



Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review

AG Hort

 **orcid.org/0000-0003-0758-4005**

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

Supervisor: Prof MP Wissing

Co-supervisor: Dr L Schutte

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Student number: 29420687

Summary

In order to better understand the concept of human strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed the Values in Action (VIA) classification of 24 character strengths and six virtues. Appreciation of beauty (natural, artistic, and moral), classified under the virtue of transcendence, is one such strength and the focus of this research. A number of questions are raised within the literature regarding the categorisation of appreciation of beauty (AOB) under the overarching virtue of transcendence, the varied componential makeup of this strength, its distinctiveness from or possible associations with other character strengths, and the varied cultural perceptions relating to AOB. There is no previous research addressing these core conceptualisation and categorisation issues, with AOB in general being one of the least researched and least understood of the classified character strengths.

The aim of the present study was to critically interrogate the conceptualisation and classification of AOB under the virtue of transcendence. A comprehensive narrative review, which entails a narrative overview of the literature, was deemed the best suited approach for this largely unexplored field. The seven-step approach as recommended by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) was followed in this narrative review process. Specific attention in the methodology was given to the introspection and bracketing of the researcher's worldview, search strategies for the identification of studies, criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies, the use of multimodal texts to supplement published literature, the thematic analysis and synthesis of selected information (data), and specific ethical considerations.

Thematic analysis of the literature revealed five core categories, namely: finding beauty, positive emotional states, deeper cognitive states, existential issues, and related character strengths, which were further analysed for emerging patterns that could assist in answering the specific research questions. It was discovered, firstly, that beauty can be conceptualised as either a moral or a non-moral endeavour. While the major sources of

beauty (natural, artistic, and moral) are seen as both related and distinct concepts, there are many similarities between natural and artistic beauty not found in moral beauty. The associated emotional states (awe and elevation) and associated existential issues (transcendence, meaning, and connectedness) as the second and third themes, respectively, also distinguished between moral and non-moral beauty. Fourthly, the deeper cognitive states (savouring, absorption, mindfulness, and flow) showed a closer association with natural and artistic beauty than moral beauty. Finally, it was concluded that appreciation of natural and artistic beauty joins cognitive strengths such as curiosity and love of learning under the wisdom virtue rather than the transcendence virtue, and that new virtue clusters should be considered with other combinations of character strengths.

The scarcity of literature on AOB as a whole, most particularly from a classification stance, as well as the lack of diverse cultural perspectives of beauty were seen as limiting factors in this study. Further theoretical, empirical, and philosophical studies are thus necessary. An analysis of the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB and an integration of the state of the art on information in this regard (as intended by this manuscript) may be a springboard for further empirical studies on this important but neglected character strength, and may facilitate the development of interventions to enhance people's quality of life by appreciating the beauty that is already there.

Keywords: character strengths, virtues, values in action, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty, moral beauty

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My deepest appreciation and gratitude go to my wife Toni. Words seem hollow compared to the sacrifices she has made in supporting me along this journey. Her kindness and selfless nature have not only been supportive but also morally elevating.

Finally, authentic appreciation is given to all the awe-inspiring and majestic God-given beauty that surrounds me on a daily basis in nature, music, art, and people.

Preface

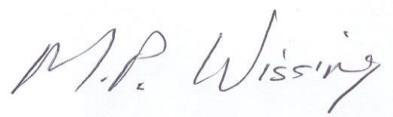
This mini-dissertation is submitted in article format as indicated in the 2018 General Academic Rules (A4.1.1.1.4 and A4.4.2.9) of the North-West University. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the taught Master of Arts degree in Positive Psychology (60 credits of the total of 180 credits for Curriculum G801P).

This article has been compiled according to the specific requirements of the Journal of Humanistic Psychology to which it will be submitted. Exceptions to the specific journal guidelines are, however, made for purposes of the mini-dissertation in terms of manuscript length and page numbering. The manuscript, which is currently longer than prescribed by the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, will be shortened before submission. The page numbering of the mini-dissertation as a whole is consecutive; however, when submitting to the journal, the manuscript will be numbered starting from page 1.

The body of the mini-dissertation consists of three sections, namely: Section 1, reflecting the first phase and preparation for the main phase of the research and manuscript; Section 2, including the research report in article format; and Section 3, giving a brief summative conclusion and reflection on the research process.

Letter of Permission

The co-authors hereby give permission to the first author to submit this article for purposes of a mini-dissertation. The first author contributed to theme development and did the major part of the literature review, qualitative analysis, and interpretation of the data. He drafted the manuscript and incorporated all suggestions from the co-authors into the manuscript. He also took responsibility for the technical and language editing of the manuscript.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M.P. Wissing". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Prof M.P. Wissing (supervisor)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Schutte". The signature is stylized and includes a horizontal line crossing through the middle.

Dr L. Schutte (co-supervisor)

Table of Contents

Summary	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Preface	v
Letter of permission	vi
SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION	1
Introduction	1
Approved protocol for this study	2
Research Proposal	3
AUTHeR scientific committee approval letter	22
HREC application form	23
HREC approval letter	45
Summary	47
SECTION 2: MANUSCRIPT FOR EVALUATION	48
Manuscript in article format	48
Guidelines to authors for <i>The Journal of Humanistic Psychology</i>	48
Manuscript: Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review	50
Abstract	51
Introduction	51
A narrative review	55
Method	56
Rationale for approach	56
Introspection of self-beliefs and experiences	56
Search strategy for identification of sources	57
Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies in the review	57
Using multimodal texts to expand the literature search	58
Analysis and synthesis of selected information	59
Results and discussion	60
Thematic analysis	60
Finding beauty	61
Natural, artistic and moral beauty	62
Positive emotional states in AOB	66

Awe and wonder.....	66
Elevation.....	68
Happiness and well-being.....	69
Existential issues in AOB.....	70
Transcendence and the small self.....	70
Meaning and connectedness.....	72
Deeper cognitive states in AOB.....	74
Savouring.....	74
Absorption.....	75
Mindfulness.....	76
Flow.....	77
Towards a new conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB.....	78
Conclusion, limitations, and further research.....	81
References.....	83
SECTION 3: SUMMARY, CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND REFLECTION.	92
Conclusion.....	92
Considerations for practice.....	93
Reflection.....	95
References.....	98

SECTION 1

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

Introduction

As indicated in the Preface, this dissertation is conducted in article format as described in the 2018 General Academic Rules (A4.1.1.1.4 and A4.4.2.9) of the North-West University. This section will reflect the first phase of the research process leading up to the manuscript as the main research report to be evaluated and that will be presented in Section 2.

A literature exploration was conducted and a research proposal developed that had to be approved, first by the subject group, and then by the Scientific Committee of the African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR). After approval of the proposal by AUTHeR, an application for ethical approval of the study by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University was prepared and submitted. The documentations in this regard, as submitted and approved, are included in this section.

Needless to say, there is an overlap between the documents in this section and the manuscript as presented in Section 2, as it all concerns the same research project in different phases of development (with the manuscript in Section 2 being the final research report).

Approved Protocol for this Study



Cover Page for Research Proposal			
School	Africa Unit for Trans-disciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR)		
Discipline	Positive Psychology		
Student			
Surname	Hort		
Name/initials	A.G.		
Cell phone number	072 280 1811		
Skype address	Drew Hort (drewhortie@gmail.com)		
Degree	MAPP		
Date of first registration for above mentioned degree	19/01/2017		
Student number	29420687		
Title of thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation	Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review		
Study leader/promoter			
Prof. Marié Wissing			
Help-/co-leader/promoter			
Dr. Lusilda Schutte			
Number of times of submission of this protocol (Mark were applicable)	1 st	x	
	2 nd		
	3 rd		
Does this project fall under a greater umbrella project?			
			Yes
			No
			x
If yes , Ethical number of the umbrella project			
Title of the umbrella project			
Leader of the umbrella project			
Specific aims of umbrella project where by this study links			
Will new data be collected?			Yes
			No
		x	
Names of small group panel within the school/unit that approved this research protocol (before send to AUTHeR) Scientific committee	1	Dr L. Schutte	
	2	Prof M. Wissing	
	3	Dr L. van Biljon	
	4	C. Liversage	
	5	A. du Plessis	
	6	A. Cromhout	
Date of approval by above mentioned panel	14/06/2018		

Research Proposal

Title

Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review.

Key Words: character strengths, virtues, VIA, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty and moral beauty.

Introduction and Problem Statement

The vibrant and developing field of positive psychology is concerned with identifying what is inherently right with people, thus enabling them to focus on and develop their inherent strengths, for the benefit of both self and others. Seligman, Parks and Steen (2004) maintain that from a psychological perspective, we are still grappling with how we can enhance the lives of people who are free from mental pathology yet still struggling to live a life of meaning and mental flourishing. They speak of a “balanced psychology” through which we can mend mental frailty and nurture inherent mental strengths. If positive psychology is as focused on human strengths, as it is on human weakness, then we need to know how we can define the concept of human “strength”?

To this end, positive psychology as a science has zoned in on the study and cultivation of character, as a path towards a psychologically meaningful and flourishing life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is by helping individuals to identify and develop their particular character strengths that the flourishing and meaningful life can be sought (Peterson, 2006). Character strengths in general have shown correlations with individual’s levels of “subjective well-being” (Toner, Haslam, Robinson & Williams, 2012), satisfaction in life (Peterson, Ruch, Beerman, Park & Seligman, 2007) and meaningful existence (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Religious and philosophical debates, focusing on human morality and virtue, have ensued throughout time. The field of positive psychology is tasked with ascertaining whether

these traits of human virtue, identified by religious and philosophical scholars, are what we may call character strengths. Peterson and Seligman (2004) working with a team of researchers, reviewed many accessible philosophical, academic and religious works from the last 2500 years, culminating in the VIA Classification of six core virtues and 24 associated character strengths.

Peterson and Park (2009) describe virtues as the “core characteristics” identified by philosophers and theologians and character strengths as the “psychological ingredients that define the virtues” (p. 435). The virtues and associated character strengths are: wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, judgement, love of learning, and critical thinking); courage (bravery, perseverance, honesty and zest); humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence); justice (teamwork, fairness, and leadership); temperance (forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation) and transcendence (appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humour, and spirituality).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) maintain that the aim for the classification of character strengths is to establish a “common vocabulary” of “measurable positive traits”. They espouse hope in that a science will develop around their classification system of strengths, thus also providing interventions that may further develop these character strengths. They were clear, however, in stating that their classification of character strengths was not the finished product, with the possibility existing of merging certain strengths in their classification system, or even adding other strengths not previously considered, should research point in this direction. They reiterate that debate may arise around certain strengths, thus questioning their classification under a core virtue. Appreciation of beauty may be one such strength.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) describe the character strength of appreciation of beauty as “the ability to find, recognise, and take pleasure in the existence of goodness in the

physical and social worlds” (p. 537). The great philosophers, throughout western history, people like Aristotle, Augustine, Plotinus, Kant and Aquinas, have long stated the significance of beauty across various domains of existence. While their debates focused primarily on artistic beauty, natural beauty was also debated (Diessner, Solom, Frost, Parsons, & Davidson, 2008). They go on to state that the origins of moral beauty can be traced to many religious and spiritual teachings, found in both Eastern and Western cultures. The character strength of appreciating beauty, therefore, refers to beauty in nature (natural beauty), beauty in artistic works (artistic beauty) and beauty in people’s actions (moral beauty).

Appreciation of beauty (AOB) as a strength has been classified under the core virtue of “transcendence”, which is the belief that we find meaning and purpose in life when we take the focus off of ourselves and connect with a larger and more purposeful existence. There is debate though around whether the core virtues identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004) are equally present in a cultural and universal sense. While most of these core virtues have received reliable and consistent mention in Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Athenian, Judeo-Christian and Islamic literature, the virtue of transcendence is only really implied in these texts, and then mostly in a religious and/or spiritual sense. The authors of the classification system do not hide from the reality that these core virtues were extracted from the works of large literate cultures who had an influence upon one another’s thinking. Smaller, isolated and illiterate cultures may not have agreed with the classified core virtues.

AOB refers to natural, artistic and moral beauty sources. The criteria used by Peterson and Seligman (2004) for categorising AOB as a transcendental strength seems to apply more to moral beauty than to natural and artistic beauty. The virtue of transcendence is inherently a religious and spiritual concept. Peterson and Seligman (2004) maintain that it is possible to separate the virtue of transcendence from religion and spirituality, saying that what is

transcendent does not need to be sacred. While this may certainly be true, the problem is that all the historical texts consulted by the above mentioned authors (particularly those of Judeo-Christian descent) that implied the virtue of transcendence were connected to the sacred. Religious connotations exist, possibly hampering the development and true understanding of appreciation.

Within that religious/spiritual framework, the transcendental character strengths of hope, gratitude and spirituality seem to fit flawlessly. Appreciation of moral beauty also seems to fit comfortably with these above mentioned strengths. Appreciation of natural and artistic beauty, however, may be better accounted for somewhere else. Peterson and Seligman (2004) also mention that previous classifications of character strengths did not include AOB, while transcendence as the core virtue (seen as being connected to the sacred) was only ever implied in both Eastern and Western philosophy. Clearly we are dealing with a virtue and related strength that is still trying to find its true place of value in positive psychology literature.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) list 10 specific criteria, by which their classified strengths are rated. They maintain that appreciation of beauty as a strength, fulfils nine out of the 10 criteria. AOB by their evaluation leads to meaning and fulfilment (criteria 1), it is morally valued (criteria 2), does not make others feel inferior (criteria 3), shows marked absence of an appropriate opposite to AOB (criteria 4), AOB is trait-like (criteria 5), existence of paragons (criteria 7), existence of prodigies (criteria 8), existence of people showing the total absence of appreciation (criteria 9) and the existence of organizations and procedures to promote AOB (criteria 10). They do not, however, feel that AOB is completely distinct from all the other strengths in their classification, thus the 6th criteria from the list of 10 criteria above, referring to the distinctiveness of a classified strength from other classified strengths, remains unfulfilled.

A number of questions arise when reviewing the classification of AOB as a strength. Firstly, is AOB best classified as an ingredient of the overarching virtue of transcendence, or is it better suited to another virtue like wisdom? Secondly, since AOB may share links with other strengths (AOB was unable to satisfy the criteria for a distinct strength), should it be categorised as a separate strength or should it perhaps be seen as a component of another strength? Thirdly, AOB is very often assessed and hence categorised according to the spiritual/religious and moral element of this strength. What about the other experiences of appreciation (e.g., natural and artistic beauty) that do not always encompass the moral side of this strength? Could it be that moral beauty belongs with other transcendental strengths like spirituality and hope, with other forms of appreciation linking with seemingly more related strengths like curiosity, creativity, zest, and love of learning?

Fourthly, flow theory seems to have strong ties with the character strengths of appreciation, curiosity, creativity and the love of learning. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) describes a person to be “in flow” when their attention is focused solely on an engaged activity, with anything beyond this interaction being kept out of their conscious awareness. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) make the interesting assertion here that it’s possible to remain in a “state of flow” through genuine interest and curiosity in life. Could AOB then also be considered from the perspective of showing genuine interest and curiosity in life, thus also fostering a state of flow? Further research is needed to determine the possible symbiotic relationship between appreciation, curiosity, creativity and the love of learning, with flow theory in particular as the glue that may bind these strengths. Perhaps most poignant from a research point of view, comes from within the conclusion section of Peterson and Seligman (2004) in which they state that the research on the different character strengths has been “conducted in relative isolation from one another”, which necessitates a look at the “joint and

interactive effects of character strengths” (p. 641). Perhaps AOB is lost and misunderstood when it is seen as an isolated strength?

