his father's homestead to form his own homestead. His father, a senior elder, remains his advisor.

As was mentioned earlier, the husband sometimes consults his wife, though not in public. This means that she has more freedom of discussion with the husband than the subsequent wives. Rudeness or lack of respect may cause her to lose her privileged position to the next co-wife who is deemed to have more wisdom than her. She may also incur this loss if she is not hard-working.

The first wife's position gives her some form of authority over the subsequent wives. Sometimes she is the husband's mouthpiece and relays his instructions to the other wives. Rank order is exemplified in this level of relationship.

By reason of her position, she is exempt from certain duties like opening and closing the cattle shed and fetching water or firewood. She is expected to rest because as the first wife in the homestead she has done more work than all the others.

Level of confidentiality among spouses

Husbands and wives keep secrets from each other. Although extra-marital affairs are not forbidden, a husband will not reveal any information about such relationships. He only does that when he is ready to bring her home as the next wife.

There is a Maasai saying that the chest of a man is like a lion's den. This *osanag* or lion's den is a place from where it is impossible to retrieve anything, implying that there are

things that a man will not share with his wife. These are things that pertain to the security of the community, for instance if men are planning a raid, it is a rule for a husband to not divulge this secret to his wife for fear of leakage since women are considered to be gossips. The leakage will jeopardise the preservation of the community, which is another core symbol that is deemed more important than communicating with a wife.

A man will share his wife with a visitor who belongs to his age group and this will not be kept secret since the society accepts this act as the respect accorded to a member of one's age group. When a member of the age group visits his friend and finds the friend away from home, he will stick a spear to the ground at the door of his host as a sign that he, the visitor, is in the house with the host's wife. The concept of age group is so important that a man sacrifices his wife out of respect for an age group member.

6.3.2 Communication with children

Children's training starts early in their lives. They are trained about the values of the society. Toddlers are also taught to fight. A male participant told a story about a two-year-old boy who came into the house crying because he had been beaten by another child, whereupon his father told him, "Don't come here crying. Go back and fight against that child". At the age of three they are taught to take care of calves and young goats. Little girls are taught how to churn butter and fetch firewood, among other minor chores. Children are also taught games to prepare them for their responsibilities as adults, for instance to be the judges, wise men and medicine men of their society.

Furthermore, children are taught to respect everyone who is older than they are and to greet the older people by bowing their heads for a touch. This behaviour reflects the core symbol of respect for age and position. A boy bows his head to all older people as a form of greeting until he gets circumcised and is ready to be a *moran* (see section 4.3.3). After this, they bow to nobody, not even the mother, and this is a show of the core symbol of male supremacy. They in fact address the mother the way their father addresses her. A girl bows her head to all the men of her father's age group for the rest of her life regardless of whether or not she is married. The core symbol of parental authority is

reflected in the way children are expected to uphold the core symbol of respect towards their parents.

Father and son in communication

A father communicates only with his sons and not his daughters, and he regards his oldest son as the leader of all the others. Wisdom among the sons is, however, more highly esteemed than age, so a wise son will be regarded as the leader and will be involved in decision-making. Although age is venerated, wisdom supersedes it as is reflected in the saying that "A wise person supersedes an old person". Wisdom or *keigwana* is therefore another core symbol in the society and qualifies one for honour and respect. In the morning the father is usually heard calling the name of his firstborn son and asking him, "Why are you people still sleeping when the sun is already up?"

The father is more involved with his sons: every morning as he goes to inspect the cattle, the sons are expected to greet him and go with to learn the art of looking after the livestock. The father sits with his sons and talks to them to instil wisdom in them. He divides the livestock among them so they grow up knowing what their property is, and this knowledge is considered to be wisdom.

During the time the boys are in the bush preparing to be circumcised and becoming *morans*, they are visited by chiefs and elders who impart wisdom to them. Senior elders are revered for their wisdom and age and assume responsibilities of clan administration. Their age is also supposed to endow them with the knowledge of proverbs, which are the wise sayings of the people. They are also supposed to be proficient in the knowledge of the operation of the age-grade system. This knowledge is considered as wisdom and important for cultural preservation.

The core symbol of male authority is passed on to sons who are taught to be decision makers especially regarding the sale of livestock. They can also represent their fathers in negotiating the bride price for their sisters before they get permission to begin their own families. Good decision-making is regarded as wisdom and good decision makers are respected. When the sons are ready for circumcision and to accept responsibility for their future wealth they can initiate a conversation with the father concerning the migration of

livestock to greener pastures. The son of a favourite wife can sometimes reprimand his father for unacceptable behaviour, an act which is adjudicated by elders. A case in point is when the father sells his wives' cattle unnecessarily. A son will never make decisions without his father's permission as long as the father is alive except when there is an emergency, for example, a medical one.

When a son wants to get married he asks for his father's permission with the declaration: "I am now a man and am capable of sustaining my own family", although he usually remains in his father's homestead, even after he is married.

As long as a son is not circumcised, he greets his father by bowing, upon which the father places his hand on his head. Culturally, this is a sign of submission to and respect for the father. Rebellion only earns a son a curse which is greatly feared. When the son gets married, he can shake the father's hand but his wife and children still bow their heads for his father to touch. These actions bespeak the core symbol of respect which is regarded as a strong foundation of society and one that binds it together.

Father and daughter in communication

As a rule, a daughter is never allowed to have a conversation with her father. She has to communicate any of her needs through her mother, and is not allowed to express either positive or negative emotions directly to her father. The only time that a girl is allowed to talk directly to her father is when she has had the duty of looking after cows and sheep and has to report anything bad that has happened to the animals. This is another example of female subsuvience.

The fact that a father will only talk to the daughter in connection with livestock, points to another core symbol in the society, namely the importance of livestock. It was noted earlier that one of the few times that a man will allow his wife to initiate conversation is when she is reporting about livestock.

There is a distant relationship between a father and a daughter and the latter is valued only according to her material worth. When daughters reach puberty and are still not married, the father does not stay in the same house with them. If a father comes to a

house and finds daughters there, he will not go in but will say that "There are children in the house". Alternatively, if a daughter finds her father in the house, she will not enter. All this is done out of mutual respect which is an important core symbol in the society. A father will brag about his daughter in public, but their personal relationship remains distant. He values his daughter because she is a source of wealth in that when she gets married her bride price is in the form of livestock, which is a source of wealth. Wealth is one of the core symbols in the society.

One male participant said that "A girl must never talk before her elders". A daughter is never allowed to make any decisions concerning her marriage. After circumcision she is usually given away in marriage to a partner chosen by her father in exchange for livestock. A girl who rebels against her father's choice of a suitor is cursed. If, however, she becomes remorseful later, a ceremony has to be performed to absolve her.

As a sign of respect, a daughter will greet her father by bowing before him for a touch on her head. This is the form of greeting for the rest of her life, even after she is married. The relationship between a father and a daughter is therefore based on respect.

Relationship between a mother and her sons and daughters

The mother communicates freely with her sons and daughters when they are young and is often a go-between for them with their father. When the sons and daughters are circumcised, the son no longer has a close relationship with his mother because that is considered unmanly. This restriction was reflected in the comment of a female participant who said that "When my son approaches the cooking place, I chase him away and I remind him of the curse that accompanies such an action". The daughter, however, remains close to her mother because she continues to receive training about life from her. Sons resort to confiding more in their peer group members with whom they were circumcised.

Whereas the firstborn son is expected to take care of his father in old age, the youngest son has the onus of looking after his mother in her old age.

Communication between siblings

Communication between brothers and sisters is controlled by the way they are brought up. The division of labour in the society keeps them apart especially as they grow older. When they are toddlers, they play and fight together but when they are older, there are some things that they conceal, for example, their love lives. They will, however, reprimand each other about behaviour that brings shame either to the family or to the society. This points to yet two other core symbols, namely, the veneration of the family and of society. Anything that dishonours the family or the society is highly castigated. This is a corroboration of the core symbol of societal solidarity.

6.3.3 Inheritance

The theme of inheritance is something that the whole family discusses. Before a man dies, he calls his wives and children for consultation. The eldest son in the home inherits the father's cattle, because while the father is alive, he is the one who looks after this parent while the youngest son is supposed to look after his mother.

Girls do not get any share of their father's wealth because they are supposed to get married and move to another home. Giving girls a share of their father's wealth would be tantamount to bequeathing the family's inheritance to another family.

One of the Maasai elders said that "Without cattle, there is no Maasai", and this expresses the attitude of the Maasai towards cattle. They refer to themselves as the "cattle people" because their herds are central to their lives. Curdled or fresh milk is the basic staple food and when there is a scarcity of food, they drink *nailang'a,* a mixture of milk and blood. These liquids are stored in gourds which are washed with fresh cow urine which is regarded as sterile and also acts as a mild antiseptic. *Osaroi,* curdled blood, is also used as food. A short arrow measuring 1 cm at the tip, is shot into the jugular vein in the neck of the animal and the blood is caught in a gourd. The bleeding, which is not fatal, is stopped with mud mixed with dung. The Maasai believe that blood makes them very strong. Although it is a taboo for the Maasai to eat game meat, they will eat the eland and the buffalo because they consider these animals as wild cattle.

Dry dung is used as fuel and its smoke keeps away mosquitoes. Wet dung is used for plastering houses, and cattle hides are used for mattresses, mats, clothes, sandals, slings and weapon sheaths.

