WHEN WEST MEETS MIDDLE EAST: THE MISSING LINK IN VALUES EVOLUTION

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Jessica Bellingham

Master of International Business, Deakin University
Master of International Relations, Deakin University

Graduate School of Business and Law
College of Business
RMIT University

January 2018
DECLARATION

I certify that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Jessica Bellingham

January 2018
PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS

Publications


Manuscript under Review


Research Awards

2013—International Conference Best Paper Award at the Second International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences

2014—RMIT Business Research Excellence Award for Best Conference Paper by a Higher Degree Research Candidate

2014—Graduate Women Victoria: William and Elizabeth Fisher Scholarship

2015—RMIT Global Business Innovation Scholarship
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I extend my deep gratitude to my primary supervisor, Dr Paul Gibson, for his unwavering support, guidance, encouragement, inspiration and mentorship throughout my doctoral research. He led me to develop insight, and offered invaluable opportunities for my professional development.

I thank my second supervisor Dr Douglas Thomson for his support in the early stages of my candidature.

I acknowledge the editorial assistance provided by Dr Sheila Cameron.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

I extend thanks to my colleagues at RMIT’s Graduate School of Business and Law for their support and encouragement during my PhD candidature.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the researcher participants and organisations whose involvement made conducting this research possible.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks are offered to my other half and best friend Fayez and my children; Hussayn, Lailah and Zaid for their endless support, encouragement, patience and understanding throughout this challenging journey.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my three children; Hussayn, Lailah and Zaid. My hope is that it shows you that as long as you are passionate, determine and resilient you can achieve anything that you desire in life. I also hope that I have encouraged you to develop an ideal possible self-construct to strive for your dreams and be the best possible you.
Table of Contents

DECLARATION 2

PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4

DEDICATION 5

FIGURES 14

ABSTRACT 16

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 18

1.1 INTRODUCTION 18

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCH 21

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE 23

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 26

1.5 RESEARCH FOCUS 27

1.5.1 THE MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURAL CONTEXT 28

1.5.2 THE CROSSVERGENT SITUATION 29

1.5.3 THE MEANING OF THE CROSSVERGENT SITUATION 31

1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND FRAMEWORK 32

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 34

1.8 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH, FINDINGS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS 37

1.9 THESIS STRUCTURE 42

1.10 THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE GULF STATES 44

1.11 CULTURE 49

1.12 ORIGINS OF THE SIX GULF STATES 50
3.3.1 THE HOFSTEDE MODEL
3.3.2 THE SCHWARTZ MODEL
3.3.3 GLOBE PROJECT FRAMEWORK
3.3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO STUDYING CULTURE
3.4 THE DYNAMIC CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH
3.4.1 ACCESSIBILITY
3.4.2 APPLICABILITY
3.4.3 PERFECTLY OR IMPERFECTLY SHARED
3.4.4 CULTURAL STANCES
3.4.5 BICULTURAL-IDENTITY INTEGRATION
3.5 STATIC OR DYNAMIC?
3.5.1 CULTURAL CHANGE
3.5.2 CONVERGENCE THEORY
3.5.3 DIVERGENCE THEORY
3.5.4 CROSSVERGENCE THEORY
3.6 CONCEPTUALISING CULTURE FOR THIS RESEARCH
3.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
3.8 THE TYPOLOGY DEVELOPED BASED ON THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION
4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE: ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY
4.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
4.4 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY
4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
4.5.1 ETHNOGRAPHY
4.5.2 INTERPRETIVE ETHNOGRAPHY
4.6 METHOD
4.6.1 RESEARCH LOCATION—CASE STUDY
4.6.2 PARTICIPANTS
4.6.3 SAMPLE SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT METHOD
4.7 ETHICAL ISSUES
4.8 DATA COLLECTION 151
4.8.1 Interview Protocol 152
4.8.1.1 Part One—General Cultural Environment 153
4.8.1.2 Part Two—General Workplace Environment 154
4.8.1.3 Part Three—Critical-incident Technique 154
4.8.1.4 Part Four—Laddering Technique 156
4.8.2 Interview Details 157

4.9 Qualitative Data Analysis 158
4.9.1 Overview of the Data-analysis Process 158
4.9.2 Cognitive Maps 160
4.9.3 Interpretation of Meaning: a Hermeneutical Approach 161

4.10 Reflexivity of the Researcher’s Assumptions and Practice 165

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS 167

5.1 Introduction 167
5.2 Data Analysis 168
5.3 Familiarisation with the Data 169
5.4 Code and Theme Development 170
5.4.1 First-order Level of Analysis 171
5.4.2 Second-order Level of Analysis 172
5.4.3 Semantic or Latent Themes 174
5.5 Data Structure Development 174
5.6 Interpretation 175
5.7 Developing Explanatory Frameworks, Propositions and Models 180
5.8 Validity 181
5.9 Reliability 183
5.9 Generalizability and Transferability 185
5.10 Analysis 189
5.10.1 Initial Findings 204

CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 208

6.1 Introduction 208
6.2 Profile Types 210
7.8 A BICULTURAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER 298

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION 301

8.1 INTRODUCTION 301
8.1 VALUES-EVOLUTION THEORY 303
8.2 MISSING LINK MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS 304
8.3 PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION 310
8.4 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION 312

8.4.1 CONTRIBUTION TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF THE SELF-CONCEPT IN THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CULTURAL VALUES AND WORKPLACE ATTITUDES 312
8.4.2 CONTRIBUTION TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ‘HOW’ OF VALUES-EVOLUTION THEORY 313

8.4 THESIS DISCUSSION AND OVERVIEW 313
8.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH 315
8.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS 316

REFERENCES 318

APPENDICES 347

APPENDIX A: INITIAL INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW 347

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW/ PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM 348

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS 351

APPENDIX D: ETHICS APPROVAL 352

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDELINES 353

APPENDIX F: ARABIC INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW/ PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM 356

356
APPENDIX G: ARABIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS
TABLES

Table 2.1: Findings of Organisational Behaviour Research across Cultural Orientations ..... 88

Table 3.1: Similarities of Major Cultural-values Dimensions Framework.......................... 105

Table 3.2: Cultural Profiles of Omani Employees’ Attitudes Towards the Workplace ....... 136

Table 5.1 Themes and illustrative comments ................................................................. 193

Table 5.2 Themes and illustrative comments ................................................................. 199
FIGURES

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................. 6

Figure 1.1: Explanatory Conceptual Framework .................................................................................. 25

Figure 1.3: The Mediating Role of Culture .......................................................................................... 28

Figure 1.4: Research-design Framework ............................................................................................... 33

Figure 1.5 (a): The Ralston Crossvergence Model Part (a)—Influences on Values Formation and Evolution ....................................................................................................................................... 45

Figure 1.5 (b): The Ralston Crossvergence Model—Influences on Values Formation and Evolution 46

Figure 1.6: Map of GCC ....................................................................................................................... 48

Figure 1.7: Dubai Then and Now .......................................................................................................... 62

Figure 1.8: Gulf State Influences upon Historical Values-formation—Crossvergence Model Part (a) 67

Figure 1.9: Gulf Influences for Potential Values Evolution—Crossvergence Model Part (b) ......... 68

Figure 2.1: How People Express Culture through Values ..................................................................... 85

Figure 2.2: Cultural Self-Representation ............................................................................................... 91

Figure 3.1: Cultural Continuum ............................................................................................................. 131

Figure 3.2: Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................... 133

Figure 3.3: Cultural Profiles of Omani Employees’ Attitudes Towards the Workplace ................. 135

Figure 4.1: An Overview of the Methodological Approach for this Research ..................................... 139

Figure 4.2: Overview of the Interview Protocol Process ..................................................................... 153

Figure 5.1 Data Structure .................................................................................................................... 206

Figure 6.1: Omani Culturally Informed Attitude Profile Types towards Western Management Practices ...................................................................................................................................... 210

Figure 6.2: Empirically Informed Framework ....................................................................................... 218

Figure 6.3: Cognitive Map of Nasib .................................................................................................... 229

Figure 6.4: Cognitive Map of Almakanuh alajitimaeih .................................................................... 232

Figure 6.5: Cognitive Map of Al’aman ............................................................................................... 235

Figure 6.6: Cognitive Map of Altathamun alajitimaei ..................................................................... 239

Figure 6.7: Explanatory Framework of Research Findings .................................................................. 256
Figure 8.1: Missing-link Model of Values-evolution ................................................................. 305
This research explores the relationship between the culture of the Arab Gulf State of Oman and Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace. A review of the organisational literature suggests that members of a traditional Middle Eastern culture, such as Oman’s, are likely to experience difficulty with Western management practices, due to the Western cultural values embedded in those practices. On the other hand, it is proposed in the literature that, given the region’s transitional stage of development, not all Gulf employees would necessarily resist management practices embedded with Western cultural values. A key objective of this research then is to explore the ways in which Arab Gulf employees are currently experiencing, and reacting to, organisational situations where traditional culture intersects in challenging ways with Western management practices.

An inductive qualitative research design and an interpretive ethnography methodology were employed by the researcher. Thirty-five semi-structured interviews with employees in Oman were conducted. All interviews were conducted away from the workplace, and an interview protocol was followed. Values-based data analysis and interpretation, in conjunction with cognitive mapping, was used to arrive at the findings.

An initial key finding was that the local cultural values, although rather traditional, are nevertheless informing positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace in a somewhat surprising way. The thesis then draws on the crossvergence account of values evolution, and on ‘possible self’ theory in conjunction with the qualitative data to explain why and when contemporary workplace practices which conflict with traditional sociocultural values will be accepted by employees, and when they will be rejected. A further key finding is that there has been a missing link, not previously understood and included, in values evolution. Brought to
the surface in this research as a discovery is the finding that cultural values which emphasise rules and duties can produce an ‘ought self’ which influences perception and behaviour. This finding demonstrates that researchers cannot rely upon a straightforwardly direct link between cultural values and employee attitudes.

The author acknowledges some key limitations of the study, including the relatively small sample. There is a discussion of how the richness of the interview material nevertheless could justify transferability of, and extrapolation from, the findings. The author suggests strategies for managers to frame the introduction of new workplace practices in ways that assist employees to see those practices as aligning with traditional sociocultural values.

This thesis makes a significant and original contribution to cross-cultural theory, particularly as it attempts to explain the processes of values evolution by providing an explanatory ‘missing link’ model of the values-evolution process. In this way, the study goes beyond previous research into Gulf States’ culture by thoroughly and deeply characterising that culture, and by uncovering and explaining its dynamic interactions with the self-concept and resultant attitudes toward the workplace.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first part of this chapter provides an overview and roadmap of this thesis, so that at every point throughout the eight chapters readers are aware of their location in relation to the thesis as a whole. The introduction begins by positioning the inquiry within the current literature and setting out the researcher’s motivation for the inquiry. The research is placed within the context of the influence of societal culture in the workplace, with a particular focus on the Arabian Gulf States of the Middle East. The primary research question and secondary questions are then presented. The research focus which has been designed to address the primary question and secondary questions is then outlined. Subsequently, setting the direction of the research from which the research aim and design framework follow. To position the reader’s expectations, this introduction then offers a preliminary account of the methodology, of which a comprehensive explanation is given in Chapter Four. The first part of this chapter concludes with a summary of the research approach, findings, and contributions, along with an outline of the thesis structure. In the second part of the introduction, the focus is on providing an historical and cultural background to the Arabian Gulf region.

As business around the world continues to increase in volume and activity, so too does the expansion of Western-derived work practices into emerging and transitioning economies increase. This expansion of Western practices is particularly clear in economies characterised by oil wealth, in opportunities for private-sector development, or in growing populations such as the Arab Gulf States. In these transitioning economies, there is the need to respond to the international business environment by developing the private sector through foreign collaboration, and by equipping organisations with foreign management systems to enable
them to improve performance and remain competitive. That response brings with it the need to consider the clash between traditional culture and Western business ideology that underlies daily business operations.

Current literature examines the experiences of bicultural and multicultural employees (Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002), expatriate employees, and host-country employees working in multinational enterprises (Caprar, 2011; Ali et al., 1995) in cross-cultural situations. This inquiry differs by focusing on the experience of employees in monocultural situations. As a result of coming into contact with Western business ideology in the workplace, these monocultural individuals, nonetheless, may be influenced by their local cultural identity in new ways.

Previous research largely dealt with employees' experience of exposure to foreign cultures by concentrating on the results of that experience (Friedman et al., 2012; Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003; Caprar, 2011). In contrast, this inquiry focuses on the underlying processes associated with employees’ experiences of foreign cultural exposure in their local work environment. More specifically, this inquiry contributes to the current body of cross-cultural management literature through its exploration of the interplay between culture and organisational situations in a part of the world where traditional culture is intersecting in challenging ways with Western management practices.

This inquiry moves beyond the national cross-cultural comparative approach in the business field (for example Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; House et al., 2004). That approach has dominated international management-related cultural research for several decades since the Hofstede (1980; 1991; 2001) investigations of differences across cultures was published. Hofstede, in effect, provided a set of value dimensions across which cultures differ. He
maintained that it is possible to measure the strength of these dimensions, and that important consequences follow from cross-cultural differences. From this perspective, culture is a unitary and monolithic entity represented by values that are relatively static and stable.

Ralston (2008) later asked a different question, not so much about how cultures differ from each other, but about what happens to a traditional culture when it collides with a set of practices informed by Western business ideologies. Coming from Ralston’s large-scale quantitative research is the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution. Ralston’s theory builds upon two earlier cross-cultural research theories of cultural divergence and convergence. According to these, one of three things will take place at the traditional cultural values–Western business ideology intersection. The divergence perspective is consistent with that of the national cross-cultural comparison theories (for example Hofstede, 1980; 1991; 2001; House et al., 2004) in which national culture is held to be composed of values that are relatively stable and absolute. Divergence treats traditional values as being relatively independent of, and unchanged by, technological, economic, and political influences (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Hofstede, 2001, 2011).

Consequently, different cultures take different paths. This happens even when encountering identical technological, economic, or political influences—they diverge from each other (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Ralston, 2008). Convergence theory instead contends that the values of individuals of a traditional culture will converge and become consistent with values that align with Western business ideology (Ralston, 2008; Ralston et al., 1993; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). However, the later research by Ralston (2008) found that values evolution does occur, but not in the way proposed by convergence theory. Rather than traditional values converging into Western ones, Ralston proposes cultural crossvergence. A particularly important conclusion of that theory is the notion that unique configurations of values and behaviours will result from this interaction between traditional sociocultural beliefs, values,
and practices, and the business ideologies, practices, and technology which embed aspects of an alternative culture.

For Ralston, culture is not as fixed and homogenous as we might assume if we only think in terms of Hofstede’s value dimensions. Thus, crossvergence is an important extension of Hofstede’s way of theorising about culture. The inquiry in this thesis explores and considers a range of multiple cross-cultural theories in order to shed light on the intrapersonal and social processes that occur at the traditional culture–Western business ideology intersection.

This research builds upon contemporary ways of theorising about culture, and it assumes that culture should not be conceptualised as being either static or dynamic. Rather, culture should be seen as existing within a continuum which can move from static to dynamic. Culture can be changeable, depending on situational factors (for example exposure to a foreign culture), and socio-cognitive processes (for example cultural meta cognition). As a part of this researcher’s approach, this inquiry holds as a central assumption that the key to understanding what occurs when traditional sociocultural values intersect with contemporary workplace practices is understanding values-evolution theory (Ralston, 2008). Additionally, this researcher assumes that the influence of culture on individuals in the workplace may be dependent on chronic and contextual socio-cognitive self-regulatory processes. These processes are cued differently, and are activated based on the availability of particular cultural knowledge and its accessibility in a specific context (Stam et al., 2010; Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003).

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

The motivation for this research emerged from an unanswered question of which the researcher became aware while she worked in organisations the Middle Eastern Arab Gulf States of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Sultanate of Oman. In Oman—in a
consultant position that involved a lot of industry collaboration—she had a lot of exposure to public and private-sector organisations. She understood their structure, how they functioned, and the organisational and management practices that were in place. She began to notice differences in the level of productivity in comparison to what she had observed earlier in Australia.

What was perplexing was that the practices in place in Oman were consistent with what was being implemented in organisations where she previously worked in Australia, which included government and the private sector nationally and internationally. This observation was consistent with organisational theory. Workplace practices embodied Western business ideology. In other words, this comparison confirmed that Omani organisations were not missing integral drivers of performance in terms of structure, processes, and management practices. Nevertheless, it seemed that they were underperforming as organisations. Was this situation a matter of motivation, lack of purpose, or a result of the particular organisational cultures or national culture?

Work practices in Omani organisations seemed to be aligned with Western business ideology and what organisational research recommends as best practice. However, those same organisations did not seem to be performing as well in their productivity as Western organisations do. Evidence from a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report states that underperformance of the national labour market in Oman is a major obstacle for development (Calovski, 2014, p. 28; Khan, 2014). The researcher considered whether Omani work practices were the reason for this underperformance, or whether it may be a result of the interaction of the traditional culture with these new workplace practices. She observed the strong presence of traditional cultural rituals and behaviours within the workplace, which was a differentiating factor in comparison with Western organisations.
Her biculturalism allowed her a rich understanding of the two cultures. This gave her a heightened sense of awareness of the differences between Middle Eastern—particularly the Gulf region—and Western cultural environments. She considered whether the answer to her question about organisational performance lay in the societal life that Omani employees brought to organisational life. She turned to the research literature to explore whether the underlying problem is related to the intersection between the traditional societal culture and Western business ideology in the case of Oman, and in the wider Middle Eastern culture and particularly in the neighbouring Gulf States.

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

“Our religion, culture, and history, I feel that they have planted values in us; these planted values make us behave accordingly; everything that happens in our life ... we depend on these values to take care of what is allowed and prohibited in our lives … .”

Prior research has established that societal culture has an impact on the workplace (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Schwartz, 1994; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; House et al., 2004). Members of society bring cultural values to the workplace that are reflected in their attitudes and behaviours as employees and that, therefore, shape organisational behaviour and the way an organisation functions. This worker behaviour, in turn, influences organisational performance and outcomes (Hofstede, 1998; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). It is evident that the development, interpretation, and implementation of management theories and practices are affected by embedded cultural values (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001).

Cross-cultural organisational-behaviour literature has identified various attitudes and values across cultures and their effect on organisational behaviour and performance (Gelfand et al.,
2007). In Gulf workplaces and, indeed in any workplace, the ways in which employees experience management practices and formulate attitudes towards the workplace are unavoidably and significantly mediated by the nature of that culture. Cross-cultural psychology research explains culturally based variances in mind, self, emotion, and motivation that result in differing attitudes and behaviours (Schweder, 1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, 2003).

Cross-cultural management research has identified that management practices are culturally constrained, thus their application across cultures often proves difficult (Michael, 1997; Hofstede 1991). Cultural self-representation theory proposes that the presence of culture in the self-concept interprets the meaning of, and evaluates the importance of, management practices - thereby mediating the impact of management practices on the level of workplace motivation, behaviour, and performance (Bhagat et al., 1995; Earley and Erez, 1997; Erez and Earley, 1993). Dynamic cultural theories have identified the various stances that individual employees may take towards their own culture that are due to their ongoing, and particular cultural histories in various contexts, which produce differing attitudes towards the workplace (Brannen, 2009; Friedman et al., 2012; Martinez and Haritatos, 2002; Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Caprar, 2011).

Other cultural research has highlighted the need to pay attention to socio-cognitive processes in the relationship between culture and the formulation of attitudes. Bicultural identity-integration theory highlights the role of culture in cognition and self-regulation. It contends that “cultural meaning systems guide socio-cognitive processes” (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002, p. 600) to the extent that “culture and the psyche mutually constitute each other” (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002, p. 605). The dynamic constructivist approach takes this contention further by focusing on ways in which culture influences cognition,
affect, and behaviour as a result of whether the “relevant shared assumptions are available, accessible, salient and applicable in the situation” (Hong and Chiu, 2001, p. 183).

The basic principles of social cognition can be applied within cultural psychology. These principles serve to explain how culture affects social cognition, and how cultural influences are mediated by basic social cognitive processes (Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong and Chiu, 2001).

Given the strong suggestion in the literature of the relationship between culture and workplace attitudes at an individual level, and the important role of socio-cognitive processes in that relationship, the conceptual framework in Figure 1.1 was developed by this author. The framework captures the central interaction between culture and employee attitudes that occurs via cognitive processes which guide the individual’s response to management practices; in turn, this interaction guides organisational behaviour and performance.

**Figure 1.1: Explanatory Conceptual Framework**
Organisational research in the Arabian Gulf region supports this conceptual framework with its suggestion that the mix of cultural, tribal, and Islamic values and norms extends into Gulf organisations (Common, 2011; Ali, 1990). Values and norms exert a major influence on organisational behaviour (Common, 2011; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001; Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Rice, 2003; Common, 2011; Jones, 2007). More significantly, prior research has revealed significant confusion about the level of, and types of, adaptability of Gulf employees towards Western-infused management practices, as well as two sets of potentially conflicting local and Western values (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001).

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, the organisational literature on the Arabian Gulf region emphasised that the antecedents of traditional Gulf culture and Western values are embedded in management practices. However, what is yet to be identified and explained are the processes which are central to the interplay of those antecedents that lead to outcomes of positive or negative attitudes towards the workplace.

**Figure 1.2: Antecedent Conditions**

![Figure 1.2: Antecedent Conditions](image-url)
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions were developed by the author to guide the research process and its outcomes. The following questions were designed to explore, describe, and explain the characteristics of the traditional culture of Oman and its relationship with employee attitudes towards the workplace. The aim was to surface the underlying processes associated with employees’ experience of the contemporary workplace; that is, a workplace infused with Western management practices.

Primary research question:

What is the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employees' attitudes towards their workplace?

To arrive at detailed answers, the primary research question is explored through the following secondary questions.

• What are the dominant cultural characteristics in the Gulf State of Oman?

• In what ways does the traditional Omani culture influence employee attitudes towards the contemporary workplace?

• What do contemporary workplace practices mean to the members of traditional Omani culture who experience them?

• What processes underlie the relationship between traditional culture and employee attitudes towards the contemporary workplace?

• What are the implications of the relationship between culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace for the design of more effective Omani managerial practices?
The primary and secondary research questions were designed keeping in mind the mediating role that culture plays, as depicted in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3: The Mediating Role of Culture**

1.5 RESEARCH FOCUS

The primary and secondary research questions are addressed through the comprehensive research focus presented in Sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2 and 1.5.3.

1.5.1 The Middle Eastern Cultural Context

To date, research into the ways in which culture influences workplace attitudes has predominately focused on America and China (see Farh et al., 2004; Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001; Ferlie et al., 2005). Very little research has been undertaken on Middle Eastern cultures. However, there is a practical and a theoretical need to explore and understand the relationship between Middle Eastern cultures and workplace attitudes. On the practical side, we have the facts that Middle Eastern economies—particularly those of the Gulf—are becoming increasingly important to the global economy; the increase of MNCs expanding into the Middle East, and the decline in oil prices leaving many leaders of Middle Eastern countries seeking to encourage development and innovation. On the theoretical side, there is no previous literature which sought to understand the impact that Middle Eastern cultures have on workplace attitudes, while taking into account the particular traditional background from which they have emerged, and of their interaction with the implementation of Western culture being embedded in management practices.
This research offers something new and potentially valuable. The reason for this is that the conclusions identify the important differences between Middle Eastern cultures and Western and Asia cultures. We do not appear to know the processes by which Middle Eastern employees arrive at their workplace attitudes through taking into account their national culture. We do know quite a bit about the nature of Middle Eastern culture and its traditional background. We know a little about workplace attitudes in the Middle East, but this knowledge is not comprehensive. Therefore, insights into relationships between Omani culture and workplace attitudes will benefit Oman and, at least in part, will be transferrable to other Middle Eastern cultures—particularly those in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. It is acknowledged that the Omani culture may be different from other Middle Eastern cultures; nonetheless, it remains a significant Middle Eastern culture.

1.5.2 The Crossvergent Situation

Some researchers claim that attitudes towards workplace practices are the direct consequence of cultural values (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; House et al., 2004) through the suggestion of a direct link between cultural values and workplace attitudes (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; Gelfand et al., 2007). Other researchers suggest that the link is complex and multidimensional (Erez and Earley 1993, 1997; Ralston, 2008). However, to explain the linkage, more research is needed into situations where traditional culture comes into contact with new workplace practices (Rashton, 2008). Along with this need for explanation there is the uncertainty found in Abdalla and Al-Homoud (2001) over the adaptability of Gulf employees towards Western management practices: there is the suggestion of possible dual sets of conflicting local Gulf and Western values. As a result of that uncertainty this inquiry assumes that an understanding of the ways in which this particular type of culture influences attitudes towards the workplace will only be achieved by exploring the intersection of traditional
sociocultural values and contemporary workplace practices currently being experienced in societies across the Middle East.

This doctoral research gives central importance to Ralston’s cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution in understanding what occurs when traditional sociocultural values intersect with contemporary workplace practices. A crossvergent situation is one in which traditional sociocultural values intersect with new technologies, new ideologies, and new work practices. More significantly, this research highlights the importance of traditional sociocultural values in not only taking tradition seriously in terms of understanding that culture but also in terms of uncovering how values evolution occurs.

Values evolution matters, because values shape attitudes of acceptance or rejection towards contemporary workplace practices such as self-managing teams, consultative decision-making, and information sharing; and these practices are becoming increasingly widespread across international borders (Crotty and Brett, 2012; Ertug et al., 2013; Lucke et al., 2014). Ralston (2008, p. 27) coined the term 'crossvergence' to capture the “important ways in which sociocultural and business ideology influences precipitate the nature and degree of values evolution”. As he points out, understanding the processes of crossvergence and values evolution matters more than ever because “the number of developing countries … that are economically emerging and … politically transforming, has increased significantly over the past few decades, resulting in a dramatic acceleration in globalisation” (p. 38). As a consequence, the values-evolution process as it is currently unfolding in Oman is an important focus for this inquiry. It is an exemplar of countries that have strong traditional sociocultural values and which are emerging economically, although not yet transforming politically.
1.5.3 The Meaning of the Crossvergent Situation

The current state of values-evolution theory—as reflected in the Ralston el al. (2008) crossvergence theory—has identified a great deal of what occurs when traditional culture and contemporary business practices and technologies intersect. Importantly, however, Ralston acknowledges that even with his research method—a large-scale quantitative inquiry—not enough is known about the intrapersonal and social processes that underlie the intersection. Therefore, he has offered little explanation about how values actually evolution occurs. This lack of explanation is a major reason why this doctoral research uses a qualitative form of inquiry to explore the thoughts, attitudes, and values of people who are in a crossvergent situation.

Ralston admits that we know very little about how values evolution comes to be. He then acknowledges that researchers need to explore “beneath the surface to understand the how, when and why of the values-evolution process” (Ralston 2008, p. 38). The call for this ‘below the surface’ research makes sense when we reflect on how little we seem to know about how values evolution does occur—particularly in monocultural situations.

According to convergence theory “technological influence is the catalyst that motivates individuals to develop a values system consistent with the technology of their society”; divergence theory tells us that “sociocultural influence is the driving force that will cause individuals from a society to retain the specific values system”; and crossvergence theory tells us that “business ideology influences is the driving force that precipitates the development of new and unique value systems” (Ralston, 2008, p.29). So explaining the ‘how’ of values evolution currently relies upon concepts borrowed from chemistry and physics - ‘a catalyst’ and a ‘driving force’ – rather than the human sciences.
It is therefore a contention of this thesis that understanding the ‘how’ of values evolution can be deepened by discovering what the business ideologies and new technologies mean to the people who experience them. In discovering those meanings, the author contends that the processes that underlie the intersection between traditional sociocultural values and contemporary workplace practices can be revealed. She further contends that this discovery will enable an in-depth understanding of the relationship between traditional Omani culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace and, as well, it will enable the understanding of the ‘how’ of values evolution. As a result, in this inquiry, presently unanswered research questions are more fully addressed.

1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND FRAMEWORK

This research builds upon extant research and theories regarding the intersection of traditional culture and the contemporary workplace within the Middle Eastern cultural context to develop a thick contextualised explanation of what is occurring at that intersection in the Arab Gulf State of Oman.