Finally, although both Eastern and Western philosophical texts have been consulted in the classification of character strengths, do we really know enough about these strengths (particularly AOB) from a non-western perspective? Research on AOB, while very scant overall, is virtually non-existent outside of the western world. It does not exist at all in an African context. Positive psychology has learnt much about well-being from the Eastern world (mindfulness, meditation, vitality, etc.). How would the Eastern cultures consider the placement and classification of AOB as a universal strength? Further, what insights might the African cultures have into our understanding of AOB? The truth is that AOB is not well understood yet has much to offer. Hence, it needs to be better understood, with the starting point perhaps being a critical evaluation of all current research on AOB, which takes the perspectives and worldviews of various cultural contexts into consideration. This would hopefully bring about an evaluation of its place, title and potential clustering in the classification of strengths.

Howell, Diessner, and Robinson (2017) claim that practitioners and lay people alike have ignored the value of appreciating beauty in promoting self-actualisation and flourishing mental health. According to Martinez-Marti, Avia and Hernandez-Lloreda (2014), AOB is one of the character strengths to have received the least amount of research focus. At the time of writing their pioneering work on character strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004), claimed that “much and perhaps most of the story about appreciation remains unknown” (p. 551). Despite some research having been done over the last decade, there is still much to learn and understand about this fascinating character strength. We as researchers, therefore also have a role to play in helping individuals to become sensitive to all the beauty that abounds.

There is no previous research addressing the core conceptualisation and categorisation issues discussed in the introduction section of this proposal. Therefore, this proposed narrative review aims to understand how AOB as a character strength is conceptualised and categorised in scientific and grey literature as well as other sources, the possible shortcomings and contradictions thereof and if another categorisation ought to be considered? A narrative review that uses many means of data collection (scientific and grey literature and other sources) is best suited for doing the earthworks in this largely unexplored field, upon which future empirical studies may stand.

Aim

The aim of this narrative review is to critically interrogate the conceptualisation and classification of AOB under the virtue of transcendence.

Expected Results and Possible Contributions

A review of both published, grey literature and other sources may provide some much needed answers and future direction to the study of one of the least understood character strengths, originally categorised by Peterson and Seligman (2004). As previously mentioned, these pioneering authors were hopeful of a growing scientific inquiry around the conceptualisation and categorisation of the character strengths, in this case for AOB. They did not hesitate to mention that their work was not the final product, which seems especially true for a character strength like AOB, which is little understood yet and has much to add to the field of positive psychology. Seeing the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB through a new lens may also have possible benefits for practitioners and lay people alike. Appreciation, for example, is a fairly vague concept, yet if the literature allows for it, a symbiotic relationship and possible categorisation between appreciation and curiosity, for example, may set new horizons of understanding and intervention.

Method of Investigation

A narrative review, according to the guidelines of Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be conducted. The rationale for the choice of a narrative review is explained in the ethical considerations later in the proposal (see 5.7.1). From the outset it seems necessary to clarify the synonymous use of what will be referred to as a “narrative” review in certain contexts and a “comprehensive” review in other contexts within this proposal. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) maintain that all literature reviews ought to be comprehensive reviews, or simply stated, carried out in a comprehensive manner. They describe a comprehensive literature review as both a “culturally progressive approach and ethical research approach” (p. 114) involving the use of “mixed research techniques inclusive of culture, ethics and multimodal texts” (p. 66). Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins (2011) argue for the status of a literature review as a stand-alone study, with Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) adding that to be considered as an independent study, such a review then also needs to be comprehensive in nature.

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) are aware that the word comprehensive may paint a picture of intimidation and therefore they bring calm to the situation by dividing the review process into the following seven steps : (a) Step 1: An introspection of self-beliefs and experiences associated with the research topic; (b) Step 2: searching the literature; (c) Step 3: the storage and organisation of information; (d) Step 4: the selection and deselection of information; (e) Step 5: using multimodal texts to expand the literature search; (f) Step 6: the analysis and synthesis of information; and (g) Step 7: presentation of a comprehensive literature review report. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) highlight that while the steps are distinct, they are also “multidimensional, interactive, emergent, iterative, dynamic, holistic, and synergistic” (p. 148), with each step enlightening the other steps.

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) also propose a number of guiding questions and tasks (evaluation checklist) for the researcher to consider after the completion of each of the seven

steps of the review process. They use the acronym CORE to describe the critical examination, organisation, reflection and evaluation related questions and tasks that may aid the researcher in detecting possible biases and providing opportunities for renewed literature searches. The seven step approach as recommended by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) for a comprehensive literature review forms the backbone of the methodology for this proposed narrative literature review (to be done comprehensively).

Introspection of self-beliefs and experiences

In line with the above mentioned CORE evaluations, Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) suggest that the researcher considers how culture and worldview may influence how the topic, in this case the AOB, is viewed and engaged. Clearly, the extent that our culture and worldview influence every aspect of the literature review process, from the selection of a topic, research question, information and methodology until the final discussions and conclusions, cannot be underestimated. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) state this most succinctly by saying that “you cannot take the literature reviewer out of the literature review” (p. 184). The researcher acknowledges that his view of the AOB is seen through both his professional experiences as a registered counsellor, guitar teacher, chef and performing artist and through personal life experiences as a surfer and nature lover. These experiences form the overall lens through which AOB is seen and the researcher will therefore need to guard against excessive selection and interpretative bias. An audit trail logging worldview reflections and challenges will remain active throughout the entire literature review process. The aim and awareness will be to bracket as far as possible these personal experiences and biases from the study so as to enhance overall objectivity.

From a research stance, a constructivist/interpretative lens through which to view AOB is not only in line with this researcher’s worldview but also lends itself well to the writing of a comprehensive narrative review, that aims to enhance understanding and

structure within the concept. The naturalistic worldview of the researcher, while having a close affinity with AOB, may at the same time create selection and interpretative bias when confronted with the conventional understanding of transcendence within the literature. All such challenges will be recorded in the audit trail.

Search strategy for identification of sources

Using a number of selected keywords, searches will continue via EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) on the North-West University Library database. These same searches will also be replicated on Google and Google Scholar search engines. The keywords here are: character strengths, virtues, VIA, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty, and moral beauty. The keywords help to establish the purposive sample that will be drawn from the overall population of studies. Synonyms and associations will then be used to advance the area of the search using augmented keywords such as aesthetics and engagement with beauty. In line with the aims of this review additional readings will be done within the virtues of knowledge (curiosity, creativity, and love of learning) and flow theory.

Following this, a search will be conducted through the citations and reference lists of potentially useful articles. This provides the benefit of identifying articles that may have been overlooked in the previous searches as well as bringing other useful keywords to light. These new keywords may generate new searches, thus generating other potentially useful articles which all bring to light further citations and references to explore. The process will be continued until all related information has been exhausted.

The ResearchGate search engine will be used to supplement and fine tune the initial searches conducted via EDS, Google and Google Scholar. ResearchGate will be used in the context of this literature review to locate the prominent researchers (experts) in the field, follow the dialogue and questioning among the prominent researchers, analyse citation databases linked to the experts in the field and create the opportunity to ask the researcher

questions about their papers. The highly developed search bar and linking capabilities within ResearchGate makes the above activities possible, thus producing additional perspectives and information on AOB. Being up to date with expert outlooks is ultimately what is required as part of the CORE evaluation criteria proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) for a comprehensive review. In addition, all search strands, databases consulted and the search results thereof will be documented.

Storage and organisation of information

Having access to Microsoft Word software allows for the documentation and tabulation of all selected sources and notes forming part of the audit trail of the review process. The array of colour fonts available will also be beneficial for the categorisation of selected information and notes. Part of the CORE evaluation criteria stipulated at this stage by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) relates to the extent that the researcher attempts to grasp the capabilities of computer technology.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies in the review

In the act of purposive sampling, the reviewer will evaluate which studies to include and exclude in the review based upon the degree to which they are related to the problem statement and focus questions of this study. The overall literature consulted will consist of both quantitative and qualitative empirical studies as well as conceptual research studies. The validity and credibility of the sources will also be considered during the selection process according to Bowen's (2009) guidelines for document evaluation. Here documents will be assessed for comprehensive or selective topic coverage, the original purpose of the document and intended target audience, whether the document was written as a result of personal experience or from secondary sources as well as an examination of the research design, method, instruments, theoretical assumptions as well as research findings of scientific studies. Key articles related to the conceptualisation of AOB as character strength will be selected as

foundational sources, while articles that are perhaps useful in providing more peripheral information selected for supplemental use. The sources not included will remain in organised folders labelled for possible use or not usable at all (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). This evaluation of sources will be documented in the audit trail.

Due to the limited amount of literature available, all accessible studies written in both English and Afrikaans, that focus on the appreciation of beauty will be considered and evaluated according to the above mentioned criteria for possible inclusion. No prescriptions for the types of studies, participants, outcomes or interventions within this area of focus will be set. It is important to understand how researchers have approached the study of appreciation over the years, hence no timeline for the inclusion or exclusion of sources will be set.

A criterion for exclusion, however, falls on all the research that is done within the cosmetic or beauty industry. The beauty of the human form, while often a captor of visual art, is excluded from this proposed review that focuses on the selfless acts of appreciation, as constituting a strength of character.

Using multimodal texts to expand the literature search

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) maintain that a comprehensive literature review ought to make use of “multimodal texts” (p. 66) or “MODES” (p. 373) that include media, observations, documents, experts and secondary data. Considering the limited number of published studies, the use of MODES is welcomed in producing a comprehensive story about AOB. A mindful observation of persons engaging in the many forms of appreciation may produce rich qualitative data, that once coded and themes have been established, will be used to triangulate the findings from the published research studies, thus adding credibility. Bowen (2009) claims that the qualitative researcher ought to search for convergence in findings through at least two different data sources.

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) highlight the limitation of using only published work in a review, due to the time delay between when the findings were made and when they are made available to the reviewer. This is where the voices of experts can be extremely beneficial as they become involved in the research process as “co-reviewers” (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016) with their opinions confirming, contradicting, altering or updating the reviewers work up to that point in time. ResearchGate will be the tool used in this study to find the voices of the leading researchers in AOB.

Analysis and synthesis of selected information

The selected articles will be read and examined with the research question in mind. The overarching guiding question though will be: “How is AOB conceptualised and categorised in the literature, and what are other emergent issues that may be important in the understanding and promotion of AOB?”. An initial scan of the abstracts may eliminate some articles to allow further time for the in-depth reading of relevant papers.

The first step in the analysis process, working within the framework of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), is for the researcher in this study to become familiar with the selected data through multiple readings thereof and jotting down of ideas. Copies of relevant studies will be printed to enable easier reading and initial coding of ideas (2nd step). Here relevant texts will be copied and pasted from the computerised copies of the selected studies onto Microsoft Word. Colour codes will be assigned for specific categories that can be applied to all the data. All selected data will therefore be highlighted a specific colour, fitting into one of the chosen categories. The complete data set, once highlighted will be cut and pasted so as to belong to one of the chosen coded categories. Care will be taken to retain the source of the text during the grouping of information.

With all data now assigned to a specific colour coded category, the focus falls on identifying patterns and emergent themes within these categories (3rd step). The key is always

whether or not the emergent themes are able to answer the research questions. The initial themes will undergo ongoing analysis (4th step), with possible merging or further division of themes before they can be defined and named (5th step). The final themes that are written up in the research report (6th step) need to withstand scientific scrutiny in showing that they both symbolize the text and answer the research questions. The themes that are generated will be triangulated with the findings that come from the other MODES of investigation, particularly that of observation. In line with the CORE evaluation criteria proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) to embrace the use of additional technology, the capabilities offered by Microsoft Excel to organise and analyse the data will continue to be explored. The method of analysis will, however, remain that of thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This proposed review, as a standalone research study, seeks to comply with all ethical criteria expected in good scientific practice. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) claim that rigorous research is ethical research. This study will, therefore, evaluate the relevance and credibility of all selected information and maintain a transparent process via the use of an audit-trail. Specific focus will also be given to ensure that the author's voices of the selected sources are not misrepresented in any way. The literature review will be to the advantage of others (beneficence) and not cause any harm (non-maleficence). The reviewer will seek to make decisions in the review process that are warranted, fair and loyal (justice & fidelity) while showing respect and honesty (integrity) and adhering to recognised reporting standards (scholarly responsibility) while not misrepresenting the voices of other authors (respecting others rights, dignity and diversity). The reviewer's limits relating to knowledge and skills have been acknowledged (professional competence) through the chosen and motivated research methodology. Specific attention has been given to certain ethical criteria as stipulated in section 5 of the HREC ethics application form.

Rationale for specific methodology

A narrative review is all about telling a story by exploring patterns, themes and meanings in the literature. Appreciation of beauty is one of the least understood of all the character strengths, thus being better suited to a stand-alone narrative review as opposed to a systematic review. The synthesis of findings of a narrative review in this largely unexplored field seems warranted in doing the initial earthworks on which future empirical studies may stand. Thematic analysis is the approach best suited to uncovering the themes that are needed to start telling this story. Thematic analysis is also well aligned with the primary researcher's level of skill and experience (ethical requirement for professional competence).

Risk of bias and trustworthiness

A narrative literature review by nature is susceptible to the risk of bias. Attempts will therefore be made to bracket personal experiences and worldviews as much as possible from the research process. A constant awareness and reflection of these challenges will be logged in the audit trail. By ensuring a comprehensive approach to the review process, particularly through the use of different MODES, the effects of bias may be minimised. Triangulation of information sources (see section 5.6) that seek convergence of data from different sources may increase assurance in the trustworthiness of the findings (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). Care will also be taken to avoid any citation errors in the report which may affect the trustworthiness of the report and credibility of the reviewer (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). The research on AOB aims to increase trustworthiness through rich cultural and contextual awareness of data. Trustworthiness and replicability will be enhanced through a detailed audit trail of the entire review process. The audit trail will include trustworthiness notes (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016) relating to both the credibility and appropriateness of collected information as well as the trustworthiness of the information provider. The credibility and trustworthiness of sources will be assessed through the scientific rigour and

transparency that is shown in the inclusion and exclusion of sources (see section 5.4). If a report reveals that credibility was compromised, the article will either be included with an awareness of the limitation or excluded entirely. It is not applicable in this study to have the service of a co-coder, with an audit trail being conducted by the study supervisor.

Benefits for participants

This narrative exploration may open up future avenues for empirical research study. A potential new lens for seeing the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB will also lend itself towards wellness interventions that may benefit individuals and society at large (refer to Section 4 in this proposal for a more in-depth discussion).

Expertise, skills and legal competencies

This researcher has the privilege of working in an extremely well balanced team that is capable of undertaking this study on AOB. A student was recently delivered (graduated in 2017) by Dr. Schutte (supervisor) and Prof. Wissing (co-supervisor) who conducted a narrative review. Prof. Wissing (supervisor) is not only a qualified clinical psychologist but also a credible and renowned research author with multiple publications. Added to this is the fact that Prof. Wissing is also a great scientific philosopher and poet who can ignite the critical thinking and philosophical debates necessary in the narrative review. Dr. Schutte (co-supervisor) has the unique and extremely advantageous status of being both a qualified clinical psychologist and statistician, thus ensuring scientific rigour is upheld. This researcher has an active and professional interest in AOB both as a registered psychological counsellor (working with themes) and artist. This researcher is also pursuing a master degree in positive psychology and has completed the first year with distinction, during which time core research components that relate to a narrative review study and thematic analysis were learnt. The interpersonal balance of skills ensures that as a team, and as practitioners of positive psychology, we can dream with our feet still on the ground.