Cattle are used for the payment of the bride price and are a symbol of the bond between the families of the bride and the bridegroom. This bond creates ties and loyalties across clans. Cattle are used to pay fines to re-establish social harmony, and also in ceremonies like births, rites of passage and deaths and rituals that symbolise the people's bond with their god, *Enkai*.

A wife does not have her own cows. Even the cows that are given to her as gifts at the time of her marriage belong to her sons. There is a Maasai fable that explains why Maasai women do not own cattle. It is believed that Maasai women used to own cattle, but one morning, before the cattle were taken to graze, a cow was slaughtered. While the women were busy with the slaughtered cow, the cattle began moving away to graze by themselves. One woman asked a child to bring back the cattle but the child's mother said that her "child is not going before eating the meat". All the mothers then refused to let their children go and in the end all the cattle disappeared into the bush and became wild animals. The women therefore lost all their cattle and decided to go and live with the men. The men's cattle were intact since they had been careful, therefore to date all the cattle belong to men.

Male children are consequently the inheritors when their fathers die, depicting male supremacy. They inherit livestock and land and are expected to look after their mothers when the fathers die. When the mother dies, the last-born son inherits the cows that were in her charge.

The Maasai keep as many cattle as possible and each family is capable of owning as many as a 100 head of cattle. There is no Maasai home without cattle and they dedicate their lives to keeping livestock safe from thieves and wild animals.

The foregoing information about the Maasai and their cattle is therefore aptly summarised by the elder who said that "Without cattle there is no Maasai".

6.3.4 General comments

Circumcision and age sets

Although it is not a core symbol, circumcision is a very important cultural practice. In Maasai life, the age-set that is circumcised every fifteen years has a definite name. The names do not change and they serve as reference points in the history of the Maasai people, just like we in contemporary life refer to World War I and World War II. The people who are circumcised at the same time have a very strong bond with and a loyalty to each other that sometimes surpass those between a man and his wife. Loyalty to age set members is another core cultural symbol.

The opening of a circumcision period is one of the most important events as far as the function of the age-set system is concerned. This period, *enkipaata,* ushers young boys into *moran*hood, which is the climax of male importance. The *moran* are held to excel all others physically, and the symbol of their coveted position is a set of privileges denied to the boys. Boys, for example, are not allowed to cross the central corral of any village, dance with girls, yelp in the bush at night, hunt lions, slaughter an animal in the forest unaccompanied or defend the area against cattle rustlers.

At circumcision, although there might be a considerable number of youths to be circumcised, the rituals are performed individually or in small groups. After a successful operation, the initiates recover in their mothers' huts. Each one is offered stock by various close members of the family. The initiation rituals last three to four months and this time is spent mostly in seclusion. After having participated in his first *olpul*, which is the warrior's training ritual, the youth is allowed to wear the clothes of a warrior as a symbol of his new status.

Greetings

When a Maasai husband greets his wife by saying "*takuenya*" he is asking her if she is happy. He is asking about her welfare and that of her children and the livestock in her charge, as well as about the general household.

His concern is related to the core symbol of male authority because, according to cultural expectations, authority goes with responsibility. The idea of authority and responsibility is also reflected in the way the wife greets the husband when she says "*sopa*", asking "Do you have life?" with which she wants to know whether he is strong enough to protect them.

The notion of protection is further communicated in the act of a father placing his open hand on the head of either a son or a daughter. It communicates that an older person is blessing a younger person and promising to protect him or her. The act of protection and blessing enhances the sense of societal solidarity. By bowing the head to be blessed the son or daughter who is the younger person communicates submission and respect. All these core symbols are the elements that hold the society together.

Expectations of the gender roles of husband and wife

What then does the society expect of a man in connection with his family? The following are the expectations that were elicited from the respondents, some of which form the symbols of the society.

A man should be hard-working. This attribute translates into his ability to manage livestock, wives and children who constitute his wealth. It is said that a man may have a lot of livestock but without a family he is *olkirigoi*, a person without honour. A person acquires this title if he is the only person in his age group who is not married. The society looks down upon such a person and he is not given social responsibilities during important ceremonies, neither is he respected.

For a man to be respected in society he must also have wisdom or *keigwana* which is highly valued in the society. He must also be a respector of his age group, those who went through the ceremony of circumcision with him. This ceremony takes place every

fifteen years and is given a name that is not repeated and that marks that period making it a point of reference in the history of the Maasai. A strong bond exists between the people who belong to that period. The members of the same age group have such high respect for one another that they will share wives. For a man to be respected he should also be a good manager of livestock, wives, children and wealth.

A respectable wife, on the other hand, brings honour to her husband. The society expects her to be hard-working, respectful to her husband and members of his age group, and a mother of many well-behaved children. Giving birth to children is a major duty and childless women are disdained.

Some of the things that are castigated in the society are laziness, ill behaviour and lack of respect. Anyone who shows a lack of respect for parents, older people, the age group and the society at large earns a curse, the most feared phenomenon especially if it is a parental curse which is believed to lead to death. The fear of a curse is the intrusive motivator to observe the expectations and practices of the society.

In summary, the relationship levels discussed in this section culminate in the reasons why the Maasai have rules that govern communication in the family. Some of the reasons given by the participants were that rules directed society, enhanced culture and helped create order, stability and security in the society. The issue of order and stability corroborates Lustig and Koester's (1999:298) view that rules of interaction give relationships a sense of coherence. They help to avert disintegration through things like curses and incest. They inculcate respect which is the societal value that binds the people together. An example was given to the effect that if a woman committed the most disrespectful act of beating her husband, she would also cause trouble for all the women in her age group. They would all be beaten by their husbands to prevent a repetition of a similar act.

6.4 PRESSURE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

It has been mentioned that the Maasai and the Akamba communities have not escaped the encroachment of modernity although the Maasai have been more resistant than the Akamba. One female Maasai respondent said that when she was young she would never have thought of refusing a marriage partner chosen for her by her father. She further commented that "a girl today goes to school and grows horns so she tries to refuse the suitor that her father chooses for her". A man from the Akamba community commented as follows: "Things are changing these days. Children are going to school, wives are going to church and they are beginning to defy our traditional ways. Our culture must not die". It seems like the encroachment of modernity on culture is spreading and those who value tradition are developing resentment towards it.

6.5 CONCLUSION

From an investigation of the rules of communication in the family structure of the Maasai, the researcher identified the core symbols of respect and submission, with respect as the outstanding core symbol that is found at all the relationship levels in the family structure. Respect and submission are pegged to age and gender to the effect that the older people command more respect, and the discrimination in gender leads to male supremacy and female subservience. Reputation, wisdom and power are the other core symbols that will earn respect especially for males in the community. Wealth is not a core symbol but it will also earn respect. The other core symbols that are geared towards the survival of culture and social harmony are age group loyalty, circumcision, familial solidarity, community, parental authority, filial piety, veneration of culture, fear of the curse and patriarchal loyalty. The purpose of rules is therefore to enhance culture.

The findings that have been discussed exemplify Hall's (2005:56) notion that culture dictates how its members communicate. The responses of the participants in the current study corroborated that among the Akamba and the Maasai the rules restrict who may talk to whom about what, so males shared more information but in particular ways. The findings are also commensurate with the concepts found in the rules theory which forms the theoretical framework of the study. The responses generated from the study pointed to the notion that the society's prescriptions to its members were meant to regulate the kind

of behaviour that kept it (society) together. People generate rules for interaction and these rules govern their behaviour (Littlejohn 1970:48).

This chapter has identified the rules of communication in the two cultures, the Akamba and the Maasai, and in the next chapter the core symbols that emanate from these rules are compared in conjunction with theoretical and methodological conclusions.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter entails the discussion of the conclusions drawn from the findings emanating from the various rules of communication among the Akamba and the Maasai. The findings are compared based on the theoretical and methodological approaches used in the study. The chapter also proposes a few possibilities for future research. Afifi (2003:737) says that the goal of interpretive studies is to make a particular phenomenon more intelligible or to provide rich descriptions of a construct or concept that has not been extensively explored. The study identifies the relevance of the rules theory for the communication relationships, mentioning the functions and types of rules within each culture. The communication relationships within the different levels of family relationships are compared as delineated through the sub-problems, and core symbols that emanate from the rules are identified and compared. The study highlights the similarities and differences of the core symbols of the two different cultures leading to the discussion of the implications of the relations that exist between the Maasai and the Akamba as perceived from the results. After a critical evaluation, directions for future research are suggested.

It is important to remember that the descriptions generated in this study were from the older members of the two communitities. The rules and the core symbols therefore reflect traditions and values that these group members wished to preserve.

7.2 RELEVANCE OF RULES THEORY FOR COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS

The theoretical approach adopted for this study comprises the works of theorists who are concerned with explicitly and systematically treating communication rules as fundamental necessities in communication theory (Cushman & Whiting 1972). These theorists are interested in investigating communicative behaviour from a rules perspective.

The findings discussed in the study reflect some of the tenets of the rules theory. O'Brien (1978) defines a rule as consisting of specific behaviour that is appropriate for an individual to use in a specific situation as agreed upon by members of a system. This definition describes the communication situation of the Maasai and the Akamba where a child, for example, knows the boundaries of relationships with either the father or the mother and is aware that there is a difference between the two. The study reflected on the specific behaviour that is appropriate for individuals in the Maasai and the Akamba cultures to use in the family relationships as agreed upon by the societies in both cultures.