Through an in-depth exploration, description, and explanation, this research aims to radically deepen our current understanding of the subtle and dynamic relationship between the characteristics of the culture of Oman, and employee attitudes. The purpose is to arrive at an understanding of the processes that give rise to either positive employee attitudes or negative employee attitudes towards the workplaces where Western designed management practices are being increasingly implemented. This will be informed by an emic understanding of what is currently not understood: the ways in which members of Arab Gulf culture cognitively and emotionally engage with the collision between their traditional culture and Western management practices. It is a fundamentally important goal, given that a primary aim of this thesis is to contribute to understanding the ‘how’ of values-evolution theory.
Figure 1.4 represents the research-design framework and provides a visual outline of the research logic. The framework first specifies the locational focus of this inquiry by region, sub-region, and the exact research location. It then specifies the contextual focus of regional traditional culture and its potential influence on organisational behaviour, by examining the impact upon employee attitudes. As a part of this examination, the researcher considers the effect of Western-designed management practices on employee attitudes, and whether the implementation of such practices may lead to changes in the traditional culture. The research-design framework proposes research outcomes based on the examination and explanation of that relationship.

In terms of the practical research outcome, the researcher contends that what will emerge is a set of culturally informed heuristic guidelines for managers working with Gulf employees. In terms of the theoretical research outcome, the researcher contends that what will emerge from the explanation of that relationship is the illumination of socio-cognitive processes that explain the ways in which Gulf employees arrive at either positive or negative attitudes towards their workplace and, thereby, advance our understanding of the values-evolution process.

Figure 1.4: Research-design Framework
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This inquiry adopts a qualitative approach aligned with the philosophical perspective of constructivism. An inductive and exploratory in-depth, qualitative research approach was chosen for the following reasons. There is a lack of existing literature in the Middle Eastern context, let alone the relationship studied or the processes that underlie it. Much is unknown about what could be happening in situations where traditional Middle Eastern cultures interact with the workplace and collide with new practices. Given the unsettled nature of the state of affairs in regard to the Middle Eastern-related organisational-research literature and theoretical developments in cross-cultural organisational-research, it was premature to generate specific hypotheses. It is therefore appropriate for this research to be qualitative and exploratory—an inductive analysis of themes on which to develop an explanatory framework drawn from the data (Doz, 2011). By doing so, this inquiry attempts to provide a thick contextualised description and explanation of the relationship between Omani culture and employee workplace attitudes and to uncover and explain the processes that underlie the relationship.

Ralston’s (2008) research employed a quantitative approach to data gathering and analysis. As a consequence, the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution does not yet provide fully explained examples of cultural crossvergence and the resulting unique value and behaviour configurations. Accordingly, crossvergence theory cannot yet offer us an understanding of the processes that lead to the unique value and behaviour configurations and explain how values evolution occurs. The findings reported in this thesis uncover and explain those processes by focusing, in a qualitative fashion, on the meaning that workplace practices have for employees who are experiencing the intersection of traditional sociocultural values and the contemporary workplace.
The Gulf State of Oman was chosen as the research site because of the combination of its transitioning economy and the strong presence of traditional sociocultural values within Omani society. This makes Oman an exemplar of Middle Eastern countries that are at the intersection between traditional culture and contemporary Western business ideology. An interpretive ethnographic methodology was selected, because a primary idea behind this research is that culture makes a difference when it comes to how people think, feel, and behave. The situation that this research examines is one where employees who are members of a culture are introduced to, and expected to commit to, workplace practices that are a product of a different culture.

Thirty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted generating close to four thousand minutes of audio recording and the majority of interviews lasted approximately two hours. The interview process included a four-part interview protocol. The first and second parts of the interviews focused on establishing a general picture of the interviewees’ lifestyle and cultural environment and their job and workplace environment. The researcher-interviewer allowed informants to raise the aspects that were most meaningful to them (Chuang et al., 2015). The third part of the protocol focused on probing more deeply into specific positive and negative workplace experiences by applying principles of the critical-incident technique (Chuang et al., 2015; Gremler, 2004). The fourth part focused on the application of the laddering method to move from personally meaningful aspects, attitudes, and attributes to underlying cultural values (Phillips and Reynolds, 2009).

A thematic approach was taken to the qualitative data analysis in which an iterative, recursive, reflective, and hermeneutical process was followed (Shapiro et al., 2008; Doz, 2010; Nowell, 2017). This process involved constant movement between the entire dataset, between the data and the sociocultural context, between the data and the theory, and between the phases of data analysis (Shapiro et al., 2008; Patton, 2015). By following this process,
associations were made between rich data, emerging themes, and existing theories, which led to the development of new theoretical insights and to a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Doz, 2010). The data-analysis process included four phases: familiarisation with the data, code development, data-structure development, and interpretation of the data. These four phases allowed for the interpretation of major themes and the development of explanatory frameworks and models (Creswell, 2009; Gioia et al., 2012). The process began with verbatim transcription of all audio-recorded interviews (Creswell, 2009).

An holistic and systematic approach to inductive code development was employed, which enabled data-structure development and ensured qualitative rigour (Gioia et al., 2012). The approach involved first and second-order analysis (Gioia et al., 2012). In the first-order analysis, open coding was conducted similarly to grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). At this level of coding, 'descriptive', 'value', and 'in vivo' coding techniques were used to assist the researcher in arriving at a detailed understanding (Saldana 2013). This was followed by axial coding in preparation for the second-order analysis of theme development (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Axial coding was conducted to search for similarities and differences among the coded categories, and to identify relationships between the codes to reduce the categories, and to refine them into broader, more abstract themes. In the second-order analysis, surprising themes emerged and a form of selective coding was conducted to make sense of the emergent themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It was then necessary to construct cognitive maps to refocus the analysis onto the sociocultural context in order to understand what had emerged from the selective coding.

The rigorous approach taken to code development (Gioia et al., 2012; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was combined with negative case analysis, constant and comparative analysis, and analytic induction to increase research reliability and validity (Brodsky, 2008; Miles and
Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2015). This rigour provided a solid basis for the development of the explanatory framework and the subsequent research model.

1.8 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACH, FINDINGS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS

At the commencement of this inquiry, the literature revealed issues arising in Gulf countries as a result of the local traditional cultures–Western management practices intersection. Those issues set the direction of the research and included the suggestion of a possible values shift (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001) sitting alongside a strong expectation of negative attitudes towards Western management practices (Rice, 2003; Common, 2011; Jones, 2007). As a result of this early examination of the literature, here the exploration of employee attitudes towards the workplace is essentially an investigation of the crossvergent situation that this region faces, and changes brought about by the importation and application of Western management practices as a result of advances in globalisation, economy, business, education and technology. The central intention is to deepen our understanding of the subtle and dynamic relationship between the elements of the Gulf State of Oman’s culture, and employees' attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, given the crossvergent situation.

The author recognised that to conduct her research, she needed to understand what contemporary workplace practices mean to those members of traditional Omani culture experiencing new workplace practices. Unavoidably, understanding what an experience means to somebody involves understanding the ways in which their interpretation of events is shaped by their culture. This research therefore takes seriously the contention that understanding a culture involves going into the economic and political history of that national culture as it emerges from its past. The need to pursue that history is particularly true when dealing with what Ralston el al. (2008) refer to as a set of traditional sociocultural values.
Section 1.10 therefore begins with an overview of the history from which Gulf States’ culture has emerged. This overview involves travelling backwards in time, and it includes discussions of the ways in which economics, politics, and society have interacted over time. That discussion should deepen our understanding of the current culture within this region and its relationship with the intersection between the traditional culture on the one hand and contemporary Western business ideology practices and technologies on the other.

The contextual and historical background raises the likelihood that the researcher will understand the interviewees' experiences in ways that go beyond their own capacity to know what is happening. A major part of understanding what their workplace experiences means to them and why those experiences have those meanings involves us in patiently developing a detailed understanding of the socio-economic and political context and where that context has come from. This contextual understanding is needed because people see the meaning of what is happening to them through the ways of thinking that are made available to them by their particular society and culture. Consequently, to understand the ways of thinking available to Omani interviewees we need to understand the nature of their society along with its history and culture.

The researcher looks beyond the focus of many current cultural theories. To ‘look beyond’ is to focus on the ‘how’ of cultural theory and social-cognitive theory in sufficient depth to allow for some understandings and interpretations to be eliminated whereas others may be combined. This approach to looking involved moving away from the macro national-culture approach to an emphasis on the interaction between culture and the construction of the self-concept. It includes drawing on the crossvergence account of values evolution, and on ‘possible self’ theory in conjunction with our qualitative data in order to arrive at several outcomes. These outcomes are:
1) An understanding of the meaning of Western business practices for employees of a traditional culture;

2) An explanation of why and when contemporary workplace practices which conflict with traditional sociocultural values may be accepted by employees, and when they will be rejected; and

3) An understanding of the ‘how’ of the values-evolution process.

Analysis of the interview data revealed the opposite to what cultural theory and the majority of the existing literature would lead one to expect. Omani employees expressed consistently positive attitudes towards their workplaces, even though within those workplaces management is increasingly implementing Western management practices. At the same time, all of the Omani employees expressed high and positive regard for their traditional cultural values.

This apparent paradox needs to be explained, because these positive attitudes towards the workplace were coming from interviewees who are members of a traditional rule-based, tribal, and Muslim culture. The paradox is captured in this quotation from one of the Omani interviewees:

*Islam has a great role in our life as we are Muslims, and it defines our life too; there are prohibited things and permitted things in Islam. I feel that Islam is suitable for every time and place. For example if I want to do something, I have to take the Islamic rule regarding this into consideration. Of course, there is no explicit text that says this is permitted and that is prohibited, but there are limits and rules, so I have to see them; if the thing is allowed, I can do it, and if it is not going according to the Islamic rules, I don’t do it.*
How then do members of a strongly rules-based traditional culture, in the midst of the intersection with the West nevertheless develop positive attitudes towards workplaces which adopt management practices that reflect libertarian Western values? The researcher sought to identify and articulate the processes taking place for members of Middle Eastern societies such as Oman, at this intersection of new Western business ideologies, practices, and technologies and traditional sociocultural values. The interpretive approach was to extract from the interview data the thought processes that enable people to frame Western management practices in such a way that they are in accord with, rather than in conflict with, traditional Omani values.

To arrive at an illuminative interpretation, this research extended further than taking interviewees' descriptions of their experience at face value. The researcher looked beneath the surface of interviewees’ comments to discover underlying cultural frames of intelligibility which could explain why interviewees were seeing their workplace situations in such positive ways (Austgard, 2012; Boyatzis, 1998). Along these lines, this research looks beyond what the current, validated, cultural theories are saying to arrive at a fuller understanding of the meaning underlying Omani employees’ attitudes towards the workplace. This interpretive method served to illuminate the contribution that this research makes to values-evolution theory by explaining how the identified underlying processes provide the missing link between culture and the culturally shaped self.

Through the discovery of an intrapersonal process of apperception, the author explains how members of a culture can accommodate practices that they would be expected to reject. This apperception occurs when interviewees see those practices as consistent with their deepest values. By paying close attention to the mediating role of the self-concept in understanding the interplay between culture and employee attitudes, the explanation is taken further with an account of how Omani social identity—induced from our interview data, and deduced from
extant literature—is highly oriented towards self-regulation. In turn, this account focuses on duties and responsibilities (an “ought self”, Stam et al., 2010) which produces unexpectedly positive attitudes towards contemporary workplaces. Subsequently, an understanding of the ‘how’ of values evolution was arrived at through understanding how the culturally inscribed self-concept determines the various ways in which new workplace practices are seen by people who are in the midst of change. In effect, the author reveals how the relationship between new practices and value shifts is mediated by the nature of the culturally inscribed self.

This thesis explores the dynamic interactions of the relationship between cultural values, self-concept, and resultant workplace attitudes to explain the surprising ways in which the culture of the Gulf State of Oman influences employee attitudes towards their workplaces. It identifies the underlying relationship between a traditional culture and attitudes towards the contemporary; it uncovers the ‘how’ of the cultural values-evolution process.

In presenting its findings, this thesis reveals six key phenomena:

1) centrally important elements of Gulf State culture;

2) unexpected positive rather than negative attitudes towards the workplace;

3) what contemporary workplace practices mean to the members of a traditional culture who experience them;

4) the intrapersonal process of apperception that occurs at the point of interaction between culture and the self-concept, which explains how members of a culture can accommodate practices that they would be expected to reject, by seeing those practices as wholly consistent with their deepest values;
5) no direct link between cultural values and employee attitudes, because cultural values that emphasise rules and duties can produce an ‘ought self’ which influences perception and behaviour; and

6) the 'culturally inscribed self' not previously identified as a missing link in values evolution.

The elucidation of the mediating role that the self-concept plays in the meaning of individuals’ experiences of crossvergent situations represents a significant theoretical contribution of this thesis. This contribution adds considerable explanatory power to values-evolution theory by detailing the role of the culturally inscribed self-concept in understanding the ‘how’ of values evolution. Additionally, uncovering the intrapersonal process of apperception leads to a significant practical contribution. Its discovery, in effect, provides strategies for practising managers who seek to introduce new work practices which may conflict with local traditional sociocultural values; such strategies include management attempting to frame the introduction of new practices in ways that assist employees to see those practices as aligning with their traditional sociocultural values.

1.9 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is organised in eight chapters which reflect the research process of this inquiry. In Chapter One, the thesis provides an overview account of the history from which Gulf States culture emerged. Chapter Two explores what the literature suggests about issues which may be arising in Gulf countries as a result of what is happening at the local traditional culture–Western management practices intersection. Chapter Three explores the particulars of general cultural theory in conceptualising culture. This exploration is important to later make sense of empirical data gathered in this inquiry into how culture influences employee attitudes towards the workplace in a crossvergent situation.
The qualitative methodology employed by the author is outlined in detail in Chapter Four and includes a justification of the qualitative approach, an explication of the underlying theoretical principles of the approach, and a detailed account of the data-collection process. 35 exploratory interviews were undertaken with employees from 10 different organisations in Oman. Chapter Five presents the approach taken to data analysis and presents the initial findings. The early data analysis led to an unexpected conclusion: Omani employees are finding surprisingly positive meaning in new business practices and technologies. However, this is not because of a shift away from traditional sociocultural values. Chapter Six further explores the interview data to discover that the expressed attitudes of the interviewees do not clearly align with convergence, divergence, or crossvergence as suggested by the literature.

In Chapter Six the interview data is analysed anew using values-based interpretation and a cognitive-mapping technique to make sense of the counterintuitive initial findings. The second stage of data analysis supported an explanation that relies on the way differing cultural-value orientations generate different types of self-construct which, in turn, may account for the attitudes towards the workplace that were found in Oman. Based on these findings, in Chapter Eight the contribution from this thesis to cultural values-evolution theory is cemented with the presentation of a missing-link model of values evolution. In this, individual self-concept plays a mediating role, and identity cues found within organisations play a moderating role. The chapter concludes with a discussion of practical and theoretical contributions, research limitations, and indications for further research.
1.10 THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE GULF STATES

Section 1.10 of this chapter provides an in-depth contextual background. Its overview account is of the history from which Gulf States culture emerged, and includes the ways in which economics, politics, and society have interacted over time; the region’s progression towards the traditional sociocultural–Western business ideology intersection; and the selection of the Gulf State of Oman as the research site. There are two reasons directly related to the research goals of this thesis, for constructing and presenting this historical overview: firstly, the importance of history and context in crossvergence theory; and secondly, the importance of context to interpretation. Later in this thesis, when the author analyses and interprets her interview data, she is faced by a difficulty common to all interpretation: how can she make a convincing case for the claim that her interpretation is more than mere speculation? A major part of the case to be made for the interpretative findings of this thesis is that the author’s reading of her interview data is based on a well-founded account of the ways in which the social, economic, and political history of Oman is reflected in present day attitudes and values of Omani interviewees, and in particular the ‘ought-to’ nature of the self-concept which emerges from living as a member of Omani culture. These matters will be explored and explained in full in later chapters.

The crossvergence theory of values evolution explains why there is a need to discuss the regional background in terms of its social, economic, and political history. According to Ralston, the formulation and evolution of an individual’s and a society’s values are influenced by four macro-level factors. These factors are sociocultural, economic, political, and technological. Figure 1.5 (a) illustrates these factors in relation to values (Ralston, 2008).
The sociocultural influences considered are those that pertain to the culture of a society and to the history of that culture and society. In terms of economic influences, Ralston (2008) refers to the economic system in place in the given society, which includes economic policies, well-being, and growth. The political influences pertain to the political and legal systems in the given society. The technological influences comprise the rate of technological change and the level of technological sophistication in a society.

Ralston goes beyond simply listing the four influences on values. He proposes further that the economic, political, and technological influences can be grouped into the category of business ideology influences. Such influences are closely associated with business activity within the given society, and thus have a mutual timeline—in terms of change—that is considerably shorter than the timeline for sociocultural change. This timeline is particularly so in the case of transitioning economies such as the Gulf States, given their rapid expansion of global business. As a part of this contention, Ralston claims that “the time that it takes for
an influence to have an impact on individual-level values appears to be directly related to the
time that it takes for the influence itself to change” (Ralston, 2008, p. 28). Figure 1.5 (b)
demonstrates how the macro-level influences can be grouped into two main categories, based
on the time that it takes for a particular type of influence to facilitate individual-level values
evolution.

**Figure 1.5 (b): The Ralston Crossvergence Model—Influences on Values**

**Formation and Evolution**

![Crossvergence Model Diagram]

Source: Ralston (2008, p. 28)

Changes in the three non-sociocultural factors as a grouping that results from the developing
business environment tend to influence changes in individual-level values much faster than
do those of the sociocultural-change process. Importantly however, these three non-
sociocultural factors of economic, political, and technology have been found to result in
shallower and more contemporary influences upon values change, whereas the sociocultural
values are longer-lasting and more difficult to shift (Ralston, 2008). This difficulty is
apparent in the current literature that is reviewed in Chapter Two. Crossvergence theory
suggests that we are now at an historic point where the interaction of contemporary business
and traditional values is happening in a way that merits exploration.
In Ralston (2008), the belief expressed is that to understand values evolution from a cross-cultural context, “we need to consider both the influences on individual-level values and the theoretical frameworks that describe the process of values evolution” (p. 28). Therefore, it is this researcher's contention that it is important to take Ralston’s framework seriously, which involves going beyond its generality, to investigate what is happening in each particular case. To understand political and economic influences—or what is actually the case in the Middle East in general, and in Oman in particular—what has been the case historically needs to be taken into account. The current values and situation are a result of the interaction between social, economic, and political factors in the region over time. To take the notion of crossvergence and understand it seriously, this thesis must arrive at a deep and detailed understanding of the historical elements of the crossvergence model.

Consequently, it makes sense in this introduction to spend time investigating what is occurring and what has been occurring in each of those four macro-level areas of influence within the Gulf States. It would be convenient to use each of those factors as section headings in this introduction. However, unavoidably, within the complex realities of any society what happens in the political area is influenced by, and in turn influences, what happens in the economy. Similarly, over time the technological domain influences what is happening in the economy, and vice-versa. The approach taken here is therefore to holistically examine each of those four influences.

The following part of this chapter presents a historically contextual overview of the background of GCC, otherwise known as the Arab Gulf geographical region. The overview discusses the establishment of the GCC, the unique culture of the region, its political structure, the interaction and evolution of politics, economics, and society over time, the region’s global economic significance, crucial government policies, and its progression a collision between the traditional culture and Western business ideology. That examination
concludes by discussing where Oman sits within this context as the reason for its selection as the research site for the thesis.

To construct this overview, the author read widely across literatures dealing with the politics, history, culture, and economies of the region. Content was chosen not in accordance with a straightforward retelling of the region’s history, but choices were instead guided by the ambition of configuring a coherent and illuminating narrative which resonates with the key research questions addressed by this thesis.

The GCC is a confederate union located on the Arabian Peninsula. It comprises six states known as the Gulf States: Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE).

**Figure 1.6: Map of GCC**

![Map of GCC](image)

Source: Hybrid News Limited—Asian Correspondent (2011)

The GCC was established in May 1981 to unify the political, economic, and military activities of the six states. It was established to address various regional challenges, and to endorse stable international investments, as well as to institutionalise and carry forward the shared historical, social, and cultural realities of the GCC countries (GCC Charter, 2013). The GCC aims to create and strengthen unity among member states and citizens through the coordination, cooperation, and integration of activities across a wide array of areas and
industries; the hope is that this will result in substantial benefits for GCC citizens (GCC Charter, 2013). The original agreement allows for the standardisation and elimination of cross-border barriers within the GCC region to promote a prosperous business environment for private and foreign direct investment that will encourage a sustainable future (GCC Charter, 2013). The region is often referred to as the Arab Gulf (Hanieh, 2011).

The Arabic translation of the word Gulf is ‘Khaleej’. However the term Khaleej or ‘Khaleji’ (the plural) holds a much larger meaning than “a geographic area” instead it encompasses “a common pan-Gulf Arab identity that sets the people of the region apart from the rest of the Middle East” (Hanieh, 2011, p. 2).

### 1.11 CULTURE

The region’s culture and religion strongly influences values in the Gulf States. The Gulf culture is high-context, dependent on complex nonverbal communication, and has a polychronic time orientation (Rice, 2003, p. 466). Social behaviour is particularly formal and a high degree of respect and conformity is paid to social norms (Ali, 2008; Rice, 2003). The Gulf people’s shared ethnicity, beliefs, values, tradition, culture, language, and economic conditions and political systems (At-twaijri, 1996)—together with their strong sense of kinship and shared geographic area (GCC Charter, 2013)—result in relative cultural homogeneity in the region.

The Gulf region largely comprises the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, the majority of which retain a Bedouin tribal tradition. Tribal tradition stresses the importance of loyalty, honour, pride, respect, generosity, justice, and status (Rice, 2003; 2004). Arising from this set of values is the notable unswerving commitment and loyalty to kin and tribe, which creates in-groups and discrimination against out-groups, and favouritism (nepotism) (Ali, 1990; Ali, 2008; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Common, 2011; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). The
practice of “Wasta” (Ahmad, 2012; Aljbour, 2010; Sarayrah, 2004; Adballa and Al-Homoud, 1995; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Common, 2011) is part of this tradition, as is the hierarchical authoritarian manner used to express status (Ali, 1990; Common, 2011); the authoritarian approach to non-kin and out-groups (Ali, 1990); the priority for interpersonal relationships; and the practice of maintaining face (Common, 2011; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Rice, 2003, 2004; Ali, 2008; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001; Al-Nashmi and Syd Zin, 2011). These values and behaviours are deeply ingrained in Gulf people (Common, 2011). They remain highly significant in Gulf society to the extent that they influence all Gulf people, “irrespective of education level, economic status, political philosophy, or religion” (Rice, 2003, p. 466).

Islam, the religion of the Gulf, also strongly influences Gulf culture. Muslims believe that Islam is a complete way of life based on the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah—the recorded sayings and behaviour of Prophet Muhammad (Rice, 2003). Gulf people hold both Bedouin and Islamic values, but they experience ‘doublethink’ when these values contradict (Rice, 2003, Ali, 2008). Ideal Islamic values, although maintained formally, are sometimes broken in practice, as they contradict predominant tribal practices and values (Ali, 2008). Doublethink is a key feature of Gulf culture that can complicate managers' attempts to understand and motivate their staff. Looking ahead in the thesis, the author found echoes of the phenomenon of doublethink in the way that her interviewees sought to avoid comments that could be seen as critical of their managers and of their organisations.

1.12 ORIGINS OF THE SIX GULF STATES

A brief historical overview of the origins of the six Gulf States assists in arriving at a deeper understanding of the traditional gulf region sociocultural values, as the more recent developments such as the establishment of the GCC, political structure, and the traditional
culture reflect earlier interpenetrations of the economic, political, and sociocultural influences. Historically, the Gulf region’s large nomadic ‘Bedouin’ population did not view geography as fixed boundaries; instead, they saw their land through “ever-shifting tribal influence” (Haniew, 2011, p. 5). To Gulf people, the idea of territorial separation was unnatural, and a product of foreign influence where pseudo borders were externally imposed.

At the height of the colonial era, British foreign intervention saw the vast Gulf region known as Arabia—where tribal leaders informally governed their areas—broken down into a configuration of six sovereign states. This state creation occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All but the two areas within the Gulf region known as Najd and Hijaz in Saudi Arabia became either firmly inserted into, or affiliated with, the British colonial empire (Haniew, 2011).

Great Britain’s control over the Gulf region was part of its broader colonial goal to ensure continued control over India (Levins, 2013; Haniew, 2011). Two British motivations that followed from this goal were the deep embeddedness of Britain in the regional trade activities to secure long-term lucrative trade arrangements, particularly in pearls, and to eliminate the opportunity for other foreign powers to gain regional control. Consequently, the bulk of the region's wealth was generated from taxes on pearling and from trade activities. With Great Britain having firmly injected itself into the region’s trade activities, British-controlled trade soon prevailed and resulted in a lessening of the economic independence of the Gulf States, and an increased dependence on British support (Haniew, 2011). This dependence is an historical point that is relevant to the economic and political influences that set the subsequent political structures within the six states. Individuals from prominent tribal families were appointed, authorised, endorsed, and supported by the British as the monarchs of the each of the six states (Henry and Springborg, 2001; Haniew, 2011). The individual monarchs, locally known as ‘shuyoukh’ (plural Sheikh), were linked to a larger ruling family.
The ruling families saw British endorsement as an important step in legitimising their rule to emphasise their roots as part of one of the Arabian Gulf tribes (Hanieh, 2011). The strength of this concern about being seen as legitimate is not limited to the ruling class: the researcher will subsequently argue that it is one of the background motivations that explain the nature of her interviewees’ comments about themselves, their managers, and their organisations.

1.12.1 Political Structure within the Six Gulf States

Within the six Gulf States, the political structures share many likenesses. Power lies in the hands of a ruling family from which the state apparatus and large areas of the economy are controlled; and the right to rule is hereditary (Hanieh, 2011; Levins, 2013). Political repression is commonplace, media are strictly controlled, and political opposition can be punished with imprisonment (Hanieh, 2011).

From the 1970s through to the 1990s, the six Gulf States developed constitutions. This development began with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE, followed by Oman and Saudi Arabia. Constitutions functioned to define political structures, while ensuring that the monarchs’ power would not be restricted (Levins, 2013). Although government assemblies are permissible within all of the Gulf States, with slight variations, constitutional provisions permit the monarchs to overlook or override these assemblies (Levins, 2013).

In the Gulf States of Kuwait and Bahrain there is some limited political contestation in elected legislatures—known as the ‘majlis al-nuwab’ in Bahrain, and the ‘majlis al-umma’ in Kuwait—with perhaps Kuwait being the most advanced. All members there are elected by the resident population, whereas in Bahrain 50 per cent of members are elected by the resident population and 50 per cent are appointed by the ruling family. However, in each case, the legitimacy of these legislatures is undermined, as the monarchs have the power to dissolve parliament and have utilised this power on many occasions. In the other Gulf States,
including Oman, there are more restricted consultative councils known as ‘majlis al-shura’ in place. Originally, all members were appointed by the ruling family. More recently, members are increasingly being elected by a group of selected representatives from the citizen population. Nevertheless, the genuine power of these consultative councils remains restricted to reviewing government policies related to social and economic matters, not actually initiating legislation—this leaves them in no position to challenge the monarchs (Peterson, 2004; Hanieh, 2011).

Assemblies across the Gulf have highly restricted functions and, as a result, they are limited in reducing the monarch(s’) authority. In effect, the way in which the political system is structured provides ways out when a situation becomes inconvenient for the ruling family. This structure essentially allows monarchies to have clear lines of authority and uninterrupted succession (Levins, 2013). So even though there seems to be a surface shift towards the use of democratic constitutions, possibly resulting from external pressure, instead there is an underlying interpenetration of the local political and economic influences which support authoritarianism and compliance. The significance of such a pervasive atmosphere of compliance to this thesis will become apparent during the later analysis of interview data concerning the expressed attitudes of Omani employees toward their workplaces.

1.12.2 Islam and Tribalism

It is evident that Gulf State monarchs have used their nations’ constitutions as mechanisms to obtain, validate, and maintain a large degree of unrestricted authority. However, historically Gulf monarchs have relied on Islam and tribalism as mechanisms to legitimise their rule (Levins, 2013). The monarchies of the Gulf States have maintained a largely unopposed reign. Nonetheless, this has not been without tribal-based challenges over the decades (Hanieh, 2011), as “tribalism, unlike Islam, does not provide a set of unifying symbols
around which nation-wide opposition movements can unite” (Levins, 2013, p. 408). Over time, the relationships between tribes and the states began to echo the progression of the relationships between religious institutions and the states which developed during the twentieth century. However, prior to that, there were times when tribal loyalties tended to divide political movements within the Gulf States, particularly when the given situation or environment motivated tribal autonomy. This was certainly the case in Oman and Saudi Arabia; tribes frequently came forth in armed opposition against the state (Levins, 2013). As a result, the monarchies fashioned an ideology of Islam and tribalism, based on their own interpretations, in order to unite various tribes in a larger national and even regional identity and secured power and even obtained wealth by taking advantage of ideas and norms of the traditional “Bedouin” tribal system where they were assigned high esteem and have established strong foundations of loyalty and support from tribes people and (Levins, 2013; Hanieh, 2011).