Monitoring of research

While it is not applicable in this study to have the service of a co-coder, an audit trail will be overseen by the study supervisor. Implementation and progress of the study as well as adherence to the approved protocol will be strictly monitored against the time schedule set as well as guidelines and deadlines as set by the study leader. The approved protocol and research done will be of an ethical nature and correctly applied by the primary (student) researcher.

Intended Journal for Publication

The Journal of Humanistic Psychology, or Journal of College and Character, or Journal of Positive Psychology.

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AUTHeR Scientific Committee Approval Letter



Private Bag X6001,
Potchefstroom South
Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-2094

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

AUTHER SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Chair and members of the HREC committee,

Please find herewith the approval letter to acknowledge that the below mentioned study underwent critical quality review by members of the AUTHeR Scientific Committee and have been granted approval for review by the HREC:

Title:	Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review
Student Name/Researcher	AG Hort
Supervisor:	Prof Marié Wissing
Co-supervisor	Dr Lusilda Schutte
Date of the meeting	12 July 2018
Reviewers	Prof IM Kruger and Dr A Wilson
Final date of approval	19 July 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Kruger'.

Signature of the chairperson

2018-07-19 _____

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Bester'.

Signature of the Director

2018-07-19 _____

Date

HREC Application Form

Please note that, although the form that was completed was designed for *systematic reviews*, the present study involves a *narrative review*. Since there is no ethics application form available for narrative reviews, as it is still in the process of development, it was advised that the form for systematic reviews is completed. **It is important to note therefore that the application form will not adhere to all the requirements of a systematic review.** Specifically, some aspects of the form are not directly applicable to the student's study as a narrative review, for example the study characteristics according to PICOS (participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes and study design) in Section 5.1 of the application form. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.



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

Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support
health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics

HREC Health Research Ethics Committee (REC-130913-037)

Ethics Application Form for a Systematic Review

HREC 01-03a, version Nov 2016

CONFIDENTIAL! This document contains confidential information that is intended exclusively for the applicant(s), the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University and the designated reviewers. Should this document or parts thereof come into your possession in error, you are requested to return it to the HREC without delay or destroy it. Unauthorised possession, reading, studying, copying or distribution of this material, or any other form of abuse, is illegal and punishable.

NWU Ethics Number:
(issued upon 1st submission)

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Instructions and recommended path for the completion of your application:

- The research proposal forms the base document that is evaluated in conjunction with this application form. This application form gives the researcher the opportunity to expand on specific ethical issues required for approval.
- All applicants complete § 1, 0, 0, 4, 5, 6 and 7.
- Ensure that a proposal that has been approved by an appropriate Scientific/Research Proposal Committee is attached to the application form as well as proof of its approval according to the standardised template (see § 4.1).
- Also attach an executive summary of the study (see § 4.1.1).
- Attach a 2-page narrative CV for each of the researchers involved in the study.

- f. Liaise with the appropriate officials and colleagues mentioned in § 7, complete and sign a printed copy.
- g. Submit the scanned copies of the signed pages.
- h. Include copies of proof of ethics training for all researchers involved in the study (not older than three years).
- i. Submit the completed Ethics Application Form (with the attached documentation) via e-mail to Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za.
- j. All applicants must please ensure that all required finalised documents as indicated above are included with the application. **No additional attachments or version correction(s) will be accepted.** If this does occur and the application was incomplete then it will have to be resubmitted with all of the documents attached which could mean that the application may not be considered for the applicable meeting date.

NWU Ethics Number NWU-?????-??-??			
Campus	Potchefstroom	Faculty	Health Sciences
Principle Investigator/Study Leader	Prof. Marié Wissing	Research entity	AUTHeR
Study Title	Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review		

Table of Contents

1	Section 1: Study identification	26
1.1	Full, descriptive title of the study	26
1.2	Name of the Study Leader/Primary investigator NB! Not the student's name	26
1.3	Name of the Student (if applicable).....	26
1.4	Student number	26
1.5	Research entity e.g AUTHeR	26
1.6	Discipline e.g. Consumer sciences	26
1.7	Envisaged commencement and completion date of the study	26
2	Section 2: Study Classification	27
2.1	Name of Ethics Committee handling application	27
2.2	Dates of applications	27
2.3	Version number	27
2.4	Estimated risk level	27
2.5	Context of the Study.....	27
2.6	For this study the following persons will be included in the study team:.....	28
3	Section 3: Detail of Study Leader/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND Co-workers.....	29
3.1	Details of Study Leader/Principle investigator	29
3.2	Other Members of the Study Team.....	30
3.3	Conflict of Interests	30
3.4	Collaborations (if applicable)	30

4	Section 4: Research proposal and scientific committee approval	31
4.1	Research proposal	31
5	Section 5: Additionally required information about ethical implications of the systematic REVIEW not provided in the proposal	33
5.1	Please describe the study characteristics according to the PICOS (participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes and study design) assessment:.....	33
5.2	Rationale for the specific methodology of the review	35
5.3	Search strategy	35
5.4	Criteria for article selection	37
5.5	Risk of bias and trustworthiness	38
5.6	Benefits for participants	39
5.7	Synthesis of results	39
5.8	Expertise, skills and legal competencies	41
5.9	Monitoring of research	41
6.	Section 6: Other research Ethics Evaluations	42
6.1	Evaluation by other Research Ethics Committees	42
7.	Section 7: Declarations	42
7.1	Sec 7a: Study Leader.....	42
7.2	Sec 7b: Research Director	43

1 SECTION 1: STUDY IDENTIFICATION

Provide the necessary descriptions below to identify this study application:

1.1 Full, descriptive title of the study

Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review

1.2 Name of the Study Leader/Primary investigator **NB! Not the student's name**

Prof. Marié Wissing

1.3 Name of the Student (if applicable)

Drew Hortt

1.4 Student number

29420687

1.5 Research entity e.g AUTHeR

Africa Unit for Trans-disciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR)

1.6 Discipline e.g. Consumer sciences

Positive Psychology

1.7 Envisaged commencement and completion date of the study

More information

Here you can indicate the expected commencement and ending dates of the study, which may be anything from a day to a few years. The full expected duration of the study must be filled in below. Even if the expected duration of the study is uncertain, you can still make an estimate here and report the progress with the annual report. Ensure that the commencement date is at least a few weeks after the date of the HREC meeting at which your application is to be reviewed. The HREC will only grant ethics approval for a one year period. If the study should take longer, a monitoring report requesting permission for continuation must be submitted to the HREC two months before the expiry of the study.

Commencement Date	Completion Date
2018/09/01	2019/12/31

2 SECTION 2: STUDY CLASSIFICATION

Complete every option of all the questions in this section. This section is used to classify your study and select suitable reviewers.

2.1 Name of Ethics Committee handling application

Health Research Ethics Committee

2.2 Dates of applications

Fill in below the date of the first submission and revised submission (*of applicable*) of this ethics application

Date of first application	Date of revise application (<i>if applicable</i>)
2018/07/24	Click here to enter a date.

2.3 Version number

Fill in the number of times this application has been submitted.

Version

2.4 Estimated risk level

Please indicate the estimated risk level of the application for the community in general by using the risk level table indicated.

Estimated risk level of the results for the community in general		
No risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Minimal risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Medium risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2.5 Context of the Study

Mark ALL options as “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box – more than one option may be “Yes”.

Description	Yes	No
Scientific Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2.6 For this study the following persons will be included in the study team:

Fill in the number concerned with ALL options. Ensure that the participant numbers in this table correspond with the individuals indicated in Section 3.1 and **Error! Reference source not found.**

More information

The study leader is generally viewed as the individual who takes the final responsibility for all aspects of the study e.g. study leader or principle investigator. The study supervisor is generally the individual responsible for the day-to-day research management of the study.

Description		Number	
		Local	Foreign
Only for research studies	Study Leader (e.g. study leader/principle investigator)	1	0
	Co-workers (researchers of the North-West University)	1	0
	Co-workers (researchers outside the North-West University)	0	0
	Co-workers (postgraduate students of the North-West University)	1	0
	Assistants	0	0

Other members of the study team not mentioned above (specify)

[Click here to enter text.]

I hereby declare that the above information in “Section 0: Study Classification” is complete and correct and that I did not withhold any information.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

3 SECTION 3: DETAIL OF STUDY LEADER/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND CO-WORKERS

3.1 Details of Study Leader/Principle investigator

Name and details of the Study Leader/Principal Investigator.

More information

NB! Only NWU staff, or extraordinary professors in collaboration with staff of the North-West University, may register as Study Leaders. The "Study Leader" accepts final, overall responsibility for the total study.

Surname	Full Names	Title
Wissing	Marié	Prof.

NWU Campus	Faculty	Research entity/School
Potchefstroom	Positive Psychology	AUTHeR

Position	University No.	Professional Registration (body & category)
Senior Researcher	10174524	HSPCA Clinical Psychologist

Telephone			NWU-box or Postal Address
Work	Home	Cell	
0182992603	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Box 500

E-mail Address

Marie.Wissing@nwu.ac.za

[PLEASE ATTACH THE TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV OF THE STUDY LEADER]

More information

NB! A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:

- a researcher's qualifications
- career path to date
- specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)
- supervisory experience
- publication list (for the past 4 years)

3.2 Other Members of the Study Team

Names, qualifications, professional registration and functions of all the other co-workers (researchers, postgraduate students in the case of a research study and assistants who form part of the study team) should be indicated. The information given in this table should correspond with the number of team members given in Section 2.67 (Add extra rows to the table if required.)

Name	Qualifications	Professional Registration	Association and/or Function
Dr. Lusilda Schutte	Phd in Psychology M.Sc.Statistics	HPCSA Clinical Psychologist	Co-Supervisor
Mr. Andrew (Drew) Hort	B.A. Hons (Psych)	HPCSA Psychological Counsellor	Masters Degree Student

(Type one name per row, or type "none" if there is no other team member)

[PLEASE ATTACH A TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV FOR ALL THE MENTIONED RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS IN THIS SECTION]

More information

NB! A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:

- a researcher's qualifications
- career path to date
- specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)
- supervisory experience
- publication list (for the past 4 years)

3.3 Conflict of Interests

Declare with full details any conflict of interests that any member of the study team might have.

More information

Examples: financial, non-financial: intellectual, bias, overly optimistic promises of potential benefits, role of the researcher/s, desire of professional advancement, desire to make a scientific breakthrough, relationship with participants.

Name of Researcher	Complete description of the conflict and how it will be managed
Not Applicable	No conflict of interest from the student or supervisors' side needs to be declared.

Note: Type one name per row, or type "Not applicable" if there is no member of the study team or professional supervisor with a conflict of interest. Add extra rows to the table, if required.

3.4 Collaborations (if applicable)

Declare with full details all collaboration agreements, e.g. with researchers or lecturers from another institution, national or international, who will be working on a defined section of the study.

More information

Your local team may collaborate with a team from a different national institution in South Africa or internationally, and thereby incorporate and benefit from their expertise and/or facilities. Typically, in such cases, functions and responsibilities differ for certain parts of the study. These functions and responsibilities must be fully described.

Name of Collaborator	National/International (Indicate which)	Full Description of functions and responsibilities
Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Note: Type one name per row, or type "Not applicable" if there are no contractors. Add extra rows to the table, if required.

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

4 SECTION 4: RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE APPROVAL

4.1 Research proposal

4.1.1 Executive summary of the study

Provide an executive summary (150 words max) of the study in the following format:

- brief problem statement (approx. 3 sentences)
- aims and objectives of the study
- study design and method.

Executive Summary

1. Problem Statement

In order to better understand the idea of human strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) developed the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of 24 character strengths and six virtues. Appreciation of beauty (AOB), classified under the virtue of transcendence is one such strength and the focus of this research. A number of questions are raised within the literature regarding the categorisation of AOB within the virtue of transcendence, the varied componential makeup of this strength, its distinctiveness from or possible associations with other character strengths as well as

the varied cultural perceptions relating to AOB. There is no previous research addressing these core conceptualisation and categorisation issues, with AOB being one of the least researched and least understood of the classified character strengths.

2. The Aims of the Study

The aims of this narrative review is to critically interrogate the conceptualisation and classification of AOB under the virtue of transcendence.

3. Methods and Study Design

A narrative literature review, according to the guidelines for the seven step review process as suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be conducted. Each step is followed by CORE evaluation questions and tasks that involve the processes of critical examination, organisation, reflection and evaluation of the process at that point.

Specific attention in the methodology is given to the introspection and bracketing of the researcher's worldview, search strategies for the identification of studies, criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies, the use of multimodal texts to supplement published literature, the thematic analysis and synthesis of selected information (data) as well as specific ethical considerations.

4. Expected Benefits

A narrative exploration of multimodal texts may open up future avenues for the empirical study of AOB, one of the least understood and researched character strengths. This potential new lens through which to see the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB will also lend itself towards wellness interventions to benefit individuals and society at large. |

4.1.2 Proposal

Note: For each study a descriptive proposal has to be submitted and is used as the main document for evaluation. The proposal should reflect the ethics of the research throughout. Attach a proposal approved by the Scientific/Proposal Committee of your research entity.

[ATTACH THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL]

4.1.3 Scientific/Proposal Committee approval

Has this study been evaluated and approved by a Scientific/Proposal Committee? If “Yes”, provide details. If “No”, provide a reason. (Please mark with X in the relevant block and provide details if “Yes”)

More information

The proposal needs to be approved by a Scientific/Proposal Committee before it will be reviewed by the HREC. The HREC relies on the expertise of a Scientific/Proposal committee regarding the evaluation of the scientific merit and design of the study.

Yes	Details	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name of formal Scientific/Proposal Committee:	AUTHeR
	Title, initials and surname of all the members of Scientific/Proposal Committee present during the review.	Prof. I.M. Kruger and Dr. A. Wilson-Fadji
	Date of approval:	19 July 2019
No	Reason:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	[Click here to enter text.]	

4.1.4 Letter confirming approval of protocol

The HREC has to have proof of confirmation of approval by the Scientific/Proposal Committee.

[ATTACH CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL OF THE STUDY PROPOSAL BY THE SCIENTIFIC/PROPOSAL COMMITTEE ON THE MANDATED TEMPLATE.]

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

5 SECTION 5: ADDITIONALLY REQUIRED INFORMATION ABOUT ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW NOT PROVIDED IN THE PROPOSAL

Note: The information contained in this part is *additional* to what is contained in the proposal.

5.1 Please describe the study characteristics according to the PICOS (participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes and study design) assessment:

More information

*The PICOS assessment highlights the core strategy and purpose of the systematic review to be undertaken by defining exactly the parameters to be followed. The “**participants**” aspect indicates the study populations that will be investigated i.e. which population groups will be included in the analysis? The “**intervention**” aspect highlights the specific therapeutic strategy that is being investigated e.g. a new medication or psychological intervention. The “**comparisons**” aspect defines the alternative therapeutic strategy that the intervention is*

being compared to, in order to determine if the intervention has greater efficacy e.g. the current standard of care or a placebo. The “outcomes” aspect refers to the actual variable that is being measured in the analysis to determine the efficacy of the intervention e.g. weight loss over time or reduced cholesterol levels. The “study design” aspect highlights the types of studies that are to be included in the systematic review e.g. randomised control trials or epidemiological studies. For each aspect that is indicated in the table, please give an explanation for the choice of the specific aspect e.g. the black South African population is being investigated due to the increased probability of side-effects and non-efficacy of standard pharmaceutical agents in the treatment of hypertension in this population.