The findings have demonstrated the "oughtness" and "expectedness" of communication rules in the family as advanced by O'Brien (1978), Cronen et al (1979) and Shimanoff (1980). Examples are given of what the community expects in the communication relationships between husbands and wives, between parents and their sons and daughters and between brothers and sisters.

The meaning-centred approach to rules (Cronen et.al 1979) maintains that an individual is a part of a number of systems and he or she must understand the rules that govern behaviour. Each participant must understand how his or her behaviour will affect other participants.This rules approach is demonstrated in the way the Maasai and the Akamba, according to the responses of participants in the study, insist on people adhering to the rules of communication in the family in order to keep the community intact.

Pearce's (1971:62) rule-governed approach expresses rules as the beliefs about what should or should not be done for an objective to be achieved or an intention to be accomplished.In this approach it assumed that people know the rules and have power to

follow or violate and that interactants know each other's rules. Rule-governed approach is therefore reflected in the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba whose beliefs are about what should or should not be done in order to enhance the existence of the community. This sense of societal coherence is the motivation behind the rules of interaction which in essence provides a predictable pattern to social episodes (Lustig & Koester 1999:298). Behaviour that contravenes societal coherence is highly castigated and the punishments meted out to offenders are examples of the functions of the rules (Shimanoff 1980:86) as reflected among the Maasai and the Akamba. In each culture a lack of adherence to the rules earns one a curse which is regarded as the greatest punishment.

7.2.1 The function of rules

Several theorists propose that the functions of rules are regulatory, interpretive and corrective. They also portray functions as guidelines for behaviour and mechanisms for social actions. Samover and Porter's (1991:36) view that rules arise to regulate behaviour in order to facilitate the attainment of goals and supply in the needs of the community, is mirrored in the way the Maasai and the Akamba have established rules of communication behaviour with the goal of perpetuating their societal values. Culture provides an implicit set of rules to govern interactive behaviour aligned to cultural prescriptions that determine how they should be used (Lustig & Koester 1999:252).

One of the functions of rules is that they are guidelines for behaviour (O'Brien 1978) and this function is demonstrated in the fact that the Maasai and the Akamba have generated communication rules as their guidelines to govern the way members of the family behave towards one another in the family unit as is reflected in the findings. This fact is portrayed in the way the community enculturates its members right from childhood. From this enculturation, the establishment of communication rules helps in engendering common symbolic information (Cushman & Whiting 1972).

The cultural prescription of the Maasai and the Akamba forbidding the father to have close communication with the daughter is meant to prevent any possibility of anti-social behaviour like incest. This example of the relationship between the father and the

daughter is also a reflection of Shimanoff's (1980) notion that rules regulate behaviour by regulating activities.

Rules function as mechanisms through which social action is organised and they also govern the structure of interaction (Littlejohn 1983:61). The Maasai's and the Akamba's rules of communication determine how members of the family interact with one another.

When a Maasai or a Kamba man is faced with a choice about whether his son or daughter will accompany him to the market, he will predictably choose the son. His choice is a reflection of Cushman and Whiting's (1972) notion that one of the functions of rules is that they provide criteria for making choices.

Shimanoff's (1980:85) interpretive function of rules is exemplified in the way a Maasai man interprets his son's extension of a hand in greeting as disrespect. This interpretation results from the fact that the culture requires a boy to give his father the head and not the hand. When a Kamba girl enters the hut where her father is entertaining his visitors, the action is interpreted as disrespect.

A wife who fights back when beaten by the husband will be disciplined by the whole community and this episode is an example of Shimanoff's (1980) corrective function of rules. Another corrective function of rules is portrayed through the punitive acts that are meted out to those who do not conform to the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba in the family structures. One outstanding example is the threat of the curse to those who contravene the rules in all the levels of relationship in the family.

When the Maasai and the Akamba forbid rebellion against the man of authority in the home, the husband and father to the wife and the child, respectively, their aim is to establish a desirable family which builds up a desirable community. The community therefore cannot be built unless there is coherence in communication. Cushman and Whiting (1972) purport that adherence to rules increases the significance of coherence in communication.

In the findings, the way members of the families in the two cultures communicate with one another tally with Littlejohn's (1983) view that the family functions as a system of

interacting individuals who are constrained by the actions of other members within the system. The constraint is exemplified in the communication rules that the Maasai and the Akamba have put in place to govern the different levels of relationship within the family structure. An example is the constraint in the relationship between a father and a daughter in both cultures.

The family also functions as a unit where members are expected to respond to each other in certain ways according to their different roles which are determined by relationship agreement in the culture. The family unit has rules and every member plays a critical role. It is evident among the Maasai and the Akamba that there are rules at the different levels of relationship, for example between spouses and between parents and children, where every member plays a critical role. According to their roles as parents, children or siblings, they respond to each other with respect.

7.2.2 Types of rules

Theorists present different types of rules. It may be noted from the findings that the major types of communication rules that are operative are interpretive, regulatory, obligatory and prohibitory. In the previous section an example has been cited concerning regulatory rules to the effect that they guide and influence behaviour (Shimanoff 1980). Obligatory rules and prohibitory rules operate together. Obligatory rules relay what must be done whereas prohibitory rules relay what must not be done. These rules are identifiable in the family relationships of the Maasai and the Akamba.

The interpretive rule which indicates the meaning of a particular act is demonstrated among the Maasai and the Akamba in the interpretations of their rules. An example of the implementation of an interpretive rule is reflected in the situation where a father is not allowed to be in close communication with his daughter. This situation is interpreted as an act of respect on behalf of the daughter. It is also interpreted as a way of averting a social evil like incest as has been mentioned in the previous section.

Examples of obligatory rules are: it is imperative for wives and children to be humble and submissive to the husband and father respectively; a daughter must not sit in the company

of her father especially when he is entertaining his visitors; and a wife must not fight back when the husband beats her. In the converse, these rules become prohibitive rules.

All the rules that exist between the spouses, between them and their children and between the siblings are regulatory because they regulate the behaviour in all these relationships.

7.2.3 Rules consciousness

Rules consciousness is regarded as the degree to which actors are aware of a rule when they are acting (Shimanoff 1980). Most people know the way they are expected to act within their own culture, but very often the rules are unwritten and unspoken expectations (Gudykunst & Kim 1997). This state of affairs expressly describes the situation of the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba because they are aware of the rules that that govern their relationships within their different cultures. Obedience to the rules is reflexive to them since they have grown up in the culture and have internalised it from a very early age. They know, for example, that the people who must be accorded respect are older people, husbands and fathers, mothers by their young children, first wives by their co-wives, and the community as a whole. They also know that the man of the home has absolute authority over all the other members of the family.

7.3 CORE SYMBOLS DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

The outstanding finding that was revealed in the study was the similarity of the core symbols from the communication rules of each culture. The basic differences lay in the ways each culture applied the core symbols in the appropriate situation.

Of all the core symbols in both cultures, respect is the one that is present in all the levels of relationships in the family even though the descriptions of some relationships seem paradoxical where an outsider is concerned. The concept of respect therefore seems to be the point of departure for the network of core symbols in both the Maasai and the Akamba cultures. Respect for those in authority, like husbands, parents (especially fathers), older siblings and older people, generally engenders submission, humility, filial piety and female subservience. It is, however, necessary to note that there is a thin line between respect and fear. An example is that although a wife respects her husband because he is the head of the family, she fears him because failure to obey him means a

beating and also the possibility of earning a curse. This same situation applies to the children's relationship with their father. Even in the case that is peculiar to the Maasai, where there is great respect between members of the same age group, it is not devoid of fear – the fear of a curse should anyone fail to comply.

The core symbols of authority and male supremacy pertain to the male gender, and by virtue of this, men are accorded respect. Respect is therefore the fulcrum of all the other core symbols which culminate in the respect for community. This attitude towards community is so revered that it is accompanied by punishment for non-compliance and reward for compliance. There is a great fear of the curse for anyone who contravenes the expectations or standards of the community. The community itself metes out punishment for its members who commit acts that are harmful to it.

The study also reveals that both the Maasai and the Akamba communities are male dominated. This view is reflected in the core symbols, which in the eyes of an outsider tend to favour the men as opposed to the women. This structure is revealed in the familial hierarchy where the man is the chief decision maker in the family. This authority descends down to the eldest son, then to the other sons. The next echelon is the first wife, and all the other females in the family have no voice. The children occupy the lowest rank.

Male domination is also expressed in the fact that rules of descent are patrilineally oriented. The son inherits from his father over his sisters and even over his mother in both cultures. From an ethnic point of view, it could be concluded that the scenario displays chauvinistic male characters and subjugated female characters. From the findings, the female characters accept the subjugation as an expression of the culture they revere. This state of affairs is more prominent among the Akamba, according to the findings. The men's attitude towards the women is utilitarian in the sense that a woman's value depends on her use and on her being a vehicle for procreation and adding to a man's wealth.

According to what has been garnered from the study, the communication rules in the families in both cultures are very hierarchical, based on the dictates of culture which are

reflected in the core symbols that have been discussed. The echelons of the communication hierarchy can be traced from the top, from the man of the family who makes all the decisions, down to the child who has absolutely no say. This hierarchy is based on the power structure which rests on age, gender and position.