This approach by the ruling families across the Gulf States has been rather fruitful. The monarchies efforts to weave Islamic and tribal structures into their overarching political systems by internalizing the operations of religious trusts, Islamic mosques, schools, scholarly organisations, and courts giving the state the authority to control them has encouraged the acceptance of their interpretations of Islam by large numbers of citizens (Levins, 2013). Coupled with Gulf States ruling families’ assertion of their tribal heritage to legitimise their right to rule promoted the monarchies monopoly of power in each of the states by providing them loyal tribal networks which in turn offered effective military strength through loyal armed forces to put down any internal challenge. Here we see a shift towards the underlying sociocultural influences and how the interpenetration of these influences with the political influences further strengthened values in support of authoritarianism and compliance.
1.12.3 The Emergence of the Oil Era

The emergence of the oil era began in the 1920s. At that time, each of the future Gulf States’ ruling families were to varying degrees dependant on a system of dominant tribes, powerful merchant families, and colonial backing (Hanieh 2011; Levins, 2013). However, as the oil era progressed and the oil industry grew, the flood of income brought with it a change in the balance of power towards the State. Power swung away from tribes, religion, and powerful merchant families and the State came to enjoy ultimate authority and influence. The oil wealth enabled the monarch-led governments to distribute generous amounts of money strategically to ensure loyalty. For instance, government payrolls included tribal leaders, and the ranks of government departments began to swell with local tribes people (Levins, 2013; Hanieh 2011). “Instead of tribal leaders using their own resources” to provide for their tribes, both leaders and followers became “dependent on the state” to do this for them (Levins, 2013, p. 406). As a consequence, present day Omans have been raised in a society that emphasises the importance of remembering the many ways in which they owe their high standard of living to those in authority.

1.12.4 The Development of the 'Rentier State'  

The oil boom of the 1970s gave rise to what is known as a 'rentier state' in the Gulf States. In a rentier state, the State makes a large percentage of its income from rents which are unproductively earned from externally derived payments, typically the result of the extraction and export of oil and gas. Authorities distribute part of the income to the people. Underlying this practice is a political-economy theory that explains State–society relationships in such places (Gray, 2011; Levins, 2013 Beblawi and Luciani, 1987; 2015).

The government in a rentier state assumes the role of donor. Citizens become very dependant on the State for income, employment, and even subsidised food and housing. The core of this
theory holds that as a result of receiving external income and passing some of it on to the society, and the ability to provide plenty of welfare services, there is no need for the State to enforce taxation. The vast majority of citizens do not feel the need to initiate change in the political system, or fight for greater representation within it. In turn, the State is under no pressure to engage in a democratic contract with citizens, or to implement a serious development strategy (Herb, 2005; Gray, 2011; Levins, 2013 Hanieh, 2011). This situation reinforces a royal-subject-like relationship between citizens and the State in the Gulf monarchies and runs counter to the promotion of democracy.

It is not surprising then, that in 2013 citizens in Qatar cared less about democracy than they did in 2012 (Levins, 2013). Abdullah al-Athbah, a Qatari writer, commented, “There are not many people who want a real change of scene …. Ordinary people do not care very much about that (democracy)” (cited in Levins, 2013, p. 415). Given the nature of State–society relationships in the Gulf State monarchies: democracy deficit—rentier-state theory alludes to important challenges produced by the oil-funded state configuration (Herb, 2005; Gray, 2011). Such a configuration saw sociocultural, technological, political, and economic influences interact in ways that reinforced values which aligned with the attitudes, and by now a mentality, in support of authoritarianism, compliance, and dependence.

In the Gulf States, this configuration produced a domino effect in the sense that State leaders became content with their situation, as oil wealth poured in and they settled into the expectation that incomes would continue to rise. Accordingly, their focus was largely dedicated to maintaining the status quo. This, in combination with little to no citizen pressure for political change—as a result of the lack of taxation and the copious welfare packages—meant that the need to do anything in terms of development and innovation was non-existent. Thus there was minimal motivation to industrialise (Levins, 2013). The result was that the
deformity in the political system was reflected in the economic system, with economic policies narrowly focused on reliance on rent flows (Hanieh, 2011; Mahdavy, 1970).

Until the 1980s and 1990s, the Gulf States' economic focus and participation in the global capitalist system were solely as oil producers; modes of production outside the extracted and exported national resources were limited (Levins, 2013, p. 394) but from the 1980s onwards, the Gulf States did begin to recognise the need for development and for the diversification of their economies, away from oil, to ensure a sustainable future.

The significant push for diversification came in the 1990s and the early 2000s, with international exposure after the Gulf War (Halliday, 1994) and the promotion of neoliberal economic liberalisation associated with globalisation. The combination of the heavy push from globalisation towards more open markets increased trade liberalisation, and simultaneously increased private investment. As a consequence, the traditional rentier bargain was under pressure due to the social and economic pressures of population growth, high unemployment, citizens' expectations of prestigious well-paid jobs, and oil prices that failed to reach the heights of the 1970s and 1980s (Gray, 2011).

In addition, the re-emergence of some Islamists who considered globalisation a threat to their values, and who viewed the actions of Gulf governments as inconsistent with serving the interests of their people—and instead saw this as collaboration with Western powers in the promotion of globalisation—propelled the Gulf States into action (Gray, 2011). The Gulf States recognised that they needed to place themselves between the neoliberal economic liberalisation and the traditional Islamic view within society in order to maintain and sustain their rule in the long term. Here then, at a national level, the collision between traditional culture and Western business ideology began to unfold. Importantly for the later empirically informed chapters of this thesis, just as Gulf State Governments have to cope with the
potential contradiction of embracing liberalisation at the same time as maintaining respect for
traditional Islam, so too, at the individual level, the researcher’s interviewees have to manage
the same tension in their daily lives – particularly in those Omani organisations that are
adopting Western management practices.

1.12.5 The Rentier State meets Capitalism

The Gulf States' rulers recognised that an alternative response to globalisation was needed,
and that the rentier system was unsustainable. They needed to produce new forms of wealth
to address social and economic pressures, and to provide State longevity and the stability of
the ruling families. This recognition has encouraged a shift in thinking towards the long term.
Rulers began to identify risks, particularly the fact that oil is a finite resource, and
strategically developed strategies that use oil revenues for policies that promote economic
diversification and that prioritised development (Gray, 2011). It has been inevitable, though,
that moving towards open economies in the monarch-led Gulf States was going to require a
different approach to the rest of the world (Levins, 2013). The Gulf States' solution has been
to adopt a highly active entrepreneurial State-capitalist approach. This was a more politically
secure approach than that of neoliberal economic liberalisation, and it seems to be more
acceptable from the traditional Islamic perspective.

This entrepreneurial–State capitalism approach emphasises a business-friendly policy which
encourages an attractive business environment for multinational corporations, and foreign
direct investment to develop the private sector. It still allowed the State to hold a large degree
of control over integral parts of the economy, and of the higher levels of the private sector
(Gray, 2011). In other words, businesses are not completely under the State’s control, but at
the same time, they are not completely free from State control. It would seem then, at the
national level, a configuration of policies and actions which is most appropriate to the unique
challenges facing the Gulf States, has emerged. Policies and actions are no guarantee of change in underlying values however, so without this researcher’s field based qualitative research, we cannot yet decide whether what Ralston (2008) would call ‘crossvergence’ has occurred.

In terms of political transformation and democracy, it is clear that the Gulf States are not following the usual process (Gray, 2011). The modest political openness that has developed reflects the need for Gulf monarchs to balance their political systems with positive economic changes (Levins, 2013). In terms of political challenges to State authority, the monarchs maintain well-defined limits as to tolerable or intolerable challenges to authority, and economic power is still rather centralised (Gray, 2011).

The Gulf States' economies are certainly evolving. This new entrepreneurial State-capitalism approach has opened the Gulf States enough to thrust them into a process of swift and dramatic development with an influx of international Western-driven investment and business to the region. Again reinforcing the point made by Ralston (2008) that given the significant increase in the number of developing countries that are emerging economically and transforming politically as a result of the rapid rise in globalisation there is an increased need to understand the processes that are taking place at the intersection between traditional culture and Western business ideology.

1.12.6 Economic Significance

The Gulf region, acting as a single unified GCC market (GCC Charter, 2013), is a powerhouse in terms of global economic activities. It is the world's biggest producer and exporter of crude oil, with proven reserves amounting to 486.8 billion barrels (Gulfbase, 2013), and a predicted GDP of $1.5 trillion for 2013 (Sambidge, 2012). The large economic surpluses from its abundant natural resources make the Gulf region one of the richest
economies in the world (Gulfbase, 2013). The region has abundant natural resources, which brings with it the ability to spend economic surpluses on infrastructure (DFAT, 2009; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009) and private-sector development in the interest of reducing the regional dependency on oil (Sturn et al., 2008). It has a young, vibrant, and growing population (DFAT, 2009; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009), which has amplified the attraction of the region as a source of global business opportunities (Baabood, 2011; Singh, 2012). The expected continuous expansion of business in the Gulf region means that pressure for Gulf organisations to improve their performance to remain competitive is increasingly likely, and so too is the continued influence of Western business ideology.

More recent economic-development policies and technological-advancement strategies have aimed at generating new business opportunities, which stimulate development, and are evidence of the Gulf’s response to globalisation and the continued influence in the region of Western business thought. One example is Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030. This is a 15-year plan of policy changes to transform the economy, diversify away from oil, and provide jobs for the young population. The 2030 plan includes the development of a $500 billion megacity named Neom, which is intended to be a technologically advanced innovation hub for manufacturing, biotechnology, renewable energy, media, entertainment, and entrepreneurial opportunities (Robinson et al., 2017). Another example of Oman’s 2030 strategy that is being developed is their Information Technology Authority. That Authority provides policies and regulations regarding security, infrastructure, e-government, society development, and future employment needs. It uses advanced technology and artificial intelligence to facilitate the planning of smart cities. As a part of this strategic planning for a logistics city, a science and technology park, and a new university are already underway (Muscatdaly, 2017).
1.12.7 West meets Middle East—The emergence of a transitional stage of
development

Western business interest in the region spiked in the 1990s, and the arrival of Western expatriates, companies, and investors began. This meeting of West and Middle East was bolstered by globalisation and economic changes, producing an influx of international Western-driven investment and business into the region (DFAT, 2009). The meeting has resulted in a process of swift and dramatic development and was the beginning of a rapid infusion of the Western way of doing business. The Gulf States have become increasingly globalised, as they allocate their “rentier wealth more intelligently to develop their economies and societies, reduce their heavy dependence on oil, and shape new international images and roles for their states” (Gray, 2011, p. 2).

The Gulf city of Dubai has led the way in the transformation of the region; it is regularly used to exemplify the significant changes occurring in the Gulf States. In Figure 1.7 are images of Dubai’s main road, Sheikh Zayed Road, 26 years apart. It is an illustration that captures the region’s progress and significant transformation. The older image displays a dusty road with a few lonely building alongside it, surrounded by a backdrop of a vast desert landscape. In contrast, the later image displays Dubai in 2017 with a scene of shining lights, soaring skyscrapers and a mass of roads and freeways.
Figure 1.7: Dubai Then and Now

Source: Business Insider Australia (2017)

This swift transformation is being paralleled in the other Gulf States to varying degrees. A transitional stage of development has ensued across the Gulf region. The current transitional stage of development is defined by a combination of swiftly growing economic prosperity from oil, the recycling of oil revenue into economic development, the need for increased education, the side effects of the rentier system, and rising exposure to Western ideas, all occurring within a culture that is resistant to change and that emphasises tradition (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001).

As previously noted, this transitional stage of development sees a reliance on the importation of Western business practices and systems to facilitate private-sector development, which has amplified the region’s heavy reliance on expatriates to fill manpower gaps. A reliance on expatriates has been the result of what is known as the ‘mudir’ syndrome, and of the skill gap which was amplified by the lack of congruence between education and training and the swift economic development.
The word *mudir* means director or manager in Arabic (Rubin, 2013). The “*mudir syndrome*” is an unusual notion of honour in employment, where jobs that do not offer authority, status, and respect are deemed unacceptable to local people (Henry and Springborg, 2001, p. 181). *Mudir* is said to be present in all the Gulf States. Gulf citizens desire professional or managerial employment—not manual labour, entry-level, semi-skilled, or technical types of employment—regardless of the skills and expertise required, and regardless of the need for governments and businesses to offer employment (Champion, 2003).

There are two possible explanations of why the *mudir syndrome* exists strongly in the Gulf States. The first is that the rentier system produces a disconnect in the causal relationship between work and reward, since income is distributed as opposed to being earned. This disconnect, in turn, produces a rentier mentality within individuals in that society, whereby income becomes disassociated from work and instead is associated with good fortune and the given situation (Beblawi, 2011; Kropf and Ramady, 2015). This is a severe contradiction to the work ethic, because it deviates from the usual economic equation that individuals need to work, sacrifice, and exert effort in return for their income (Levins, 2013).

The other explanation is that the *mudir syndrome* is inherent within Bedouin tribal tradition. The role of a man, according to Bedouin tradition, embodies characteristics of a knight, a warrior, and a wise desert survivalist. As a result, manual labour is interpreted as not being honourable (Rubin, 2013). An illustration of this explanation is a piece of Arabic poetry famous among the Bedouin tribes in the Gulf region, dated approximately to the nineteenth century.
The poem says,

*Son, your situation has no proud-ness in it, it only suits those who accept mortifying themselves when working with their hands to entertain others. Ask wise men around you, those were never dignified.* The poem reflects how low-level occupations involving manual labour have traditionally been considered disrespectful and unsuitable members for Arabian tribes, even in times of extreme poverty. The poem is about a young man who migrated from Najad in (current) Saudi Arabia to Nazwa, Oman, to find a job. His migration was due to the destitution that struck their land. The young man's father sent the poem away with trading merchants who travelled between the two areas, asking his son to return to his homeland to work as a trader, because petty jobs (manual labour) were not meant for them.

Manual labour is therefore usually thought to be unworthy of one's consideration and is commonly regarded as *'aib',* or shameful, by traditional norms (Rubin, 2013). The increase in oil wealth, swift economic development, and citizens' preferences for the well-paying, widely respected and comfortable government jobs that they had become accustomed to (Levins, 2013), along with the lack of effective change in the education and training sector, left locals with no encouragement to up-skill (Henry and Springborg, 2001; Levins, 2013). This situation has meant that expatriates were needed to fill expertise and skill gaps at the higher
ends of the employment market, as well as private-sector executive jobs, consultancies, and academic posts. As a result of this ever-increasing reliance on expatriate population growth causing high youth unemployment (Peterson, 2004; Levins, 2013), “limitations were imposed” on the percentage of expatriates that could be employed in particular industries and positions to “counter the shortage of skilled labour” (Levins, 2013, p. 394).

The historical sociocultural, religious, political, economic, and technological influences discussed in this chapter come together to point towards an attitude and mentality that is representative of shared traditional Gulf cultural values that have formed over time. The discussion has also pointed to new Western influences upon the intersection between the existing traditional culture and Western business ideology that is currently unfolding, the mystery about what is occurring at this intersection, and the uncertainty about what that interaction means for values evolution and resultant attitudes.

1.12.8 Government Policies

The Gulf governments have introduced workforce localisation policies such as 'Omanisation', 'Emiratisation', and 'Saudisation' that aim to reduce the region’s enormous reliance on expatriates for professional and technical expertise (Mashood et al., 2009; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). The underlying reason that ultimately led to these localisation policies was the Gulf governments' concern that “the dependence on an expatriate workforce has serious long-term political, economic and social consequences” (Mashood et al., 2009, p. 2). Here we see discomfort and uncertainty begin to emerge regarding this intersection between traditional sociocultural influences and Western business ideology influences. These policies enforce a rule to employ locals and a plan to equip locals with the skills needed to carry out the organisational requirements of the private sector competently (Sturn et al., 2008, Mashood et al., 2009). Ironically, however, for Gulf governments to equip locals with the
necessary skills, Gulf citizens were predominately sent to Western educational institutions for higher education and vocational training. Educated nationals living in the West were invited to fill higher-level positions at home (Perterson, 2004; Valeri, 2015).

1.12.9 What we know about the Gulf, and what we don’t know

The seemingly transformational process unfolding across the Gulf region makes it clear that an intersection between the traditional Middle Eastern society and contemporary Western business ideology is occurring. It raises the question as to what is happening to members of these traditional societies at the individual level, as they cognitively and emotionally encounter these Western business ideas at their workplaces. The mix of historical, political, economic and cultural factors that have been explored in this part of the thesis seems to emphasise authoritarianism, compliance, and dependence as values and behaviours which are in sharp contrast to the emphasis on liberal values in Western societies.

According to Part (a) of the Ralston (2008) model of crossvergence, the political, economic, technological, and sociocultural influences in a society together produce the specific cultural values of a society. In the historical overview provided in this chapter as a contextual insight into what we do know, influences have come together to result in the existing shared culture of the Gulf States. In this case, part (a) of the Ralston model can be used to map the historical political, economic, technological, and sociocultural influences detailed in this chapter. The Ralston model lists the influences that produce cultural-values formulation, as seen in Figure 1.8.
We now turn to part (b) of the Ralston (2008) model in terms of values change and evolution. What we do and do not know about the intersecting factors of the region’s shared traditional culture and its transitional-stage development heavily influenced by Western business ideology has been clarified in the earlier discussion of this chapter. We do know from the historical overview and from Part (a) of the Ralston model that the amalgamation of the influences in Part (a) can be mapped to the current sociocultural influences in Part (b) of the model. This mapping is possible as a result of those influences coming together during the Gulf region’s history to produce the existing traditional cultural values and attitudes. Secondly, what we need to know more about is in effect highlighted by Part (b) of the model,
given the outline in this chapter of the transformational process that is unfolding across the Gulf region, i.e. the intersection between the traditional sociocultural beliefs and values and the contemporary Western business ideology. Figure 1.9, therefore, captures what we do know—the influences which come together to formulate the existing shared culture of the Gulf States. We do not yet know the effect of new Western influences on cultural-values evolution and subsequent attitudes.

**Figure 1.9: Gulf Influences for Potential Values Evolution—Crossvergence**

Model Part (b)

- Islam
- Tribalism
- Oil Wealth
- Monarchy

![Diagram](Image)

**Business ideology influences**

- The Rentier State meets Capitalism
- New Economic and Technological Policies
- Increase in Western Business
- Influx of Western Work Practices
- Increase in Western-influenced Education
- High Reliance on Expatriates in the West

Source: Adapted from Ralston (2008, p. 28)
1.13 RESEARCH SITE: WHY THE GULF STATE OF OMAN

The Gulf State of Oman is experiencing an intersection between, or perhaps collision of, traditional sociocultural values and contemporary Western business ideology, as are other Gulf States. However, Oman presents as a particularly well-suited research site to explore this crossvergent situation for several important reasons. One is that Oman has been vocal about its commitment to balancing the preservation of its traditional social values and culture, while at the same time advancing its development to achieve the advantages of a modern society (Funsch, 2015). In the decades following the abdication of his father Sultan Said bin Taymur Al Said, who held to an unwavering policy of extreme international isolation (Valeri, 2015; Peterson, 2004), Oman’s present monarch, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, took power with the help of British advisers (Valeri, 2015). He was determined to ‘modernise’ Oman without ‘Westernising’ it (Funsch, 2015; Jones and Ridout, 2015). In an interview with the Journal of Middle Eastern Policy in 1995, the Sultan is quoted as saying "I have borne in mind the need to preserve a careful balance between these two paramount factors—the acceptance of modernity and the retention of old established values" (Joyce, 1995, p. 1).

Oman started from nothing, and significantly later than the other the Gulf States. It was the last of them to open up to the contemporary world, due to the Sultan Said bin Taymur Al Said’ policy of isolation which had shut Oman off from the rest of the world (Peterson, 2004). That policy severely restricted education, foreign travel, and foreign media. Foreign visitors were rare, with the exception of British military personnel who assisted in quashing the 1950s rebellions throughout the interior of Oman (Miller, 1997; Peterson, 2004). Although he accepted this assistance, Sultan Said firmly resisted the British push for liberalisation and development (Peterson, 2004). Even after Sultan Said's succession, his son
Sultan Qaboos was slow to allow foreigners access to Oman (Miller, 1997; Peterson, 2004). This situation changed in the late 1990s when Oman began to look to the tourism industry for income supplementary to their natural resources of oil and gas (Peterson, 2004). Restrictions on tourist visas were gradually relaxed, and Oman became an increasingly popular tourist destination for European and Gulf citizens. There was a recorded entry of a half a million tourists in 1998 and a steady increase in the following years (Peterson, 2004; Valeri, 2015). One would expect that these events would encourage swift exposure to Western ideas, thereby increasing the visibility of the traditional culture–contemporary world intersection.

In addition, Oman along with Bahrain, is known as one of the “poorer desert cousins” of the other Gulf States in terms of oil production and income (Peterson, 2004, p. 125). By the early 2000s, it was apparent that oil income in Oman, even at its highest, is hardly sufficient to provide the financial growth and economic and social development the nation needed (Peterson, 2004). This lack, coupled with the prediction in the mid 1990s that Oman’s oil might run out within a few decades (O’Reilly, 1998), meant that Oman needed to encourage greater Western-led private-sector investment to diversify its economy away from oil. That need is arguably more urgent than in the other oil-producing Gulf States.

The importance of this need for diversity was further highlighted by the growing pressures brought on by a population boom. One such pressure was the need to provide employment opportunities for a large number of young people joining the labour market. Oman was recorded as having one of the youngest populations in the world in 2013, with 56 per cent of their citizens being younger than 25, and 45 per cent being younger than 20 (Valeri, 2015).

For Oman to redirect its economy away from a petroleum base and toward a prosperous post-oil economy, it needed to consider how to position itself within the international political–economic world order, where superpowers, particularly Western superpowers, held control
over economic and trade relations. Oman had substantial population growth, excessive reliance on expatriate labour, and a work ethic within its citizen population that shows traits of a mix of mudir, and a lack of enthusiasm and determination (O’Reilly, 1998).

As a result, in 1995 a 25-year economic program was introduced called Oman 2020. Its main goals were economic diversification, and human resource development and employment.

As a part of the economic diversification plan, Oman was determined to reduce the oil industry’s share in its GDP from 41 per cent in 1996 to 9 per cent in 2020, and to increase non-oil industries' contribution to GDP from 7.5 per cent to 29 per cent. To achieve shift, they planned to implement a stage-by-stage development of the gas, tourism, and non-oil industries. The central contributor to the growth of non-oil industries that underpinned this plan was the development of the private sector, which was directed towards attracting foreign capital while supporting the role of local companies already in place in the sector (Valeri, 2015).

In terms of addressing the employment needs of its citizens and the human resource needs of its industries, the number of citizens employed in the public and the private sectors would have to rise. There was a concomitant commitment to increase employment in the private sector very significantly from “7.5 per cent to 75 per cent by 2020” (Valeri, 2015, p. 6). This increase would be supported by an increase in citizens' scholarships to study (largely) at Western higher-education and vocational-training institutions (Perterson 2004; Valeri, 2015). The government's employment-localisation policy of Omanisation, aimed by 2020 to reduce to 15 per cent the share of expatriates within the population (Valeri, 2015).

However by 2011, the Omanisation policies had not achieved the expected outcomes; and the diversification process to produce new sources of income had been slow. By this time, many Omanis had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the side effects of this process of transition,
such as the ever-increasing unemployment rate and growing social inequality (Valeri, 2015). There was uncertainty about the long-term changes that opening up and developing the private sector would have on the traditional Omani identity.

This brings us to an even more significant issue in the complicated and swift planned transition for this traditional society. In 2011, the overflow effect of the Arab Spring saw Oman as the only Gulf State to experience protests as a result of this transitional clash between a traditional and a modern society. The deep-rooted sense of social malaise experienced by Omanis floated to the surface as a warning sign of the possible beginning of a shift in the mentality of the younger Omanis. They appeared to be increasingly frustrated with high levels of unemployment and lower incomes, particularly in comparison to their closest neighbour the UAE. During the 2011 protests, it was estimated that the national unemployment rate was higher than 20 per cent, and for those nationals aged between 18 and 24 it was greater than 25 per cent (Valeri, 2015).

Although high levels of unemployment seemed to be the obvious factor which caused the situation to boil over into protest, it was also an outcome of the combination of several underlying and interconnected contributing factors. The privatisation policies as the state shifted in the direction of developing the private sector seemed to be adding to the high levels of unemployment, rather than decreasing them. The result was growing anxiety over the loss of potential security that traditional government jobs provided, and Omanis had to depend on themselves to find private-sector jobs. The population had come to depend on the government to employ them as a result of the model that the State previously implemented using oil revenue to ensure its legitimacy.

Not surprisingly then, there was growing social and economic inequality between members of the society with secure government employment—with those who were business and
government elites reaping the riches of private-sector development contracts—and those lacking the skills needed in the private sector. Many Omanis had graduated from an inadequate and incompatible education system, and were left to compete for the insufficient number of good jobs on offer. This was exacerbated by influential Omani business elites consistently employing people based on personal interests, rather than in accordance with the Omanisation policies and the needs of society (Valeri, 2015).

The protests seem to indicate that the younger generation of Omanis are increasingly less willing than their parents' generation to act as the nation’s ultimate guardians and defenders. This is not surprising, as the vast majority were born after Sultan Qaboos became the monarch in 1970 (Valeri, 2015). What is also not surprising—given the fact that the Gulf State of Oman has a traditional culture—is that it resisted change and emphasised compliance and dependence similarly to all other Middle Eastern and Gulf societies. Oman's immediate reality experienced a severe collision between their traditional world and a more contemporary one. Could it be that the Omanis, more so than members of other Gulf States, experienced a heightened sense of uneasiness regarding where their traditional Middle Eastern society fits in today's increasingly globalised world?

A notable occurrence at the time of the protests was the differing responses from locals to the calls by tribal leaders for calm (Valeri, 2015). Those different responses point to the potential for a divide within Oman society between the need for stability—the sociocultural values of a traditional culture—and change brought about by economic, social and educational needs, and business technological advances. During the protests, the State looked to tribal leaders to help alleviate the people's frustration and restore the status quo within society, as it historically always did. With the previous extension of generous incomes to tribal leaders as State employees, to encourage their loyalty to the state, tribal leaders were in the role of intermediaries between the tribes’ members and the State, which most often skewed towards
the State. The objective has always been to play to the emotions of 'belonging to ones tribe' to obtain compliance and inhibit the development of wider political movements. This manipulation of local identities has proved effective in the largely government-employed interior 'Dakhiliyah' region of Oman. In the 'Batinah' region however, where the social fabric suffered from the swift, yet poorly executed modernisation of the northern provincial town of Sohar into an industrial city in the early 2000s, the use of tribal leaders to calm protestors and pledge government security-forces jobs to young Omanis proved fruitless (Valeri, 2015). The response from protestors is significant for this research, as it seems to signal a decline in the respect and authority given to tribal leaders, which in turn indicates a possible shift away from the traditional values of Omani society.

Although the protests in Oman clearly cannot compare to the intensity and scale to which the other uprisings were seen across the Middle East in non-Gulf State countries, they hold an underlying meaning which researchers must uncover. Has Middle Eastern society outgrown the traditional approach from the political and the cultural elites? Are the younger generation of Omanis less willing to trust in the authoritarian, paternalistic approach to guide them into the future, and less willing to conform to the traditional tribal systems? If so, is a result of this collision between traditional and contemporary society the emergence of a cultural-values evolution? What can such a collision reveal to us about the underlying relationship between this traditional culture and employee attitudes? Is this fierce collision with the current reality a tug of war between the stability of the traditional way of doing things and the change needed to develop into a contemporary State to serve the needs of its people a sign of a new wave of change in Oman and the wider Middle East?

This thesis sheds light on these matters by using Oman as the vantage point from which to explore the ways in which individuals from a traditional Middle Eastern culture cognitively and emotionally encounter and make sense of Western business ideas at their workplaces.
Given this state of affairs, one might expect that the collision between traditional culture and contemporary Western business ideology would be pronounced in its effects on the attitudes of Omanis towards the workplace in 2014, which was the data-collection year for this thesis.