Aspect	Decision	Explanation
Participants	N/A	While the application form for a systematic review has been completed, the chosen method of study is in fact that of a narrative review (as mentioned in the cover letter). PICOS is not applicable in a narrative review. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.
Interventions	N/A	While the application form for a systematic review has been completed, the chosen method of study is in fact that of a narrative review (as mentioned in the cover letter). PICOS is not applicable to a narrative review. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.
Comparisons	N/A	While the application form for a systematic review has been completed, the chosen method of study is in fact that of a narrative review (as mentioned in the cover letter). PICOS is not applicable to a narrative review. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.
Outcomes	N/A	While the application form for a systematic review has been completed, the chosen method of study is in fact that of a narrative review (as mentioned in the cover letter). PICOS is not applicable to a narrative review. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.
Study design	N/A	While the application form for a systematic review has been completed, the chosen method of study is in fact that of a narrative review (as mentioned in the cover letter). PICOS is not applicable to a narrative review. Study guidelines for a narrative review according to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) will be followed.

5.2 Rationale for the specific methodology of the review

As applicable to your study, with reference to available alternatives (if applicable), motivate your choice of the specific systematic review procedures/techniques/methods/approaches being undertaken to achieve your study's aims.

More information

It must be clear to the evaluators that you have chosen a meaningful/best study design to achieve your study aims. Particularly where alternative review procedures/techniques/methods/approaches exist to what you used in the study, it is important to motivate your alternative choice.

A narrative review is all about telling a story by exploring patterns, themes and meanings in the literature. Appreciation of beauty is one of the least understood of all the character strengths, thus being better suited to a stand-alone narrative review as opposed to a systematic review. The synthesis of findings of a narrative review in this largely unexplored field seems warranted in doing the initial earthworks on which future empirical studies may stand. Thematic analysis is the approach best suited to uncovering the themes that are needed to start telling this story. Thematic analysis is also well aligned with the primary researcher's level of skill and experience (ethical requirement for professional competence).

5.3 Search strategy

Please indicate the reasoning behind the specific search strategy being implemented with specific reference to the:

- databases to be investigated,
- motivation for the databases being used,
- time period being investigated,
- languages to be investigated,
- specific search string to be used and
- curation strategy to be implemented i.e. the manner in which objectivity will be ensured during the search phase.

Using a number of selected keywords, searches will be conducted via EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) on the North-West University Library database. Many published resources are not freely available on the open web, thus making EDS a great option for accessibility to full text articles. These same searches will also be replicated on Google and Google Scholar search engines. These search engines are chosen for their accessibility, appropriateness and comprehensiveness in locating as many studies and other sources as possible in the field of interest. Relevant articles that are found on these search engines that are not available in open access may be accessible on EDS library subscription databases. The library subscription databases and search engines will be used together as a way of

triangulating the search. The keywords (search string) here is: character strengths, virtues, VIA, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty, and moral beauty. These keywords help to establish the purposive sample that will be drawn from the overall population of studies. Synonyms and associations will also be used to advance the area of the search using augmented keywords such as aesthetics and engagement with beauty. In line with the aims of this review additional readings will be done within the virtues of knowledge (curiosity, creativity, and love of learning) and flow theory.

Following this, a search will be conducted through the citations and reference lists of potentially useful articles. This provides the benefit of identifying articles that may have been overlooked in the previous searches as well as bringing other useful keywords to light. These new keywords may generate new searches, thus generating other potentially useful articles which all brings to light further citations and references to explore. The process will be continued until all related information has been exhausted.

The ResearchGate search engine will be used to supplement and fine tune the initial searches conducted via EDS, Google and Google Scholar. ResearchGate will be used in the context of this narrative review to locate the prominent researchers (experts) in the field, follow the dialogue and questioning among the prominent researchers, analyse citation databases linked to the experts in the field and create the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about their papers. The highly developed search bar and linking capabilities within ResearchGate makes the above activities possible, thus producing additional perspectives and information on AOB. Being up to date with expert outlooks is ultimately what is required as part of the CORE evaluation criteria proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) for a comprehensive review. In addition, all search strands, databases consulted and the search results thereof will be documented as part of the audit trail. |

5.4 Criteria for article selection

Describe in full which inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used to select the manuscripts to be included in the systematic review and motivate (justification).

More information

Include also criteria for evaluating that the research undertaken in the manuscripts being chosen for review was ethical e.g. indication of ethics committee review, obtaining written informed consent etc.

Inclusion criteria	Justification
<p>1.The overall literature consulted will consist of both quantitative and qualitative empirical studies as well as conceptual research studies. Key articles related to the conceptualisation of AOB as character strength will be selected as foundational sources, while articles that are perhaps useful in providing more peripheral information will be selected for supplemental use.</p> <p>2.All accessible studies written in both English and Afrikaans, that focus on the appreciation of beauty will be considered.</p> <p>3.No prescriptions for the types of studies, participants, outcomes or interventions within this area of focus will be set.</p> <p>4.No timeline for the inclusion or exclusion of sources will be set.</p>	<p>1. The reviewer will evaluate which studies to include and exclude in the review based upon the degree to which they are related to the problem statement and focus questions of this study The validity and credibility of the sources will also be considered during the selection process according to Bowen's (2009) guidelines for document evaluation. Here documents will be assessed for comprehensive or selective topic coverage, the original purpose of the document and intended target audience, whether the document was written as a result of personal experience or from secondary sources as well as an examination of the research design, method, instruments, theoretical assumptions as well as research findings of scientific studies. This evaluation of sources will be documented in the audit trail</p> <p>2. The primary researcher is English speaking but has the capability of understanding studies written in Afrikaans and also has the advantage of having both the study supervisor and co-supervisor being fluent in both languages. These studies will be evaluated according to the above mentioned criteria.</p> <p>3. Due to the limited amount of literature available, all studies irrespective of the participants, outcomes and interventions used will be included. These studies will be evaluated according to the above mentioned criteria.</p> <p>4. Due to the limited amount of literature available, all studies irrespective of</p>

	publication date will be included. These studies will be evaluated according to the above mentioned criteria.]
Exclusion criteria	Justification
[Research that is done within the cosmetic or beauty industry.]	[The beauty of the human form, while often a captor of visual art, is excluded from this narrative review that intends to focus on the selfless acts of AOB as constituting a strength of character.]

5.5 Risk of bias and trustworthiness

Please explain the procedures that will be implemented in order to ensure that bias is limited in the process of the systematic review and that the articles and information sources being used for the review will be trustworthy. If a meta-analysis or meta-synthesis is being performed, please indicate the summary measures that will be used to evaluate inter-study bias.

[A narrative review by nature is susceptible to the risk of bias. The extent that our culture and worldview influence every aspect of the narrative review process, from the selection of a topic, research question, information and methodology until the final discussions and conclusions, cannot be underestimated. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) state this most succinctly by saying that “you cannot take the literature reviewer out of the literature review” (p. 184). This researcher acknowledges that his view of the AOB is seen through both his professional experiences as a registered counsellor, guitar teacher, chef and performing artist and through personal life experiences as a surfer and nature lover. These experiences form the overall lens through which AOB is seen and the researcher will therefore need to guard against excessive selection and interpretative bias. The aim and awareness will therefore be to bracket (as far as possible) these personal experiences and biases from the study so as to enhance overall objectivity. An audit trail logging cultural and worldview reflections and challenges will remain active throughout the entire narrative review process. By ensuring a comprehensive approach to the narrative review process, particularly through the use of different MODES (section 5.5 in the research proposal) the effects of bias may also be minimised. Triangulation of information sources (section 5.6 in the research proposal) that seek convergence of data from different sources may increase assurance in the trustworthiness of the findings (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). Care will also be taken to avoid any citation errors in the report which may affect the trustworthiness of the report and credibility of the reviewer (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). The research on AOB aims to increase trustworthiness through rich cultural and contextual awareness of data.

Trustworthiness and replicability will be enhanced through a detailed audit trail of the entire review process. The audit trail will include trustworthiness notes (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016) relating to both the credibility and appropriateness of collected information as

well as the trustworthiness of the information provider. The credibility and trustworthiness of sources will be assessed through the scientific rigour and transparency that is shown in the inclusion and exclusion of sources (see section 5.4). If a report reveals that credibility was compromised, the article will either be included with an awareness of the limitation or excluded entirely. It is not applicable in this study to have the service of a co-coder, with an audit trail being conducted by the study supervisor.

5.6 Benefits for participants

Describe the potential *indirect* benefits that the study holds for the society at large or for the researchers and the organisations/institutions they are working for, through the knowledge gained.

Indirect benefits for society at large or for the researchers/institution

A narrative review of both published, grey literature and other sources may provide some much needed answers and future direction to the study of one of the least understood character strengths, originally categorised by Peterson and Seligman (2004). These pioneering authors were hopeful of a growing scientific inquiry around the conceptualisation and categorisation of the character strengths, in this case for AOB. They did not hesitate to mention that their work was not the final product, which seems especially true for a character strength like AOB, which is little understood yet and has much to add to the field of positive psychology by opening up future avenues for empirical research study. AOB is a fairly vague concept, yet if the literature allows for it, a symbiotic relationship and possible categorisation between AOB and another character strength (for example curiosity) may set new horizons of understanding and intervention. A potential new lens for seeing the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB may therefore lend itself towards wellness interventions that benefit individuals, practitioners and society at large.

5.7 Synthesis of results

Discuss the process by which the results will be determined from this analysis by highlighting the reasons for the use of the methodology indicated e.g. the use of a data synthesis table. If a meta-analysis or meta-synthesis is being performed, please indicate and justify the statistical procedures that will be implemented as well as the software to be used.

The selected articles will be read and examined with the research question in mind. The overarching guiding question though will be: “How is AOB conceptualised and categorised in the literature, and what are other emergent issues that may be important in the understanding and promotion of AOB?”. An initial scan of the abstracts may eliminate some articles to allow further time for the in-depth reading of relevant papers.

The first step in the analysis process, working within the framework of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), is for the researcher in this study to become familiar with the selected data through multiple readings thereof and jotting down of ideas. Copies of relevant studies will be printed to enable easier reading and initial coding of ideas (2nd step). Here relevant texts will be copied and pasted from the computerised copies of the selected studies onto Microsoft Word. Colour codes will be assigned for specific categories that can be applied to all the data. All selected data will therefore be highlighted a specific colour, fitting into one of the chosen categories. The complete data set, once highlighted will be cut and pasted so as to belong to one of the chosen coded categories. Care will be taken to retain the source of the text during the grouping of information. With all data now assigned to a specific colour coded category, the focus falls on identifying patterns and emergent themes within these categories (3rd step). The key is always whether or not the emergent themes are able to answer the research questions. The initial themes will undergo ongoing analysis (4th step), with possible merging or further division of themes before they can be defined and named (5th step). The final themes that are written up in the research report (6th step) need to withstand scientific scrutiny in showing that they both symbolize the text and answer the research questions.

The themes that are generated will be triangulated with the findings that come from the other MODES of investigation, particularly that of observation. In line with the CORE evaluation criteria proposed by Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) to embrace the use

of additional technology, the capabilities offered by Microsoft Excel to organise and analyse the data will continue to be explored. The method of analysis will, however, remain that of thematic analysis.

5.8 Expertise, skills and legal competencies

What expertise is needed to implement the systematic review? Do the study leader/researcher(s)/assistants/fieldworkers have at their disposal the necessary expertise to implement the techniques concerned? If not and as applicable, explain how the necessary training will be provided before the study commences.

Study leader	Researchers/Assistants/Fieldworkers
<p>Prof. Wissing (supervisor) is not only a qualified clinical psychologist but also a credible and renowned research author with multiple publications. Added to this is the fact that Prof. Wissing is also a great scientific philosopher and poet who can ignite the critical thinking and philosophical debates necessary in the narrative review.</p> <p>Dr. Schutte (co-supervisor) has the unique and extremely advantageous status of being both a qualified clinical psychologist and statistician, thus ensuring scientific rigour is upheld. A student was recently delivered (graduated in 2017) by Dr. Schutte (supervisor) and Prof. Wissing (co-supervisor) who conducted a narrative review.</p>	<p>The primary researcher in this study has an active and professional interest in AOB both as a registered psychological counsellor and artist. The primary researcher is also pursuing a master degree in positive psychology and has completed the first year with distinction, during which time core research components that relate to a narrative review study were learnt. This researcher has the privilege of working in an extremely well balanced team that is capable of undertaking this study on AOB. The interpersonal balance of skills ensures that as a team, and as practitioners of positive psychology, we can dream with our feet still on the ground.</p>

5.9 Monitoring of research

Describe how you as the researcher will monitor both the implementation and the progress of the research, compliance with the approved protocol, the management of ethics throughout the research process, as well as the need for amendments during the execution of the research study.

While it is not applicable in this study to have the service of a co-coder, an audit trail will be overseen by the study supervisor. Implementation and progress of the study as well as adherence to the approved protocol will be strictly monitored against the time schedule set as well as guidelines and deadlines as set by the study leader. The approved protocol and

research done will be of an ethical nature and correctly applied by the primary (student) researcher.]

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6 SECTION 6: OTHER RESEARCH ETHICS EVALUATIONS

6.1 Evaluation by other Research Ethics Committees

Please complete this section if this study has been or will be reviewed by any other research ethics committees, for example with multi-institutional studies. Provide information about all research ethics committees involved in the evaluation and approval of this study.

Name of Research Ethics Committee	Date of Approval / In process	Contact number or e-mail address of the research ethics committee	Approval no.
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

7 SECTION 7: DECLARATIONS

Applications and declaration are filled in and signed by:

Sec 7a: Study Leader

Sec 7b: Research Director

The pages with declarations and signatures must be uploaded with this form.

[PLEASE UPLOAD ALL SIGNED DECLARATIONS]

Health Research Ethics Application

Study Leader (Title, Initials and Surname)	Study Title (see § 0)
Prof. M.P. Wissing	Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review.]

NWU Ethics Number

[NWU-?????-??-??]

7.1 Sec 7a: Study Leader

Application and Declarations by Study Leader

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for approval of the research study as described in the preceding proposal and declare that:

- 7.1.1 The information in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that no ethical codes will be violated with the study;
- 7.1.2 I will make sure that the study is managed ethically justifiably from start to finish;
- 7.1.3 I and all co-workers/assistants/field workers are appropriately qualified, capable and legally competent to implement the proposed studies/procedures/interventions;
- 7.1.4 I will not deviate from the approved proposal and that I understand approval for the study will be cancelled if I deviate from the proposal without the approval of the Health Research Ethics Committee;
- 7.1.5 the study is scientifically justifiable;
- 7.1.6 I undertake to respect intellectual property rights throughout and to avoid any form of plagiarism;
- 7.1.7 I will report annually to the Health Research Ethics Committee (or half-yearly as determined by the Health Research Ethics Committee) on the prescribed monitoring report concerning progress of the study;
- 7.1.8 I will notify the Health Research Ethics Committee should the study be terminated.

Name (Title, Full Names & Surname)	Qualifications
Prof. Marié Wissing	Drs. Phil. (Clinical Psychology); (Psychology) D.Phil

	[Click here to enter a date.]
Signature	Date

NWU Ethics Application

Study Leader (Title, Initials and Surname)	Study Title (see § 0)
Prof. M.P. Wissing	Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review.

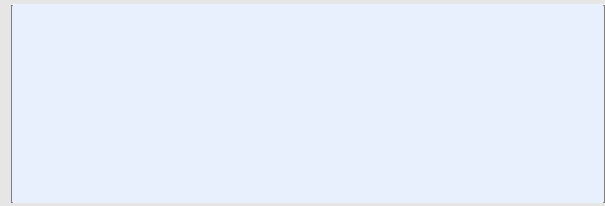
NWU Ethics Number [NWU-?????-??-??]