Position, in both cultures, is distinguished by ownership of wealth, although, as has been pointed out, the concepts of wealth in the two cultures differ (see also section 7.5.6). For the Maasai, the concept of *karsisisho*, riches, entails the ownership of women, children and livestock, as alluded to in the literature review. The Akamba's concept of wealth on the other hand is the possession of land. A man who attains old age and possesses many wives, children and heads of cattle is looked upon as a successful person (Llewelly-Davis 1979:211). Old age is honoured and is also associated with wisdom which is another cherished core symbol which very often surpasses wealth.

The Akamba cherish old age because it marks the attainment of seniority. In the case of a man, it marks the time when he is rewarded by his peers and the community at large. Old age is therefore highly venerated because of the accumulation of experience.

7.4 COMPARISONS OF COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS

The most endeared core symbol, respect, is observed at family level as a way of preserving the culture of the people. Findings from the different levels of relationships in the family structure are summarised according to the sub-problems of the study, namely the communication between spouses; communication between a father and a son; communication between a father and a daughter; communication between a mother and a son; communication between a mother and a daughter and communication between siblings.

7.4.1 The relationship between spouses

In the relationship between spouses the outstanding core symbol is respect, but it is often accompanied by the core symbol of authority and male supremacy. A husband's position of authority is described as superior and he elicits respect from his wives, children and all the people who are younger than him. There is a thin line between respect and fear: the Akamba husband is referred to as the "lion", "cock" or "bull" of the house, and the

Maasai husband is described as the "head" and "manager" of the household who is feared and revered. Judging from the terms that are used in the two cultures, the Akamba husband is described in a more aggressive way than the Maasai husband. These descriptions depict the core symbol of male supremacy and superiority in the two cultures.

The core symbol of male supremacy or superiority reflects the other side of the husband and wife relationship portrayed in the core symbol of female subservience or inferiority. Out of respect for his age group member, a Maasai man will sacrifice his wife by offering her for the night to a visitor of his age group. This practice is only allowed as a man's special treat to friends who strictly belong to his age set, namely those who participated in the same circumcision period with him. This phenomenon is not found among the Akamba. The core symbol of the authority of the husband is reflected in the fact that he is the initiator of conversation, the decision maker and the owner of the home and his wife is submissive to him. In both cultures submission is reflected in the wife not being allowed to make decisions on the important matters of the family and not fighting back when beaten by the husband. The wife is regarded as inferior and weak by the Akamba and one who cannot be confided in. A Maasai wife refers to a husband's heart as a "lion's den" from where it is very difficult to retrieve anything. The fact that a husband will not confide in the wife is further based on the belief among the Akamba that a wife is the source of misfortune, and among the Maasai that a wife is a child. For the Maasai, female subservience is partially allayed by the practice of *alamal* which is an annual celebration where women are allowed to express their grievances about men's oppressive ways.

7.4.2 The relationship between father and son

The level of communication with children entails parental authority which calls for the core symbols of respect, submission, female subservience, humility and filial piety from the children. These core symbols reflect the view that "parents and children are not age mates", according to one respondent from the Akamba, and so are not allowed to relate at the same level.

In the communication between a father and a son, the community expects a son to communicate with his father respectfully and with submission and humility. Among the Maasai, one of the ways this attitude is reflected is through bending the head to the father and others in the father's age group to touch. Boys in this culture however, do not bow to their parents after they have been circumcised and have become *morans.* In both cultures, the first sons of first wives hold a special position and are sometimes allowed to make decisions in the family. The Maasai's cattle are special to them, and the first son is allowed to inherit his father's cattle.

7.4.3 The relationship between father and daughter

Within the level of communication between a father and his daughter, the most outstanding core symbol is filial piety, in other words respect, submission and humility. In both cultures daughters have the furthest social distance from their fathers. According to the Akamba, daughters "have no voice" and among the Maasai, a daughter bows her head to the father even after she is married.

7.4.4 The relationship between mother and son

In the level of relationship between a mother and her son, the core symbol of respect supersedes the core symbols that have been discussed pertaining to the communication between parents and children. The mother's age and parental authority call for this respect. A son's respect for the mother is, however, not laced with fear as is his respect for the father. The core symbol of submission to the mother is, however, not applicable after a boy is circumcised.

7.4.5 The relationship between mother and daughter

Although mothers and daughters communicate freely, their relationship still hinges strongly on respect, and the daughter is expected to be counselled by her mother regarding the issues of life.

7.4.6 The relationship between siblings

Siblings also communicate relatively freely but they still have to remain respectful to one another. The younger siblings are expected to treat the older ones with the kind of respect that they would accord their parents. Whereas the Akamba siblings share their love life,

the Maasai do not. In both cultures, siblings castigate one another for bad behaviour which disgraces the family and community. Male supremacy and female subservience are apparent at this level of communication in that from childhood, girls are brought up to know that they are inferior to the boys and are treated so. An example of this is that sons are the inheritors of family property whereas girls are looked upon as transient members of the community who get married and move on to another family.

7.5 COMPARISON OF THE AKAMBA AND MAASAI CORE SYMBOLS

The formation of community gives rise to learned patterns of behaviour which can be termed as culture (Maciver & Page 1962:8). Culture, which is the totality of a people's way of life, is summarised in their world views, values and norms (Hall 2005:56). This study has portrayed that the Maasai and the Akamba have controlled their cultures by generating rules of communication to be observed by their members. Samovar et al (1981) contend that in a bid to compare cultures, the family is the most appropriate starting point because as Grunlan and Mayers (1979) put it, the family gives a person status, plugging him into the social network that prepares him for his social roles. This is the basis on which this study compares the Maasai and the Akamba at a family structure level.

The comparison indicates that although the Akamba and the Maasai belong to different ethnic groups of Africa, similarities and differences exist in the core symbols of their communicative styles. Ayisi (1988:18) says that "in most African societies, kinship constitutes the primary basis for the individuals' rights, duties and rules of residence, marriage, inheritance and succession". Whereas there might not be kinship ties between the Akamba and the Maasai, a possible reason for the similarities could be the proximity of residence, considering that the two communities border each other geographically and could have borrowed values from each other.

In comparing the core symbols of both cultures it is noted that the similarities outnumber the differences. Within the similarities, differences occur in the details of the manner in which the rules are executed and the degree to which they are observed. Core symbols that were extracted from the communication rules in each culture are compared next. The

influence of age sets could be one of the reasons why the Maasai are able to resist modernity more effectively than the Akamba.

7.5.1 Respect

Respect is one of the core symbols and is regarded as the most basic in both cultures. It is the embryo and the fulcrum of all relationships in the family. In both the Maasai and the Akamba cultures, respect for the community motivates the respect that is exercised at every level of relationship in the family. In some cases the descriptions of some relationships seem paradoxical where an outsider is concerned. A case in point which features more among the Maasai is the fact that a father, who will not communicate with his daughter, explains this act as a sign of respect. The concept of respect is the web that unites members of the family, giving them the motivation to want to behave in a way that will not disgrace the family or the community. Respect is weaved into the grain of the community such that even female subjugation, which may seem oppressive to an outsider, is accepted as an expression of respect by those in authority and those under authority. A case in point is the situation among the Akamba where a mother who loses her inheritance to her son, acquiesces and does not regard it as a loss but as an act of respect. It may however be argued that the behaviour that the culture proscribes as a demonsration of respect from women to men may not actually be a feeling of respect but subservience. The *alamal* season among the Maasai is an acceptable time for women to rebel against male dominance. This behaviour shows that women's respect is "culturally" motivated and not an optional move.

Among the Akamba, more so than among the Maasai, humility is, as a rule, a mandatory accompaniment to respect. As has been reflected before, a wife must act in humility towards her husband by not initiating communication, not answering back when aggrieved, accepting not to be a decision maker, receiving a beating without retaliation, and not entering the husband's *thome* which represents his domain. The children's communication with their father, especially sons, since daughters are not even supposed to talk with their fathers, is supposed to be seasoned with humility. Citing the example that was given earlier, when a son or a daughter is summoned by the father, he or she is

supposed to enquire humbly why he or she has been summoned. This phenomenon is more pronounced in the Akamba community than in the Maasai community.

In both communities the mother is respected by sons and daughters, although she is not a supreme authority. Respect for the mother is expressed by not maligning or insulting her by mentioning her by name. To the Maasai and the Akamba a mother is regarded as sacred and this regard earns her a unique kind of respect.

Age and position

Despite the subjugated status of the woman, the respect that is accorded the first wife by the co-wives, the children and members of the community, is based on age and position. It will be noticed in both cultures that an intersection of gender, age and position are also the tenets that underlie respect. For instance, the older people of the Akamba and the Maasai are the initiators of greetings because age accords one a higher position in the community and yet a woman does not initiate greetings in spite of her advanced age.

Submission is also an aspect of respect. The younger people are expected to submit to the older people, just like the female is supposed to submit to the male. In some cases, age supersedes gender in the sense that an uncircumcised son should submit to his mother although she is female.

One aspect of respect that features among the Maasai but not the Akamba is the respect for age mates or members of one's age group. This respect is in keeping with the fact that the Maasai community is a highly age-conscious community as was mentioned earlier. It was also said that the age system among the Maasai is the most important and dominating feature of the Maasai unity and cultural structure (Llewelly-Davies1979:206). Men who belong to the same age group or age-set are bound together by the common circumcision season that they went through and the *moran* status (warriorhood) that marks a certain era in the history of the Maasai. These men therefore pay very high respect to each other. This is the reason why they are even ready to offer their wives to a visitor of the same age-set.