1.14 CONCLUSION

This background goes a long way towards constructing an understanding of the cultural, political, and economic history and the current dynamics within the Gulf Region—such as the strong dependence of citizens upon, and compliance of citizens towards, their governments—along with the emergence of a collision between the traditional and the contemporary which the region is experiencing. The contextual and historical overview also helps to explain why the question as to what is really happening within the Gulf States at the traditional sociocultural values–Western business ideology intersection is important. Gulf States culture has been influenced by not only tribal traditions and Islamic beliefs and values but also by the more recent conjunction of the rentier state and capitalism, resulting from globalisation, and the recognition that dependence on oil cannot be sustained in the long term.

This thesis explores whether the growing presence of multinational corporations and international economic and business-development projects are visible embodiments of a deeper shift in Gulf society, which perhaps is the beginning of a more fundamental transformation in the cultural fabric of that society. Such a transformation would in effect be an instance of values evolution, spurred by a collision of the traditional and the contemporary. Another possibility however, is that the apparent values evolution is no more than a desert mirage.

This thesis argues that much like a desert mirage, the character of what the author expected to see in the empirical interview data (negative attitudes towards the contemporary workplace)
and what the author initially thought she saw in that data (positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace) could not be trusted. Analysing and interpreting the empirical interview data eventually revealed underlying processes which account for what occurs at the individual person level due to interaction between culture and self-concept, when individuals experience and are confronted by the intersection of Middle Eastern traditional beliefs and values and contemporary Western business and organisational practices. By providing that account, this thesis discovers and articulates a missing link that has interpretive importance for understanding the contemporary Middle East and the process of values evolution.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review for this thesis is in two parts, each with its own focus and chapter. The primary research question being addressed in the thesis as a whole is:

What is the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace?

This chapter, Chapter Two, is part one of the literature review and is designed to explore and discuss key issues relevant to the research problem which the primary research question will later address. Those key issues are: 1) issues suggested in extant literature which may be arising in Gulf countries due to the collision between local culture and Western management practices; 2) possible lessons from previous theory and research into how culture influences organisational behaviour in a more general sense; and 3) the current knowledge about the relationship between national cultures and workplace attitudes.

Starting this research with what is currently known regarding cultural influences on organisational behaviour and workplace attitudes, particularly in the Gulf region, enabled the researcher to locate this inquiry within the extant body of theory and empirical research.

Chapter Three is in effect Part Two of the literature review and discusses the ideas, theories, and debates central to the conceptualisation and study of culture. These debates include the genesis and nature of cultural values; the cross-cultural comparative approach to understanding and researching culture; whether culture is static or dynamic; as well as the cultural-change and values evolution perspective on culture. Chapter Three is designed to
identify the explanatory power of different ways of theorising culture, which will matter greatly when the author has to make sense of her empirical data.

2.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM-RELATED LITERATURE

The extant political and organisational literature suggests that cultural and political contexts in which government policies are developed encourage conformity with cultural norms. These norms carry over to organisational behaviour, and represent a considerable obstacle for organisational performance and development when new practices require a departure from those norms (Common, 2011; Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001). Western organisational practices are said to have a low level of compatibility with Gulf State norms (Rice, 2003; Common, 2011; Jones, 2007) and conflicting local and Western values have been identified as a source of inconsistent organisational behaviour (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). The literature indicates that although Gulf organisations may demonstrate poor adaptability to many Western organisational practices—due to difficulties associated with Western cultural-value orientations embedded in these practices—not all Gulf employees necessarily resist Western-style organisational practices. Therefore, in countries such as the Gulf States that do not accord with the Western conceptions of organisational behaviour, analysing the cultural context is necessary to understand the organisational behaviour (Common, 2011).

2.2.1 The Impact of Gulf Culture on Organisational Behaviour

Gulf cultural characteristics have been found to influence organisational-leadership development (Common, 2011; Abdalla and Al-Homoud 2001), human resources practices (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Common, 2011), management practices (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Ali et al., 1995; Common, 2011; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001), decision-making (Ali et al., 1995; Ali, 2008), training practices and programs (Abdalla and Al-
Homoud, 1995; Jones, 2008; Aljbour, 2010), knowledge exchange and creation (Al-Adaileh and Al-Atawi 2011; Rice, 2003), and overall organisational performance and development in the public and the private sectors (Common, 2011; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Ahmad, 2012).

Ali (1990) suggested that the mix of Bedouin tribal tradition and Islamic beliefs and values extends to Gulf organisations, thus reinforcing local cultural norms. This particular cultural configuration produces an authoritarian management style within a highly centralised and authoritarian structure, regardless of the organisational strategy. Consequently, Gulf managers experience conflict between the Islamic consultative ideal and the cultural reality of authoritarian processes and centralised decisions (Ali, 2008). This conflict results in doublethink, whereby managers adopt a pseudo-consultative decision-making style (Ali, 2008) which is authoritarian in disguise, as it is designed to persuade subordinates to accept decisions that have already been made (Ali, 2008; Hammoud, 2011).

Rice (2003) suggested that the culturally influenced attitudes and behaviours of Gulf employees hinder knowledge-sharing and knowledge-creation, thereby limiting organisational performance. Negative organisational outcomes were said to be a result of the importance given to maintaining the status quo, the unwillingness to accept responsibility, the need to maintain tradition, the resistance to self-management, and the avoidance of risk - along with authoritarian, centralised, hierarchical, and bureaucratic management approaches (Rice, 2003).

Importantly for this research, there is a striking contrast between authoritarianism, risk avoidance, favouritism, and the importance of maintaining face when those attitudes and behaviours are compared to Western workplace values of diversity, fairness, egalitarianism, and collaborative problem-solving. Not surprisingly, an earlier study of expatriate and host
country managers in the UAE identified a significant variance in cultural-value orientations between expatriate and host country managers, resulting in differing management approaches and decision-making styles (Ali et al., 1995).

### 2.2.2 Incompatibility of Western-designed Management Practices

Rice (2003) acknowledged that her finding of Gulf attitudes and behaviours, which she identified as being limiting to organisations and knowledge-creation, are defined as such from the perspective of Western-designed theories and approaches (Rice, 2003). She argued that the specific cultural context needs to determine suitable approaches to ensure the successful implementation of knowledge-creation in non-Western cultures (Rice, 2003).

It has been noted in the literature that a lack of management-education packages which have been customised to align with the Gulf cultural context may be the reason why management programs that are found to be very successful in the West are hardly used in Kuwait (Adballa and Al-Homoud, 1995). Similarly, a study investigating the implementation of the total quality control (TQC) management program in the Gulf region, identified a low level of acceptance of the program, due to the Gulf’s hierarchical culture and a cultural type in general that is inconsistent with TQC (Manochehrehri, 2012).

A study of the response of UAE bank trainees to a Western-designed conflict-resolution training program provided a clear demonstration of the incompatibility of Western organisational practices and the Gulf culture (Jones, 2008). Jones’ findings indicated an overwhelming trainee use of ‘compromising and avoiding’ modes of conflict resolution. These modes are considered to have the greatest negative impact upon organisations, causing losses in sales, unprofitable customer relationships, and an overall deterioration in business performance (Jones, 2008). Trainee behaviour was completely inconsistent with the intended outcomes of the training program due to culturally based resistance (Jones, 2008).
There is a strong consensus in the literature reviewed here that members of a traditional Middle Eastern culture such as that of Oman are likely to experience difficulty with management practices that reflect a different culture—in this case, Western culture. This led the researcher to expect that negative employee attitudes towards Western workplace practices would be found among her interviewees.

2.2.3 The Gulf’s Need for Both Change and Stability

Conflicting local sociotraditional and Western values have been identified as a source of inconsistent organisational attitudes and behaviour (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). This inconsistency is said to be the result of the Gulf region’s transitional stage of development: a stage characterised by swift economic prosperity from oil, increased education, and rising exposure to Western ideas all occurring within a culture that is resistant to change, and which emphasises the importance of tradition. Consequently, the Gulf region faces the dilemma of needing and seeking both change and stability (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 1995; Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001).

An example of this dilemma at play within organisations is the enthusiastic introduction of contemporary Western management approaches, organisational design, and technology by managers in their attempt to improve employee and organisational performance (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). At the same time however, organisations strive to maintain organisational behaviours that are consistent with the social norms of traditional tribal culture (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001).

The suggestion by some researchers that the developments in the economy, education, and global exposure have together brought about some slow acceptance of contemporary organisational values (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001), raises the question of whether Gulf cultural values are changing as a result of these developments, or whether the change is
superficial and limited to workplace situations. Importantly, extant research literature indicates that although Gulf organisations may demonstrate poor adaptability to many Western management practices, not all Gulf employees resist Western-style management practices. This heterogenous response supports Ali (1990; 2008), who pointed out that a true understanding of management culture in the Gulf region can only arise from the examination of the conditions that drive change - in the economy, education, and technology – and the forces and factors that encourage stability in culture and tradition; along with an appreciation of the constant rivalry between groups. This local constellation of forces and factors explains the need to empirically and qualitatively research the actual effects of economic, technological, and educational developments in relation to Gulf culture and organisational behaviour.

This inquiry’s examination of employee attitudes towards the workplace is, in effect, an examination of the collision between stability - the sociocultural values of a traditional culture - and change brought about by the importation and application of Western management practices as a result of advances in globalisation, economy, business, education and technology.

### 2.2.4 Need for Further Research

The limited extent and geographical narrowness of existing Gulf research justifies the need for further research. The existing literature provides neither the depth nor the holistic approach needed to explore, explain, or provide adequate recommendations for coping with the problems arising in Gulf organisations as a result of the crossvergent situation that the region is currently facing.
Many other researchers have called for a more sustained and sophisticated approach to researching the ways in which Gulf States’ culture influences workplace attitudes and behaviour. These authors have called for the following research agenda:

(a) a comprehensive study of the Gulf culture and its influence on organisational behaviour (Ali et al., 1995);

(b) an investigation of the relationship between Gulf culture and organisational behaviour, particularly to enable understanding of the positive and negative influences of Gulf culture on effective organisational knowledge-creation, and an investigation of the Gulf cultural influence on knowledge-exchange relationships and organisational performance (Al-Adaileh and Al-Atawi, 2011);

(c) the customisation of Western organisational training programs in the Gulf context so as to better reach intended outcomes (Jones, 2008);

(d) the development of Gulf leadership and management approaches based on positive cultural characteristics of local social leaders (Common, 2011).

(e) the design of culturally specific Gulf organisational and management approaches, given that the cultural influences at the root of organisational concerns are unlikely to change in the near future (Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001), especially in Gulf States that uphold traditional cultural values in spite of globalisation, economic prosperity, and increasing access to global markets (Common, 2011; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001);

(f) an investigation into the possibility that Gulf culturally specific management approaches built around the Bedouin tribal characteristics are likely to promote positive organisational outcomes (Rice, 2003).
The contemporary literature emphasises the clear need for future research and stresses the importance of accurate cultural value orientations in the examination of organisational behaviour and management practices (Ali et al., 1995; Rice, 2003). There have been only two cultural value orientation dimension studies related to the Gulf countries (Hofstede, 1983; Attwaijri and Al-Muhaiza 1996). However, neither of these studies adequately or comprehensively represents the current Gulf culture (Al-Nashmi and Syd Zin, 2011; Alkailani 2012).

2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Previous organisational studies suggest that societal culture largely determines an organisation’s culture, as a society's culture shapes organisational values and norms and guides employee behaviour, thereby influencing organisational practices, objectives, and outcomes (Srivastava, 2000; Hofstede, 1998; Adler, 2002; Dartey-Baah, 2013; Shuaib, 2012; Sparrow and Wu, 1998). Cultural psychology offers an explanation for this phenomenon because it recognises the role of culture in shaping the human mind and human behaviour.

2.3.1 Cross-cultural Psychology Research

Cultural psychology makes the strong claim that culture and the human psyche are mutually constitutive (Triandis, 1989; Markus and Kitayama, 1991, 1993, 2003; Schweder, 1991; Nibett, 2003; and Fiske et al., 1998). This co-constitution exists because shared cultural values play a central part in human cognitive, emotional, and social functioning (Cooper and Denner, 1998). Cultural psychology’s study of the impact of culture on the human psyche has identified culturally based variances in self, mind, emotion, and motivation that result in differing attitudes and behaviour across cultures (Schweder, 1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, 2003). Markus and Kitayama (1993) claim that this “cultural shaping of

2.3.2 Cross-cultural Organisational Behaviour Research

Cross-cultural organisational-behaviour literature suggests that cultural values play a considerable role in shaping organisational behaviour, which in turn influences organisational practices and outcomes (Adler, 2002; Gelfand, al et., 2007; Kirkman et al., 2006; Kirkman, 2009; Khatri, 2009; Erez and Earley, 1993, 1997; Bhagat and Steers, 2009 McFarlin, and Sweeney, 2013; Gelfand et al., 2007). Research in the field of cross-cultural organisational behaviour often uses cultural value orientations to identify the relationship between culture and organisational behaviour. Figure 2.1 illustrates how people express culture through values which shape their attitudes toward appropriate and effective behaviour (Adler, 2002).

Figure 2.1: How People Express Culture through Values

The reason why cultural value orientations explain the intricate interaction of values, attitudes, and behaviours exhibited by a society’s members (Adler, 2002) are fully explained in Part Two of the literature review (Chapter Three of this thesis); however, their importance is summarised here.

The importance of cultural-value orientations in shaping differences in organisational behaviour that then influence a wide range of organisational practices is emphasized in the literature. These organisational practices include selection and reward systems (Alder, 2002; Shuaib, 2011; Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997), communication and meeting behaviour (Adler, 2002; Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997; Kemp and Williams, 2013; Bagire, et al., 2015), superior and subordinate relationships (Adler, 2002; Khari, 2009; Gelfand et al., 2007), group dynamics (Adler, 2002; Gelfand et al., 2007; Shuaiba, 2011; Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997; Erez and Somech, 1996), leadership and decision-making, (Adler, 2002; Gelfand et al., 2007; Kirkman, 2009; Khari, 2009; Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997; Dartey-Baah, 2013; Sparro and Wu, 1998; Selvarajah and Meyer, 2008) negotiating, conflict styles and problem-solving (Adler, 2002; Gelfand et al., 2007; McFarlin and Sweeney, 2013; Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997; Dartey-Baah, 2013; Sparro and Wu, 1998), goal setting and achievement (Gelfand et al., 2007; Shuaib, 2012; Khatri, 2009; Erez and Earley 1993; 1997), and human-resource management practices (Dartey-Baah, 2013; Sparro and Wu, 1998; Gelfand et al. 2007; Khatri, 2009; Aycan et al., 2000).

The effect of differing cultural orientations on these practices has been shown to influence the ability to obtain and develop resources which influence organisational performance (Li, 2001 Khatri, 2009; Dartey-Baah, 2013). It has been suggested that if organisational practices support the emic (cultural-specific) elements of organisational behaviour, resources can be developed to encourage performance (Gelfand et al., 2007). Research by Newman and Nollen (1996), Earley (1994), and Harzing et al., (2011) found superior organisational performance
in organisations that align human-resources practices with cultural values. This was particularly evident in employee attitudes, motivation levels, return on assets, and sales (Newman and Nollen, 1996). For this reason, rather than adopting culturally ill-fitting foreign organisational approaches, organisations should promote practices that match the features of their society’s cultural-value orientations (Ghosh, 2011)—for instance, the paternalistic leadership style in collective high-power distance cultures (Ghosh, 2011; Gelfand et al., 2007).

2.3.3 Attitudes across Cultures

Research by Kirkman and Shapiro (2001) found that the relationship between employee cultural values and job attitudes mediated the resistance of employees towards self-managing teams and the differences in the level of job satisfaction and commitment across cultures. Their findings suggested that “employees do resist management initiatives when these clash with their cultural values” (Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001, p. 565). These researchers call for research to examine the relationship between cultural values and employee workplace attitudes further, and for researchers to look for factors that play a mediating role in this relationship when researching management initiatives, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

Farh et al. (2004) emphasised the importance of the relationship between employee cultural values and workplace attitudes in their study on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) in China. They found that attitudes about what is considered to be OCB differ across cultures as a result of culture-informed attitudes regarding the behaviours which contribute to organisational effectiveness. For instance, the high value given to the cultural value of collectivism in China encourages an attitude that is counterproductive to organisational effectiveness. As a result, interpersonal harmony represents a behaviour central to OCB in
China. The results of their findings “suggested that Chinese formulation of OCB differs from that in the West, and is embedded in its unique social and cultural context” (Farh et al., 2004, p. 241).

The findings of the Kirkman and Shapiro, (2001) and Farh et al. (2004) shed light on the importance to international managers and cross-cultural management researchers alike to continue to pay attention to the relationship between cultural values and employee attitudes.

**Table 2.1: Findings of Organisational Behaviour Research across Cultural Orientations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational practice or behaviour</th>
<th>Individualist or low power distance cultural orientation</th>
<th>Collectivist or high power distance cultural orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job autonomy and employee empowerment</td>
<td>increased motivation and commitment</td>
<td>decreased motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhanced performance</td>
<td>negative impact on performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice and inquisitiveness</td>
<td>important for motivation</td>
<td>not important for motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>motivated by the promotion of success</td>
<td>motivated by prevention to deter failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-setting</td>
<td>more motivated by challenging goals</td>
<td>more motivated by reachable, modest goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participative goal-setting increased commitment and performance</td>
<td>assigned goals increased commitment and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions</td>
<td>more motivated by participative decision-making</td>
<td>more motivated by decisions being made by a trusted leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling shame</td>
<td>de-motivating: negative impact on performance</td>
<td>motivating: a positive impact on performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to conflict</td>
<td>direct confrontational attitude</td>
<td>indirect non-confrontational attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>forced solution</td>
<td>compromise or avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rational persuasion</td>
<td>emotional persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivated by individual rights or self-interests</td>
<td>motivated by interdependent self, social reasonability, and maintaining harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work teams</td>
<td>motivated by increased job complexity and autonomy</td>
<td>de-motivated by increased job complexity and autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team cooperation and trust</td>
<td>motivated by functional factors</td>
<td>motivated by socio-emotional factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership types</td>
<td>motivated by participative leadership and improved profitability</td>
<td>participative leadership did not improve profitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>motivated by paternalistic leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employee attitudes are essential for understanding employee motivation and behaviour and their relationship with organisational performance across cultures (Adler, 2002; Gelfand et al., 2007; Erez and Earley, 1993, 1997; Bhagat and Steers, 2009; McFarlin, and Sweeney, 2013). The Gelfand et al. (2007) comprehensive study of cross-cultural organisational behaviour demonstrates that different cultural-value orientations produce varying employee perceptions and attitudes across cultures, which change the meaning and purpose of organisational goals and behaviour (Gelfand et al., 2007). This was evidenced in the organisational behaviour outlined in Table 2.1.

2.3.4 Organisational Behaviour Research Limitations and Culturally-informed Employee Attitudes

The Gelfand et al. (2007) findings—among others, Bhagat and Steers (2009); Shuaib (2012); Erez and Earley (1993)—indicate that neither management practices nor motivational practices are appropriate for organisations across all cultural contexts. Cultural-psychology research has shown that organisational theories developed in one culture are not applicable across all cultures, as they are limited to predicting and explaining the behaviour of that particular culture (Markus and Kitayama, 2003; Schweder, 1991). They demonstrate that organisational behaviour research is most beneficial when the effect of culture that lies beneath the research is considered.

Singh et al. (2012) noted that organisations with increased employee-engagement and motivation experience enhanced performance and superior overall outcomes. In relation to the Gulf region, they stressed that to increase employee engagement and motivation, human-resource development practices need to be improved (Singh et al., 2012). However, the central importance of culture is found in organisational-behaviour research, and there is an overwhelming indication found in the Gulf organisational literature of the influence of the
local culture on workplace attitudes and behaviour (Ali et al., 1995; Al-Adaileh and Al-Atawi, 2011; Jones, 2008; Common, 2011; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Rice, 2003; Attwaijri and Al-Muhaiza 1996; Al-Nashmi and Syd Zin, 2011; Alkailani 2012). The identification and understanding of Gulf culturally informed employee attitudes seems vital to the improvement of all organisational practices that aim to motivate Gulf employees' behaviour towards enhanced performance.

2.3.5 Cultural Self-Representation

We turn to Cultural Self-representation theory because it provides an understanding of consistency and variance in workplace attitudes and behaviour, within and across cultures, through its contention that a person’s self-concept is the mediating link between culture and workplace behaviour (Bhagat et al., 1995; Earley and Erez 1997; Erez and Earley 1993). According to this theory, the self is shaped to a large extent by cultural values and this generates needs of self-enhancement, self-efficacy, and self-consistency which work to maintain a positive level of self-esteem and well-being (Bhagat et al., 1995; Earley and Erez 1997; Erez and Earley 1993). The importance of developing and maintaining self-esteem is emphasised by social-identity theory which argues that “individuals tend to affirm the continuity of their self-concepts by drawing positive self-comparisons with the groups they identify with and by distancing themselves from those groups that negatively reflect on their self-concept” (Banks et al., 2016, p. 326). Cultural values function as the self’s criteria for interpreting the meaning of managerial practices and evaluating the importance of the rewards on offer in terms of self-derived need satisfaction (Erez and Earley 1993, 1997). Figure 2.2 illustrates the interrelationships between self-concept, culture, managerial practices, and employee attitudes and behaviour.
Differing cultural-value orientations generate different self-constructs across cultures (Erez and Earley, 1993; 1997). Therefore in Chapter Six—to bring to surface the underlying explanation for the findings of this research—the researcher pays particular attention to the interaction between Omani traditional cultural values and the Omani ‘self-concept’ in the development and expression of Omani social identity. This is done to illuminate the intra-personal and social processes which combine to produce employee workplace attitudes.

To conclude this part of the literature review, the approach in this thesis to arriving at a thick description and rich understanding of culturally informed Gulf employees' attitudes towards the workplace involves taking the extremely complex nature of the local culture and its collision with Western management practices into consideration—bearing in mind that culture and the psyche mutually constitute each other (Markus and Kitayama, 1998). Employee attitudes towards acceptance of or resistance to Western management practices are
shaped by cross-cultural differences, and by the interrelationship between self-concept, culture, and employee attitudes (Bhagat et al., 1995; Earley and Erez 1997; Erez and Earley 1993). This research takes into consideration the interplay between cultural, socio-cognitive, and contextual variables at the individual level that may be required to determine and explain culturally informed Gulf employees' attitudes towards the contemporary workplace (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002). Chapter Two has established the research problem concerning the acceptance and rejection of Western management practices and the underlying relationship between culture and workplace attitudes. It showed that within Gulf workplaces (and indeed in any workplace anywhere) the ways in which employees experience management’s attempts to motivate them, is unavoidably and significantly mediated by the nature of that culture. As a result Chapter Three turns to the conceptualisation of culture.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW PART TWO

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There has recently been a dramatic rise in new approaches to thinking and theorising about culture. Attendant upon that increase are questions about ways in which new theories might be competing with or be complementary to older theories. Has the Hofstede value-dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001), for instance, been made redundant by the constructive-dynamic theory of culture (Hong et al., 2000)? Or is Hofstede's theory perhaps extended and enriched by the constructive-dynamic theory? Should theories about bicultural identities (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002), to take another example, be seen as applications of the dynamic constructivist approach, or as separate and distinct ways of theorising about culture? Should the cultural-change and values-evolution ways of theorising about culture be considered? Above all, what are the questions answered by these theories? And, do we need different theories for different questions?

The researcher’s review of the literature here in Chapter Three is designed to provide an informative overview and mapping of a set of cultural theories. The aim is to assess their explanatory usefulness in making sense of empirical data gathered from an exploration of the interplay between culture and organisational situations, in a part of the world where traditional culture is intersecting in challenging ways with Western management practices. In effect, this review of what is thought regarding the different ways of theorising on culture has enabled an understanding of the major theories, concepts, and recent theoretical developments that are needed to arrive at a conceptualisation of culture for this research. The review of the literature allowed the researcher to identify cultural theories that are important
for the construction of a typology to serve as an analytical framework during the initial analysis of her qualitative data. This is seen in the conclusion of Chapter Three.

3.2 CONCEPTUALISING CULTURE

The word ‘culture’ has been characterised by Williams (1985, p. 87) as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” Although culture has been researched for centuries by anthropologists and, more recently, in other disciplines such as psychology, education, business, management, and cross-cultural and organisational studies, there is no universally accepted definition of the term (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz; 1994). The culture literature presents a wide range of definitions emanating from different theoretical perspectives. This diversity is reflected in the Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) research which found 164 different definitions of culture. It is the complexity of culture itself, given that it is constituted by such a variety of different elements that makes it difficult to settle on which elements to include or omit. As a result, the culture literature needs to be reviewed so that a conceptualisation of culture which is most potentially relevant to the goals of this research can be decided upon.

One of the earliest definitions of culture was proposed by the anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1871, p. 1).

*Culture taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action.*
A much more recent attempt by Adler (2002) defined culture not as the laws of human thought and action but as a set of values that are held consciously and subconsciously. These values are beliefs that are embodied in norms of behaviour that are aligned with the morals, customs, and practices of a society: cultural norms shape feelings about right and wrong. Similarly, Hall (1976) asserted that “culture is not genetically inherited, and cannot exist on its own, but is always shared by members of a society” (p. 16).

Many cultural theories, based on differing theoretical foundations such as evolutionary biology, anthropology, linguistics, and sociology, have been developed with the intention of providing a focused, researchable concept of culture. Opposing conceptualisations range from ethnology to cultural determinism (Keesing, 1974). What have come to be seen as classical cultural theories, include the functionalist, functionalist-structuralist, historical-diffusion, ecological-adaptation, cognitive, and symbolic schools of thought (Allarie, 1984). Of these, the ecological-adaptation and symbolic theories will now be explored further, as they have are most relevant to this research, particularly the focus on values evolution.

### 3.2.1 Cultural Ecological-adaptation Theory

The ecological-adaptation theory is grounded in the evolutionary or ecological approach to cultures as adaptive systems. The main assumptions of this school of thought are that culture is a system of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings through reciprocal interplay and causality (Keesing, 1974). This reciprocal relationship acknowledges that the environment plays a shaping role in the evolution of culture (Allarie, 1984). Cultural change is primarily a process of adaptation that is similar to natural selection, and is directed by the same rules as biological adaptation (Keesing, 1974). Environmental factors such as technology, economics, and social organisation are the most adaptive dimensions of culture. The adaptive changes typically
originate in these dimensions and spread out into other areas of a society’s form of life (Keesing, 1974).

Consistent with this line of thought is the more recent cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution (Ralston, 2008), which is a central focus of this inquiry. As mentioned in Chapter One, and returned to later in this chapter, the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution contends that cultural evolution and adaptation begin with the influence of faster-changing factors of technology, the economy, and politics on the slower-changing, traditional, sociocultural values.

These environmental factors have been repeatedly acknowledged as the primary systems for adaptive changes in culture (Keesing, 1974; Ralston, 2008). Research shows that increased wealth in China, for instance, due to economic growth, has changed the collective nature of society into a more individualist one (Yan, 2010). This change is evident in the impact of the Internet on almost all cultures around the world (Hofstede, 2011). There are many examples of such changes in modern history and the Gulf is a specific example, given the region’s major economic development due to the oil boom from the 1970s onwards, which significantly changed the lifestyle of people in the region. These economic developments brought about large changes for Bedouin tribes (the inhabitants of Arabia), as they moved from freely roaming the vast desert to urban life (Ali, 2008). This movement has slowly eroded the Bedouin traditional pattern of life, unavoidably altering their worldview (Ali, 2008).

The primary claim of the ecological-adaptation theory is that culture - being the medium through which humans adapt to their ecological surroundings in order to survive - amounts to natural selection (Keesing, 1974). History shows us that behaviour and cultures do indeed change, adapt, and evolve. Beginning with the Stone Age, then the Neolithic period with a
developing agricultural society, through to the Industrial Revolution, and to globalisation, traditional aspects of previous cultures have vanished. This occurs because over time, the instrumental value of traditional cultures has decreased in relation to changes in their natural, economic, and technological environment. Although insightful, this purely ecological view limits our understanding of human culture to the need for survival, and neglects the importance of meaning.

### 3.2.2 Cultural symbolic theory

Geertz (1973) suggested that the ecological-adaptation theory says something important about - but not everything important - about human culture. He takes the concept of culture further by identifying the essence of culture as a system of symbols and signs that embody abstract meaning (Geertz, 1973). This theory defines “culture as the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action” (Geertz, 1973, p. 145). According to this perspective, culture is “an ordered system of shared and public symbols and meanings which give shape, direction and particularity to human experience” (Allarie, 1984, p. 221). Symbolic cultural theory asserts that culture should be looked for in the meanings shared by interacting social actors (Geertz, 1973).