7.2 Sec 7b: Research Director

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the above study has been reviewed by a Scientific/Proposal Committee and may proceed to the Health Research Ethics Committee and that the Study Leader/Researcher has enough physical facilities, equipment and money at his/her disposal to implement and complete the study.

7.2.1 Research Director:

The director of the research entity signs here.

Name (Title, Full Names & Surname)	Qualifications
[Click here to enter text.]	[Click here to enter text.]
	[Click here to enter a date.]
	Date
Signature	

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

Credits

Compiled by the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support

HREC Approval Letter



Prof MP Wissing
Positive Psychology
AUTHeR

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,
Training and Support**

Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Tel: 018-285 2291
Email: Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za

8 November 2018

Dear Prof Wissing

APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION BY THE HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Ethics number: NWU-00094-18-S1

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) secretariat.

Study title: Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review

Study leader: Prof MP Wissing

Student: Mr A Hort- 29420687

Application type: Narrative review

Risk level: Minimal (monitoring report required annually)

Expiry date: 30 November 2019 (monitoring report due at the end of November annually until completion)

You are kindly informed that after review by the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, your ethics approval application has been successful and was determined to fulfil all requirements for approval. Your study is approved for a year and may commence from 08/11/2018. Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report should be submitted two months prior to the reporting dates as indicated i.e. annually for minimal risk studies, six-monthly for medium risk studies and three-monthly for high risk studies, to ensure timely renewal of the study. A final report must be provided at completion of the study or the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences must be notified if the study is temporarily suspended or terminated. The monitoring report template is obtainable from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za. Annually, a number of studies may be randomly selected for an internal audit.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences requires immediate reporting of any aspects that warrants a change of ethical approval. Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be submitted to Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in **yellow highlight** in the amended documents. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment

request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Any adverse/unexpected/unforeseen events or incidents must be reported on either an adverse event report form or incident report form to Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating that it is a notification of a serious adverse event or incident in a specific project e.g. "SAE/Incident notification: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". Please note that the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences complies with the South African National Health Act 61 (2003), the Regulations on Research with Human Participants (2014), the Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015), the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Wayne Towers
HREC Chairperson



Prof Minrie Greeff
Ethics Office Head

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5 Ethics\NWU-00094-18-S1\9.1.5.4.1.AL_NWU-00094-18-S1_08-11-2018.docm
8 November 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.1

Summary

This section comprised a scientifically evaluated (AUTHeR) and ethically approved (HREC) research proposal that laid the foundation for the present study focusing on the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB as a character strength. The research report detailing the method, results, discussion, and conclusion of the present study follows in the next section, which is presented as a manuscript in article format.

SECTION 2

MANUSCRIPT FOR EVALUATION

Manuscript in Article Format

This mini-dissertation is compiled in article format according to the 2018 General Academic Rules (A4.1.1.1.4 and A4.4.2.9) of the North-West University. The manuscript and article follow the submission guidelines for the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. An exception here (for dissertation purposes) is that the article exceeds the 15-20 double spaced page limit stipulated by the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. The article length will be adjusted prior to submission. A header will not be inserted for mini-dissertation purposes so as not to interfere with page numbering, but will be added in the final manuscript.

Guidelines to Authors for the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*

The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* explores the many facets of humanistic psychology through a variety of features, including experiential reports, analyses of contemporary culture, theoretical papers, personal essays, poetry, research studies emphasising human scientific methods, and applications of humanistic psychology (“Journal of Humanistic Psychology: Description”, 2018).

According to the “Journal of Humanistic Psychology: Submission Guidelines” (2018) webpage, manuscripts are to be compiled according to the *APA Style Guide (sixth edition)*. All pages (inclusive of references, footnotes, and endnotes) are double-spaced (block quotes as an exception are single spaced) with one-inch margins on all four sides of the page. Text must be in Times Roman font size 12. Articles are not to exceed 20 double spaced pages in length and should include a Title Page, Abstract, Main Body, and References.

The title page must include the full title of the article, acknowledgments and credits, each author’s complete name and institutional affiliation as well as the name, address, phone/fax, and e-mail details of the corresponding author. The abstract should be within the

framework of 150-250 words, located on a separate page, and headed by the full title of the article (the authors' names omitted). All headings and subheadings, citations, references, tables, figures, and appendices follow the *APA Style Guide (sixth edition)*.

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/johp>. This requires the setup of an online account on the SAGE Track system powered by ScholarOne. A cover letter (with address, e-mail, phone number, and fax number details) must be attached with the manuscript (“Journal of Humanistic Psychology: Submission Guidelines”, 2018).

Manuscript

Revisiting the conceptualisation and categorisation of appreciation of beauty as a character strength: A narrative review

Andrew (Drew) Hort^{a*}, Marié P. Wissing^b, Lusilda Schutte^c

Author affiliations

^{a*} Corresponding author. North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa. +2722801811 drewhortie@gmail.co.za ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0758-4005

^b Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUPHeR), North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa. +27182991721 Marie.Wissing@nwu.ac.za ORCID-ID.org/0000-0002-0445-6246

^c Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUPHeR), North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa. +27182992090 Lusilda.Schutte@nwu.ac.za ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2107-3669

Abstract

Appreciation of beauty (AOB; natural, artistic, moral), a character strength identified in the Values in Action (VIA) model, has received limited attention in positive psychology thus far. The conceptualisation and classification of AOB in the VIA, under the virtue of transcendence, have not been explored at all. The aim of this study was to critically interrogate the conceptualisation and classification of AOB under the virtue of transcendence. A comprehensive narrative review was conducted. Thematic analysis revealed five core categories, namely: finding beauty, positive emotional states, deeper cognitive states, existential issues, and related strengths, which were further analysed for emerging patterns that could assist in answering the specific research questions. A distinction emerged between moral and non-moral (natural and artistic) beauty. There is a cognitive or perceptive quality to “seeing” the world in an “artistic” way that relates more to natural and artistic beauty than moral beauty. Similarities were identified between appreciation of natural and artistic beauty and the strengths of curiosity, love of learning, and creativity, which are classified under the virtue cluster of wisdom. It is concluded that appreciation of natural and artistic beauty joins cognitive strengths such as curiosity and love of learning under the wisdom virtue rather than the transcendence virtue, and that new virtue clusters should be considered with other combinations of character strengths. Further theoretical, empirical, and philosophical studies are thus necessary. Implications of findings for practice are indicated.

Keywords: character strengths, virtues, values in action, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty, moral beauty

Introduction

Live the next sixty seconds as if your whole life depended on them, with a sense of urgency and excitement, or as if you had just arrived in a foreign land

where there is nothing expected, hackneyed, or taken for granted. This is a journey into life's true possibility, freshness, mystery, wonder, and novelty. After all, who knows what amazing things may happen in the next minute? (Altman, 2011, p. 1)

While the above quotation was not written by Altman as an explicit description for the appreciation of beauty as a character strength, it still paints a picture of living a life mindfully and in flow, with curiosity, interest, and a deep sense of connection. Just as there is an art to living mindfully, there is an art to the appreciation of beauty - but also a science for the understanding thereof. Albeit that wealth can be defined in numerous ways, it is most often defined in a fixed or materialistic way; yet it is only psychological and transcendent wealth which allows one to truly experience life with all its fresh possibilities, mystery, and wonder (Altman, 2011). The vibrant and developing field of positive psychology is about the mining and development of this psychological wealth through the identification and enhancement of inherent human strengths.

Appreciation of beauty and excellence? is one of the 24 character strengths initially conceptualised and categorised by Peterson and Seligman (2004) in their Values in Action (VIA) Inventory of Strengths and Virtues. Peterson and Park (2009) describe virtues as the “core characteristics” identified by philosophers and theologians and character strengths as the “psychological ingredients that define the virtues” (p. 435). These six virtues and theoretically associated character strengths classified by Peterson and Seligman are: wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, judgement, love of learning, and critical thinking); courage (bravery, perseverance, honesty, and zest); humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence); justice (teamwork, fairness, and leadership); temperance (forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation); and transcendence (appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humour, and spirituality).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) espoused the hope that a science will develop around their classification system of strengths. They were clear, however, in stating that their classification of character strengths was not the finished product, with the possibility existing of merging certain strengths in their classification system or even adding other strengths not previously considered. They reiterated that debate may arise around certain strengths, thus questioning their classification under a core virtue. Appreciation of beauty may be one such strength.

Appreciation of beauty (AOB) is defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as “the ability to find, recognise, and take pleasure in the existence of goodness in the physical and social worlds” (p. 537). They assume it to comprise physical beauty, human talents or skills, and virtue or moral goodness. Three other models have since been proposed to describe the nature of appreciation from other structural perspectives. The appreciation of beauty and excellence model (Haidt & Keltner, 2004) makes a distinction between beauty in the physical world and excellence in the social world. The engagement with beauty model (Diessner, Solom, Frost, Parsons, & Davidson, 2008) defines beauty according to natural, artistic, and moral sources. The responsiveness to the good and beautiful model (Güsewell & Ruch, 2012) makes a distinction between natural beauty, artistic beauty, and what they called “non-aesthetic goodness”.

AOB has been assigned to the overarching virtue of transcendence in the VIA classification of strengths model. Peterson and Seligman (2004) describe transcendence as the connection to something greater, with the belief that life has meaning or purpose beyond ourselves. The concept of transcendence as connecting with something greater than ourselves has been a crucial part of religious teachings throughout history. The pioneers of humanistic psychology spoke more about self-transcendence, with Maslow (1970, p. 165) likening it to a “mystic or peak experience” where there is a “loss of self” and Frankl (1984) seeing it as a

way of reaching beyond ourselves to connect with others. The proposed end state of living a transcendent life is one of salvation or enlightenment for religious scholars, self-actualisation for Maslow, and finding the path to ultimate meaning for Frankl.

A number of issues or questions arise when reviewing the classification of AOB as a strength. Firstly, is AOB best classified as an ingredient of the overarching virtue of transcendence, or is it better suited to other virtues such as wisdom and knowledge? Ruch and Proyer (2015) cautioned that the association of the strengths with the virtues was done on theoretical rather than empirical grounds.

Secondly, AOB may share connections with other character strengths thus posing the question as to whether it should be categorised as a separate strength or as a component of another strength. Thirdly, AOB is often assessed and hence categorised according to the religious and moral element of this strength. This raises questions regarding the other experiences of appreciation (e.g., natural and artistic beauty) that do not always encompass the moral side of this strength; thus, should moral beauty be categorised separately from natural and artistic beauty? Fourthly, although both Eastern and Western philosophical texts have been consulted in the classification of character strengths, the question arises whether the authors of this paper really know enough about these strengths (particularly AOB) from a non-Western perspective.

Finally, it is uncertain what the association is between flow theory and character strengths in general, and AOB in particular. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) describes a person as “in flow” when their attention is focused solely on an engaged activity, with anything beyond this interaction being kept out of their conscious awareness. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) make the assertion that it is possible to remain in a “state of flow” through genuine interest and curiosity in life. Could AOB then also be considered from the perspective of showing genuine interest and curiosity in life, thereby also fostering a state of flow? There is

no previous research addressing the core conceptualisation and categorisation questions discussed in the above paragraphs.

Howell, Diessner, and Robinson (2017) claim that practitioners and lay people alike have ignored the value of appreciating beauty. According to Martinez-Marti, Avia, and Hernandez-Lloreda (2014), AOB is one of the character strengths to have received the least amount of research focus. At the time of writing their pioneering work on character strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004) claimed that “much and perhaps most of the story about appreciation remains unknown” (p. 551). Despite some research having been done over the last decade, there is still much to learn and understand about this fascinating character strength. Researchers therefore also have a role to play in deepening insights into this strength from a scientific perspective and, moreover, helping individuals to become sensitive to all the beauty that abounds.

A Narrative Review

A narrative review of published literature, grey literature, and other sources has been conducted to provide some much-needed answers and future direction to the study of one of the least understood character strengths, originally categorised by Peterson and Seligman (2004) who indicated that their work was not the final product. This is especially true for a character strength such as AOB, which is poorly understood and has much to add to the field of positive psychology.

The aim of this narrative review was to critically interrogate the conceptualisation and classification of AOB under the virtue of transcendence. This was done by exploring how AOB as a character strength was conceptualised and categorised in scientific and grey literature as well as other sources, the possible shortcomings and contradictions thereof, and whether a different categorisation needs to be considered. A narrative review that uses many means of data collection (scientific and grey literature and other sources) was deemed the

best suited approach as the present topic is largely an unexplored field.

An analysis of the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB and an integration of the state of the art on information in this regard (as intended by this manuscript) may be a springboard for further empirical studies on this important but neglected character strength, and may facilitate the development of interventions to enhance people's quality of life by appreciating the beauty that is already there.

Method

Rationale for approach

A narrative review was selected as the method of investigation and was conducted according to the seven-step guidelines of Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016). A narrative review involves telling a story by exploring patterns, themes, and meanings in the literature.

Appreciation of beauty is one of the least understood of all the character strengths with very little research conducted on it thus far, and therefore a stand-alone narrative review is better suited as an approach than a systematic review. Onwuegbuzie and Frels maintain that all literature reviews ought to be comprehensive reviews, or, simply stated, carried out in a comprehensive manner. They describe a comprehensive literature review as both a “culturally progressive approach and ethical research approach” (p. 114) involving the use of “mixed research techniques inclusive of culture, ethics and multimodal texts” (p. 66). Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2011) argue for the status of a literature review as a stand-alone study, with Onwuegbuzie and Frels adding that to be considered as an independent study, such a review then also needs to be comprehensive in nature.

Introspection of self-beliefs and experiences

Clearly, the extent to which our culture and worldview influence every aspect of the literature review process, from the selection of a topic, research question, information, and methodology until the final discussions and conclusions, cannot be underestimated.

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) state this by saying that “you cannot take the literature reviewer out of the literature review” (p. 184). The aim and awareness were therefore to bracket as far as possible all personal experiences and biases (that ordinarily would form the overall lens through which AOB was seen) from the study so as to enhance objectivity. At the same time, it cannot be excluded that the choice of topic and way of engaging with the literature reflect something of the first author himself. Therefore, some personal reflections will also be indicated by way of triangulation where relevant.

Search strategy for identification of sources

Using a number of selected keywords, exhaustive searches were conducted via EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) on the North-West University Library database. These same searches were also replicated on Google and Google Scholar search engines. The keywords used to establish the purposive sample were: character strengths, virtues, VIA, appreciation of beauty, transcendence, natural beauty, artistic beauty, and moral beauty. Synonyms and associations of the keywords used for additional searches were aesthetics and engagement with beauty. The reference lists of selected articles were also scanned for literature that was overlooked in the initial searches. In line with the aims of this review, additional non-exhaustive searches were also done within the virtues of knowledge (curiosity, creativity, and love of learning) and flow theory.

ResearchGate was used in the context of this literature review to follow the discussions of the work of key researchers in this field, locate other prominent researchers (experts) in the field, follow the dialogue and questioning among prominent researchers, and analyse citation databases linked to experts in the field.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies in the review

Articles were included in the purposive sample based on the degree to which they were related to the problem statement and focus questions of this study. The validity and

credibility of the sources were considered during the selection process according to Bowen's (2009) guidelines for document evaluation. Documents were assessed for: comprehensive or selective topic coverage; the original purpose of the document, and intended target audience; and whether the document was written as a result of personal experience, empirical study, or from secondary sources; and an examination was conducted of the research design, method, instruments, theoretical assumptions, and research findings.