In both cultures, the major purpose for the practice of respect in the communication network of the family is to achieve harmony and peace in the community. This is because, as has been mentioned before, community is sacrosanct and anything that violates the harmony, peace and unity within it is castigated and punished severely. For this reason, any disrespectful behaviour, especially of wives to their husbands, is severely punished, even by supernatural powers through a curse. The Akamba invoke powers of witchcraft and sorcery to put curses on offenders.

7.5.2 Male supremacy

Among the Maasai and the Akamba core symbols of male supremacy and female subservience are found in the levels of relationship between husband and wife, father and children and between siblings. These symbols exist in both cultures although there is a difference in the way male supremacy portrays the position of a wife in each culture, as will be explained presently.

In the culture of the Akamba the term male superiority is more appropriate because in the communication relationship between a husband and a wife, the latter is regarded as an inferior being. A male interviewee from the Akamba community said that his people considered a woman so inferior that if a man, for example, enquired, "Is there anybody in that home?", he might get the response that there is nobody except two women and three children. It was also mentioned earlier that when boys are growing up, they are taught that women are weak and less clever, so the latter should not be told secrets.

Among the Akamba, the husband is, as a rule, the initiator of communication because he is the owner of the house. He is referred to as the "cock", the "lion" and the "bull". In one sense these terms with their references to animal characteristics, depict the man as one who either rules over others or suppresses them. The severity of the punishment that the community metes out to the wife for her disrespectful behaviour to her husband could affirm that the husband is a bully and that the community expects him to be one. A further affirmation is the fact that the woman is blamed even for her husband's mistakes, and that a woman is generally regarded as the source of misfortune in the family.

Due to male dominance, husbands are the ones who initiate communication in both cultures. Male dominance among the Akamba could be referred to as male superiority because it is more oppressive and the men regard themselves as superior to the women. The terms used to describe the Maasai husband, namely "owner", "head", "manager" and "director" refer to the action of management which suggests a more lenient attitude to or treatment of the wife by a less authoritarian leader.

With both the Akamba and the Maasai, the husband is the sole controller of the affairs of the family and the chief decision maker who wields authority over the family.

In both cultures, male dominance is also reflected where the son is concerned. A son is venerated above a daughter because he is the inheritor of his father's benefits and perpetuates a patriarchal line. A daughter, on the other hand, is derogated because when she gets married, she moves away from the home and becomes a member of another family. When she is married, she is considered as a guest because she has another home. This attitude of male supremacy is inculcated in the boys when they are growing up, so much so that Akamba boys will beat up girls if they pass by where the boys are playing.

Male supremacy is also demonstrated in the situation where a man is absent from the home and the authority is usually delegated to the first son instead of to the wife. This act could be interpreted as an elevation of the son over the mother. This notion is extended to the situation where the sons inherit the wealth of their father who has passed away and the first son assumes the position of the overseer of the homestead, and he takes charge of his mother and his stepmothers. The nature of this charge is more pronounced among the Maasai where a woman owns so little that even the cows that she is given to milk belong to her sons.

Male supremacy in the Akamba culture has another dimension in that a son legitimises his mother's status: a woman without a son could very easily be disposed of. The son's position is also elevated above that of his mother and his sister because he is allowed into the *thome* to discuss important family matters with his father, while the mother and the sister are not. As has been mentioned, a daughter has to ask for permission to do certain things whereas a son does not have to. The example given was that of a son who could go

to a village dance at will, whereas the daughter had to ask her father's permission through her mother (see section 6.2.2).

Another facet of male supremacy among the Maasai is where a circumcised son does not have to bow his head to his father for the latter to touch. A daughter is subjected to this act of submission to her father for the rest of her life. Unlike the Akamba woman, the Maasai woman is subjected to a double yoke of submission. In marriage, she must also submit to the fact that her husband has the freedom to offer her as a sexual partner for the night to visiting members of his age group.

The notion that the wife, the sons and the daughters are under the authority of the man is more pronounced among the Maasai. Apart from the fact that the wife has no authority to make decisions, the husband exercises such authority over her that he decides when she can get pregnant. As for the son, the father has authority over him even after he is married, hence the saying that "A boy whose father is alive is not circumcised". In this context the meaning of the word "circumcised" is not literal but is an expression that depicts the lack of total freedom that accompanies a man whose father is still alive as opposed to the concept that circumcision turns a boy into a man.

It is evident in both cultures that the position of the male member is often more venerated than that of the female. The existence of male supremacy gives rise to female subservience, which is the subject of the next section.

7.5.3 Female subservience

In both cultures the woman's voice in the family is muffled. In her father's house, she has no rights and less value than her brother although she enriches her father with livestock that he receives as her bride price when she gets married. She makes no decisions but has to abide by the decisions that are made by her father and sometimes by her brothers. She inherits nothing from her father, and in her husband's house the status quo does not change much. She has additional duties, such as taking care of her husband and giving birth to and taking care of the children. This status quo of the woman is a corroboration of what Spencer (1988) says about Maasai women who are trained to be dependent on men and to occupy a restricted role. He goes on to say that Maasai women never have full

rights of ownership over livestock, which are the hallmark of wealth, and for that reason they mitigate this disparity by bearing children. As a matter of fact, the latter are their point of recognition and a sense of their value to the community.

In both cultures the woman is denied affective expressions and unless she is a first wife she cannot make substantive decisions apart from those that pertain to her children, her household and the livestock or land (Maasai or Akamba respectively) which are in her charge. She is required to do everything in obedience and submission to her husband. Humility is an added virtue expected from the Akamba woman. For wives from both cultures, failure to comply with rules of communication results in a beating or some other type of punishment including that of a curse. The force of the rules around subservience and the consequenses for violation are extremely strong. In situations like these, one would argue that being obligated to show respect is different from choosing from options such as questioning authority, raising alternatives, collaborating, as well as showing respect. In both cultures there are reasons for women to complain about their husbands, but although the women in both cultures are muffled, the Maasai woman is given a chance once a year, during the annual *alamal* ceremony, to vent her anger about how she is treated (see section 6.3.1).

In both cultures, when the wife commits an offence, the community mandates the husband to beat her, but she is not expected to fight back. The act of a wife fighting back is taboo and is tantamount to a lack of respect that ends up in earning a curse. This taboo is a reflection of the expectations of the community. This core symbol of female subservience can also be seen in the relationship between boys and girls in that whereas girls cannot speak to their fathers, there is a much closer relationship between father and son.

7.5.4 Authority

The core symbol of male supremacy in the Akamba and the Maasai cultures is expressed through the wielding of unquestioned authority over the whole family. His wife or wives, sons and daughters bow down to his authority both symbolically and physically in respect, submission and humility. The physical bowing down is more pronounced among

the Maasai. Respect is sometimes laced with fear, because any lack of compliance results in beatings for all the members of the family. The husband therefore has both marital and parental authority. In the case of the latter, the mother's parental authority over the children is displayed in their respect for her manifested in their not wanting to do anything that will elicit a parental curse from her. In both cases of the relationship of a wife and a husband and that of a child and a mother or indeed a father and the children, respect is reduced to the level of the fear of retribution.

In both cultures, when the men are making major decisions about the community they do not involve or consult the women. This is particularly relevant when the men are planning raids, especially in the case of the Maasai whose quest is to reclaim their cattle that were allegedly stolen by other ethnic groups, according to one of their legends. The reason given in both cultures is that the women might divulge the men's secrets. In some cases, a man may want to consult his wife, usually the first wife, but in both cultures the public is not supposed to know that the man consulted his wife for fear of his losing his honour in the community. The authority of the community therefore supersedes the authority of the man.

For the Akamba, the *thome* is the symbol of authority. As was mentioned earlier, this hut with a fireplace is the man's "parliament", and the women are not allowed to enter, not even to bring food. Their sons are the ones who carry food to the hut. With the Maasai, the women are allowed to bring the food but they cannot sit with their husbands in the hut.

Parental authority and filial piety (total unconditional obedience to parents) mark another level of authority. In both cultures children submit to parental authority. If they do not do that they can be subjected to a beating or a parental curse, which is one of the most dreaded of all curses. Filial piety is the hallmark of children's relationships with their parents. This means that children exercise total and unconditional obedience to and unquestioning compliance with their parents' wishes. As a demonstration of respect for authority, children never address older people by name. They address them as "father of

so and so" or "mother of so and so", and older people who do not have children are addressed by relational labels, for example "uncle" or "aunt".

The other level of authority is the one that exists in a polygamous situation between the first wife and the subsequent wives. In both cultures the first wife commands respect from the other wives by virtue of her position and age. She is the mouthpiece for the other wives to the husband and also relays the husband's instructions to the other wives. She also assigns duties to her co-wives.

Among the Maasai, the first wife in the homestead is expected to rest because she has done more work than anybody else. She is therefore exempt from some of the duties of the co-wives, for example opening the cattle kraal in the morning.

Among the Akamba, the first wife is regarded as a mother and is specially addressed as *mwaito* (mother) by the co-wives whom she treats as her children. She is respected because she has spent a longer time with the husband and knows him better. She is therefore called the "adviser." She seems to assume a higher level of authority over her co-wives than the first wife among the Maasai because she deputises in the husband's absence (although the first son is still in charge) and also supervises discussions of family issues where wives are allowed to participate.