Geertz (1973) provides the example of distinguishing between a 'wink and twitch' to demonstrate that by using 'thick description' to examine the symbolic system, behaviours become meaningful to an outsider. Differences in behaviour become clear, as the cultural meanings behind the behaviour - from which an accurate understanding of a particular culture can develop - are established (Geertz, 1973). Hofstede (1991) supports his view by noting that although practices are visible to an outside observer, their cultural meaning is invisible and lies in the interpretation of members of that particular society (Hofstede, 1991). Many elements of the Gulf region’s culture can only be understood by utilising symbolic theory.
because there are many expressions, behaviours, and objects that have deeper underlying cultural meanings for members of that culture.

A clear example of the symbolic meaning associated with an object is the ‘Agal’, a black circular cord headdress made from camel hair. Originally, the functional purpose of the Agal was to hold a long white cloth, the ‘Ghetra’, in place on a man’s head to protect him from the desert sun. However, the Aga also carries a significant underlying symbolic meaning, signifying a man’s respect. Chapter Seven presents the researcher’s experience of attaining insider status, and coming to understand the underlying cultural meanings of expressions, attitudes, behaviour, and objects within the Arab Gulf culture.

### 3.2.3 Conceptualising Culture from an International Management Perspective

For organisational researchers, culture has been defined in terms that echo Mechanistic thinking, as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede and Minkov 2010, p. 6). Edgar Schein, on the other hand, produced an account that echoes Ecological-adaptation Theory:

*a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems* (Schein 2010, p. 18);

Finally, House et al provide an account that echoes symbolic theory: “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations” (House et al., 2004, p. 15).
In addition to the various foundational theories outlined above, it is important to note that approaches to studying cultures fall into two significantly different categories: the etic and the emic. Etic studies focus on differences and similarities across cultures to understand “behaviour from a vantage external to the culture, in constructs that apply equally well to other cultures” using multi-setting, quantitative survey methods (Morris et al., 1999, p. 783). Emic studies, however, focus on one culture from the inside, to understand how members of that culture understand themselves, their lives, and their society, and qualitatively describe it from within that context (Varner and Beamer, 2011, p. 95; Morris et al., 1999).

3.3 THE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO CULTURE

The most popular etic approach to studying culture in international management research is the cross-cultural comparative approach, which is based on dimensions of cultural-value orientations. These dimensions are used to measure ‘cultural distance’ (differences and similarities) between and across cultures (Shenkar, 2001; Hofstede, 2001). The cross-cultural comparative approach is an etic approach, because it groups cultures into categories based on national boundaries, and the cultural-value dimensions used are considered to be universal (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 1999, 2004; Inglehart, 1998). Smith (1998) noted that examining values to understand cultural orientation is the predominant scholarly approach in management studies, and it has proved to be an encouraging one. Past studies have shown that cultural-value orientations are fundamental to identifying the cultural priorities of employees that directly relate to organisational behaviour and practices (Ali, 1995).

Over the past several decades, a variety of cultural-dimensions frameworks that use values to describe, examine, and compare cultural orientations have been produced (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Schwartz, 1994;
Inglehart, 1998; House et al., 1999). These studies have identified similarities and differences between cultures, based on cultural-value orientations in numerous countries. Three of the major cultural frameworks are explored below. They are the Hofstede cultural-dimensions model, the Schwartz values model, and the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project framework.

### 3.3.1 The Hofstede Model

Hofstede’s cultural-dimensions model was derived from a quantitatively based research project on work-related values of IBM employees in 72 countries. The project gathered data from 116 thousand questionnaires, from 88 thousand respondents, in 20 languages (Hofstede, 2001). Work-related values and behaviours of IBM employees were examined, and the data identified specific cultural dimensions that could be used to categorise similarities and differences among countries, based on value orientations (Hofstede, 2001). Validation of these dimensions was achieved through ecological factor analysis, based on 32 items whose values established the significance of specific dimensions through their correlations with geographic, economic, and social indicators (Smith et al., 1996).

The dimensions identified by Hofstede are:

- the power–distance dimension, which refers to the extent to which a society accepts unequal power distribution (Hofstede, 2001);
- the individualism versus collectivism dimension, which refers to the extent of a society’s loyalty towards self or the group (Hofstede, 2001);
- the uncertainty–avoidance dimension, which refers to a society’s tolerance and attitude towards uncertainty and risk (Hofstede, 2001);
- the masculinity versus femininity dimension, which describes a masculine society by its inclination for accomplishment, material possessions,
assertiveness, and competition, in contrast to a feminine society that values quality of life through cooperative, nurturing, and humble traits (Hofstede, 2001);

- the long-term versus short-term orientation dimension, which refers to a society’s preference to focus efforts either on the present and (or) past, or on the future (Hofstede, 2010); and

- the dimensions of indulgence versus restraint, which refers to the extent to which society allows relatively free gratification of human desires that are related to enjoying life and having fun (Hofstede, 2010).

These dimensions are measured on an index scale. Scores from the scale point to a country’s cultural-value orientations on each dimension. By using this model, Hofstede developed country scores of cultural-value orientations that compare countries and identify work-related values that highlight the differences between countries in relation to work attitudes and behaviour. The Hofstede cultural-dimensions model has been replicated many times through the use of the Hofstede values survey-module instrument to identify and measure cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2010).

3.3.2 The Schwartz Model

The Schwartz universal human-values model researches culture through values that were proposed by Shalom Schwartz (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995). The Schwartz values-model survey instrument was development based on the Rokeach value survey (Hofstede, 2011). The theoretical basis of this model is that values represent three social functions or “universal requirements of human existence: biological needs, requisites of coordinated social action, and demands of group functioning” (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995, p. 94). This model identifies and evaluates individual and societal-level value orientations relating to attitudes, behaviour, and social experience (Schwartz, 1999). At a societal level, Schwartz used 45 values that
were found to have cross-culturally equivalent meanings for the individual to identify the following value dimensions.

- The conservatism (otherwise known as embeddedness) dimension (Schwartz, 2006) refers to the cultural importance of maintaining the status quo, propriety, and restraint on actions disruptive to the traditional order.
- The intellectual-autonomy dimension refers to the cultural priority of the desirability of individuals to pursue their own ideas and intellectual directions independently.
- The affective-autonomy dimension refers to the cultural priority of the desirability of individuals to pursue affectively positive experiences independently.
- The hierarchy dimension refers to the cultural priority of the legitimacy of an unequal distribution of power and resources.
- The egalitarianism dimension refers to the cultural priority of voluntary commitment to promoting the welfare of others over selfish interests.
- The mastery dimension refers to the cultural priority of getting ahead through active self-assertion.
- The harmony dimension refers to the cultural priority of fitting harmoniously into the environment (Schwartz, 1999).

These seven value dimensions correspond to the following broader cultural-value dimensions identified by Schwartz. They are openness to change versus conservatism, and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. Conservatism, intellectual autonomy, and affective autonomy correspond to the openness to change versus conservatism on the dimension scale, and hierarchy, mastery, egalitarian commitment, and harmony correspond to the self-enhancement versus self-transcendence scale (Smith et al., 1996). Schwartz used his findings
to highlight the implications of prevailing cultural-value orientations on attitudes and behaviour within countries, including attitudes towards work (Schwartz, 1999; 2006).

3.3.3 GLOBE Project Framework

Another option in management studies is the GLOBE project led by Robert House. This project involved 170 researchers from 61 cultures. From 1994–1997, the project examined the relationships between societal culture, organisational culture, and organisational leadership to explain the impact and effectiveness of cultural variables on leadership and organisational processes (House, 1999). A significant focus of the GLOBE project was leadership, in terms of the extent to which leadership attributes and behaviours are universally or culturally contingent, and their correlation with effective leadership (Hofstede, 2011). The GLOBE framework consists of the following nine cultural dimensions.

- The assertiveness dimension refers to the degree to which individuals in societies are assertive, aggressive, and direct.
- The uncertainty–avoidance dimension refers to the extent to which members of a society tolerate uncertainty.
- The power–distance dimension refers to the degree to which members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally.
- The collectivism–I dimension (institutional collectivism) refers to the degree to which societal institutional practices encourage and reward the collective distribution of resources, and collective action, as opposed to individual distribution and individual action.
- The collectivism–II dimension (in-group collectivism) refers to the extent to which members of a society express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their groups, organisations, or families.
• The gender–egalitarianism dimension refers to the degree to which a society minimises gender role differences.
• The future–orientation dimension refers to the degree to which members of a society focus efforts on the future.
• The performance–orientation dimension refers to the degree to which a society encourages and rewards improved performance.
• The humane–orientation dimension refers to the extent to which a society encourages and rewards fair, altruistic, friendly, and caring behaviours (House et al).

GLOBE applies these dimensions to both societal and organisational levels, and differentiates between societal values and societal practices (House et al). That differentiation makes it possible to identify organisational behaviour related to cultural-value orientations.

The three cultural-dimensions frameworks presented above (Hofstede, Schwartz, and GLOBE) are valid alternatives for measuring cultural-value orientations across cultures. However, Hofstede argues that although the Schwartz values model and the GLOBE project framework are valid alternatives, they are largely consistent with the Hofstede model, and actually confirm its cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; 2011). Hofstede (2001; 2011) stated that the 1994 Schwartz country scores show considerable correlation with the IBM scores in the dimensions of individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty–avoidance.

In addition, Hofstede (2011) noted that, although the GLOBE project used a different approach, the bulk of the GLOBE data still demonstrated the structure of his original model. Further, seven of the GLOBE measures were found to have high correlations with Hofstede’s power–distance dimension, and with a further three factors with Hofstede’s uncertainty–avoidance, individualism, and long-term orientation dimensions (Hofstede, 2006, 2011).
Table 3.1 maps the similarities between the cultural-value dimensions of these three major dimensional approaches to studying culture.

**Table 3.1: Similarities of Major Cultural-Values Dimensions Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hofstede Dimensions</th>
<th>Schwartz Dimensions</th>
<th>GLOBE Project Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power distance</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Power distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism versus collectivism</td>
<td>Intellectual autonomy</td>
<td>Institutional collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective autonomy</td>
<td>In-group collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity versus femininity</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Gender–egalitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Human orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term orientation versus Short-term orientation</td>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>Future–orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence versus restraint</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance–orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.3.4 Limitations of the Dimensional Approach to Studying Culture**

Of the major dimensional frameworks, the Hofstede model has had the greatest impact on the field of international business research. This is because of its operationalisation of the study of culture, its wide replication, and its clarity and parsimony (Kirkman et al., 2006). It has advanced cross-cultural business research in areas such as organisational behaviour, performance, innovation, training design, conflict resolution, teamwork styles, leadership styles, management practices, and compensation practices (Khatri, 2009; Smith, 1998; Shuaib, 2012; Dartey-Baah, 2013; Michael, 1997).

Regardless of its popularity and praise, however, there is no denying that Hofstede’s work has been strongly debated, and it is not without limitations. Accordingly, this section will
consider criticisms of the Hofstede cultural-values dimensions model. The following concerns are not limited to Hofstede’s model, however, but rather relate also to issues that exist in other dimensional-based comparative approaches to studying culture.

A common criticism of Hofstede’s model is that it has a Western bias, since the model’s dimensions were chosen from a Western point of view. Hofstede (2010) acknowledges this; he states that during the IBM survey, the researchers’ way of thinking was culturally constrained. Hofstede and Bond (1988) tried to resolve this shortcoming with the addition of the fifth dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation. This, it was hoped, would reduce Western bias. Gergen et al. (1996) extend this criticism to all dimension-based cross-cultural comparative research, contending that the cultural dimensions do not completely capture the cultural uniqueness of non-Western cultures as they were developed mostly from a Westerner’s perspective.

A further criticism is that a survey is an ill-fitting choice for measuring culture. Schwartz (1999), among others, argues that to measure culture precisely, a survey instrument is not suitable; this is particularly so if its values are the variable being measured, since they are culturally subjective. Hofstede (2011) acknowledged that in validating the dimensions, etic quantitative data must be supported by an emic qualitative research approach to society. Such research would enable an understanding of what dimensional-value orientations mean for different societies (Hofstede, 2011). This point is a major reason why the inquiry presented in this thesis uses a qualitative method to capture the cultural meaning behind Omani employees’ experiences of and attitudes towards their workplace.

It has been acknowledged by Hofstede (2011) and Jones (2007) that some critics claim the Hofstede model is obsolete in a rapidly changing modern world. However, Hofstede (2011) argues that the reality of our changing world should not affect the merits of the dimensional
model. In fact, he asserts, the model remains useful for understanding the reasons for and implications of the changes that are occurring (Hofstede, 2011). Further, Hofstede (2011) suggests that many studies correlating the Hofstede country findings with related variables on a year-by-year basis find no weakening of these correlations (p. 21). Additionally, Jones (2007) noted that the bulk of Hofstede’s findings have held up over time. Kirkman et al. (2006) demonstrated this longevity with their examination of 180 empirical studies that have used the Hofstede cultural-values model for the period from 1980 to 2002. Their results show that, overwhelmingly, 148 of these studies identify culture as the central influence on a range of practices and outcomes (Kirkman et al., 2006). Nonetheless, this section of the literature review will later examine how the static cross-cultural comparative way of conceptualising and studying culture can be advanced by the dynamic and cultural-values evolution approach to conceptualising and studying culture.

Hofstede has been famously criticised by McSweeney (2000) for using nations as the units of analysis, since cultural boundaries do not necessarily match national borders. Most cultural-values dimensions approaches do use national boundaries to cluster cultures. The work of Hofstede et al. (1980; 1991; 2010) has been regarded by many as the most comprehensive and systematic framework in use. Hofstede (1998) draws attention to the fact that nations are the only means available to identify and measure cultural differences. Advocates of a national culture-analysis approach, such as Leung et al. (2011), argue that the national-boundary approach is still a useful unit of analysis because of its well-defined boundary.

Opponents such as Gould and Grein (2009), Oyserman et al. (2002), and Hong et al. (2003) argue that following Hofstede’s work; the national-boundary approach to culture has been overemphasised, thus increasing the possibility of its misuse. They do recognise, however, that the etic national-boundary approach to cross-cultural psychology has made a significant contribution to uncovering intercultural differences in cognition-based universal dimensions,
such as individualistic versus collectivistic (Hong et al., 2003; Hong and Chiu, 2001). For example there are differences in social-perception variables of attribution and categorisation between China and the United States (Hong et al., 2003). Nevertheless, they criticise assumptions of cultural homogeneity within nations, and the assumption that people within one nation internalise culture in the form of a broad set of motivational orientations which serves as a constant lens that colours all of their social perceptions. Essentially, the dimensional, national cross-comparison approach taken by Hofstede is criticised for treating nations as monolithic, and treating culture as largely static (Hong et al., 2003; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002).

Due to the complexity of the culture construct, the etic approach of national cultural-value orientations analysis inevitably overlooks the existence of multiple cultural identities being active within individuals; and the interaction between culture and situational factors which produce intra-cultural variations (Hong et al., 2003). Multiple cultural identities and intra-cultural differences can often be as significant as intercultural differences in international business research, such as in the case of diversified workforces and host-country nationals (Caprar, 2012; Brannen, 2009; Hong et al., 2003). It makes sense then, not to limit this inquiry to an etic approach of national cultural-value orientations analysis, given that the author is exploring organisational situations where traditional Middle Eastern culture is intersecting with new Western-infused management practices.

Some scholars argue that a national culture analysis can still provide a good starting point for research. Yeganeh and Su (2006) for instance, suggest that a national cultural-dimensions approach to measuring culture is very useful for providing an overview of culture at the macro level. However, this approach is of limited value in predicting and explaining the interplay between culture and organisational behaviour (Yeganeh and Su, 2006). For this reason, they, along with Osland and Bird (2000), recommend a sense-making strategy at the
micro level. Those considerations strengthen the researcher’s choice of adopting the qualitative research method and sense-making analysis of interview data used in this present inquiry.

3.4 THE DYNAMIC CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

The dynamic constructivist theory offers a different pathway to understanding culture, which allows for both a micro-level analysis and an emic approach. Apart from being less parsimonious, and saying much about the complexity of culture, this approach adopts a social-cognitive model of culture which adds the basic principles in social cognition to cultural psychology. These social cognition principles serve as a way to describe how culture affects social cognition and how cultural influences are mediated by basic social-cognitive processes. The dynamic constructivist approach differs from the traditional national-boundary approach to cross-cultural psychology in that it assumes that culture is "internalised in smaller pieces, in the knowledge systems that social perceivers use to interpret ambiguous stimuli" (Hong et al., 2003, p. 454).

The accumulation of culture in knowledge systems comes to be active in social cognition. In effect, the dynamic process of the activation of knowledge systems is a mechanism for cultural influence on social perception. To understand cultural influence which results in both intercultural and intra-cultural variations, the dynamic constructivist approach focuses on other kinds of boundaries that are very different from national boundaries. These are boundaries that arise from the interaction between culture and situation (Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong and Chiu, 2001). The dynamic constructivist approach elucidation of the interaction between culture and situation is central to the study of culture, and provides this research with an important insight. The crossvergent situation occurring in the Gulf region means that rather than just characterising the culture of
Oman, this present research must pay particular attention to the interaction between the traditional culture of Omani employees and Oman's workplace situations that are infused with the Western management practices that the workers experience.

The dynamic constructivist approach conceptualises culture as a loose network of domain-specific cognitive structures, rather than a general monolithic structure with an overall mentality, worldview, or value orientation. These domain-specific structures present cultural-knowledge systems that guide an individual’s cognition in interpreting the social world and deriving meanings. Accordingly, cross-cultural differences can be defined as differences in shared-knowledge systems between members of different cultural groups.

Members of a cultural group share the same cultural-knowledge system extensively, frequently using it in social interaction (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2000). An individual, after exposure to other cultures, can have more than one cultural-knowledge system available to them simultaneously, even if the systems contain conflicting theories (Hong and Chiu, 2001; Hong et al., 2000; Friedman et al., 2012; Hong and Mallorie, 2004). Knowledge systems can thereby constitute a form of biculturalism which allows frame-switching, where bicultural individuals shift between interpretive frames embedded in different cultures in response to cues from their social setting (Hong et al., 2000). To examine this interaction between culture and situation as a means of understanding how specific parts of cultural knowledge come to be activated in specific interpretive tasks causing frame-switching, the dynamic constructivist approach looks at the theory of the knowledge-activation concepts of availability, accessibility, and applicability (Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004).
3.4.1 Accessibility

The concept of accessibility emphasises that parts of an individual's knowledge differ in terms of accessibility. The more accessible a part of knowledge is, the more likely it is to rise to the top of the mental stack in the individual's mind and to guide interpretation. The greater accessibility of a particular part of knowledge depends on the extent to which it has been activated by recent use (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003). Using the concept of accessibility as a basis, Hong et al. (2000) proposed that when Chinese–American bicultural people enter either a Chinese setting or an American setting, the parallel (Chinese or American) cultural-knowledge system will be excited as a result of the images they encounter, and in so doing, that knowledge system will become more accessible (Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000). To demonstrate this, they conducted an experimental manipulation of the accessibility of cultural-knowledge systems known as cultural priming. They showed Chinese–American bicultural people pictures of Chinese or American cultural icons to increase the accessibility of cultural-knowledge systems. The findings were that this priming did indeed activate the parallel cultural-knowledge systems (Chinese or American) causing frame-switching. The outcomes were patterns of thoughts and behaviours representative of Chinese or American individuals (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Friedman et al., 2012).

There are situational differences in accessibility that influence the activation of the different knowledge systems that allow for frame-switching. Accessibility to cultural-knowledge systems is influenced by the level of chronic accessibility of a cultural-knowledge system; and that can vary from zero to high. A level of zero chronic accessibility presents a cultural-knowledge system that has never been internalised. A high level of chronic accessibility presents the cultural-knowledge system which has been most frequently employed in social interaction. Frequency makes it more easily accessed, as it is at the top of the mental stack. This phenomenon is known as ‘the chronically accessible knowledge system’. As a result of
its frequent use, this particular system provides effective cognitive shortcuts for sense-making (Hong et al., 2003, 2004; Hong and Mallorie, 2004).

In situations of limited cognitive resources and epistemic motivation to reduce ambiguity quickly, such as a high cognitive need for closure, bicultural individuals will be more likely to rely on the chronically accessible knowledge system, because access to the other cultural-knowledge system will most likely be slight. It will be argued later in the thesis that the Omani interviewees had a high cognitive need for closure as a consequence of the ‘ought-self’ which emerges from strongly rule-based cultures.

A study by Knowles et al. (2001) found that the typical cross-cultural attribution difference between Chinese and Americans appeared when a situation of limited cognitive resources was induced. This situation was induced by asking individuals to execute a concurrent secondary task. The results indicated that the difference between Chinese and American groups was due to the application of their different chronically accessible knowledge systems, as result of their limited cognitive resources (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003).

Additionally, in situations of a high need for closure, as a consequence of time pressure, Chiu et al. (2000) and Morris and Peng (1994) found that Chinese participants were prone to make group-agency conceptions; and American participants were prone to making individual-agency conceptions. The Chinese people were less likely to make internal attributions and the American participants were less likely to make external attributions (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002).

All three studies found that the cultural differences disappeared when the situational factors of limited cognitive resources and high cognitive need for closure were absent. This demonstrates the situational differences in accessibility that influence frame-switching. In
any given situation, bicultural individuals use the cultural-meaning system that is more accessible. However, the level of accessibility of a particular cultural-knowledge system can also be bounded by its applicability to the particular situation.

3.4.2 Applicability

Applicability is another principle of knowledge activation; it refers to situational applicability of culture-related behaviours in particular social contexts. Applicability is operationalised through mapping between the features of internalised cultural-knowledge systems and the attendant features of the particular social context, resulting in a conscious or unconscious selection of culture-related behaviours that are most fitting in that particular social situation (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003). In fact, social-context variables which can influence situational applicability may consist of the cultural-knowledge systems of participants in social interaction; the nature of the interpersonal situation, such as in-group versus out-group cultural norms; and high or low power–distance cultural norms (Hong and Mallorie, 2004).

Wong and Hong (2003), for example, proposed that the applicability of the cooperative norms of the Chinese cultural-knowledge system would be highly likely in social interactions between in-group members, but much less likely in social interactions with out-group members. To test this conjecture, they conducted a study on Chinese–American bicultural people to look for differences in cooperative versus competitive strategy choices. They used cultural priming to manipulate the accessibility of Chinese and American cultural-knowledge systems, before having participants engage in a prisoner’s dilemma game with partners. The biculturals were paired with either in-group members (friends), or out-group members (new acquaintances) as partners in the game. The aim was to manipulate the situational applicability of the Chinese cultural-knowledge system.
Results were that the selection of cooperation strategies was rather limited by those primed with American cultural icons. As expected, there was a much higher selection of cooperation strategies by those primed with Chinese cultural icons—but only in the in-group situation. In the out-group situation, participants conducted themselves much like the American-primed participants (Wong and Hong, 2003; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003). This example demonstrates the interaction between the level of accessibility and situational applicability in the activation of cultural-knowledge systems. Thus, it highlights the value of examining the interaction between culture and situation.

The dynamic constructivist approach involves discovering the boundary of culture’s cognitive consequences in the agreement between features of the cultural-knowledge systems and those of the judgment context. It provides new and advanced understandings of how individuals may possibly switch interpretive frames in response the perceptual demands of specific judgment situations, and thereby reach beyond the bounds of a single cultural perspective (Hong et al., 2003).

The dynamic constructivist approach to culture and its conceptualisation of culture differ from traditional cross-cultural psychology in that it positions itself as a complementary approach rather than a competing approach. It builds on earlier understandings and highlights new phenomena, such as frame-switching, bicultural, and multiple-cultural identities (Hong et al., 2000). Importantly, the dynamic constructivist approach to culture provides the present inquiry with a way of thinking about the conceptualisation and study of culture. As a result, this research takes into account the likelihood that the influence of culture on individuals in the workplace may be dependent upon the availability and applicability of particular cultural knowledge, and its accessibility in a particular context (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003).
3.4.3 Perfectly or Imperfectly Shared

Culture is traditionally thought to be shared by members of a community. However, Brannen (2009) asserts that culture is imperfectly shared because individuals’ fit with their national culture of origin varies in degree. The reason for this discrepancy is that the cultural attributes expressed by individuals reflect their ongoing particular cultural histories in various contexts and subgroup cultural identities (Brannen, 2009). These individual histories can lead to people with bicultural or multiple-cultural identities (Hong et al., 2000; Chao and Moon, 2005), and to different cultural stances (Caprar, 2011). Culture researchers have long recognised the likelihood of a person becoming considerably acculturated, or even completely assimilated, as a consequence of living abroad (Berry et al., 1989; Triandis et al., 1986). In line with the dynamic constructivist approach, upon returning home from living abroad, or from having strong exposure to more than one culture, an individual should have available cultural knowledge from the different cultural-knowledge systems. This availability will result in bicultural or even multiple-cultural identities (Friedman et al., 2012; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2002; Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Caprar (2010) takes this idea of biculturalism further. He suggests that it applies to host-country nationals (HCNs) working for Multinational Corporations (MNCs). He claims that the effect on HCNs from spending the bulk of their time within an organisational setting (culture) dissimilar to their own national culture would, in fact, make their working life and other elements of their lifestyle similar to living abroad (Caprar, 2010). His claim is not surprising, given that MNC subsidiaries are often considered to be extensions of their home cultures, as they bring culturally loaded practices to the host countries. The new local employees are expected to learn and follow the MNCs’ pre-existing norms and practices (Caprar, 2010). MNCs often encourage this form of assimilation by implementing extensive socialisation processes to ensure that new employees learn the relevant behaviours and
practices, and the values, beliefs, and social knowledge needed to carry out their new jobs (Schein, 1968; Schein, 1979).

For some time now, international organisations and foreign-owned and (or) managed companies have been recognised as places of cultural redefinition, where the features of the original national cultures can be suppressed as a result of the organisational cultures (Brannen and Salk, 2000). These organisational cultures cannot be separated from the employees who “carry” them (Van Maanen and Barley, 1985, p. 35). Therefore, it stands to reason that local employees may be contaminated by the organisational culture of their workplace (Caprar, 2010). A further aspect of the present inquiry then, will be examining Omani participants’ interview data looking for indications of assimilation into organisational culture – a key difference between the research presented in this thesis, and the research of Caprar, however, is that the Omani interviewees are experiencing Western based work practices in Oman organisations, not in multinationals.

3.4.4 Cultural Stances

The Caprar (2010) examination of the extent to which Romanian HCNs working in an American MNC reflect their national culture revealed a cultural profile of varying stances toward their national culture. His findings uncovered mixed feelings among his interviewees who expressed a sense of ambivalence, even negativity, toward their national culture. Some HCNs who strongly identified with a non-Romanian identity were categorised as either infatuated or converted types. The main difference between the two was that the latter were open to discussing advantages and disadvantages of the American and the Romanian cultures, whereas the former were only interested in discussing the advantages of working for an American MNC.
There were also those employees categorised as the reconciled type: these employees seem to have integrated positively in both cultures, thus demonstrating Romanian and American attributes. Others were categorised as the conflicted type: these were employees who struggled to define their cultural identity. It was as though they were caught between the two cultures, and felt a sense of respect for both the American and the Romanian cultures. In addition, Caprar identified the estranged type; these were ex-employees who disapproved of the rigid environment of the MNC, expressed a strong disrespect towards American culture, and at every opportunity emphasised positive aspects of Romanian culture. At the same time however, they displayed behaviour indicating that they were influenced by their experience with the MNC (Caprar, 2010).

The Caprar (2010) typology of infatuated, converted, and reconciled stances indicate that in this relationship between national culture and organisational culture, the latter may take primacy in certain situations. But what is there about those situations which can explain organisational primacy? According to Caprar (2010), HCN cultural-profile types seemed to be largely related to the HCNs' length of tenure in the MNC. HCNs seem to go through stages from initial infatuation at short tenure, to converted or conflicted at average tenure, to arriving eventually as reconciled at long tenure. Caprar (2010) suggested that the longer the tenure, the more likely it is that the reconciled stance will be adopted. However, this finding does not adequately explain the existence of the converted type and, more curiously, of the conflicted type among the long-tenured employees. Furthermore, there is the estranged type who seemed to reject the MNC and display a strong opposition to American culture. What is needed is a more theoretical explanation to assess why and how these differences in cultural stances exist.

The culture and situation interaction model of the dynamic constructivist approach, with its powerful determinants of intra-cultural variation among individuals and in specific situations,
has already shed light on a more theoretical understanding of the primacy of organisational culture over national culture in certain scenarios. However, it is plausible that other important contextual variables can expand this understanding. To bring these other contextual variables to the surface, an in-depth exploration of what is known as the Bicultural Identify Integration (BII) construct follows. By presenting this exploration, the literature review brings the researcher closer to a richly useful explanatory conceptualisation of culture and, later, to constructing a theoretical framework for this research.