Due to the limited amount of literature available, all accessible studies that focused on the appreciation of beauty were considered for possible inclusion. No prescriptions for the types of studies, participants, outcomes, or interventions within this area of focus were set. It is important to understand how researchers have approached the study of appreciation over the years, hence no timeline was set for the inclusion or exclusion of sources.

A criterion for exclusion did, however, fall on research studies that were done within the cosmetic or beauty industry. The beauty of the human form, while often a captor of visual art, is excluded from this proposed review that focuses on the selfless acts of appreciation, as constituting a strength of character.

Using multimodal texts to expand the literature search

Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) maintain that a comprehensive literature review ought to make use of "multimodal texts" (p. 66) or "MODES" (p. 373) that include media, observations, documents, experts, and secondary data. Considering the limited number of published studies, the use of MODES was embraced in producing a comprehensive story about AOB. Bowen (2009) claims that the qualitative researcher ought to search for convergence in findings through at least two different data sources. A mindful observation of persons engaging in the many forms of appreciation produced rich qualitative data, which was used to triangulate the findings from the published research studies, thus adding credibility.

ResearchGate was used as a tool in this study to find the voices of the leading researchers in AOB. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) highlight the limitation of using only published work in a review due to the time delay between when the findings were made and when they are made available to the reviewer. This is where the voices of experts were extremely beneficial as they became involved in the research process as ‘co-reviewers’, with their opinions confirming, contradicting, altering, or updating the reviewers’ work up to that point in time.

Analysis and synthesis of selected information

A total of 46 selected articles were read and examined with the research questions in mind. The overarching guiding question was: How is AOB conceptualised and categorised in the literature, and what are other emergent issues that may be important in the understanding and promotion of AOB? The first step in the analysis process, working within the framework of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), was familiarisation with the selected data and the jotting down of any key ideas. The selected articles were printed to enable easier reading and initial coding of ideas (second step). Colour codes and symbols were assigned to specific categories that could be applied to the data. Using the electronic versions of the selected articles and Microsoft Word and document processing, the data were grouped according to the colour- and symbol-coded categories previously assigned. Care was taken to retain the source of the text during the grouping of information. With all data having been assigned to a specific colour- and symbol-coded category, the focus fell on identifying patterns and emergent themes within these categories (third step). The key question here was whether or not the emergent themes were able to answer the research questions. The initial themes were subjected to ongoing analysis (fourth step), for possible merging or further division of themes before they were defined and named (fifth step). The final themes needed to show that they both symbolised the text and answered the research questions (sixth step).

The themes that were generated were then triangulated with the findings that came from the other MODES of investigation, particularly those of observation and personal reflections.

Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis

Initial categories were discerned from the literature based on the overall content of the articles reviewed. These initial categories that ranked from a higher to lower level of abstraction related to positive psychology, character strengths, AOB history, research findings and theories, measurement scales, interventions, AOB-associated emotions (awe, elevation, self-transcendence, etc.), cultural considerations, and sources of beauty (natural, artistic, and moral beauty). While these initial categories aided in compartmentalising the literature, they were not sufficient for answering the research questions. In light hereof and as per the chosen methodology of thematic analysis, the initial categories were analysed for emerging themes and patterns that could assist in answering the specific research questions.

Five major recurrent themes and components thereof (see Table 1) were extracted from the literature on AOB and will be further discussed below. It must be noted that very few articles within the sample of literature addressed the categorisation of character strengths in general. No literature was found that addressed the categorisation of AOB as a character strength, specifically. In addition, no literature was found on cultural factors that could assist with the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB as a character strength.

Table 1. Recurrent themes and components.

Finding beauty	Positive emotional states	Advanced cognitive states or deeper consciousness	Existential issues	Related strengths and traits
in nature	awe	mindfulness	transcendence	curiosity
in art	admiration	absorption	small self	love of learning
in moral goodness	elevation	flow	meaning in life	openness to experience
	wonder	gratification	universalism	hope
	happiness	appreciation	perspective	gratitude
	well-being	noticing	mystery	humility
		engaging	magic	
			spirituality	
			harmony	
			connectedness	
			self-actualisation	

Finding beauty

Zabihian and Diessner (2016) assert that, even though it seems that AOB is merely one of the 24 character strengths, it actually deserves a higher standing, being one of the three foundational virtues of civilisation: truth, beauty, and goodness. May (1985) argues that Plato positioned beauty above truth and goodness in stature, likening beauty to harmony, which he saw as more important than both truth and goodness. Danto (2003) expands on this by saying that while artists can choose whether or not to include beauty in their work, the average person does not have that choice in life. Beauty is an absolute necessity for a flourishing and meaningful life. Despite the importance of beauty in people's lives, Howell, Diessner, and Robinson (2017), in their article titled 'self-actualisation and the tragedy of beauty', maintain that beauty and all its benefits are ignored by mental health practitioners and the general public alike.

The various structural models and definitions for AOB (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Haidt & Keltner, 2004; Diessner et al., 2008; Güsewell & Ruch, 2012) named in the introduction section of this paper allude to physical or artistic beauty, human talents or skills,

natural beauty, and moral goodness or non-aesthetic beauty. Of these sources of beauty, human talents or skills have received the least amount of research interest and are not explicitly mentioned in the models of Diessner et al. (2008) and Güsewell and Ruch (2012). These authors and leading experts in the field have put more emphasis on finding beauty in nature, art (aesthetics), and moral goodness.

We start our exploration by looking at the different sources of beauty and exploring whether or not they ought to cluster together under the virtue of transcendence in the VIA classification of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Haidt and Keltner (2004) question the way in which the various sensitivities to beauty displayed by individuals are grouped together. Diessner et al. (2008) provide empirical evidence for the multi-dimensional nature of appreciation by showing both the correlation and distinction between the three dimensions of appreciation on their Engagement with Beauty Scale. They show, therefore, that different sensitivities to beauty are related but also distinct from one another. Güsewell and Ruch (2012) expand on this conceptualisation issue with their research conclusion stating that “responsiveness to the good and the beautiful is a general sensitivity to the beautiful and the good, which encompasses distinct, but related dimensions” (p. 526). This could imply that being sensitive to moral goodness, for example, does not guarantee sensitivity to natural or artistic beauty. The above findings can be augmented by looking at the similarities and differences between the appreciation of natural, artistic, and moral beauty dimensions, with an eye on further categorisation and conceptualisation advancements for AOB. Natural and artistic beauty may have more in common with each other and could possibly be differentiated from moral goodness.

Natural, artistic, and moral beauty. Hamilton (2006) makes the assertion, based on the philosophical writings of Kant (1987), that there is a “conceptual connection between the aesthetic appreciation of art and that of nature” (p. 183) and that the “capacities to make

aesthetic judgements of art and nature are inextricably intertwined” (p. 184). One could interpret the essence of the above statement to have the same meaning as the popular adage ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’. Whether one is gazing upon a sunset over still waters or marvelling over a life-sized African wood carving, the eye for appreciating both natural and artistic beauty is the same. As per the adage, not all people will see and feel beauty in the same way. Is it fair to say, then, that someone with an artistic eye will notice and be moved more by the beauty in nature? Being an artist is not an elitist position reserved only for those people with a special skill. In assessing musicians’ sensitivity to beauty, Güsewell and Ruch (2013) found that responsiveness to beauty is not dependent upon any specific training and ability, with regular opportunities to express oneself artistically being a far better indicator of such sensitivity to beauty.

Hamilton (2006) talks about the post-modern assertion in which “anything can be art and anyone can be an artist” (p. 191). The famous Spanish painter Pablo Picasso stated that “all children are artists, the problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up” (“Pablo Picasso Quotes,” n. d.). This suggests that all individuals can find their inner artist again and reap the psychological benefits thereof. Adler (2015) maintains that the first skill that art offers one is the ability to see. She continues with a personal reflection: “my eyes rewarded me by introducing me to the beauty that was worth seeing in my world, to what had been there all along, hidden in plain view” (p. 484).

Zabihian and Diessner (2016) found that artists displayed significantly higher scores on engagement with natural and artistic beauty than non-artists. Interestingly, there was no difference between scores on engagement with moral beauty between the two groups. Haidt and Keltner (2004) predicted that the personality trait openness to experience would show a strong relationship with AOB in general. More specifically, Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2004) found a significant relationship between openness to experience and art

experiences in general. Openness to experience was also found to be the foremost predictor of the appreciation of music (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007; Rentfrow & McDonald, 2010). Zabihian and Diessner (2016) established that artists scored higher on openness to experience than non-artists, with Martinez-Marti, Hernandez-Lloreda, and Avia (2016) observing that people who were sensitive to physical beauty (art and nature) were more likely to be open to experience than those who were sensitive to moral beauty. No studies could be found that show a positive link between moral beauty and openness to experience. The personality factor most associated with moral beauty is agreeableness (Diessner, Iyer, Smith, & Haidt, 2013). Passmore and Howell (2014) speak of the spontaneity and freedom that have always been associated with nature. They maintain that, while society enforces its pressures and values upon us, nature offers us a safe haven whereby “we are free simply to be” (p. 379). It seems that sensitivity to beauty in both nature and art may be mediated by a certain personality trait that may not always be associated with the appreciation of moral beauty. It may also be that the idea of moral goodness is grounded in religious fundamentalism, which stifles the freedom to be oneself. Preston and Shin (2017) make the distinction between religion and spirituality saying that, while the former describes “affiliation and adherence to a prescribed set of religious beliefs and practices” (p. 212), the latter refers to the actual religious or spiritual experience. They raise the question of whether spirituality need always be related to the ‘sacred’ or the ‘divine’, since spirituality is shared by the religious and non-religious alike. Although it may seem as if spirituality is then favoured above religion in terms of AOB, Diessner et al. (2008) mention that religions have also enthused prodigious works of visual art, music, and architecture.

Diessner et al. (2013) found a higher correlation between spirituality and moral beauty compared to natural and artistic beauty. Engaging with moral beauty also shows a significantly stronger correlation with the trait hope than engaging with natural or artistic

beauty, with the authors stating that no studies existed that associated artistic and natural beauty with moral development (Diessner, Rust, Solom, Frost, & Parsons, 2006). Smith, Diessner, and Mayton (2009) discovered a strong relationship between empathy and engagement with moral beauty; stronger than that between empathy and both natural and artistic beauty.

Engagement with moral beauty showed higher correlations with the concept of love than both natural and artistic beauty, with those engaging in moral beauty being seen as agreeable, empathic, caring, forgiving, and grateful people who had a desire to do good for others (Diessner et al., 2013). This is, of course, not to say that those who engage with natural or artistic beauty are self-serving hedonists. Engaging with natural beauty in particular showed the highest correlation out of all types of beauty with the concept of universalism (Diessner et al., 2013). Schwartz (1992) defines universalism as an “understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature” (p. 12). Engaging with artistic beauty is not to be outdone in this self-transcendent dimension, with Diessner, Kirk, Guenther, Pohling, and Mobasher (2017) claiming that those who engage with artistic beauty have a strong connection with and love for all humanity and nature. Engaging with artistic beauty increases an individual’s sense of universalism, kindness, and spirituality, thus promoting strong ties and love with the community, humanity, and nature (Diessner et al., 2013). It is in this self-transcendent nature of love and universalism that the bond is found between natural, artistic, and moral beauty. Despite this similarity, Diessner et al. (2013) prefer to see artistic, natural, and moral beauty as separate constructs as opposed to all three forming a single construct. The data seem to suggest a unified construct for natural and artistic beauty separate from moral beauty. The problem with such a conceptualisation of beauty lies in the current categorisation of AOB in the VIA under the virtue of transcendence.

This may become clearer as the narrative exploration continues into positive emotional states and existential issues that relate to AOB in the subsequent sections.

Positive emotional states in AOB

Haidt and Keltner (2004) distinguish between three positive emotional states in AOB that are sometimes referred to as ‘self-transcendent’ or ‘other praising emotions’. They claim the following: appreciation of natural beauty produces awe; appreciation of skills and talents produces admiration; and appreciation of moral beauty produces elevation. While the study of awe has received the majority of research focus, followed by moral elevation, there is virtually no literature available on the study of human skills and talents as related to admiration. This may be because the emotional response of awe is often used to describe the reaction to all forms of appreciation. Haidt (2002) claims that awe appears to be the central component among the self-transcendent emotions. In other words, all the self-transcendent emotions are awe-related. Other than these core awe-related states, the literature also alludes to feelings of wonder, happiness, and overall well-being that are associated with AOB as a whole. The way in which the emotional states of awe and elevation are related to natural, artistic, and moral beauty is the primary focus of this section.

Awe and wonder. The terms awe and wonder are often used interchangeably in the literature to describe the sense of admiration, amazement, humility, and respect that a person feels when they are confronted with a virtually inconceivable beauty or phenomenon. Keltner and Haidt (2003) state that the awe response is triggered when a certain stimulus exceeds the recipient’s usual boundaries of experience and the recipient is then forced to expand current mental structures to accommodate this special stimulus. They also mention that awe produces certain physiological and emotional effects such as the feeling of goose bumps, a lump in the throat, and tears in the eyes. The behavioural response to awe, on the other hand, is very

subtle, with the recipient being very still and soaking up the awe(some) experience (Frijida, 1986) with open eyes and an open heart.

Being connected to nature and engaging with nature have often been associated with awe (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007; Güsewell & Ruch, 2012; Passmore & Holder, 2017). Awe is not restricted to nature stimuli, with religion and art also offering awe-evoking experiences. Schneider (2017) claims that awe can be associated with all religions worldwide, without identifying with any particular one. Schneider (2009) offers a phenomenologically based reflection stating that “awe is associated with an ongoing appreciation for life in all its vicissitudes, from the melancholic to the ecstatic, and from the deeply troubling and even mortifying to the poignant and profound” (p. 105). He continues to describe themes that became evident to him during awe experiences. These themes are listed as “an acute awareness of the passing nature of time, the attunement to wonder and surprise, the realisation of a cosmic context to everyday experiences, the perception of the intricacy and subtleties of life, the experience of being deeply, emotionally moved and the appreciation for solitude” (p. 105). These themes are important as they relate to the concepts of mindfulness and flow theory which will be discussed later in the section on deeper cognitive states in AOB. Silvia, Fayn, Nusbaum, and Beaty (2015) found that awe correlated significantly with the personality trait openness to experience. Chirico, Glaveanu, Cipresso, Riva, and Gaggioli (2018) have established that awe has a positive influence on creativity by expanding people’s mental structures. Could it be assumed here that those who see the world through an artistic lens are more prone to awe experiences? All of this has important implications for the way that AOB is categorised as a virtue of transcendence with associated strengths such as spirituality, hope, and gratitude or as a virtue of wisdom and knowledge with associated strengths such as curiosity, creativity, and love of learning. This categorisation issue will be

discussed towards the end of this article in the section that deals with a possible new conceptualisation and categorisation for AOB.

Abraham Maslow (1970) likens awe to a peak experience, with some individuals being more prone than others to these peak experiences. According to Maslow (1964), the awe experience transcends the ego, thus decreasing perceptions of self-importance and increasing one's willingness to be more loving and caring of others as well as embracing the world for all its beauty and goodness, despite its flaws. Recent research by Stellar et al. (2017) shows how experiences of awe lead to a reduced sense of self-importance, or 'self-diminishment', and an increased sense of humility, thus improving an individual's relationships with other people and the world as a whole.