At another level of authority, older siblings in both cultures exercise authority over the younger ones. When the older siblings have undergone circumcision and there is a big disparity of age, the younger siblings look up to the older ones the way they would to their parents. The community also expects the older siblings to take responsibility for the younger ones to the extent that the former can discipline the latter.

The role of the community

The community reflects the solidarity of the people as it is rallied around the totality of their way of life.The community is regarded as an authoritative institution over the family and each of its members. When asked about the purpose of the communication rules in the family, a common response from the participants was that it preserved the community and enabled it to survive. The fear of the curse is based on the sanctity of community

because to transgress community is believed to open the door for all its members to be cursed. The violation of any rules that are laid down for communication relationships is detrimental not only to the family but also to the community. For example, when siblings reprimand each other, they caution each other against doing things that will bring shame to the community. When a woman, for example, fights with her husband the action is deemed as an offence to the community, and the community is given the mandate to punish her.

Among the Maasai, the importance of the community is reflected in the fact that governance structures are so intertwined with community practices that one cannot be discussed without the other. The age-set system provides the central institution for political action. This system is the most important and dominating feature of the Maasai unity and cultural or social structure. The age system organises men into hierarchies of sex and age groups which are interrelated, and also delineates the different levels of social positioning, spelling out the importance of cultural and social structure in preserving community.

7.5.5 The family and community

The core symbols of the importance of the family and the supremacy of the community in both cultures are closely intertwined. Infante et al (2003:296) attest to the fact that the family is one of the most fundamental units of human interaction, and therefore family communication shapes the way people communicate in the community (see section 2.5). Socha (2001:5) suggests that family communication is the locus of constructing ethnic identity.

To the Akamba, the family is the core of the concept *musyi* or home (Ndeti 1972:94). For example, when a man sends his wife away, he remains with the children to demonstrate his loyalty to the family. Another instance is where the community allows a wife to get a child out of wedlock for the purpose of conserving the family. This practice is indulged because of the belief that if there is a curse that affects all the members of the family, that child will not be affected because the child does not have the husband's blood and

therefore forms a buffer. In this way the family line is saved by this child and the community can thrive.

The fact that communication between a father and his daughter is kept distant for fear of incest is also motivated by the conservation of the family and hence the community. One of the responses that featured invariably to the question about the credibility of a man in the community was that he cared for and controlled the family, disciplined his wives and children and was not a disgrace to the community.

When asked about the purpose of rules in the family, the responses from the focus groups and the individual interviewees pointed towards the core symbols of the family and the community. They conceded that the purpose of rules formation was to assure harmony in the home and in the community; control relationships; maintain order; alleviate evils like clashes, incest and curses; and fulfil societal expectations. The core symbol of respect in the family is enhanced for the purpose of preserving the community.

For the Maasai the family also forms the raison d'etre of social responsibility and cooperation as was expressed by Ayisi (1988:16) who says that the family acts as social security for its members. The preservation of the family ensures the preservation of the community. It is notable that the Maasai regard wealth as a distinguishing feature in a man's life, and a man without a family is an *olkirigoi*, a person without honour. This attitude highlights the reality of the family as a core symbol among the Maasai. Like the Akamba, when asked about the purpose of rules in the family the responses of the Maasai pointed towards the importance of the family and the community, but with more emphasis on the community. The rules are supposed to enhance the stability, security and administration in the community so that it does not disintegrate. However, in delineating the qualities of a credible man in the community the outstanding quality is the ability to manage his family and livestock. A Maasai man will not beat his wife in public for fear of losing face in the community. It means that although the family is important to him, he will not risk putting his reputation in the community at stake.

Cultures thrive because of the communicative activities of their family members. This is the reason why the Akamba and the Maasai venerate family communication: it is the expression of their community.

7.5.6 Wealth

One of the distinctive marks of a Maasai or a Kamba man is his wealth. In both cultures wealth is interpreted as the possession of many wives and children, especially sons, as well as livestock in the case of the Maasai. Wealth is not a core symbol but is an important theme that generates a core symbol like respect.

An aspect of wealth where the Akamba differ from the Maasai is the ownership of land. A man with many wives and children but without land is considered an embarrassment to the community because his people will not have ample living space. Ancestral land is especially valued because of the people's attachment to their ancestors. Land is also valued because agriculture is the principal occupation of the traditional Akamba. Agricultural work is left exclusively to the women except when it comes to the breaking of new ground. It is therefore apt to say that although the rearing of cattle is important to the Akamba, agriculture surpasses it in importance.

For the Maasai, the concept of wealth is measured by the possession of livestock, which are so important that they could be a distinctive core symbol. Bleeker (1963:229), who calls the Maasai "the cattle people", says that most of the activities of the Maasai oscillate around cattle and they revere cattle. A saying of theirs is that "Cattle are in our hearts". The love for cattle makes the Maasai fathers value daughters whom they hardly communicate with. When a daughter gets married, the father increases the number of his livestock through the bride price that is paid for her. A Maasai man is so attached to his cattle that he will beat the wife who does not care for the cattle. Although a Maasai father hardly talks with his daughter, he will do so when she reports on the welfare of the cattle that she has been looking after. It is reported that the strained relationships between the Maasai and other ethnic groups are often related to cattle. These strained relationships are caused by the Maasai's raiding cattle from other people since they believe that all the cattle in the world belong to them, a belief that is born out of one of their myths. The

Maasai language is therefore rich with words concerning cattle because livestock have a subsistence role in providing the Maasai with the basic means of livelihood. For the Maasai, the core symbol of wealth is synonymous with livestock.

Inheritance

Inheritance is not really a core symbol but a theme that emerged among the Akamba and the Maasai. It is a predetermining factor of the perpetuation of the family, the clan and the community. The way it is implemented reflects the values and core symbols such as male supremacy and female subservience and anything that is associated with wealth. It is invariably linked to patriarchal loyalty in that it is determined by male dominance in both cultures. The rules that exist for inheritance are safety measures to prevent strife should the man of the house die. Strife is an anathema both at family and community levels, taking into account that both institutions are valued highly.

Inheritance is implemented differently in the two societies and it is related to what each culture deems as the more valuable aspect of wealth. Among the Akamba inheritance is based on land whereas among the Maasai it is based on livestock. The latter are nomadic, and being lovers of cattle, land would be of lesser value to them, hence the Maasai saying that "Without cattle, there is no Maasai". Every aspect of the life of the Maasai is intricately connected to cattle as has been demonstrated in section 6.3.4. When a Maasai man dies, his firstborn son inherits his cattle and when a Maasai woman dies, the last-born son inherits the cattle that are in her charge since she does not actually own the cattle.

For the Akamba, the preference for land is based on the fact that it is regarded as an important link to ancestors. When a man dies, he is supposed to be buried on the land that belongs to his first wife. Kenyan courts have to deal with many cases concerning wives in polygamous families haggling over where to bury their late husbands.

A Kamba man divides his possessions equally among his wives, although the sons are really the ones who own their mothers' portions, the most important of which is land. This land is assigned to a woman when she joins her husband's household. Each wife's sons are supposed to look after her. There is a slight variation among the Maasai, because

the oldest son in the home inherits the father's cattle since he is the one who looks after the father while the latter is still alive. A wife's cattle (though she does not actually own them) are inherited by her youngest son who should look after her while she is alive.

In both cultures, a daughter does not inherit anything from her father or her husband.

7.5.7 Circumcision and age sets

Circumcision is not really a core symbol but a cultural practice. The circumcision of boys and girls is carried out as a rite of passage by both the Akamba and the Maasai. It is a very important rite of passage that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. There is a marked difference in the way circumcision is carried out by the Akamba and the Maasai. In the case of the Akamba there are three phases. The first phase involves the physical act carried out on both boys and girls at no fixed age. The second phase, the great circumcision, is the one that signifies the graduation from childhood to manhood and is a ceremony for only men to charge them with the assumption of responsibilities. The third phase, an oath of secrecy among men, distinguishes men of reputation who are ushered into the company of the elders.

The Maasai, on the other hand, have only one circumcision which is most important because it symbolises the transition from childhood to adulthood. The ceremony that occurs every fifteen years marks the distinctive age-sets which have distinctive names that mark different eras in the history of the Maasai. The opening of the circumcision period is one of the most important events because it emancipates young boys from childhood to *moran*hood (see an elaborate explanation in section 4.3.3). The concept of age-sets is closely connected to the core symbol of respect in that a Maasai man has a lot of respect for a man of his age group, that is, a member of his age-set. The bond between members of an age set stems from the fact that they go through the period of circumcision together. As was mentioned earlier, this season marks the transition from childhood to *moranhood*. They spend time together in the bush proving their manhood by doing exploits like hunting lions and protecting each other from adverse situations.

7.5.8 Wisdom

The core symbol of wisdom is one characteristic that distinguishes the Maasai from the Akamba. Wisdom is highly rated among the Maasai. A man is honoured if he has *keigwana* or wisdom, which even surpasses the possession of wealth. A wise and judicious man earns respect from his peers. A wise co-wife can dethrone a first wife from her place of authority if the latter lacks wisdom. When children are growing up, the sons are trained in wisdom. Children's games are meant to prepare them for their future responsibilities and a wise son is initiated into leadership and involved in decision-making. Wisdom is regarded as the product of old age and the latter is greatly revered. Old age overall is however, not the key to be venerated since one has to be male and also older. Among the Maasai, women who are old are venerated to a lesser degree because they are longer producers of children.