3.4.5 Bicultural-identity Integration

The BII construct explains individual differences in the way bicultural people experience the intersection between their two cultures, and the complex way that they make sense of and organise their two cultural identities. Differences in BII moderate bicultural people's socio-cognitive behaviour regarding how they process cultural knowledge and use it to interpret social interaction (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002).

The research by Friedman et al. (2012), Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002), Hong et al. (2000) and Benet-Martinez et al. (2002) revealed that bicultural people have more than one cultural-knowledge system available to them; they can switch between interpretive frames when cultural-knowledge systems are activated by cues in the social environment. However, researchers found that having more than one cultural-knowledge system does not necessarily enable all bicultural people to use that cultural knowledge effectively to switch their cultural frame of reference between cultural-knowledge systems (Friedman et al., 2012; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Friedman (2012) found differences between Taiwanese bicultural managers who could efficiently switch between their Western cultural knowledge in Western managerial situations, and their Chinese cultural
knowledge in Chinese managerial situations, and those who could not. The answer lay in how much they could integrate their Eastern and Western identities (Friedman et al., 2012).

The BII construct proposes that bicultural individuals differ in the extent to which they view the identities associated with the two cultures as compatible, or as conflicting. Bicultural people with high BII experience their identities as compatible, view themselves as part of a combined or third emerging culture, and find it fairly easy to integrate both cultures into their lifestyle. However, bicultural people with low BII experience their identities as largely conflicting, and have trouble in combining both cultures into a unified sense of identity, and often feel the need to choose one culture over the other (Friedman et al., 2012; Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002; Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002).

The Caprar (2010) account of differing cultural stances seems to support this explanation. For example Caprar’s reconciled stance appears consistent with the high BII successfully integrating both cultures into their lifestyle. The estranged stance characterises a low BII of cultural inner conflict and opposition. Estrangement indicates a reverse reaction where some low BIIIs exhibit a contrasting response to cultural cues. Haritatos and Benet-Martinez (2002), Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002), Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005), and Benet-Martinez et al. (2002) all describe low BII as hyper-vigilance, and a high-valence disposition towards cultural cues within "specific perceptual and cognitive processes, leading to behavioural and/or affective reactance against the cultural expectations embedded in particular situations" (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005, p. 1021).

To explain the existence of the conflicted stance in long tenure employees, an understanding of the multidimensional nature of BII is needed. It is not simply a case of high or low BII. Variations in BII result from significant individual differences in the manner that bicultural
people subjectively organise their cultural identities. These differences are related to psychosocial antecedents of the following factors:

(1) contextual variables, such as national assimilation versus multicultural policies, the cultural make-up of a living environment, and personal experiences of discrimination;

(2) personality variables, such as open to experience, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism; and

(3) performance variables, such as linguistic proficiency.

These types of contextual and individual factors that indicate variations in BII may be linked with positive or negative affective experiences (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002). To explore this linkage, Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002) examined the structure, antecedents, and consequences of BII. They uncovered two sound dimensions: cultural conflict (versus harmony) and cultural distance (versus blended) that demonstrate the different features of the dynamic intersection between the two cultural identities in bicultural people.

Cultural conflict represents a sense of ambivalence—feelings of being caught between two cultural identities. It involves an added emotional, rooted, subjective component of bicultural-identity dynamics. Cultural distance represents the compartmentalisation or dissociation of cultural identities, where the two identities do not overlap. Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002) argue that the psychometric independence of cultural conflict and cultural distance demonstrates that BII is not a straightforward process which results in perceptions of conflict and dissociation, or harmony and being blended. On the contrary, this
configuration indicates that the manner in which bicultural people organise their two cultures can be different mixes of components of the two dimensions.

In other words, bicultural people may view their two cultural identities as rather dissociated or compartmentalised, yet at the same time they can believe that those identities do not clash with each other. They may take on a combined identity, but still feel tension or conflict between the two identities. These unique patterns of antecedents that result in the selection of different components of BIIs’ cultural conflict and distance dimensions demonstrate how very different phenomenological experiences of biculturalism are not only possible, but are likely (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

This discovery allows for greater explanation of the Caprar (2010) surprising finding concerning the existence of the conflicted stance among long-tenured employees. The Caprar (2010) justification for this finding was that both cultures may be salient, as a result of the need for HCNs to ‘commute’ continuously between their national culture and the organisational culture in which they work. This need to commute continuously between cultures may induce a coping mechanism in some individuals to better protect their self-esteem and positive mood. This coping mechanism involves a compartmentalisation of the two cultures, so that they can be applied without feelings of conflict (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Compartmentalism suggests that the conflicted stance may represent those bicultural people who are low on the cultural-conflict dimension, and high on the cultural-distance dimension. This configuration may make switching between cultural frames possible, allowing the conflicted-stance employees to access their American cultural-identity compartment when in the organisational environment, and the national Romanian cultural-identity compartment when in the social or living environment. This, in turn, may allow them to maintain their position in the organisation without changing their cultural stance.
Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002) show that cultural conflict is greater in bicultural people when the following antecedents were present: an anxious disposition consistent with the personality trait of high neuroticism; contextual acculturation-related experiences of discrimination; and, stressed intercultural relationships and language concerns such as a high level of self-consciousness regarding their accent. As a result of their higher levels of rumination, vulnerability, and emotional rigidity, bicultural people with high neuroticism are more disposed to experience stress in areas of intercultural relations and language. They are more likely to feel that their two cultural identities conflict with each other (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

Cultural distance was found to be greater in bicultural people when the following antecedents were present: a close-minded disposition consistent with the personality trait of low openness to new experiences; contextual acculturation-related experiences, such as living in an environment that produces feelings of cultural isolation and linguistic concerns (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2002) suggest that the "experiential rigidity" of low openness to experience makes these bicultural people more disposed to experiencing linguistic stress, but it also significantly affects their ability to recognise the elastic boundaries between cultures, and their ability to absorb new cultural ideas. These features are likely to give rise to low bicultural competence, and the perception that their two identities cannot be integrated which, in turn, results in the dissociation of both identities (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002). Hong and Mallorie (2004) and Hong et al. (2000) seem to support this finding. They suggest that the internalised cultural-knowledge systems of bicultural people are not necessarily blended, because they take turns in guiding their cognition, feelings, and behaviour.
The personality traits of high neuroticism and low openness to experience are prominent antecedents to BIIs experiencing cultural distance and conflict. The presence of high neuroticism and low openness to experience in some bicultural people suggests that experiencing the negative aspects of acculturation will be more likely (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002). Other personality traits that arose as antecedents were agreeableness and extraversion. However, these traits seem to have a counter effect on cultural conflict and distance, making a positive experience of acculturation more likely (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

As a result of their easy-going nature and agreeable personalities, bicultural people were more likely to have relaxed intercultural relationships. Those bicultural people with the extraverted personality trait were less likely to experience feeling culturally isolated in non-multicultural social environments, due to their interpersonal resources and the benefits of being outgoing and sociable (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

The configuration of relationships between the many personality variables and contextual variables of acculturation stressors explored above demonstrates the complexity and multidimensional nature of the BII process. That complexity explains the fact that variations in BII are more than just subjective identity representations. They are psychologically meaningful experiences associated with particular dispositional influences and contextual pressures. These add further explanatory power to cultural studies, particularly to individual differences that give way to varying cultural stances (Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

This thesis considers the characteristics of the BII construct in its empirical data analysis as a way of explaining how different individuals experience the collision of traditional culture and
Western business practices differently. In particular, the notion of personality antecedents influencing attitudes toward other cultures has alerted the author to an explanatory factor that is additional to culture. When an Omani employee encounters and experiences a new workplace practice, one that is embedded with Western values (such as individual rather than group bonus rewards) an openness to new experiences could lead to curiosity toward and readiness to look for the value of, that new workplace practice, rather than a rejection of that practice.

3.5 STATIC OR DYNAMIC?

Within the study of culture, there has been much disagreement regarding whether culture is static or changeable. From the perspective of the national cross-cultural comparison approach (for example Hofstede, 1980, 1991; House et al., 2004) and that of divergence theories (for example Max Weber 1948; 2002), national culture is considered to have values that are relatively stable and absolute (Guo, 2015; Ralston, 2008; Webber, 1969). More recently, however, the dynamic constructivist approach to culture and bi-and multiple cultural-identity approaches have rejected this static view of culture as limiting in an increasingly globalised world (Friedman et al., 2012; Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002; Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003). Supporters of this dynamic view of culture argue that with the rise of MNCs, migration, technological transfer, and multiculturalism, it is quickly becoming normal for individuals to speak many languages, to live and work in culturally diverse environments, and to have internalised more than one culture.

We have already seen in this literature review that within the context of globalisation, the dynamic constructivist approach focuses on the ways in which culture influences cognition, affect, and behaviour as a result of whether the “relevant shared assumptions are available,
accessible, salient and applicable in the situation” (Hong and Chiu, 2001, p. 183). Culture is seen as being socially constructed, dynamic, constantly evolving and context-specific (Hong and Chiu, 2001; Benet-Martinez, Leu et al., 2002; Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Hong et al., 2003). Bi and multiple cultural identity approaches view culture as actively created, not only inherited, and that individuals within organisations and nations may hold different cultures existing together in a pluralistic, overlapping, or separate way, rather than in a single and monolithic fashion (Friedman et al., 2012; Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002).

This dynamic approach to understanding culture enriches the related debate regarding primacy in the relationship between national culture and organisational culture. Although organisational culture has been acknowledged as important, the primacy of national culture was a fundamental factor of the national cross-cultural comparison paradigm (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; Adler, 2002). The dynamic-orientated approaches’ reinterpretations that extend from that paradigm suggest that the primacy of national culture over organisational culture may have been overemphasised. For example Caprar (2010) draws attention to the idea that “MNC local employees might better capture the dual national and organizational cultural anchoring” (p. 624). These developments clarify the importance of cultural stances, bicultural identities, and the impact of the various individual and contextual factors in determining the effects of culture on international business. In addition, they highlight the importance for the present research to pay close attention to underlying Western business ideology in the organisational context, potentially deepening our understanding of employee attitudes towards the workplace, in relation to changes in the traditional culture.
3.5.1 Cultural Change

The most recent and central theory of cultural change is the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution (Ralston, 2008). As outlined in the research focus in Chapter One, this theory plays an important role in the present research. Here, it is assumed that key to capturing what occurs when traditional sociocultural values intersect with contemporary workplace practices is understanding values-evolution theory (Ralston, 2008). The Ralston (2008) cultural-crossvergence theory has advanced the study of cultural change and values evolution, by revealing the significant ways in which both sociocultural and business-ideology influences interact to trigger the nature and degree of cultural change. Crossvergence theory was developed to extend earlier, incomplete, cultural-change theories—convergence theory and divergence theory (Ralston, 2008). However, the driving forces of cultural change central to all three theories are sociocultural influences, economic development, political reform, and technological advances.

3.5.2 Convergence Theory

The convergence-theory perspective is that the traditional values in a society would eventually be replaced as an outcome of modernisation—consistent with the modernisation theory developed by Karl Marx. The claim is that values evolution is driven by economic development, political reform, and technological influences, irrespective of sociocultural influences. Specifically, technological influences are said to shape educational demands and business structures in a way that produces common values. In turn, they encourage people to develop a value system parallel with their society’s technology. As a result, as societies industrialise, the adoption of technologies from already industrialised societies increases, and local values become aligned with those of Western capitalism (Ralston, 2008; Ralston et al., 1993; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).
3.5.3 Divergence Theory

Divergence theory views traditional values as relatively independent of technological, economic, and political influences. This theory proposes that sociocultural influences, with their persistent and enduring characteristics, are the central drivers that allow for the preservation of traditional values systems over time. As a result, different cultures would take different paths, even with identical technological, economic, or political influences and, in doing so, they maintain divergent cultural values (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Ralston, 2008).

3.5.4 Crossvergence theory

Conversely, crossvergence theory first clusters economic, political, and technological drivers together as business-ideology influences, because they are closely related to business activity in a society. These factors take considerably less time than sociocultural influences to affect individual-level values. Crossvergence theory advances the study of cultural change and values evolution by revealing the significant way in which both sociocultural and business-ideology influences interact to trigger the nature and degree of cultural change. As an alternative to cultural divergence (that is, remaining different) or cultural convergence (that is, becoming the same), the sociocultural influences and business-ideology influences become synergistic driving forces. They form a dynamic interaction that accelerates the development of new and unique values systems in societies (Ralston, 2008). Consistent with this contention is the notion in BII theory that bicultural people have a well-integrated identity view of themselves as part of a combined, or third, emerging culture (Friedman et al., 2012; Haritatos and Benet-Martinez, 2002; Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2002; Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002).

One possible line of thought relevant to the present research of an exploration of the relationship between traditional Omani culture and employee attitudes towards the
Contemporary workplace is that our interviewees have developed the bi-cultural ability to switch between interpretive frames. They may engage in switching when evaluating management practices in their workplace that reflect Western cultural values. If that is the case, the researcher would expect to find indications of a unique local configuration of values—in other words, a clear example of crossvergence.

Cultural metacognition is said to drive cultural frame-switching in bicultural people and the integration of their bicultural identities (Hong et al., 2000; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). The notion of *cultural* metacognition was built upon the foundation of metacognition. Metacognition can be defined as thinking about and reflecting upon one’s thinking. Thomas et al. (2008) define it as “knowledge of and control over one’s thinking and learning activities (p. 131) [and] conscious and deliberate thoughts that have as their object other thoughts” (p. 132). Subsequently, cultural metacognition is metacognition of a particular cultural context (Thomas et al., 2008). Therefore the process of cultural metacognition may also play a role in cultural values change, as it encourages conscious thought on the part of individuals in cross-cultural situations to loosen culturally bounded assumptions, and to regulate cultural knowledge (Thomas et al., 2008). Therefore, the researcher expects to find indications of cultural metacognition.

3.6 CONCEPTUALISING CULTURE FOR THIS RESEARCH

We have seen thus far in this literature review that there are ongoing debates about cultural studies within international management related to the conceptualisation of culture, the use of cultural values-dimensions theories, cultural change, and the appropriate methodologies for researching culture. Cultural studies in international management most often adopt positivist or interpretivist paradigms, with the positivist quantitative approach having been dominant for a number of decades (Brannen, 2009). Nevertheless, increasingly, scholars such as
Birkinshaw et al. (2011), Redding (1994), and Tung and Verbeke (2010) call for a paradigmatic shift. This call has occurred because the interpretive qualitative method can expand upon the quantitative etic method to capture emic micro level understanding. This is particularly so in contemporary multifaceted, interrelated, dynamic, and interactive cultural contexts (Hong and Chiu, 2001; Redding, 1994). The progression of globalisation from goods and capital to people has brought with it the increasing emergence of bicultural or multicultural individuals (Doz, 2010). As demonstrated in the literature, these individuals with two or more cultural identities now represent a significant number of people.

However, they are unacknowledged in traditional etic cross-cultural research. Doz (2010) stresses the importance of qualitative ethnographic research. He calls for research that goes beyond the standard quantitative method of surveys to create an in-depth understanding of individuals in cross-cultural situations, and on how such studies could influence the field of international business (Doz, 2010).

Additionally, Yeganeh and Su (2006) propose that instead of contradictory paradigms, positivist and interpretive approaches should be viewed as being associated with two different yet complementary epistemological levels—both can add to a better understanding of culture. Consequently, the researcher contends that the qualitative interpretive approach of this research will further advance the quantitative-based cultural research provided by the static perspective of a national cross-cultural comparison approach (for example Hofstede, 1980, 1991; House et al., 2004), by adopting the dynamic perspective of the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution. Instead of simply measuring culture, this research approaches the complexity of culture and the uniqueness of the context as an opportunity, rather than a limitation. It does this by exploring the ‘how’ of the intersection of traditional sociocultural values and contemporary workplace practices currently experienced in the
Middle East, to understand the ways in which this particular type of situation influences attitudes towards the workplace.

Cultures cannot be captured in their entirety in any one study (House et al., 2004). As a result, the conceptualisation of culture in this thesis combines cultural theories based in etic and in emic approaches. This combining is designed to understand better the relationship between traditional culture and employee attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. Based on the insights provided by the various cultural theories discussed in this chapter, this present researcher views culture as a set of shared cognitive values, and meanings systems that are held consciously and subconsciously, and that represent the constant medium through which people live and act. Culture is learned, interpreted, and actively created, and transmitted through social interaction within a collective that shapes attitudes and behaviour patterns.

Building upon current ways of theorising culture, this researcher contends that it should be conceptualised within the notion of a continuum in which it can move from static to dynamic, and can change depending on situational factors (for example exposure to a foreign culture) and socio-cognitive process (for example cultural meta cognition). In conceptualising culture, extant theories of culture can be usefully displayed within the notion of a cultural continuum in Figure 3.1. The researcher’s continuum presents an overview of cultural theories beginning with those which see culture on the left side of the continuum as static, and moving towards those which see culture as dynamic and changeable.
Chapter Three has explored the complexities of conceptualising and studying culture in order to arrive at a conceptualisation of culture and a theoretical framework for this research. Its conceptualisation of culture has taken us from one end of what the researcher terms the culture continuum to the other. This literature review began from the perspective of the national cross-cultural comparison approach (for example Hofstede, 1980, 1991; House et al., 2004), and that of divergence theories (for example Max Weber 1948; 2002) within which national culture is composed of values that are relatively stable and absolute (Guo, 2015; Ralston, 2008; Webber, 1969). The current author acknowledges the instrumentality of Hofstede’s traditional national cross-cultural comparison approach in operationalising the study of culture in international business. She does this by providing the image of cultural differences at the macro level. From the left side of the continuum, we move toward the right to encounter theories of the dynamic constructivist approach to culture, to the bi-and multiple cultural-identity approaches that reject the static view of culture and conceptualise it as dynamic and changeable.
These right side theories expanded on the traditional cross-cultural comparison research with their multi-faceted, multi-layered, contextual, and systems perspectives of culture. The emphasis in such theories is that culture involves considerably more than cultural dimensions (Leung et al., 2005). At the far right end of the continuum, cultural crossvergence is where the interaction of internalised cultures can produce a distinctive form of cultural change. This is where new and unique values and configurations emerge and, some say, a hybrid culture emerges. The researcher's position is that these cultural theories come together to provide a more complex conceptualisation of culture, and a theoretical framework for this research. From this continuum framework, a deeper understanding of the interplay between traditional Omani culture and Western-infused organisational situations can be achieved, which gives rise to either positive or negative attitudes towards the workplace. Therefore, rather than seeking to test one or several of these competing ways of thinking about culture, the intention here is to discover which parts of contemporary theorising about culture are the most useful in explaining the situation being explored.

3.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this research was developed with cultural theories from the literature review in mind. The Part One review in Chapter Two revealed the antecedents of traditional Gulf culture and Western-values-embedded management practices. It revealed that from the interplay of those antecedents, either positive or negative attitudes towards the contemporary workplace develop as outcomes. However, what is yet to be discovered are the processes that are active during the interplay of those antecedents which lead to the outcome of positive or negative attitudes towards the workplace. With the aim of uncovering and explaining these processes or mechanisms, this research takes a comprehensive approach, drawing upon the conceptualisation of culture that combines the many cultural theories discussed in this chapter. The research methodology is discussed in Chapter Four.
3.8 THE TYPOLOGY DEVELOPED BASED ON THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

The theories reviewed in this chapter provide a basis for constructing the following typology. The typology draws on parts of multiple, current, cultural theories, with the aim of guiding the data analysis of the later empirical interview data. The construction of the typology takes into account the perspective of the national cross-cultural comparison approach (for example Hofstede), and cultural-divergence theory (for example Max Weber 1948; 2002) which suggests that national cultural values are relatively stable, but when only one culture has been internalised. It also takes into account three major ideas from the dynamic constructivist approach to culture:
1) the importance of the interaction between culture and situation (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003);

2) that the influence of culture on individuals is dependent upon the availability and applicability of particular cultural knowledge and its accessibility in a particular context (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003); and

3) the ability of the individual to internalise knowledge from more than one culture, hold multiple cultural identities, and thereby develop the ability to switch between culturally informed interpretive frames (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003).

The researcher accepts cultural frame-switching as a reality. Thus the construction of her typology takes into account the possibly that Omani employees have developed a bi-cultural ability to switch between interpretive frames when evaluating management practices that reflect Western cultural values at their workplace. The typology also takes into account cultural crossvergence, with the possibility of the development of unique configurations of local and Western values. Even more importantly, the typology takes into account that the BII construct can be viewed as an application of the dynamic constructivist approach. As a result, the typology can be used to explain how individuals come to sit at varying positions along the culture continuum—from cultural divergence through to cultural crossvergence—and thereby captures crossvergent processes at the individual-level of cognition, emotion, and attitudes.
Figure 3.3: Cultural Profiles of Omani Employees’ Attitudes Towards the Workplace

The profiles included in this typology are based on what the combination of the literature on cultural theory leads us to expect. Figure 3.3 presents three potential Omani cultural profile types to explain various attitudes towards workplaces embedded with Western management practices. Those profile types are crossvergence, conflicted, and divergence.

Table 3.2 displays the characteristics of the three profiles types.
Table 3.2: Cultural Profiles of Omani Employees’ Attitudes Towards the Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile types</th>
<th>Characteristics of each profile type</th>
<th>Attitude towards Western management practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A state of individual-level crossvergence  | ▪ Two 'accessible' cultural-knowledge systems  
▪ High level of BII  
▪ High second-language proficiency  
▪ Personality traits of extraversion and openness to experience  
▪ Cultural intelligent-active process of meta cognition                                                                 | ▪ Positive: inclined to accept Western management practices                                                  |
| A state of individual-level conflict       | ▪ Two cultural-knowledge systems, but limited ability to apply second cultural-knowledge system  
▪ May be able to access second cultural-knowledge system in some low-stress situations and without time constraints  
▪ Low level of BII  
▪ Possible second-language proficiency but highly self-conscious (for example accent—feels as if they does not fit in)  
▪ Bicultural competence dependent on personality traits of neuroticism and low openness to experience  
▪ Low cultural intelligence— little to no active process of cultural meta cognition | ▪ Caught between feeling of resistance of and adaptation to Western management practices  
▪ Can in some cases, eventually arrive at some form of adaptation. But this usually comes by way of a coping mechanism. Thus competence is usually low |
| A state of individual level of divergence  | ▪ Very limited knowledge of second cultural-knowledge system internalisation  
▪ None to low second-language proficiency  
▪ Generally traditional national cultural-dimension orientations and their related explanations apply (such as Hofstede) | ▪ Negative: inclined to reject Western management practices                                                   |
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the justification for the choice of methodology adopted for this inquiry is provided. In social-science research, there are many methodological options (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Selecting the appropriate methodology for a particular research project is vitally important, as the choice of methodology acts as the foundation for the entire research approach (Silverman, 2009). Accordingly, to select the most appropriate methodology for this research, the author took into account the nature of the phenomenon under examination, and the type of research questions to be addressed by the inquiry. This chapter begins with a discussion of how the researcher’s ontological and epistemological position, the nature of the phenomenon, and the type of research questions have informed this study’s methodological approach. Following that discussion, the data collection and the interview-protocol process are detailed. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the data analysis and a discussion of the role of the researcher’s reflexivity.

A qualitative form of inquiry was employed to conduct this research. The reason for this choice is that qualitative research is primarily concerned with subjective meaning—rather than objective measurement—to achieve an in-depth understanding and thick description of the phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Reflected in this approach is the researcher’s epistemological and theoretical position, as well as the nature of the phenomenon, and the research focus. Regarding this research’s epistemological and theoretical position, the nature of knowledge and what can be usefully known is subjective; social and psychological reality is dependent on the context, resulting in the existence of more than one kind of reality.
The nature of the phenomenon being studied lies at the intersection between traditional culture and Western business ideology. Therefore, it is important for this research to focus on gaining an understanding of the meaning that Western-infused management practices have for Omani employees. This would lead to an in-depth understanding of the relationship between traditional Omani culture and employee attitudes towards their contemporary workplace.

In the social sciences, many phenomena are embedded with underlying meaning (Krauss, 2005). Research on the how Omani individuals from a traditional culture experience new management practices is one such area: it is rich in meaning, particularly in the context of attitudes towards the workplace. Meaning will shed light on Omani employees' attitudes towards the workplace, and enables a fuller understanding of the cultural-values evolution process.

Given these considerations, this qualitative inquiry is exploratory and explanatory in nature; the exploratory element is less-structured to facilitate rich data collection (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). The explanatory element largely focuses on meaning constructions to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Mason, 2002). The selected methodology is interpretive ethnographic given that this research:

1) examines a situation where employees are expected to commit to workplace practices that are a product of a different culture; and

2) assumes that employees' attitudes towards the workplace are largely informed by their cultural assumptions.

In line with the selected methodology, a semi-structured interview method was employed. The overall methodological approach and the philosophical and theoretical positions that
underpin it, are broadly conceptualised in Figure 4.1 and are discussed in-depth throughout this chapter.

**Figure 4.1: An Overview of the Methodological Approach for this Research**

The mode of inquiry, methodology, and methods chosen by the researcher were determined by the interrelationship between the philosophical position taken towards ontology and epistemology and the theoretical perspective. An ontological position deals with the nature of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality, and the methodology - supported by the theoretical perspective – leads to the specific methods used to acquire knowledge of the reality focused upon (Krauss, 2005).
4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE: ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The philosophical perspective which underpins research is a “basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). This researcher’s choice of philosophical perspective for the research involved considering whether there is one knowable reality, or different realities about which knowledge can be achieved, and whether the nature of the knowledge that the researcher seeks is objective or subjective. Objective knowledge refers to external reality and is characterised as information that defines reality in terms of the “innate structure or pattern of reality”, whereas subjective knowledge refers to internal reality in terms of “ideas, structures or pictures” with which people make sense of their subjective experiences of the social and physical world (Krauss, 2005, p. 759).

In addressing these considerations, the researcher arrived at a philosophical perspective that is made up of an ontological position of constructivism, and an epistemological position of interpretivism. From the perspective of constructivism, meaning is constructed by human beings as they interact with one another and attempt to understand the world. Constructivism considers the social world as being a construct of the researcher and the researched (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; O’Leary, 2004). An interpretivist epistemological position emphasises the need to understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretations of that world by its participants (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). For this author’s research project, knowledge will be established through surfacing the meanings that interviewees attach to the phenomenon under investigation. To uncover that type of knowledge about the phenomenon, the researcher must interpret the meaning of the social world as it is experienced by its participants (Schwandt, 1994). Thus, knowledge that is subjective and context-dependent is being sought by the researcher (Krauss, 2005).
4.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rooted in the ontological and epistemological foundations of this research, the theoretical perspective offers “a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts, and propositions that orientates thinking and research” (Bogdan and Biklan, 1982, p. 30), in turn guiding the choice of methodology and method. As mentioned in the previous section, the epistemological position taken, and the theoretical perspective of this research, is interpretivism. A theoretical perspective of interpretivism is one that emphasises the importance of “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). The nature of the phenomenon being studied is reflected in this interpretivist perspective, given that it seeks to uncover and understand the culturally informed attitudes of employees who hold traditional sociocultural values within a contemporary, Western-infused, workplace. Whereas researching the natural world focuses on measuring abstract phenomena which requires quantifiable regularities; researching the social world focuses on unique aspects of human action which requires qualitative meaning and derived understandings (Crotty, 1998).

4.4 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

In line with the epistemological assumptions and theoretical perspective expressed in Section 4.3, this research adopts a qualitative mode of inquiry. Qualitative research is concerned with explicit and implicit knowledge and is interested in words and meaning. The qualitative researcher is concerned with how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their version of reality. In general, qualitative methodologies view meaning as their central focus, rather than the measurement of one objective reality. The aim of this focus on meaning is to assist the researcher in understanding the participants' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and actions in terms of their world (Krauss, 2005; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research is about taking an insider’s view, where the experiences of the participants are given priority. This
approach enables the researcher to be a part of the inquiry, in order to gain an in-depth contextual understanding, which brings the researcher closer to the social reality being investigated (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Perri and Bellamy, 2012).

Krauss (2005) stated that “meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions and even the interpretation and application of knowledge” (Krauss, 2005 p. 763). The construction of meaning is a cognitive process where, once meanings are established, they become cognitive categories which come together to produce a person’s view of reality. From this process, a person’s thoughts and actions are determined and interpreted.