Elevation. Diessner et al. (2006) describe elevation as an emotion, triggered by an act of moral beauty, that feels something like a combination between awe and admiration and which inspires pro-social actions. Elevation triggers a feeling of physiological warmth in the chest and an opening of one's heart to the key person who triggered the feeling as well as to humanity in general (Haidt, 2002). Along with the warm feeling in the chest, one may also experience tingling skin sensations and a lump in the throat (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). There is also some evidence to suggest that the hormone oxytocin, also known as the 'love hormone', may be released in women during elevation, thus inspiring pro-social and loving tendencies (Silvers & Haidt, 2008). Elevation has been likened to gratitude in that one feels a sense of fondness for the person responsible for causing the feeling of elevation or gratitude, yet the associated pro-social actions related to elevation, inspiring one to be a better person (similar to that of the moral example set) is what sets elevation apart (Haidt, 2002).

Appreciation of moral beauty is dependent upon both the appraisal of the morally good situation as well as the accompanying emotional response. The emotional response (elevation) is important because individuals can observe acts of moral goodness without any

desire to improve the self and become more concerned for the welfare of others. Diessner et al. (2006) maintain that emotional reaction to the observed moral goodness and the motivational element for moral action is the difference between moral goodness and moral beauty. While elevation is mostly associated with moral beauty, it can also be associated with artistic and, particularly, natural beauty. Murdoch (1970) spoke about the moral significance of ‘unselfing’ and added that engaging with natural and artistic beauty provided the means to take the focus off the self. Elevation is one of the ‘unselfing’ emotions (Haidt, 2003). Algoe and Haidt (2009) refer here to the ‘other praising emotions’ that arise from the moral actions of other people invoking feelings of elevation, admiration, and gratitude. While elevation and gratitude both share positive affect for the elicitor of the emotion, elevation goes a step further by inspiring one to be a better person (Haidt, 2002). Individuals who experience the moral emotion of elevation have much greater likelihood of striving for moral excellence and serving the needs of others (Pohling & Diessner, 2016). Passmore and Holder (2017) noticed that a nature-based intervention produced feelings among the participants that were related to elevation. While this nature-based study does not make mention of the exact quality of these feelings other than that they were feelings related to elevation, it seems likely that gratitude and a desire to be a better person may have been involved. “I do know that when I am surfing and engaging with the natural beauty of the ocean that I tend to feel a deep sense of connectedness, gratitude, and longing for the well-being of humanity and the earth” (reflection by the first author).

Happiness and well-being. Zabihian and Diessner (2016) found that artists displayed significantly greater levels of the trait happiness than non-artists, maintaining that “the creation of art brings happiness to one’s soul” (p. 7). Csikszentmihalyi (1991) discovered that artists often experience flow, with flow being related to happiness (Myers & Diener, 1995). The relationship between flow and AOB will be discussed in the section on deeper cognitive

states in AOB.

Passmore and Holder (2017) found that research participants who were exposed to an intervention in nature (to assess its effect on well-being) discovered increased levels of positive emotions after the intervention, feelings of ‘elevation’ and connectedness with a greater desire to act pro-socially. The increases in well-being that they found were not associated with an increased amount of time spent in nature; rather participants were instructed to focus on aspects of nature that they see on most days, but do not really notice. The adage ‘while reaching for the stars, don’t forget the flowers at your feet’ rings true in this instance. This finding bears semblance to the concept of mindfulness which will also be discussed in the section on deeper cognitive states in AOB. A study by Howell, Dopko, Passmore, and Buro (2011) showed that being connected with nature enhanced only the eudaimonic aspects of well-being, with significant correlations established between psychological well-being and nature connectedness, and between social well-being and nature connectedness. Emotional well-being, the more hedonic aspect of well-being, did not produce significant correlations. This suggests that appreciating natural beauty may add meaning and purpose to life, which is a primary goal of the positive psychology movement.

Nature has been associated with eudaimonic well-being (Capaldi, Passmore, Nisbet, Zelenski, & Dopko, 2015), with the more natural or wilder environments being associated with higher levels of eudaimonic well-being (Hinds & Sparks, 2011). Nature is also seen as adding meaning to people’s lives (Note, 2009), which may contribute to the assertion made by Martinez-Marti et al. (2016) that AOB may be related to a more permanent type of well-being. The relationship between meaning in life (and other existential issues) and AOB will therefore be discussed next.

Existential issues in AOB

Transcendence and the small self. Maslow (1971) describes transcendence as “the

very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos” (p. 269). Maslow adjusted his hierarchy of needs pyramid in the latter years of his life, which originally saw self-actualisation as the highest of human needs, to include the concept of self-transcendence as the highest sense of attainment (Messerly, 2017). Self-actualisation is about reaching one’s personal potential, while self-transcendence is about sacrificing personal needs and aspirations for others and something greater than the self.

Frankl (1984), the renowned author of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, maintained that self-actualisation is only possible as a by-product of self-transcendence. It seems that appreciation is not really possible without at least some degree of self-transcendence. Haidt and Keltner (2004) claim that appreciation is “emotional responsiveness, the tendency to experience at least subtle self-transcendent emotions such as awe, admiration, and elevation” (p. 539).

Diessner et al. (2008) noticed that as individuals increased their engagement with beauty, their sense of gratitude, self-transcendence, and overall satisfaction with life also increased. Martinez-Marti et al. (2016) distinguished between beauty, moral excellence, and non-moral excellence and found that those who scored high on the beauty ratings were likely to experience more self-transcendence than those who scored high on the moral excellence ratings. It serves to remind at this stage that AOB is one of the character strengths assigned to the overarching virtue of transcendence. It is a question of whether natural, artistic, and moral beauty are all to the same extent at home within this virtue.

Passmore and Howell (2014), elaborating on the findings of Dambrun and Ricard (2011), speak about self-transcendence as an expanded sense of self as it relates to harmony and connectedness between the self and the natural environment. This is a unique view as transcendence is most often described as the small or diminished self and not an expanded

self. Recent studies by both Stellar et al. (2017) and Bai et al. (2017) speak of the relationship between a small or diminished sense of self and humility and collective engagement, respectively. Both studies involved the concept of awe as a transcendent quality. Diessner et al. (2013) make mention of several transcendent traits that are associated with moral beauty, such as hope, gratitude, spirituality, love, forgiveness, and empathy. These traits also identified more strongly with moral beauty than the other kinds of beauty. Despite moral beauty seemingly ahead in the transcendence stakes, Diessner et al. (2013) still state: “It appears engagement with any kind of beauty, including moral beauty, lifts us out of ourselves, and assists us to transcend ourselves” (p. 148). They also mention that increased time spent engaging with beauty would lead to an increased sense of transcendence. It may be that there are specific transcendent qualities for moral beauty and others for natural and artistic beauty. While not within the scope of this study, this points towards a reconceptualisation and classification of not only AOB as a character strength, but also of the virtue structure itself.

Meaning and connectedness. Frankl (1984) made the assertion that self-transcendence involves a deep sense of meaning and connectedness with humanity and the world. Feelings of connection, meaning, and wonder are the most common non-religious themes permeating people’s descriptions of spiritual experiences (Preston & Shin, 2017). Spending time in nature (Terhaar, 2009) and noticing nature (Passmore & Holder, 2017) have both been associated with a heightened sense of connection. Nature also plays a fundamental role in having a sense of meaning in life (Passmore & Howell, 2014). Kalnin (2008) writes that “there are times when the beauty and tranquillity of natural places allow us to see the world and our part in it from a completely different perspective” (p. 15). The idea of an altered perspective is one of the deeper themes within the literature on AOB as it relates to finding meaning. Cohen, Gruber, and Keltner (2010) mention that awe experiences, which

are often associated with natural beauty, all emit the prominent theme of finding new meaning in life. Adler (2015), in an article titled ‘Finding beauty in a fractured world’, speaks about using serendipity to find beauty in unfavourable situations.

Regarding the debate between beauty and meaning, Victor Frankl was able to find beauty in the harshest of environments while imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Frankl (1984) noticed that, as the prisoners’ inner worlds intensified, they began to see the beauty in nature and art as never before.

If someone had seen our faces on the journey from Auschwitz to a Bavarian camp as we beheld the mountains of Salzburg with their summits glowing in the sunset, through the little barred windows of the prison carriage, he would never have believed that those were the faces of men who had given up all hope of life and liberty. Despite that factor-or maybe because of it-we were carried away by nature's beauty, which we had missed for so long... Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, 'How beautiful the world could be!'" (p. 58)

Danto (2003) concurs that beauty is an essential rather than optional condition for life. However, one still needs to proceed with caution when making assumptions about the relation between beauty and living a meaningfully good life. Diessner et al. (2006) contend, for example, that many of the powers behind the Nazi regime were well acquainted with visual art and literature.

Güsewell (2013) mentions that philosophers have been grappling for centuries with the mysteries that lie behind beauty, truth, and goodness. Not being able to truly

conceptualise beauty is part of its magical quality that always escapes those who search to understand it. Adler (2015) speaks of artistic creations as being one of life's most beautiful mysteries. The sense of mystery and magic that encapsulates beauty is another one of the deeper and largely unexplored themes in this field of study. "I can remember vividly the sense of magic and mystery I felt hearing the classical guitar for the first time. The yearning to gain access to this magic has led to a lifetime of studying, performing, and teaching the art of classical guitar playing. The yearning to access more of its beauty and magic is stronger than it was all those years ago" (reflection by the first author).

Deeper cognitive states in AOB

Thus far, the discussion around AOB has centred mostly on emotional responses to beauty. Appreciation certainly has a strong cognitive component, albeit that the emotional and cognitive elements are often closely related. In this section, we discuss the relationship between the deeper cognitive states of savouring, absorption, mindfulness, and flow with AOB. It seems as though these states may be more associated with natural and artistic beauty than moral beauty. The cognitive aspect involved here is what may distinguish between the different types of beauty. This categorisation issue will be discussed in the next section that deals with a possible new conceptualisation and categorisation for AOB.

Savouring. Diessner et al. (2017) took an educational approach to beauty and created an undergraduate course called 'The psychology of beauty'. The course involves theoretical training in the skills of savouring, absorption, and mindfulness, as well as the practical acquisition of these skills during beauty-related excursions.

Bryant and Veroff (2007) describe savouring as a method whereby people become more aware and appreciative of positive experiences in their life. Savouring the moment is about focusing on a positive experience while it is happening to prolong, intensify, and broaden positive emotions in the present (Hurley & Kwon, 2011). Savouring shares strong

similarities with the concept of mindfulness, yet Hurley and Kwon (2011) point out that, while both interventions focus on present experiences, savouring focuses only on positive emotions with mindfulness concerning the acceptance of all emotions. Artistic and particularly natural beauty present endless opportunities for savouring its magnificence, just as Victor Frankl and fellow prisoners savoured the beauty of the mountains and sky as described earlier.

Absorption. Seligman, Park, and Steen (2004) state that there are two roads to happiness. One is by increasing positive emotions and the other is by pursuing gratifications. While savouring is focused more on increasing positive emotions, absorption is the quality associated with pursuing gratifications. Seligman et al. (2004) describe the key factor behind pursuing gratifications as the all-absorbing nature of total involvement in the task at hand that also requires the use of character skills such as AOB.

Diessner et al. (2017) describe absorption as complete engagement with something and focusing only on that which one is completely absorbed in at the time. They also state that absorption is closely related to the concept of flow whereby the person in flow is at one with what they are doing and lose perception of time and awareness of self. In this way, absorption is also very similar to self-transcendence (Martinez-Marti et al., 2016) and awe experiences (Güsewell & Ruch, 2013). Martinez-Marti et al. (2014) claim that artistic beauty is best characterised by the state of absorption. While they do not see the similarities between absorption on the one hand and savouring and mindfulness on the other due to the advanced cognitions inherent in the latter, they still make the assumption that being absorbed in artistic beauty may also increase levels of mindfulness and savouring. A positive correlation exists between absorption and music appreciation (Rhodes, David, & Combs, 1988) and visual art (Combs, Black, O'Donnell, & Pope, 1988). Unlike savouring, being totally absorbed in something is not always accompanied by positive emotions (Seligman et al., 2004). It may

be, for example, that one is totally absorbed while listening to music that is both sad and beautiful at the same time. In other words, it is also possible to cry ‘tears of beauty’.

Mindfulness. While absorption is closely related to artistic beauty, it could be argued that mindfulness is closely related to natural beauty. Kabat-Zinn (2003) describes the practice of mindfulness as embracing two important features: having a non-judgmental awareness and a focus on the present moment. In the context of AOB, this means experiencing beauty exactly as it is perceived at that moment in the perceiver’s mind and heart, without such a person making any judgements on the beauty value of what is being seen (Diessner et al., 2017). What mindfulness brings to AOB more than anything else is a new sense of awareness. We revert back to a personal reflection quoted earlier in this paper by Adler (2015) which states: “my eyes rewarded me by introducing me to the beauty that was worth seeing in my world, to what had been there all along, hidden in plain view” (p. 484). It is virtually impossible to see beauty when we are operating on what mindfulness practitioners call ‘autopilot’. The fresh awareness that mindfulness brings is essential for AOB. Niemiec, Rashid, and Spinella (2012) found that when people practiced mindful walking they began to “notice beauty in places they had previously overlooked” (p. 247). “I have noticed that the self-improvised practice of mindful swimming produces an almost unimaginable array of beauty stimuli upon which to feast” (reflection by the first author).

A study that assessed the relationship between nature connectedness and mindfulness produced mixed results, but did, however, establish that it is the increased awareness of experiencing nature that correlates with nature connectedness (Howell et al., 2011). Their findings further showed that being connected with nature enhanced only the eudaimonic aspects of well-being. This seems to be in line with what Seligman et al. (2004) mentioned about the path to happiness being through gratifications described earlier. Mindfulness and its relationship with the beauty in nature is one path to eudaimonic well-being.

Flow. If one can imagine Ludwig van Beethoven, almost completely deaf, with his ear pressed firmly to the wood of the piano, at one with his art, instinctively guiding his fingers, as if without effort, into the manifestation of the hauntingly beautiful ‘Moonlight Sonata’, then we can understand what it means to experience flow.

Csikszentmihalyi (2014) describes a sense of control as one of the most important features of the flow experience. He goes on to state that this is achieved by reducing the stimulus field to allow for total absorption and full attention to the task at hand. Maslow (1971) was of similar thinking when he described a “narrowing of the consciousness” (p. 63) and “giving up the past and the future” (p. 65) so that potentially obtrusive stimuli can be kept out of attention. Flow, therefore, has a self-transcendent-like quality with the person in flow losing perception of time and awareness of self. Being in flow thus relates to experiences of awe and the concept of absorption that was discussed above.

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) note the balance between the level of challenge and competence in a particular skill that is necessary to achieve flow. If a person lacks the skills to meet the demands of a situation, they will experience anxiety. If a person has the necessary skills but is underchallenged, boredom will ensue. Neither states of anxiety nor boredom facilitate flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) discovered that artists often experience flow, to which he attributed the intrinsic happiness that the artistic pursuit brought to the artist, or as Zabihian and Diessner (2016) stated: “the creation of art brings happiness to one’s soul” (p. 7). Seligman et al. (2004) mention the role that our character strengths play in the pursuit of gratifications. Finding flow in the pursuit of aesthetic gratification is enabled, then, by AOB as a character strength. The experience of flow in aesthetic gratifications will inspire further engagement with beauty. An increase in the level of challenge and acquisition of new skills is necessary to ensure continued flow experiences (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). A

pianist, for example, is inspired to play a more moving and mature piece, while a bird watcher goes in search of new species, thus making AOB an ongoing pursuit. Finding flow in beauty is also part of the mystery and magic of beauty alluded to earlier.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) highlights perhaps the most pertinent feature of the flow experience while describing what is known as the autotelic personality. He describes it by saying that such a person “generally does things for their own sake, rather than in order to achieve some later external reward” (1997, p. 117). He goes on to describe the autotelic personality as somebody who enjoys life and has an active curiosity and interest in life. Curiosity and AOB (artistic and natural beauty) seem to have much in common.