7.6 CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE MAASAI AND AKAMBA CULTURES

The formation of a cultural group gives rise to learned patterns of behaviour which can be termed as culture (Maciver & Page 1962:8). Culture, which is the totality of a people's way of life, is summarised in their world views, values and norms, and dictates how a community's members interact or communicate (Hall 2005:56). This study has portrayed that for any community to survive, it has to harness its culture by generating rules of communication to be observed by its members, and it was found that the Maasai and the Akamba have generated rules for interaction and have used these rules to govern behaviour in the family unit.

Culture results from the interaction of people and this interaction is facilitated by core cultural symbols. The latter are symbolic systems that reveal both prescriptions and proscriptions (rules) for cultural behaviour (Hecht et al 1993). The core cultural symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba reflect the communication rules that they have put in place for the smooth running of their societies at the family level. These rules govern the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children and between siblings. Culture represents the learned and socially transmitted patterns of behaviour which are used as tools for acquiring skills for the survival of the community (Nida 1984; Nanda 1994). Culture is at play in the findings which corroborate the notion that communication

rules are observed by the Maasai and the Akamba for the sole purpose of preserving the community. This fact was reflected by the participants from both cultures who reiterated that the purpose for their communication rules was to conserve and stabilise their societies. Folb (1985) says that when a community is formed, the members initiate forms of control as a necessary measure of securing stability. This concern for stability is exemplified among the Akamba who, for example, restrict communication between a father and a daughter to avert possible incidents of incest which would greatly interfere with the stability of the community. When a father keeps a social distance from his daughter, it is regarded as a sign of respect, which is one of the outstanding core symbols among the Maasai and the Akamba and is regarded as a measure for unifying the community.

The concern of the Maasai and the Akamba for the community is in tandem with the descriptions of the theorists who envisage rules as existing to define socially acceptable ways for people to accomplish their intentions and regulate behaviour, and as mechanisms for social action. Rules are further considered as being interpretive and a means of correcting and predicting behaviour (Littlejohn 1970; Pearce 1971; O'Brien 1978; Shimanoff 1980).

Kraft (1983) argues that cultural behaviour is communicated from childhood and consists of rule-ordered structuring of the family. Dodd (1991) further argues that children are taught the kind of behaviour that adds value to the existence of community. The notions relayed by Kraft and Dodd are evident in the fact that the cultural behaviour of the Maasai and the Akamba is taught or communicated from childhood, and this highlights the importance of the family.

Socha (2001) describes the family as the locus of construction for the ethnic identity of an individual. It is evident from the findings that both the Maasai and the Akamba associate the conservation of family with the conservation of the community or ethnic group because all the rules are observed from respect for the community. This notion is a corroboration of Ayisi's (1988) concept that the family in African societies is localised and bound by biological and social ties, and is the basic unit of every social group. Both

the Maasai and the Akamba participants gave the need to conserve the community as the reason for maintaining the rules of communication in the family.

In both cultures, the communication rules, which are statements of ideal behaviour (Otterbain 1972), are a means of regulating behaviour among the members of the family. As a measure of control, members are threatened with a curse should anyone contravene the communication rules. For this reason, the fear of the curse underlies all the core symbols depicted in the two cultures. As an example, the core symbol of male dominance, of which female subservience is a byproduct, is effected through the notion that a wife or daughter who will not be submissive to a husband or a father respectively, will be cursed and castigated by the community. In the communication among siblings, they castigate one another for indulging in any behaviour that will dishonour the family or the community.

The attitude towards community depicts one of Hofstede's (2005) dimensions of culture, namely, collectivism. He says that in collectivist societies, the interests of the group are prevalent over the interests of the individual. Children from such groups take their cues from others when it comes to opinions. Hofstede says that when the individual fails to meet the requirements placed upon him or her, then he or she loses face or, as is the case among the Maasai and the Akamba, is punished by the community.

In explaining one of the dimensions of culture, namely masculinity versus femininity, Hofstede (2005) says that certain behaviour is recognised as more suitable for males or for females based on the understanding that gender roles vary from culture to culture. This dimension of culture is found in the Maasai and the Akamba cultures where males and females have distinctive roles. These roles give rise to the core symbols of male domination and female subservience. The analysis of the core symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba notably creates a connection between the dimension of masculinity versus femininity and the dimension of power distance which depicts a situation of inequality. There is inequality in the relationships within the family structures of the Maasai and the Akamba. The less powerful members of the family like wives, daughters and children expect and accept, according to their cultures, that power is distributed unequally.

Inequality is therefore endorsed by both leaders and followers. Thus both cultures can be typified as a more masculine culture due to male supremacy and female subservience and the clear demarcation of gender roles.

In cultures where power distance is prevalent, children are expected to obey their parents and other people in authority. This description aptly addresses one of the core symbols that were identified among the communication rules of both the Maasai and the Akamba, namely, filial piety. This core symbol refers to the relationship between parents and children, where the children demonstrate total and unquestioning obedience and submission to their parents and to those in authority over them. Hofstede (2005) says that in cultures where power distance is high, respect for parents and elders is regarded as a basic value. This statement aptly describes the parent-child power distances in the Maasai and the Akamba families. It should be reiterated that the core symbol of filial piety is always coupled with the core symbol of respect.

7.7 RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AKAMBA AND THE MAASAI: IMPLICATIONS FROM THE RESULTS

From the findings of the study it is evident that there are more similarities than differences in the cultures of the Maasai and the Akamba. One cannot speculate that the similarities could have been the result of ethnic interactions since the two communities share a common border. Such interactions could include meetings at common places like the market place, a water source like a river or well or even intermarriage.

The similarity of core symbols therefore could imply that ethnic differences should not lead to the assumption that there will be positive, exclusive differences in the cultural practices. On the other hand it should also not be assumed that conflict is excluded when two cultures share similar cultural practices or core symbols. The similarities in core symbols could be used to campaign for cultural tolerance.

It is not likely that if the study had been carried out among urban communities, a possible equal range of similarities among the Maasai and the Akamba might have been found. It is possible therefore to conclude that more than similar cultural practices are needed to achieve cohesion between ethnic groups or to avert conflict.

The question could be asked why the long-standing hostility and conflict between the two peoples exist if their cultural foundations are similar. Could it stem from the fact that the Maasai remain pastoralists whereas the Akamba have turned to farming, relying mainly on crop production? The basis of conflict then is not based on their cultural foundation.

It is also evident from the findings that the Maasai attach more importance to cattle than to land, whereas the Akamba attach more importance to land than to cattle. Conflicts could flare up if, for example, the Maasai in pursuit of fodder for their livestock let their animals stray into the Akamba farmlands.

It was observed earlier that modernisation is one of the forces of change that has been putting a lot of pressure on the traditional way of life of the ethnic groups in Kenya. One of the groups which have succumbed is the Akamba, leaving the pastoralists like the Maasai behind to wage a lone battle (Tribes and politics in Kenya 2008). This situation could possibly be a point of conflict for the Maasai who might view the Akamba as people who have betrayed their own culture. This possibility could stem from the fact that the Maasai are a closely knit community and their community is still governed by a commonly held traditional value system. The strong bonds between age sets could help them resist modernity more effectively (Casal 2008). They take great pride in being Maasai and living like traditional Maasai. They enjoy being in their villages and are said to be at their happiest when they mingle with their families and their cattle (Maasai marathon 2008). Through media image the Maasai have become icons of African traditionalism and symbols of resistance to modernist values (Salazar 2010).

It was mentioned earlier that the Akamba are more open to modernisation than the Maasai, and because of the openness the Akamba pose as agents of modernity and claim to be pacesetters to the Maasai. The Akamba allege that they have played a part in bringing transformation to Maasai land (Mutie 2003:76). In contrast, as was reflected earlier, the Maasai are often cited as an example of conservation and resistance to development. These differences in attitude could possibly cause strife among the two ethnic groups whose cultures and core symbols are so similar.

It seems like the similarities of culture and core symbols are not sufficient for the Maasai and the Akamba to live in harmony, and so it might be necessary to persuade them to accept the reality about their similarities and differences.

One of the practical implications in this study is that the findings can help us understand the core symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba, a first endeavor in knowing how to communicate with them crossculturally and thus to understand the behaviour and social action of members of these groups. The findings could also be an eye opener to members of the two communities in laying bare the fact that the root of their conflict does not stem from their core symbols since the latter are largely similar. This finding should motivate them to seek solution elsewhere. White (2009) puports that African styles of communication are not just incidental but that they incorporate fundamental cultural values. To lose them would mean ceasing to be African and losing something very valuable in the panorama of cultural diversity in the world. The study of the communication styles of the Maasai and the Akamba is therefore an important contribution in the knowledge of the panorama of cultural diversity not only in Kenya but also in Africa and rest of the world.