The constructivist approach, however, reminds us that central to meaning, construction, and development are the dynamics of culture and social interactions (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Crotty, 1998). Accordingly, it is through the interaction of people within a sociocultural system that, over time, mutual cognitive meanings for each other’s actions are developed. Thus, meaning is based on continued back and forth interaction from which meaning becomes embedded in society, and informs people’s knowledge and beliefs about social and physical reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Consequently, knowledge can be looked upon as belonging to the group, rather than to the individual (Kuhn, 1970). In effect, a person’s description of their experiences is not necessarily seen as a reflection of the individual’s underlying thoughts and feelings but instead as a result of the implicit discourse embedded within them (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2015). Therefore, a qualitative approach—informed by a philosophical position of constructivism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, is the best approach to uncover the meaning of Western-derived management practices to the Omani employees who enact and experience those practices. By discovering what such practices mean to them, this research will arrive at a deep understanding and explanation of the relationship between traditional Omani culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace, thereby addressing the primary research question.
The way in which this detailed understanding and explanation are achieved is through highlighting the processes that underlie the meanings experienced by employees who work at intersection between traditional sociocultural values and contemporary workplace practices. The elucidation of these processes facilitates the fuller understanding of the ‘how’ of the values-evolution process, thereby advancing the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution. This aimed for understanding is the second centrally important reason for adopting a qualitative approach. As explained in Chapter One, the cultural-crossvergence theory of values evolution emerged from quantitative inquiries. As a result, crossvergence theory cannot yet offer us an understanding of the process of values evolution at the individual level (Ralston, 2008). Accordingly, it makes sense for this qualitative-research approach to take an inductive exploratory process to acquire rich, subjective data from which new theoretical developments can emerge (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Perri and Bellamy, 2012).

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology here employs interpretative ethnography, because it is the most effective method for arriving at an understanding of the relationship between traditional Omani culture and employees' attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. Interpretative ethnography is suitable because this inquiry is primarily concerned with culturally informed employee attitudes towards the workplace.

4.5.1 Ethnography

The researcher has adopted a partial form of ethnography. Central to any ethnographic inquiry is the idea of culture, and that over time every human group develops a culture. Culture is a collection of assumptions and beliefs that serve as the criteria for deciding what is right and wrong, guiding how one feels about it and, consequently, directing one's
behaviour, and developing behavioural patterns. This view of culture is consistent with the author’s ontological position of constructivism, whereby meaning is seen as constructed as a way of understanding the world and also the author’s epistemological position of interpretivism, wherein culture can be understood through the examination and interpretation of the participants’ social world—that is, the cultural and social settings. Ethnography highlights the use of the natural setting as the preferred data source for cultural insight, which is consistent with this inquiry’s naturalistic approach (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2015; Roy and Pradesh, 2012).

Although all ethnographers deem culture to be central, there are a variety of ethnographic approaches. In more traditional approaches, anthropologists observed non-literate cultures in remote settings, for instance the holistic approach of Benedict and Mead, the semiotic approach of Geertz (1973), and the behaviouristic approach of Whitings and Edwards (Patton, 2015; Roy and Pradesh, 2012). More contemporary anthropologists have applied ethnographic approaches to the study of modern society, such as the problems of industrial democracies (Whyte and Whyte 1984), and organisational studies (Morgan, 1986, 1989; Patton, 2015).

Within ethnographic method, great emphasis is placed on intensive fieldwork, usually in the form of participant observation where the researcher is immersed in the cultural setting, and gains personal experience of the setting (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2015). Although observational methods are more often than not central to ethnography, other methods such as interviews and focus groups are also used. It is important to note that ethnography is not necessarily defined by observation (Mason, 2002). What is distinctive about ethnography is interpreting qualitative data from a cultural perspective (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2015).
4.5.2 Interpretive Ethnography

An interpretive-ethnographic approach can be distinguished from other ethnographic approaches by its lenience regarding the use of observational methods. This is a result of its focus on people, their perceptions, meanings, interpretations, and understandings as the primary data sources. Interpretive ethnographers postulate that for social actors to navigate their way around their world, and come to an understanding of it, they need to interpret their activities together through interaction and conversation from which shared meanings develop and are embedded in language that embodies their social reality (Mason, 2002). As a result, interpretivism need not depend on total immersion in a setting, and therefore it endorses the use of interview methods. The purpose of interview research is to explore people’s individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, and social norms. Other data sources can be used; however, the interpretivist reason for using them would be to explore what they reveal, or how they are constituted in people’s individual or collective meanings and understandings (Mason, 2002).

This author has adopted an interpretive-ethnographic approach to gathering and analyzing her interview data, which uses culture to guide its exploration of the intersection between the local Omani culture and Western embedded management practices. Total immersion in the cultural setting was not carried out. The Omani culture was already familiar to the researcher, and the research focuses on culturally informed perceptions, interpretations, and meanings of Omani people’s attitudes towards their jobs and workplace. Therefore, detailed, semi-structured, conversation-style interviews were conducted, where priority was given to the informants’ perceptions, interpretations, and meanings of their social reality—including their workplace.
The researcher does not claim to have arrived at an understanding of this research as a result of full immersion into the sociocultural environment—the procedures of a traditional field-based anthropologist have not been adopted. However, the researcher, in effect, is a person who has immersed herself into the local culture, prior to undertaking this research. She uses this background understanding of the culture as one of the tools that will inform her interpretation and understanding. However, she did not engage in that immersion as a part of this research project, so she does not claim that as a part of the methodology of this research. Nevertheless, her personal history makes her an interpreter with a particular perspective. Her personal history and prior immersion in Omani culture will be explained in full in Chapter Seven: The Researcher as an Instrument of Inquiry.

In summary, interpretive ethnography is the best fit for this research because a fundamental assumption of the researcher is that culture makes a difference when it comes to how people think, feel, and behave. This inquiry examines situations where people in the workplace who are members of a traditional culture are introduced to, and expected to commit to, workplace practices that are a product of a new and different culture. Because this research is focused only on that issue, full-scale anthropological ethnography is not required. The researcher does want to interpret attitudes to, or responses to, workplace practices, but she wants that interpretation to be informed by culture.

4.6 METHOD

This research employs a qualitative fieldwork method with priority given to semi-structured interviews for the purpose of achieving a detailed understanding and a contextualised thick description of the relationship between Omani culture and employee attitudes towards their contemporary workplace (Hesse-Biber, 2010). It is hoped that the results from the interview data will have a significant explanatory effect on our understanding of the intersection
between traditional Middle Eastern culture and Western management practices and, thereby, on our understanding of the values-evolution process (Ralston, 2008). The meaning of the social world is uncovered through a mutual process of researcher–participant interaction, so the method of semi-structured interviews is justified.

4.6.1 Research Location—Case study

As a result of resource constraints, it was not viable to examine this research problem in every Gulf State. A case-study approach was adopted and the chosen location was the Gulf State of the Sultanate of Oman. It is hoped that the research findings may provide relevant insights for application to other Gulf States. Oman is transforming from an economy of a closed-society to a more liberal free-market one. This transformative stage of development has seen Oman pursuing an open and liberal investment policy by encouraging domestic and foreign investment, job-creation for the expanding, well-educated Omani workforce, the development of management skills, and the transfer of technology. Oman is the last of the Gulf States to begin these transformative developments that will require its citizens to become familiar with Western management practices. Therefore, it is plausible that the interaction between culturally embedded values and practices and Western management practices would be more prominent in Oman than in the other Gulf States.

Oman presents other advantages. The researcher knows the culture and religion, she speaks the native Arabic language, and has prior experience of working in Oman. The researcher’s experience and understanding has proven to be beneficial in the following ways: the interpretation of participants’ narratives, retaining the authenticity of their perspectives, respecting their cultural sensitivities, and reducing barriers to access. The researcher’s experience and her ability to understand the phenomenon under examination are significant in making sense of the data (Lindlof, 1995).
4.6.2 Participants

Research participants were each asked to participate in an interview. The purpose was to explore the interface between Omani culture and workplace attitudes in Oman. The interview participants selected were working Omani nationals between the ages of 18 and 60. To achieve a wide ranging set of interviewees, potential participants were sourced from public and private-sector employment, and from various levels of employment.

Prior to sending out a formal invitation to participate in an individual interview, introductory letters were sent to potential participants by electronic mail via organisational gatekeepers. These letters introduced the project, the researcher, and her intention to invite them to participate in an individual interview (Appendix A). Participants received a formal hand-delivered invitation to participate in an individual interview at which they would be asked to provide information about their jobs, management practices, and their lifestyle in Oman. The invitation explained that interviews would last for approximately two hours, and would be guided by open-ended questions. Participant information and consent forms accompanied this formal invitation (Appendices B and C). The participant information and consent forms included the contact details for the primary researcher and her supervisors, the objectives of the research, and participant-complaint procedures. These forms were provided in English and in Arabic to ensure that the information therein could be fully understood by all participants (Appendices E and F).
4.6.3 Sample Selection and Recruitment Method

Sampling in social-science research involves the selection of subjects, locations, groups, and situations that best provide windows on social processes (Bouma, 2004). The primary research question is:

What is the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards their workplace?

With a purposeful sampling method for this inquiry, the researcher developed participation criteria for people at levels of employment such as administration, technical, and management (Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2009). A dataset of people with a diversity of demographic characteristics was seen as most useful for the research goal because the research question does not focus on any particular demographic section of the population and collecting data from a wide variety of participants would allow for the possibility of encountering interviewees who may exhibit attitudes aligned with the typology developed by the researcher and presented earlier in the thesis, at the end of the literature review. Snowball sampling was used as a supplementary method and played an essential role in identifying additional willing and suitable participants (Neuman, 2011).

Recruitment of participants was performed through voluntary networking to gain initial access. Voluntary networking was facilitated through the Consulate of the Sultanate of Oman in Melbourne, fellow Omani Higher Degree Research candidates, former colleagues, and local Omani friends. Voluntary networking was used to gain access to large Omani organisations.
4.7 Ethical Issues

Prior to the data collection, which occurred in January and February 2014, ethics approval for this research was obtained on 26 November 2013 from the Business College Human Ethics Advisory Network (BCHEAN) of RMIT University. This research was classified as low-risk, according to the BCHEAN ethics-approval process. Ethics approval was granted for the period from 26 November 2013 to 4 March 2017; the documentation is in Appendix D.

In accordance with BCHEAN ethical procedures, the following steps were taken to ensure that participation was voluntary, and that confidentiality was maintained throughout the research.

1) Participant information and consent forms (Appendices B and C) were provided to participants (as explained in Section 4.6.2);

2) The participant information explained the research project in plain language to ensure that it was understood.

2) The written consent of participants was obtained, and they were informed of their right to withdraw consent at any time, and to have identifiable data withdrawn and destroyed. They were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, and would be anonymous and that there were no penalties if they decided not to participate;

3) Times and places for interviews were arranged to be held outside the workplace and out of working hours;

4) At the beginning of every interview, participants were reminded of their right to decline to answer any question and to withdraw from participation at any time;

5) Audio recording took place with the consent of participants. They were informed about the reasons for the recording and that they could opt to switch the recorder off at any time;
6) Participants were assured that none of the information that they provided would be passed on to their organisation;

7) Data were made anonymous during analysis and reporting—codes or numbers were used for participants and their organisations, and in reporting results in any publications. Participants' and their organisations' identifying information files and the data are stored in different places (Veal, 2005);

8) Electronic data, including interview tapes, transcripts, observation notes, and draft analysis were stored on password-secured university network systems. Hard-copy data are archived in a locked filing cabinet in locked office at RMIT University. Personal data relevant to the research such as names, office emails, office numbers, positions, job responsibilities, and companies' addresses of participants were collected and processed in a manner compatible with research (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.8 _DATA COLLECTION_

In order to explore adequately the ways in which Omani employees’ experience of the culturally informed meaning of management practices shapes their attitudes towards the workplace, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted. This interview technique is useful for obtaining rich and meaningful data, as it facilitates the discovery of unseen aspects of human thought and behaviour (Morse and Richards, 2002). Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to understand underlying reasons for thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours by probing beneath the surface and encouraging elaborative answers to yield insights and reveal subjective meanings (Neuman, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Saunders et al., 2009). The flexibility of such interviews encourages a mutual discovery process, in which the interaction between the researcher and interviewee reveals insights and underlying meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).
The interviews began with questions about the interviewees’ demographic status and general workplace information. Questions relevant to the interviewees’ lifestyle and cultural environment were asked to encourage interviewees' interest, build rapport, and facilitate positive interaction (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The next questions were about their jobs, workplaces, and management practices (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). To ensure that the researcher covered key topics during the interviews, an interview guide was used and is presented in Appendix E. Interviews were conducted in a natural setting (for example at home or a local cafe) to support the discovery of any in-depth meaning behind the interviewees' attitudes and behaviours (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

### 4.8.1 Interview Protocol

As this research takes a naturalistic informant-focused approach, no specific questions were asked regarding their acceptance or rejection of Western cultural-embedded management practices. This was to encourage interviewees' naturalistic interpretations of their jobs and workplace, based on their own perspectives and words (Chuang et al., 2015).

The interview protocol adopted was in four parts. The first and second parts of the interview focused on achieving a general picture of informants’ lifestyle and cultural environment, and their job and workplace environment. The intention behind this approach was to allow informants to discuss aspects of their situations that were the most meaningful to them personally (Chuang et al., 2015). The third part of the protocol focused on probing for specific positive and negative interviewee workplace experiences by applying principles of the critical-incident technique (Chuang et al., 2015; Gremler, 2004). The fourth part of the protocol was an application of the laddering method to move from personally meaningful aspects, attitudes, and attributes to the interviewees' underlying cultural values (Phillips and Reynolds, 2009).
4.8.1.1 Part One—General cultural environment

In the first part of the interview, the initial questions asked were (Note: these are indicative questions, the full list is provided in Appendix E):

*Can you describe to me what it means to be an Omani?*

Several follow-up questions included:

*What do you enjoy most about living in Oman?*

*What do you enjoy least about living in Oman?*

*In what ways are you proud to be Omani?*

*In what ways are you uncomfortable about being Omani?*

*Have you lived or travelled outside Oman? Where? Why?*

*What did you enjoy about it?*

*What did you dislike about it? Why?*

*What role does Islam play in your life? Has that changed over time in any way?*
Interviewee answers to these questions referred to many aspects of their cultural environment that are personally and socially meaningful. It is likely that their answers were indirectly relevant to their attitudes towards their workplace and to its management practices.

4.8.1.2 Part Two—General workplace environment

In the second part of the interview, the following questions were initially asked:

What do you do in your job? Why are you doing this job?

Several follow-up questions were asked that included:

What do you like most about your job?

Are there parts of the job you really do not like?

What are the most important job characteristics for you?

Can you tell me about your relationship with your manager?

Have you reported to anyone else? What was that like?

Once provided with their answers to the questions from the second part of the interview, many aspects of the interviewees’ workplace environment emerged for the author, and their attitudes towards their jobs and preferred management practices were becoming apparent.

4.8.1.3 Part Three—Critical-incident technique

The third part of the interview protocol concentrated on specific positive and negative workplace experiences. This was accomplished by applying principles of the critical-incident technique (Chuang et al., 2015; Gremler, 2004). Interviewees were asked to describe how certain events influenced their attitude to their job, the workplace, and to management practices. It consisted of questions such as the following.
Of the incidents you described, which ones do you believe have shaped your attitude towards the workplace the most?

Follow-up probing questions were:

What happened?

How did you feel?

How did you react to it?

This technique involved probing more deeply into the incidents that interviewees had already shared. The subsequent questions encouraged them to identify as many incidents as possible, to uncover other incidents that they had not yet revealed, and to bring to the surface their feeling about these incidents.

1. Now let's think about a scale from one to 10. One is a day when you have been to work and it has been really unsatisfying, and has left you feeling bad in some way. Ten is a day when you have been to work and you have felt great; this is a highly satisfying day at work.
   a. Let’s start with a number one ranking on the scale.
   b. Now tell me about a number 10 ranking day?

2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt disheartened or disappointed at work?

3. Can you tell me about a time when you felt enthusiastic or excited or passionate about work?

4. Can you tell me about a time when you felt a sense of achievement at work?

5. Can you tell me about a time when you felt a sense of satisfaction at work?
6. Can you tell me about a time when you felt that something (for example a task) was challenging?

These questions helped the interviewees to provide specific and informative answers. Referring to specific examples aided the researcher’s understanding of interviewees’ feelings about their jobs and about their interpretations of management practices.

In this part, interviewees were also asked:

Beyond your work circle, what other incidents or experiences have influenced your attitude towards your job?

Answers usually referred to family and friends, and to the social norms to which one should adhere. This question was asked to obtain an indication of whether interviewees could establish a link between their cultural assumptions and their attitudes towards the workplace.

4.8.1.4 Part Four—Laddering technique

As this inquiry explores the link between underlying cultural values and attitudes towards the workplace, the laddering technique was applied in the interviews with the aim of establishing a hierarchical network of meanings. The laddering technique is based on means–end theory, where individual behaviour is said to be driven by personal values. Means–end theory views this as a top-down process, where the higher-level values give meaning and importance to the lower-level attributes (Gutman, 1982; Phillips and Reynolds, 2009). These lower-level attributes gain their importance from satisfying functional and psychosocial needs and functional and psychosocial satisfactions acquire their importance from aligning with higher-order personal values.
The ladder-like hierarchical network of meanings is established by adopting a bottom-up approach to questioning, which begins with questions regarding lower-level attributes, and then probes to reveal higher-level values (Phillips and Reynolds, 2009). When using laddering technique, the interviewer must extract from the informant a personally meaningful attribute first, which the interviewee subsequently uses to discriminate among alternatives. This process was carried out in the first and second parts of the interviews. Once those personally meaningful attitudes and attributes were established, probing questions were asked such as, Why is that important to you? (Phillips and Reynolds, 2009).

4.8.2 Interview Details

Thirty-five interviews were conducted generating close to four thousand minutes of audio recording. The majority of the interviews lasted around two hours. They were conducted in a natural setting for the participants’ comfort (away from their workplace). This facilitated a contextual understanding, and it allowed the researcher to be closer to the social reality of the interviewees and thus to obtain richer responses (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Perri and Bellamy, 2012). Prior to the questioning, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to put the interviewees at ease. Interviewees were offered the option of conversing in English or Arabic, but only one interview was carried out in English.

The researcher’s ability to speak the local Arabic language established good rapport and trust with interviewees. Data saturation occurred after 20 interviews, but more interviews were nevertheless conducted to extend the range of data sources (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were transcribed verbatim—first in the Arabic language to preserve the specificity of meaning and then translated into English. This process resulted in over 60 thousand words of interview material.
4.9 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

A comprehensive explanation of the data-analysis approach taken in this inquiry is provided in Chapter Five. However, a preliminary, overview account is given here to provide coherence for this Methodology Chapter.

4.9.1 Overview of the Data-analysis Process

Thematic data analysis was employed for this qualitative inquiry. Interview data were coded, inter-textual comparisons were made, contradictory data were considered, and themes emerged inspired by new ideas in the data and inspired by the theoretical concepts (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Shapiro et al., 2008; Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Morse and Richards, 2002). Although thematic analysis was used, the analysis of the data departs slightly from the common practice of the qualitative research approach in searching for themes. In this research, a theme is defined not so much as a concern or view shared across interviewees, but more as a central background concept that individuals use to make sense of their experience of a Western business-ideology-infused workplace and their tendency towards either positive or negative workplace attitudes (Chuang et al., 2015).

The data analysis involved an overarching two-step approach. The first step was to ascertain ways in which the thinking and speaking of the interviewees reflected, or failed to reflect, elements of traditional Omani culture and Muslim culture to establish the culture that is alive in them. The second step of the analysis was to explore their attitudes towards the workplace. The reason for that two step approach is that this inquiry was motivated by literature that argued that Middle Eastern culture is not a comfortable fit with Western management practices.

The data-analysis process for both of the overarching steps included four phases: familiarisation with the data, code development, data-structure development, and
interpretation of the data. These phases facilitated the identification of major themes and the development of explanatory frameworks and models (Creswell, 2009; Gioia et al., 2012).

A rigorous first and second-order-analysis approach was taken to code development and data-structure development (Gioia et al. 2012) involving open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Open coding was supported by ‘descriptive’, ‘value’, and ‘in vivo’ coding techniques and was carried out in the first-order analysis (Saldana 2013). To make the transition from first-order analysis to second-order analysis, axial coding was conducted to identify relationships between the coded categories, and to refine the categories and the broader themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In the second-order analysis, themes emerged and selective coding was conducted to make sense of the emergent themes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). To arrive a fuller understanding of what was coming from the data analysis, and to develop the explanatory framework and subsequent research model, a deeper interpretation of the data and the emergent themes was needed.

The researcher took an in-depth interpretive approach in analysing the data that went beyond open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. A detailed interpretive approach was taken to look for underlying meanings within the dataset as a whole. The fact that the interviewees were often not overtly aware of their embedded pre-assumptions, and did not have the opportunity to consider the dataset as a whole meant that cultural assumptions are not necessarily observable to them, and are thus not fully available for them to convey during their interviews. Another reason for taking a whole-of-interview-set interpretive approach was that these underlying meanings were unlikely to be immediately apparent to the researcher, based solely on individual interviews. This interpretive approach involved iterative and recursive interplay between the entire dataset, between the data and the sociocultural context, and between the data and the theory (Shapiro et al., 2008; Doz, 2010; Patton, 2015). Through this process, a deep understanding of the phenomenon developed,
based on the links made between emerging themes and existing theories, which then led to new theoretical insights (Doz, 2010). Two centrally important techniques were used to execute this interpretive approach—the construction of cognitive maps, and a hermeneutical approach to meaning. Both are detailed here and are returned to in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

4.9.2 Cognitive Maps

To establish a link between workplace attitudes and traditional culture, and thereby to make sense of the interviewees' perceptions and understandings of their experience of the contemporary workplace, the data-analysis technique of free-form cognitive mapping was applied (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009). Cognitive maps are thought of as “internally represented schemas or mental models for particular problem-solving domains that are learned and encoded as a result of an individual's interaction with their environment” (Swan, 1997, p. 188). As a result, cognitive maps provide a demonstration of what is known and believed by individuals, and show the reasoning behind purposeful actions (Fiol and Huff, 1992). According to constructivism, individuals reach new knowledge by integrating new information within existing knowledge structures (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009). Importantly for this research, cognitive maps may clarify how the integration of new management practices into interviewees' existing cultural-knowledge structures produces their attitudes towards the workplace.

In qualitative research, cognitive maps can be used to show the complexity of participants' thinking. Cognitive processes are not normally structured in a linear fashion and the flexible structure of cognitive maps - and free-form cognitive maps in particular - allows researchers to gain insight into participants' thought processes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the case of this research, the free-form cognitive-mapping technique assisted the researcher’s
understanding of the cognitive processes of Omani employees in relation to their culturally influenced attitudes towards the workplace (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Cognitive mapping follows from the laddering technique (Phillips and Reynolds, 2009) used in the interviews to probe into higher-level cultural and religious values, which serve as the cognitive criteria to shape the lower-level attitudes and attributes. Combining cognitive mapping with laddering allowed the researcher to group those lower-level attitudes and attributes with their corresponding higher-level cultural and religious values, and thus form a visual representation of the interviewees’ cognitive thought processes.

To establish a link between traditional culture and workplace attitudes, and thereby to understand Omani employees’ experience of the contemporary workplace, the construction of these maps was supported by a hermeneutical approach to interpretation.

4.9.3 Interpretation of Meaning: a Hermeneutical Approach

This hermeneutical approach to analysis involved moving back and forward between the parts and the whole to come to a more complete understanding. The author treated the interview data as being the parts, and the sociocultural context (which was comprehensively presented as part of Chapter One: The Origins of the Six Gulf States) as being the whole.

Hermeneutics is a popular qualitative method within the interpretative tradition (Guba and Lincoln 1998; Regan, 2012). It focuses on discovering the meaning of individual experiences through an understanding of human interpretation (Regan, 2012). Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989), the founder of philosophical hermeneutics, actually preferred to look at hermeneutics as an approach, rather than as a method. It does not necessarily provide specific rules for the acquisition of new knowledge, but instead, its purpose is to uncover conditions and contexts that enable understanding (Debesay et al., 2007).
A researcher’s ability to interpret the participants’ intentions is required in any research involving human activity. According to Charles Taylor (1989), all understanding includes one’s self-understanding, as we are self-interpreting animals. All of our understanding related to social interactions unavoidably begins with our understanding of ourselves, which is another reason why the author has included Chapter Seven: *the Researcher as an Instrument of Inquiry* in the thesis.

Fortunately, the interrelationship between the whole and its individual parts need not be viewed as a vicious circle from which there is no way out. When in the hermeneutic circle, the researcher does not stay in one place. Instead, she continuously gains new knowledge by peeling back the layers of meaning to uncover deeper meaning. Hence, the hermeneutic circle essentially creates a positive opportunity for the acquisition of new knowledge (Debesay et al., 2007). It means two things for this research. The first is that the research participants' past and present cultural, religious, and political contexts are considered and drawn upon to arrive at an interpretation of their own understandings. The second is that the researcher’s prejudices are explicitly acknowledged, because her pre-understanding of the sociocultural context of the research participants unavoidably influences her interpretations.

This is again where the researcher’s personal experience becomes relevant: the whole in this case is both the workplace and the sociocultural environment. It is not necessarily the case that the researcher has gathered everything that needs to be known about the organisational and cultural context, but nevertheless, she has experienced much of it. Therefore, the hermeneutic interpretation of this research has to do with an objective and a subjective approach. The objective approach is what the interview data are telling us in terms of the facts of what is happening around these workplaces in Oman; the subjective part of it is what the researcher herself has experienced.
Deriving new meaning from text – which of course includes interview transcripts - that might be at odds with its original status is not possible according to some philosophical conventions. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1981), for example, maintains that text constantly receives an autonomic status, and so the process of any interpretation must take the text on its own terms. In Ricoeur’s opinion, the interpreter should only be concerned to retrieve the text’s original intended meaning, and what the text is trying to establish, regardless of their own presuppositions.

Ricoeur’s position has been rejected in Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach to interpretation (Austgard, 2012). The hermeneutical approach maintains that various meanings which go beyond the text’s literal meaning can be derived from the text. By applying the hermeneutical canons of interpretation, the interpretation goes beyond the immediate value of the text (Austgard, 2012; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). This parts-whole process leads the interpreter to a dialogue with the text—where interpretation is viewed as an act of understanding; and understanding always involves applying the text to be understood with reference to the interpreter’s present situation (Austgard, 2012).

The first of the seven hermeneutical canons begins with understanding, as understanding initially is vague and intuitive of the text as a whole. One cannot establish useful insights from any given text as a whole without making reference to the individual parts, so in the same way, one cannot establish useful insights of these parts without making reference to the whole. Without reference to one another, neither the whole nor the individual parts can be understood: hence the need in this thesis to place the answers provided by interviewees within the larger context of the present socioeconomic situation in Oman which in turn is placed within the larger whole of the Gulf Region’s history.
Importantly, hermeneutical interpretations should involve innovation and creativity in order to enrich understanding (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The creativity of the author was called upon during the later analysis of interview data when she encountered an apparent contradiction between the expressed attitudes of the interviewees and the expectations derived from the review of literature in Chapters Two and Three.

In the hermeneutical process of text understanding, interpretation is not only frail but it is in fact impossible if meaning is not based on cultural, historical, and literary contexts (Debesay et al., 2007). Furthermore, with the extension of hermeneutics by Schleiermacher (1977) and what he terms universal hermeneutics, the hermeneutical approach now applies to all human documents and modes of communication—non-verbal and verbal alike (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Therefore, in even the spoken word—whether in conversation or in interviews—one should not take the informants or their accounts at face value. One should pay great attention to underpinning meaning to view informants’ expressions with an openness and curiosity in order to obtain valuable insights into their experiences (Debesay et al., 2007).

This is not a straightforward process, because our implicit prejudices over which we have no conscious control, can influence our interpretation without our awareness. Therefore, schematising one’s pre-understanding, and the prejudices that bring about misunderstanding can be removed through the interplay between the whole and the individual parts in the hermeneutic circle. By doing this a clearer, proper, or better understanding based on the actual phenomenon can be achieved, but an absolute understanding is not achieved. According to the theory of hermeneutics, there is no one final and definitive accurate interpretation, but it is necessary to have the most accurate interpretation possible in order to describe the relevant preconditions surrounding the inquiry’s details. Constantly changing contexts, according to Gadamer (1960), mean that all interpretations cannot be equally
plausible—every interpretation must be made under, and make sense within, a different context (Debesay et al., 2007).