Towards a New Conceptualisation and Categorisation of AOB

Not only did Peterson and Seligman (2004) state that their classification of virtues and character strengths was still a work in progress but they also claimed that research on the different character strengths had been “conducted in relative isolation from one another”, which necessitates a look at the “joint and interactive effects of character strengths” (p. 641).

The final theme in this narrative review is on the interactive links between AOB and the cognitive strengths (curiosity, creativity, and love of learning). While AOB certainly shares associations with other strengths and traits already mentioned in the literature (e.g., hope, gratitude, and humility), it is the association with the cognitive strengths that are of interest here. It is expected that AOB would be related to hope and gratitude as they are all classified under the overarching virtue of transcendence. Showing increased strengths of AOB and love of learning aids effective recovery from psychological disorders and increases life satisfaction among depressed persons. These were the only two strengths found to have such effects (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006). Chirico et al. (2018) found that, by inducing awe, which is associated with AOB as previously discussed, levels of creativity were

increased. They hypothesised that, due to both the cognitive appraisal element and emotional nature of awe, emotion could impact creativity.

The question is whether AOB may in fact be better classified as a cognitive strength under the virtue of wisdom and knowledge. McGrath's factor analytic study (2014) has shown that the VIA does not resolve into factors representing the original six virtues suggested by Peterson and Seligman (2004), but rather into three major factors or virtues, which he has labelled Inquisitiveness, Caring, and Self-Control. The VIA strengths that are contained within the factor of Inquisitiveness are: Curiosity, Love of Learning, Creativity, Perspective, and AOB. McGrath (2014) also summarised seven previous studies that explored the structure of the VIA classification of strengths. A close analysis of this summary of studies shows that three of the seven studies link beauty with a transcendent factor while another three studies link beauty with an intellectual or cognitive factor. It appears that AOB has both a strong emotional and cognitive component, thus casting doubt on its best associated virtue.

Ruch and Proyer (2015) expanded on the factor analysis findings by performing conceptual analysis on the structure of the VIA. Some of their findings relevant to this review showed that curiosity, love of learning, creativity, humour, zest, and AOB produced the lowest prototypical ratings. This means that these strengths may be incorrectly assigned to a virtue. This is a very interesting finding as it links with a major hypothesis of this study that AOB may be better classified with certain cognitive strengths, most notably with curiosity. Ruch and Proyer (2015) proposed adjusting the classification (by reallocating strengths and allowing strengths to be included under more than one virtue) or changing the definition of certain strengths so that they typify only one virtue. It could be proposed here that AOB join cognitive strengths such as curiosity and love of learning under a new or combined virtue. This is where the distinction between moral and non-moral (artistic and natural) beauty may

be important. Haidt and Keltner (2004) wondered if it made sense that the different kinds of beauty were grouped together. Diessner et al. (2008) showed that, while the different types of beauty were related, they were also distinct from one another, thus providing empirical evidence for the multi-dimensional nature of appreciation. Riddle and Michel-Riddle (2007) established that the highest-ranked character strengths among art therapists and art therapy students were curiosity and AOB.

Güsewell and Ruch (2012) speak of the intellectual strengths which include curiosity, love of learning, and creativity as an “openness to the world and to anything new or unexpected” (p. 231). AOB, particularly from an artistic perspective, has been associated with openness to experience. Both curiosity and AOB are centred on the theme of wonder as in curiosity, a person is fuelled by the wonders that await and in AOB, a person is filled with a sense of wonder or amazement.

It may be useful now to relook at the opening quote used in this article.

Live the next sixty seconds as if your whole life depended on them, with a sense of urgency and excitement, or as if you had just arrived in a foreign land where there is nothing expected, hackneyed, or taken for granted. This is a journey into life’s true possibility, freshness, mystery, wonder, and novelty. After all, who knows what amazing things may happen in the next minute? (Altman, 2011, p. 1).

In conclusion, one could argue that a multi-directional positive feedback cycle exists between curiosity, love of learning, creativity, and AOB (natural and artistic), which also involves the deeper cognitive states of absorption, mindfulness, and flow. Curiosity fuels AOB and love of learning, with the latter reigniting heightened curiosity and continued AOB experiences which are associated with awe experiences; which have, in turn, been associated with creativity. This proposed interaction of strengths is reliant upon the deeper cognitive

states of absorption, mindfulness, and flow. A heightened level of these cognitive states is also proposed to have an increased influence on the positive feedback cycle as a whole. It is hoped as per the aim of this narrative review that a small part of the earthworks has been done in this largely unexplored field on which future empirical studies may now stand.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Further Research

Thematic analysis of the literature sample revealed five dominant themes that were able to shed some light on the research questions. Firstly, finding beauty in the world can be conceptualised as either a moral or a non-moral endeavour. While the major sources of beauty (natural, artistic, and moral) are seen as both related and distinct concepts, there are many similarities between natural and artistic beauty not found in moral beauty. The associated emotional states (awe and elevation) and existential issues (transcendence, meaning, and connectedness) as the second and third themes, respectively, also distinguished between moral and non-moral beauty. Fourthly, the deeper cognitive states (savouring, absorption, mindfulness, and flow) showed a closer association with natural and artistic beauty than moral beauty. A different level of cognitive awareness and perspective may be required to appreciate natural and artistic beauty.

Finally, a new categorisation for AOB was suggested on the basis of the associations found between AOB and the strengths of wisdom and knowledge, particularly with that of curiosity. The concept of flow was also linked with an active interest and curiosity in life, in effect then linking flow with AOB. A theoretical model hypothesising the interaction between AOB, the strengths of wisdom and knowledge, and the deeper cognitive states was also suggested, thus highlighting an avenue for further research. A combination of so-called character strengths may be required to fully appreciate beauty in the world. Peterson and Seligman (2004) state that the research on the different character strengths has been “conducted in relative isolation from one another”, which necessitates a look at the “joint and

interactive effects of character strengths” (p. 641). Perhaps, then, appreciation of beauty as a character strength is misplaced and misunderstood when it is seen as an isolated strength.

Seeing the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB through a new lens may also have possible benefits for practitioners and lay people alike. AOB is a fairly vague concept, yet a symbiotic relationship and possible new categorisation between AOB and curiosity may set new horizons of understanding and intervention. Appreciation of moral goodness and physical beauty appear to be distinct strengths that ought to be categorised as such in the VIA classification of strengths.

A limiting factor in the present study was the scarcity of literature on AOB as a whole, particularly from a classification stance. Empirical studies in various cultural contexts are lacking. Diessner et al. (2016) state most aptly that “beauty is in the eye of the culture” (p. 31). They maintain that cultural systems create the standard of beauty that everyone in that culture is socialised into adopting. All sense of beauty is therefore in relation to a cultural system, making it irrational to say one culture or one system is better than another. Harmony and unity in diversity are considered universal perspectives on beauty (Diessner et al., 2016). However, without a rich account of culture, we lack both unity in diversity and harmony of understanding. Rich qualitative data generated from the voices of diverse cultures would create a more unified understanding of AOB.

Therefore, recommendations for future research include firstly, exploration of individual character strengths in diverse cultural contexts, and secondly, further exploration of individual character strengths such as AOB in combination with others, and implications thereof for reconsidering the classification of virtue clusters themselves. Thirdly, taking a stance of AOB as part of the cognitive wisdom cluster can inform strategies to enhance well-being in interventions for evaluation in empirical studies.

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SECTION 3

SUMMARY, CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND REFLECTION

Summary

An initial review of the literature, in conjunction with questions that probed the nature and classification of appreciation of beauty (AOB), culminated in the current study's focus on the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB as a character strength. A research proposal that stipulated the need for such research, the chosen methodology, ethical considerations, possible outcomes, and contributions was approved by a scientific (AUTHeR) and ethical (HREC) committee.

The study commenced with a comprehensive review of the literature that aimed to interrogate the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB as a character strength. A comprehensive narrative review was deemed the best approach with which to explore this largely unexplored field of study. Thematic analysis of the selected literature revealed five categories, namely finding beauty, associated emotional states, deeper cognitive states, existential issues, and relations with other character strengths. These categories were further analysed for emerging patterns that assisted in answering the specific research questions.

A distinction emerged between moral and non-moral (natural and artistic) beauty. There is a cognitive or perceptive quality to 'seeing' the world in an 'artistic' way that relates more to natural and artistic beauty than moral beauty. Similarities were identified between appreciation of natural and artistic beauty and the strengths of curiosity, love of learning, and creativity which are classified under the wisdom virtue cluster. It was concluded that appreciation of natural and artistic beauty joins cognitive strengths such as curiosity and love of learning under the wisdom virtue rather than the transcendence virtue, and that new virtue clusters also be considered with other combinations of character strengths.

Considerations for Practice

Zabihian and Diessner (2016) assert that even though it seems as if AOB is merely one of the 24 character strengths, it actually deserves a higher standing; being one of the three foundational virtues of civilisation: truth, beauty, and goodness. Danto (2003) believes that beauty is an absolute necessity for a flourishing and meaningful life. Despite all its benefits, beauty seems to be ignored by mental health practitioners and the general public alike (Howell, Diessner, & Robinson, 2017). To the best of our knowledge, only four studies have been published that focus on interventions to increase AOB. Such interventions include writing weekly beauty logs (Diessner, Rust, Solom, Frost, & Parsons, 2006), taking beauty walks in nature (Diessner, Woodward, Stacy, & Mobasher, 2015), an online AOB intervention (Martinez-Marti, Avia, & Hernandez-Lloreda, 2014), and an undergraduate psychology of beauty course (Diessner, Kirk, Guenther, Pohling, & Mobasher, 2017). With the exception of beauty walks, these interventions focus on an overall level of sensitivity and engagement with both moral and non-moral (natural and artistic) forms of beauty. The confusion and lack of understanding surrounding the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB may be a cause for the supposed lack of interest in this character strength. Seeing the conceptualisation and categorisation of AOB through a new lens, with natural and artistic beauty being part of the wisdom virtue, may set new horizons of understanding and intervention. The role of the arts and humanities is of great importance in the sculpting of this new lens through which to appreciate beauty (cf. Ryff, 2017).

The cognitive or perceptive quality to seeing the world in an artistic way relates both to natural and artistic beauty, as well as the other wisdom-related strengths such as curiosity, love of learning, and creativity. Ryff (2017) maintained that a deeper appreciation is needed for the role that the arts play in stimulating eudaimonic well-being throughout society. Promoting eudaimonic well-being experiences has been linked with full recovery from

mental health problems (Fava, Ruini, & Belaise, 2007; Ruini & Fava 2012), lower incidence of psychological distress, and increased personal growth among adolescents (Ruini et al., 2009), as well as reduced physical, depressive, and sleep problems and overall improved well-being and life satisfaction among older age groups (Friedman et al., 2015). In education, there is an increased interest in how music, visual arts, literature, and drama promote well-being (Lomas 2016). A recent claim among educators is that the promotion of well-being should be the main objective of higher education (Harward, 2016). The educational curriculum should then involve more activities for the appreciation of artistic beauty. Appreciative activities can be inspired by personal curiosity, resulting in a willingness to learn more (love of learning), with a possible increase in creativity resulting from a curiosity-based learning style. Along with the arts, perhaps nature-based or outdoor education facilities should also be included.

Increasing time spent in nature, or even merely noticing nature, should be used more often in both educational and clinical settings. Passmore and Holder (2017) found that being exposed to an intervention in nature increased levels of positive emotions, with nature connectedness enhancing only the eudaimonic aspects of well-being. This is in line with Ryff's (2017) recommendation to use the arts to enhance eudemonic well-being. Employing a combination of both natural and artistic beauty should then boost levels of eudaimonic well-being.

The simple act of walking barefoot on the grass (in a mindful way) allows connectedness with nature and thus enhanced eudemonic well-being. Blowing soap bubbles outdoors and watching them float away on a sunny and windless day reveals a multitude of changing shapes and colours for the appreciative eye, inspiring further engagement, creativity, and artistic and learning opportunities. In this way, the appreciation of natural and artistic beauty is inextricably linked, with one not being possible without the existence of the

other. Looking for shells on the seashore is another example of how an incredibly simple appreciative activity inspires the other wisdom-related strengths and deeper cognitive states. Focusing on the artistic beauty inherent in the small details of a shell leads to an outward appreciation of natural beauty as seen in the sea and sky (sights, sounds, and sensations) and a sense of connectedness with the world.

Clifton et al. (2018, p. 2) explained that a set of environmental beliefs or “primal world beliefs” are responsible for our life experiences. They speak of three primal world beliefs that relate to the way that we see the world as being “safe, enticing, and alive”. The relationship between natural and artistic beauty (as a component of the wisdom-related strengths) and the primal belief of the world being enticing is of relevance here, with Clifton et al. (2018) stating:

Those high on enticing inhabit an irresistibly fascinating reality. They know treasure is around every corner, in every person, under every rock, and beauty permeates all. Thus, life is a gift, boredom a misinformed lifestyle choice, and exploration and appreciation is the only rational way to live. (p. 16)

The empirical relationship between this primal world belief and AOB (as a component of the wisdom cluster) would make for some fascinating research possibilities and implications for practice within the field of positive psychology.

Reflection

Working as a registered counsellor in an educational setting has afforded me great opportunities for exploring and observing the inherent need and therapeutic effects of appreciating beauty. I have realised that interventions aimed to increase well-being are best designed around a person’s sense of curiosity. Paints, clay, musical instruments, hammers and nails, mixing bowls and spoons, bats and balls, balloons and bubbles, indoors and outdoors, the child (in this case) will show us where their sense of curiosity lies. The secret is

in allowing the journey to unfold, and the stream of consciousness to flow. The result is very often pure alchemy; a little piece of 'gold' is created, seen, or experienced, where none previously existed. 'Finding the gold' is inspired by curiosity, which leads to inspired learning and creative opportunities. It is always through engaging, appreciating and noticing beauty in some way that the process of alchemy unfolds.

In a recent outdoors session, a child was holding a water balloon in the direction of the sun, marvelling at the kaleidoscope-type shapes and colours that resulted from each turn or squeeze of the balloon, when he suddenly exclaimed, "Wow, the sky is so beautiful today!" This child's curiosity (filling a balloon with water) led to an appreciation of artistic (kaleidoscope images) and natural (sky) beauty which inspired creative finger painting in the following session. The challenge is now for us as adults to also adopt a sense of playful curiosity and innocent appreciation of beauty, as a root to inspired learning and creative thinking. In other words, we need to 'see' beauty again through the eyes of a child.

As in the example above of the boy's water balloon producing a kaleidoscope of changing colours and patterns, the research process for me produced a kaleidoscope of changing emotions and learning experiences. It was challenging, enlightening, humbling, inspiring, frustrating, and hugely rewarding. Probably the greatest insight for me lay in the difference between taking and creating knowledge. I was given a glimpse of what it means to create scientific knowledge, the critical thinking and scientific rigour expected; and this for me was an incredibly humbling experience.

A wise person asked me recently if I was aware that there is such a thing as beauty in science? The words of Einstein provided me with an answer to this question when he said:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead—his

eyes are closed. To know what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty. (“Einstein Quotes”, n. d.)

I am in awe and indebted to the wise counsel of those who accompanied me on this journey and opened my eyes to the mystery and beauty of science.

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