This study makes a significant contribution to the discipline of communication by investigating the relevance of communication rules theory within the African context. . It was mentioned earlier that the journal *African Communication Research* was initiated to address the deficiency of African communication research and theorising. The four volumes covering the period from the year 2008 to 2010 have presented articles in major areas of communication like media and religion, media policies in Africa, health communication and communication development in Africa. The articles that have been featured do not address the theory of rules and core symbols in depth. It has been questioned as to whether any theoretical perspectives have developed among African communication scholars. The editors of the journal African *Communication Research* admit that although there have been very specific empirical studies they have been lacking in broader theoretical foundation. They say that one of the causes of stagnation in Africa is little theoretical creativity. This gap has been addressed in the current study

which is therefore a timely contribution for an emerging need for African theoretical perspectives.

This study supports one of the assumptions of the communication rules theory to the effect that rules consist of those specific behaviour that are appropriate for an individual to use in a specific situation as agreed upon by members of a system. The findings have demonstrated how the core symbols have reflected appropriate and acceptable behaviour. The study has therefore added to a considerable body of research which has helped us to better understand how people culturally enact identity in familial interactions.

The study has also demonstrated and reflected the contribution that personal, relational and communal identities are interconnected. This notion is generated from the fact that among the Maasai and the Akamba, community and family, geled together by respect, emerge as significant core symbols, with the family itself implying personal and relational identities. Core symbols therefore are avenues of gaining communication competency in familial relationships of the Maasai and the Akamba.

From the findings there are possibilities of developing the theory of core symbols. The Maasai for example are a unique people in Africa in that in their solidarity they have resisted any significant changes to their cultural way of life. They seem to have an internal communication process that is not significantly shaken by external influence. There must be something about their core symbols and communication rules that inseparably gels them together. This fact gives strength to the notion that strong maintenance of core symbols can be the root of cultural persistence.

The Akamba who have been portrayed as tending to adopt various aspects of social change, also have certain pockets of their culture that do not change substantially. The question that could be asked is, “Are there degrees of tenacity towards core symbols that give rise to the Maasai situation and the Akamba situation?” One could further ask, “Are there times when core symbols foster change and adaptation and times when they lead to more “conservative” responsenses to the situation and what motivates these phenomena?”

Doki (2009) holds that the cultural interpretation of issues assists in communicating the cherished ideals of a particular group to the rest of the world. In order to understand the culture of a people it is necessary to know their core symbols which are an expression of their world view. In this study, the core symbols that have been discussed are indicators for values and beliefs that provide valuable insights into the worlds of meanings of the Maasai and the Akamba. By understanding the core symbols of a people one might be able to interpret their values, beliefs and premises.

7.8 CRITICAL EVALUATION

As in any empirical study, this study is likely to have suffered a number of limitations. The identification of such limitations and their likely influences on the study would be appropriate in understanding and applying the findings and conclusions that might arise. The challenges that the two research assistants encountered can be reckoned as a strength and contribution to the study. The challenges comprised scarcity of means of transport forcing the assistants to walk for long distances; adverse conditions in places of accommodation; difficulty in soliciting for participation in focus groups; dealing with suspicious attitudes of respondents and dealing with natural interference of collecting data outdoors.

The researcher desired to involve participants who had some special experience or communication ability and this desire led to the choice of an appropriate sampling method. Non-probability sampling was used as opposed to random sampling due to the fact that the researcher wishes to select individuals that would be able to provide information regarding the communication rules of their communities. The study furthermore concentrates on the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba who live in the rural areas of Kenya as opposed to those who live in towns and cities. The study targeted older participants who are supposed to have more knowledge about the traditional way of life of their ethnic community, especially the Maasai, because, as has been mentioned before, the Maasai are relatively more resistant to modernity. This is both a strength as well as a limitation. The older people knew the rules very well. However, as discussed in the next paragraph, younger people could have a different understanding of the rules.

Many of the people in the age bracket of the participants who were investigated have children who attend school or are employed in urban areas. The latter are people whose practices are a blend of modernism and traditional culture. They are people who, for example, live in the urban areas but regularly visit people in the village. The study does not, however, discuss this category of people since the children of the participants were not part of the investigation. The children were left out because it was assumed that they were not proficient in the knowledge of the traditional ways of life. If these younger respondents had been included their responses would possibly have included information about core symbols from other ethnic groups and from the cosmopolitan world. The fact that this category of people was not investigated is another limitation. If a study which included this category of people was carried out it would be a full-fledged study on its own that would delve into the influences of modernisation on traditional culture, which was not the focus of this study. Another limitation of the study is the relatively small number of participants involved in the focus groups and the individual interviews. Different results could have been obtained if larger numbers of respondents, and particularly larger numbers of younger respondents, were involved.

A few participants mentioned that the advent of schools, churches and other institutions which are not traditional are beginning to interfere with the traditional way of life. Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka (2004:3) argue that the inevitable advance of modernity has not done away with ethnic communities and identities in Africa. This situation is based on the fact that these ethnicities have been constructed from diverse indigenous ways of life which continue to be adhered to in the contemporary world. Modernisation is cited as one of the factors interfering with the traditional way of life. As a voice that represents another view, Sironka (2010) however claims that the Maasai culture has not been in conflict with either his faith or the western education that he has acquired. He claims that the Maasai do not deny the existence of God since they refer to him as *Enkai*. He maintains that the Maasai life is governed by one major unifying theme of conduct which is respect so however successful he may become he will not enjoy life to the detriment of others.

The similarities of the core symbols in the communication rules of the Maasai and the Akamba that have been identified in this study could serve to motivate the people of the two cultures to understand each other's cultures in order to facilitate intercultural tolerance.

7.9 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers could replicate the investigation carried out in this study by comparing the core symbols of different cultures in the Kenyan community in a bid to identify more core symbols and communication rules. This information could also be used in supporting the Rules theory.

The views of school-going children who live in the villages would be a viable source of information to compare the effect of modernisation on the traditional way of communication.

Research could be expanded to include other communities of the Maasai and the Akamba to establish whether the communication rules in these communities have been affected by any other factors, for example proximity to an urban centre, a major highway, a different ethnic group or a major game reserve.

It was evident from the findings that age and gender could have a lot of impact on the core symbols derived from the communication rules and the ensuing core symbols of the Maasai and the Akamba. This could also be a viable area for study.

Research could also be expanded to include a study of the communication rules of urban communities to establish the factors that have led to the existence of these rules.

A study could also be carried out to establish the reasons for enmity between peoples with similar communication rules and core symbols. The study could be expanded to investigate the attitudes of the different cultures towards one another in spite of the similarities in communication styles.

The study does not discuss the effect of modernisation on the traditional ways of life of the two cultures that have been investigated. It would be viable to carry out such a study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Introduction from the two research assistants preceded the focus group discussions.

Kyalo Wa Ngula for the Akamba.

My name is Kyalo Wa Ngula, a postgraduate student in the Communication Department of Daystar University. We are interested in finding out how the Akamba in the traditional setting communicate within the family. I am interested in getting this information from you because you are experts. The information will be used for educational purposes so feel very free and answer the questions as honestly as you can. There is no right or wrong answer. (Asked for permission to use the tape recorder.)

Grace Masarie for the Maasai.

My name is Grace Masarie and I have just finished my studies at Daystar University. We are interested in finding out how the Maasai in the traditional setting communicate within the family. For example, in normal circumstances, a husband and a wife have unique ways of discussing different family issues with different family members. I would like to find out how this happens culturally. There is no right or wrong answer. (She asked for permission to use the tape recorder.)

Communication between husband and wife

1. Who initiates communication and why?

2. How are husbands and wives supposed to express positive or negative emotions to each other?

3. Is there any significance in the way they greet each other?

4. In which areas of life does a husband make decisions?

In which areas of life does a wife make decisions?

5. Discuss any restrictions concerning the topics a husband and wife are supposed to discuss.

6. Are there secrets that the husband and the wife are not supposed to share with each other?

7. In a polygamous situation how does a husband communicate with his wives? Is there a distinction, for example, between the first and the last wife?

8. How is the communication between wives in a polygamous marriage?

Communicating with sons and daughters

9. When communicating with his son, what level of conversation does the father assume, for instance discussion level or authoritative level?

10. Is there any significance in their greetings?

11. What topics do they discuss and what emotions can they display to each other?

12. When communicating with his daughter, what level of conversation does the father assume?

13. What topics do they discuss and what emotions can they display to each other?

14. How does a mother communicate with her son?

15. What topics do they discuss?

16. How does a mother communicate with her daughter?

17. What topics do they discuss?

18. How do brothers and sisters communicate with one another?

19. What topics do they discuss?

20. Do relationships change between parents and children when the parents get old?

General

21. Who discusses the economics of the family?

22. How is the issue of inheritance communicated in the family?

23. What does society expect of a man concerning his family?

24. What does society expect of a woman concerning her family?

25. What is the purpose for the rules of communication within the family?

APPENDIX B: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

My name is Jane Awiti and I am a lecturer at Daystar University. I am interested in finding out the kind of communication that occurs in the family at the following levels:

Between a husband and a wife/wives; between a father and his son or daughter; between a mother and her son or daughter; and between siblings. Please answer as honestly as you can. There is no right or wrong answer.

The questions that were implemented for individual in-depth interviews were the same as those used for the focus group interviews except that they were summarised. The six questions represent the areas of the six sub-problems of the study.

1. Explore the communication between a husband and his wife or wives.

2. Explore the communication between a father and his son.

3. Relate as much as you can about the communication between a father and his daughter.

4. How do mothers and sons communicate with one another?

5. How do mothers and daughters communicate with one another?

6. How do brothers and sisters communicate with one another?