4.10 REFLEXIVITY OF THE RESEARCHER’S ASSUMPTIONS AND PRACTICE

Although the aim of most qualitative approaches is to lead to the production of new theories grounded in research-participant knowledge and understandings, the researcher cannot give value to a theory or an interpretation without acknowledging the role that they personally play in its construction (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009; Patton, 2015). This is a limitation that all qualitative researchers need to address and requires researcher reflexivity. Reflexivity requires the researcher to develop an awareness of their part in the construction of meaning, and the unlikelihood of remaining neutral, impartial, and unconnected to the subject being investigated and interpreted. It requires the researcher to consider openly their personal and epistemological beliefs so as to recognise their prejudices during their study of the research participants' activities and experiences (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009; Patton, 2015). This reflexive process includes the researcher having to think about and reflect on the nature of their involvement in the research process, and on the role they play in shaping the research findings and conclusions. Reflexivity includes the researcher asking what is it that they bring to the analysis, and how their own assumptions about the study under investigation might influence the way they carry out the research, the questions that they ask, and the decisions that they make.

The key point here for this researcher is acknowledging and being continuously aware of the fact that any piece of interpretative research places the researcher in a situation where they are the major methodological tool or instrument. In this piece of qualitative interpretative research, the researcher has not been examining an insect through a microscope as an
instrument; instead, she has been interviewing and interpreting people from Oman, and arriving at those interpretations significantly through who she is and her personal perspectives.
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Using a qualitative methodology, this inquiry contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace. The analysis in this chapter will focus on addressing the following two key secondary research questions:

*What are the dominant cultural orientations in the Gulf State of Oman?*

*What influence does culture have on employee attitudes towards the contemporary Omani workplace?*

The author chose to employ a qualitative methodology for this research in order to provide an empirically informed and contextualised examination of the interplay between culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace (Saunders et al., 2009; Neuman, 2011). The application of this qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to provide in-depth explanatory accounts of both Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace. It enabled the researcher to dig beneath the surface of the crossvergent situation being experienced by employees in the Gulf States of the Middle East—namely, the intersection of traditional culture and contemporary management practices infused with Western business ideology.

The intention of digging beneath the surface of this intersection is twofold. The first is to arrive at findings drawn from thick and in-depth qualitative data, which enable a rich understanding of the mediating role of culture in the formulation of employee attitudes towards the workplace. This understanding will be achieved through an exploration of
interviewees’ interpretations of their workplace experiences. These interviewee interpretations will be combed through to identify dominant themes and dimensions that uncover both Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace and Western-infused management practices, and the processes of meaning making that underlie those attitudes. Dominant themes are considered to be culturally influenced ideas by Chuang et al (2015) that help individuals to make sense of their attitudes towards the workplace, and help to explain their tendency to reject or accept Western-infused management practices.

In conducting this thematic analysis, we will uncover the underlying cognitive processes at play in order to discover what contemporary management practices, infused with Western business ideology, mean to the people who are experiencing them. The Ralston (2008) theory of crossvergence asserts that “business ideology influences is the driving force that precipitates the development of new and unique value systems” (p. 29). Therefore, by taking this approach that digs beneath the surface to seek to understand what business ideologies and new technologies mean to the people who are experiencing them—as recommended by Ralston (2008, p. 38)—this research will uncover a well-founded understanding of the how, when, and why of the values-evolution process.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic approach involving an iterative, recursive, reflective, and hermeneutical process was taken by the researcher to analyse the data (Shapiro et al., 2008; Doz, 2010; Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher constantly moved back and forth between the entire dataset, between data and the sociocultural context, between the data and the theory, and between the phases of data analysis (Shapiro et al., 2008; Patton, 2015). Through this process, associations were made between the rich data, emerging themes, and existing theories, which
then led to the development of new theoretical insights and to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Doz, 2010).

The data-analysis process included four phases: familiarisation with the data, code development, data-structure development, and interpretation of the data. This process enabled the researcher to identify major themes and to develop explanatory frameworks and models (Creswell, 2009; Gioia et al., 2012).

5.3 FAMILIARISATION WITH THE DATA

Familiarisation with the data began in the data-collection phase of this research. The researcher, having collected the data herself through interactive conversational interviews, came to the analysis with some previous knowledge of the data and some early analytical thoughts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This was an important first step in the vital process of the researcher’s immersion in the data.

All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, manually, by the researcher to facilitate her immersion in the data further, and to maximise familiarisation. Transcribed interviews were then organised according to source types. To ensure rigour in the transcription process, the records had to retain the true nature of the information obtained from the interviewees’ verbal accounts; therefore, an orthographic approach was taken to account for all verbal utterances (Poland, 2002). Although the process of transcription was time-consuming, it was essential in order to perform the thematic analysis. Bird (2005) argues that transcription is “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (p. 227). This process gave the researcher a thorough understanding of the data, which aided her in the early part of the analysis by increasing her ability to read and interpret the data closely (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).
In accordance with the hermeneutical interpretative approach of this research, prior to starting the formal coding process, the researcher read through the entire dataset to ensure that she had sufficient familiarisation with the depth and breadth of the data. The establishment of any useful insights of any given parts of the text could not have been achieved without making reference to the text as a whole, and vice versa (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). This involved actively reading the data in search of meanings or patterns, and taking notes of ideas and possible patterns that the researcher later drew upon in the subsequent analytical phases (Silverman, 2009).

During this early phase, the researcher elected not to use computer-assisted qualitative data-analysis software, such as Nvivo, and instead manually performed all data-analysis phases from recordings of the data, coding, and to the interpretation of the data. This qualitative-analysis approach best enabled the researcher to stay close the data to ensure that the data were reduced without loss of meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.4 CODE AND THEME DEVELOPMENT

Once she adequately familiarised herself with the data, the researcher moved to the formal coding phase of the data-analysis process. Initially, coding began with a deductive type of approach using a typology. As detailed in the conclusion of Chapter 3, the typology was constructed by combining multiple cross-cultural theories drawn from the literature review. The author’s aim in constructing the typology was to capture the combinations of individual differences in values evolution, and thereby differences in positive and negative attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. However, it quickly became apparent that this deductive type of qualitative analysis did not fit the rich and in-depth qualitative data drawn from the interviews. The characteristics of the typology appeared to be inconsistent with the Omani interviewees’ accounts of their culture, and their attitudes towards the workplace.
Henceforward, the researcher moved to an inductive approach to identify and develop themes drawn from interview data (Doz, 2011).

This inductive approach was a holistic yet systematic approach to inductive code development, as outlined by Gioia et al. (2012). Code development was designed to embed a high level of qualitative rigour in the inductive research. What increased the qualitative rigour within this approach was the two-level data-analysis process, whereby the data were sorted into first and second-order categories. This two-stage process enabled the first and second-order categories to be presented later in the analysis in a more structured form (Gioia et al., 2012), as illustrated in Sub-section 5.10.1, figure 5.1 of this chapter.

5.4.1 First-order Level of Analysis

In the first-order analysis, open coding was conducted. The researcher read the transcripts line by line, coding any passages of data that she interpreted as important, and relevant, to traditional culture and workplace attitudes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Gioia et al., 2012). At this level of coding ‘descriptive’, ‘value’, and ‘in vivo’ coding techniques were used to assist the researcher in arriving at a rich understanding (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive coding was used to select basic topics within passages of data that described workplace behaviours—one such code was 'collaborative meetings'.

Value coding was used to code the values and beliefs of the interviewees. Coding interviewees' values, such as ‘honour’, surfaced in this research as possible ways to reveal cultural insights significant to the research questions. The use of in vivo coding, also known as verbatim coding, enabled the researcher to remain faithful to interviewees' terms by using their own language to generate codes such as 'fate' or 'written for me' (Saldana, 2013).

At this stage of the first-order analysis, the data were categorised into meaningful expressions from which substantial codes emerged. Thus far, there had been little attempt to refine the
categories (Gioia et al., 2012). However, codes are essentially links between points and sets of concepts across the data. They act as heuristic mechanisms enabling the researcher to go beyond the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Therefore, henceforward, the data analysis moved to axial coding in preparation for the second-order analysis of theme development.

Axial coding was conducted in search of similarities and differences among the coded categories. The purpose of this process was to identify relationships between the codes to reduce the categories and to refine them into broader, more abstract, themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Gioia et al., 2012). All episodes were analysed line by line to maximise and minimise the differences between the codes simultaneously (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). All first-order codes were studied and carefully compared to recognise any relationships and similarities between the first-order codes, and subsequently to recognise any commonalities across the first-order codes. For instance, it was found that the codes ‘honour’ and ‘reputation’ both focused on an individual’s social standing within their society, which led to the emergence of a theme called *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih*. This is the Arabic term which refers to the importance of social reputation. Additionally, across both of these codes, the individual’s social standing was related to the jobs that they did and the organisations within which they worked. In their descriptions of feeling honoured to belong to a particular organisation, those interviewees referred to the reputation and social standing of the organisation as being directly associated with their own social standing. Figure 6.4 *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih* cognitive map in Chapter 6 explains this association further.

### 5.4.2 Second-order Level of Analysis

Such insights saw the researcher begin to move cognitively from the level of interviewee terms and first-order codes to a refinement of codes into broader themes. This level of thought moved the researcher firmly into the second-order analysis phase. The new broader
level focus on themes needed to consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme based on similarities and relationships identified through axial coding. An important next step in this process was that of the researcher questioning how the emerging themes suggested concepts that might help to describe and explain the phenomena (Gioia et al., 2012; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Through this questioning, it became apparent that the themes emerging from categories where value coding was applied were consistent with overarching cultural concepts specific to the Gulf sociocultural context. These concepts were indigenous and did not seem to have "adequate theoretical referents” (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 20) in the existing cross-cultural management literature, for example ‘Nasib’. Additionally, the researcher noticed that themes emerging from categories where descriptive coding was applied were consistent with Western management practices, which previous literature had suggested were an uncomfortable fit with the Gulf cultural context. Although Western management practices are concepts which already exist in the management literature, they "leapt out” as important in this inductive inquiry "because of their relevance to a new domain"(Gioia et al., 2012, p. 20). They identified workplace behaviour consistent with Western management practices in a sociocultural context said to be uncomfortable with such practices (Gioia et al., 2012).

The two-level analysis emphasised by Gioia et al. (2012) provided research clarity in moving the analysis from detailed interviewee accounts to the identification of patterns, to produce a workable set of concepts and themes. From this workable set of concepts and themes, broader and common meanings of those accounts emerged, enabling the distillation of second-order aggregate dimensions.
5.4.3 Semantic or Latent Themes

In the development of themes and aggregate dimensions, the analysis of the data moved more deeply into interpretative analysis. It was at this point that the researcher needed to make the distinction between semantic and latent themes. The early data analysis had begun at a descriptive level, particularly when initially identifying passages of interviewee transcripts about workplace behaviours and practices, and had indicated the semantic approach of recognising the explicit or surface meanings of the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2015). The analysis in this research had primarily occurred at a latent level, digging beneath the surface content to identify underlying assumptions and conceptualisations that informed the semantic content of the data (Boyatzis, 1998). That ‘digging’ was consistent with the hermeneutical interpretative approach of this research, in which the interpretation goes beyond the immediate value of the text (Austgard, 2012).

For instance, when investigating commonalities across themes that relate to culturally derived values and beliefs to identify aggregate dimensions, connection was made to the underlying conceptualisation—on behalf of the interviewees—of the need to comply. Additionally, connection was made to the underlying conceptualisation—on behalf of the interviewees—of positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace infused with Western management practices. Given this study’s constructivist-based methodology, the researcher could not straightforwardly treat the interviewees’ accounts of their experiences "as a transparent window into their world" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 26).

5.5 DATA STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

At this stage of the analysis, the researcher had the full set of first-order codes and second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions which formed the elements needed to create a data structure. The data structure then allowed for a display of an overall conceptualisation of the
It is important to reiterate to the reader that the data-analysis process systematically enabled the creation of the data structure for this research to demonstrate qualitative rigour. Analysis also remained flexible and holistic through the iterative, recursive, hermeneutical, interpretive approach of backward and forward movement between the phases of data analysis, between the data, codes, and themes, and the sociocultural context as a whole, to arrive at a theoretical conceptualisation (Shapiro et al., 2008; Doz, 2010). Theoretical conceptualisation began with aggregate dimensions of compliance and dependence brought to the surface as having high regard for the traditional culture and positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace.

This progression towards a more theoretical conceptualisation allowed the researcher to begin to consider an even deeper structure, and a larger narrative about what is going on at the intersection of traditional culture and the contemporary workplace. That structure and the accompanying larger narrative is explored and explained later in the interpretation of the research findings in Chapter 6.

5.6 INTERPRETATION

The process of interpretation, sense-making, and reflective reading of the data began at the early stage of data collection. It continued throughout the stages of transcribing and coding, and in the development of the explanatory framework and of the subsequent research model thereby ensuring a consistent approach to analysis (Gibbs, 2007; Gioia et al., 2012). Throughout the phases of first-order and second-order analysis, the researcher cycled between data and the emergent codes, themes, and the dimensions themselves, and between these phases and the sociocultural context. At this stage of the analysis, it became important
to return to the relevant literature in order to make sense of the problematic and unexpected findings that had emerged thus far (Gioia et al., 2012).

The researcher needed to make sense of the Omani employees’ expression of positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, given a suggestion in the literature that members of a traditional Middle Eastern culture would have negative attitudes towards such a workplace—that is, one infused with Western management practices. Given that the data and existing theory were now being considered in tandem, it was at this point that the research transitioned from being ‘inductive’ to a form of ‘abductive’ research (Alvesson and Karreman, 2007). Abduction is in line with the constructivist philosophical underpinning of the researcher’s data analysis, and its hermeneutical position that we are never completely uninformed by prior knowledge. By reengaging with the literature, the analysis could no longer be considered as purely inductive.

Now, informed by the Ralston (2008) theory of values evolution, the researcher returned to the data once more, this time using line-by-line coding guided by theoretically derived codes such as ‘convergence’ to interact with the interview data, and to provide structure for the reading of the data, and to seek an understanding of the positive attitudes that interviewees seemed to be expressing (Charmaz, 2011).

That line-by-line coding was, in effect, a form of selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The coding was not open, in the sense of discovering categories, but instead was intentionally directed by the research goal of understanding what new technologies and workplace practices mean to the interviewees. This approach allowed the researcher to preserve and read the empirical details in a way that aligned with the orientating goals and theoretical categories of the inquiry. As previously mentioned, the coded interview fragments and segments were indicative of attitudes which suggested approval and acceptance of new
technologies and workplace practices. The researcher was not seeking to build theory from the ground up; instead, she sought to understand how the interviewees were experiencing their workplace situations, and what these new workplace practices mean to them.

This clarity of purpose enabled her to make decisions about what the data analysis could yield about the processes of values evolution. However, data that had initially seemed to express ‘convergence’ was misleading in ways that are fully explored and explained in Chapter 6. During this process, the researcher realised that those decisions about underlying meanings required a more interpretive, reflective and, in that sense, a less-than-certain reading of the data. Again, this intent drew her back to the sociocultural context as a means of arriving at a reflective interpretation.

As stated in Chapter 4, this researcher’s analysis of the data differed slightly from the common practice in qualitative research concerning what is meant by the notion of ‘theme’; although her approach is consistent with the idea of a ‘latent theme’ (Boyatzis, 1998). In this thesis, a ‘theme’ is a central background concept that people use to make sense of their experience. As a part of identifying central background concepts, which Omani interviewees use to make sense of their experience of their workplace situation, the researcher needed to pay particular attention to the elements of traditional culture which emerged from the data.

To reiterate, the reason for taking this approach in this inquiry was motivated by a literature that strongly suggests that Middle Eastern culture is not a comfortable fit with Western management practices.

Before moving away from this approach to the data, and towards the literature to help inform the interpretation, the first and second-order analyses had already identified segments of interviewee material which strongly reflected core elements of traditional Omani and Muslim culture so cultural-related themes were developed, as depicted in the data structure in figure
5.1. The researcher moved towards the literature in search of a way to interpret the puzzlingly positive interviewee attitudes that suggested acceptance of new workplace practices. This move highlighted the need to refocus the analysis back onto the sociocultural context to arrive at meaningful findings. In effect, the theoretically informed line-by-line selective coding uncovered the idea that the interviewees' expression of positive attitudes towards Western-based workplace practices was paradoxically motivated by the same cultural elements that, in the first place, had led the researcher to expect negative attitudes towards the workplace.

At this juncture of analysis and sense making, it became important to develop cognitive maps that could align the analysis with the sociocultural context, and to explore the connection of that sociocultural context to the apparently positive workplace attitudes. The development of cognitive maps required the researcher to look for ways in which the thinking and speaking of the interviewees—when expressing their attitudes towards workplace practices—reflected, or fail to reflect, elements of traditional culture. In so doing, the researcher arrived at a rich understanding of the link between the expression of positive workplace attitudes and traditional culture, by surfacing the underlying meaning that workplace situations and practices have for the interviewees.

Identifying the connection between themes reflective of traditional culture and the interviewees’ expressions of positive workplace attitudes involved back and forth movement between the cognitive maps, the interview data, and the interviewees' past and present cultural, religious, and political contexts. An example of such a connection is the cognitive map of ‘Al’aman’, the Arabic term which refers to the importance of security within Omani sociocultural values and practices. The cognitive map of ‘Al’aman’ captures how Omani interviewees’ cognitive processes were suffused with the importance of security within the socio-economic and socio-political context, resulting in a positive workplace attitude.
Reflective of this study’s hermeneutical approach to meaning, the interpretation thus far—and in particular, the development of the cognitive maps—was informed by interviewees’ past and present cultural, religious, and political contexts. The understanding was also, unavoidably, influenced by the researcher’s preconception of the sociocultural context. Her preconception is based on the personal experience of living and working in Oman, and thus being bicultural. In effect, this researcher is ‘an instrument of inquiry’ in the truest sense of the notion. The details of the researcher as instrument are presented and related to her interpretation of data, in Chapter 7. By no means is the researcher implying that she already had complete knowledge of the organisational and cultural context. However, she has experienced that context as an ‘insider’—as an ‘emic’ participant, rather than an external observer.

Once the themes reflective of traditional culture were explored further and connections between traditional culture and positive workplace attitudes were established, a thematic understanding of what their workplace situations meant to the interviewees began to emerge. To arrive at a fuller understanding however, the researcher connected those themes to broader knowledge contributions from social-cognition theory: in particular ‘ought prevention’ versus ‘ideal promotion’ selves (Stam et al., 2010). By making that connection, the sense making process that lies between background culture and employee workplace attitudes could be revealed and explained. As will be detailed in Chapter 6, the sense making process of the interviewees enabled traditional cultural elements to produce unexpectedly positive, rather than negative, attitudes towards the workplace. Identifying that sense making process, in turn, began to uncover the ‘how’ of values evolution which was occurring at the intersection between the traditional culture and the contemporary workplace.
5.7 DEVELOPING EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORKS, PROPOSITIONS AND MODELS

Codes and themes were constantly compared and contrasted during different phases of analysis and interpretation of the data (Gibbs, 2007). The raw data and first-order codes were continuously returned to throughout the coding and the iterative analysis of the data and the interpretation of the findings (Shapiro et al., 2008). The emerging concepts and themes were refined throughout the iterative interpretation process which identified paradoxical themes of elements of traditional Omani culture on the one hand, and themes reflecting positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, rather than negative attitudes, on the other.

These themes were further refined using cognitive maps to increase the explanatory value of the findings, to reach a well-founded understanding of these seemingly paradoxical sets of themes, and to explain what is happening at the juncture where they overlap. The findings, which were supplemented by social-cognition theory, let to the development of an explanatory framework. This framework explains how themes reflective of traditional Omani culture and the related dimension of compliance and dependence, come together with the organisational context to shape particular socio-cognition processes within individuals from a traditional culture that facilitate positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. The details of that explanation are presented in Chapter Six which concludes with the presentation of the explanatory framework of the findings of this research.

Based on the findings which had been grounded in qualitative data, the researcher constructed a model of the interviewees’ sense making and developed relevant propositions to explain the linking role that socio-cognition plays in values evolution. The sense making model makes a considerable contribution to the practicality of this research as well as making a significant theoretical contribution to values-evolution theory as will be seen in Chapter 8.
5.8 VALIDITY

In qualitative research, validity depends on the researcher's efforts in their role as the instrument of inquiry. Credibility is the hallmark of validity in qualitative research. Credibility denotes the extent to which the descriptions, findings, interpretations, and explanations of the research accurately reflect the participants' social reality and therefore relies upon 'authenticity' in terms of faithfully and fairly capturing the participants’ lived experiences, and making known the researcher’s perspective when investigating and reading those experiences (Neuman, 2011; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

Several mechanisms were put in place during this research to ensure validity. To provide an holistic picture and to promote a thick description of the phenomenon under investigation, both data-source triangulation and theoretical triangulation were performed (Tracy, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The triangulation of data sources involved purposefully selecting a pool of interviewees—as diverse as possible—to represent the sample population as well as possible (Saunders et al., 2009; Tracy, 2010). Interviewees represented 10 different organisations across different industries in both the public and private sector; they ranged in age from 22 to 60 years; and they varied in their organisational level from entry and administrative to technical and management. This representative sample supported by the researcher’s prior understanding of the “tacit knowledge” of the participants’ culture (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 492) also allowed for an “in-depth illustration that explicates culturally situated meanings” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843; Geertz, 1973).

Theoretical triangulation included using multiple theoretical perspectives to analyse the research data (Tracy, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This involved constructing a typology derived from multiple cross-cultural theories, outlined in the literature review, and using it in the initial data analysis. Theoretical perspectives were used to analyse the data,
including the Ralston (2008) theory of crossvergence and values evolution. The author also employed social cognitive theory to arrive at an explanation of how positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace and traditional culture interact. The researcher’s aim of providing triangulation aligns with the notion of ‘crystallisation’ in which the goal of using various data sources and applying various theories is to enable a more complex, in-depth, understanding of the phenomenon to a greater extent than establishing a singular truth (Tracy, 2010, p. 844; Richardson, 2000).

To reduce outsider observer bias and insider participant bias (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), descriptions and emerging codes and themes were shared with some interviewees to seek clarification and validation. This sharing occurred during the early stage of the data analysis (Chuang et al., 2015). Additionally, the researcher practised reflexivity throughout the research process (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009; Patton, 2015).

To minimise the possibility of response bias in participants, all of the interviewees were voluntary and were assured of anonymity in the research. In the design of the interview questions, the interview protocol allowed participants to naturalistically describe their lifestyle, jobs, and workplace from their own perspectives, and in their own words. No specific questions were asked regarding their acceptance or rejection of Western-infused management practices (Chuang et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2009).

To take the rigour and validity of this research even further, the data-analytic approach of negative case analysis was used. Negative case analysis encompasses what grounded theories refer to as a ‘constant comparative method’, and the notion of analytic induction (Brodsky, 2008, p. 552; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This constant comparative method involved actively exploring deviant cases to ensure that the emerging explanatory framework was representative of the whole dataset. Constant testing, comparing, redefining, and confirming
the relationships, interpretations, and explanations took place until the explanatory framework integrated all of the relevant data and offered a comprehensive explanation of the phenomena (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2015). In addition, the themes and interpretations throughout have been supported with citations from the literature in the data-analysis and findings chapters (Tracy, 2010).

To ensure that all accessible aspects of the phenomenon were analysed, multilevel coding was used (Silverman, 2015). A number of methods and two different levels of data coding were implemented, which allowed categories to be compared and contrasted. Comparing and contrasting was done to strengthen the validity of the themes emerging from the data analysis (Gioia et al., 2012; Saldana, 2013; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It was coupled with the use of cognitive maps to improve the comprehensiveness of the data interpretation (Fiol and Huff, 1992), which involved recognising elements of traditional culture which emerged from the data, and acknowledging the wider sociocultural context to improve the accuracy of data interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Finally, to achieve the development of “an integrated, precise model that comprehensively describes a specific phenomenon” all data were repeatedly inspected (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008, p. 264).

5.9 RELIABILITY

In qualitative research, reliability involves the replicability and dependability of the research process and findings. Replicability refers firstly to ensuring that the findings reached could not have emerged by accident; and secondly, whether if the same research methods, data collection, and data-analysis processes were to be followed by other researchers in similar environments, those same findings can be confirmed. Dependability refers to acknowledging and describing changes that take place during the research process, and how such changes affected the research. It includes documenting and making explicit how the eventual
understanding was reached (Silverman, 2015; Saunders et al., 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Six mechanisms were put in place throughout this research to ensure reliability and dependability. This dissertation has described, in an explicit and comprehensive way, the entire research process from the methodology to the data collection and analysis, and to the subsequent interpretation of the findings. It has demonstrated the researcher's engagement with the data through the inclusion of extracts of the qualitative data, tables outlining the links between interviewees' comments and codes or themes, and the data structure. The interviewees’ narratives are continually referred to and explored in the findings chapter (Gioia et al., 2012; Morse et al., 2002). Throughout the interpretive process, memos were used to aid the development of theoretical interpretations and these were included in the discussion of the findings (Silverman, 2015).

To minimise “observer error” interview questions were piloted with five doctoral candidates from the Gulf region (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 157) and the questions, data collection, data coding, and the analysis and findings were reviewed by supervisors and other academic peers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To provide interviewees with a basic understanding about the research and the data-collection process, all were given participant information and consent forms prior to the commencement of their interview. The forms explicitly detailed the research background, research aims, research questions, and the data-collection methods. Additionally, time was taken during the interviews to explain each interview question in an attempt to ensure that each of the interviewees understood the questions in the same manner (Silverman, 2015).

Finally, to moderate the likelihood of "subjective reconstructions of interviewees’” reports on the part of the researcher as far as possible (Silverman, 2015, p. 361), all interviews were
audio-recorded and orthographic verbatim transcription of all interview accounts was carried out. In addition, a systematic data-coding and analysis approach was taken using the Gioia et al. (2012) recommendations to develop a data structure. The researcher’s preconceptions and prior experience of the sociocultural context of the interviewees was explicitly and reflexively acknowledged (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009; Patton, 2015).

5.9 GENERALIZABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY

Generalizability denotes the applicability and transferability of the research findings beyond the sample population and is said to be a hallmark of quantitative research (Silverman, 2015). Rather than generalising the findings of a single study, the primary purpose of qualitative research, however, is to provide context-specific knowledge by producing thick description and in-depth explanations of a social phenomenon (Patton, 2015). That purpose may suggest that qualitative research is not generalizable to other, similar, situations. Undeniably, statistical generalisability does not apply to this researcher’s qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). However, other authors argue that qualitative research is generalizable in terms of advancing our understanding of settings other than those under investigation (Silverman, 2015, p. 386; Gioia et al., 2012). Silverman (2015) explains that the criteria for determining generalisability in qualitative research varies from that of quantitative research. Under qualitative criterion, it is the knowledge gained that is generalisable because that knowledge is not restricted to demographic variables but, rather, to the relevance of the topic or problem being investigated (Morse, 1999, p. 6). Other authors make the distinction between 'statistical generalisation' which is synonymous with the projection of quantitative findings across broad populations, where an experiment-based randomly selected population sample is used, and 'analytic generalisation' which is synonymous with the qualitative aim of arriving at a rich, in-depth, detailed understanding of a phenomenon, and where a theoretically based, purposely selected population sample is used (Yin, 2013).
Such authors claim that it is misleading to exaggerate the difficulties with developing general propositions and theories on the basis of specific cases (Yin, 2013; Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). They disagree with those who argue that qualitative research is essentially idiosyncratic, since it uncovers the socially constructed structures and processes of unique individuals within unique contexts (Gioia et al., 2012; Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). Instead, they maintain that qualitative research goes beyond producing idiosyncratic descriptions as “many concepts and processes are similar, even structurally equivalent across domains” (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 16), and can thereby provide explanations which have a wider relevance in other domains (Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). As such, extracting transferable knowledge, principles, concepts, and processes allows qualitative findings to reach a larger audience and aids in the development of theory, regardless of whether the findings come from specific cases (Gioia et al., 2012).

The “aim is to make logical generalisations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomenon rather than probabilistic generalisations to a population” (Popay et al., 1998, p. 348). Given that generalisability is understood differently in qualitative research, there is a preference for the term 'transferability' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As implied in this argument, transferability infers that qualitative research findings can be applicable to similar individuals or situations. Researchers conducting research in one context can apply concepts that were developed in previous research conducted in another context. Transferability involves assessing the relevance of the previous research and seeing associations between a current research project and prior research (Morse, 1999; Patton, 2015).

However, to ensure that qualitative findings are transferable (or generalisable in the qualitative sense) the research data collected and presented needs to be rich with information to provide a thick description and to uncover in-depth meanings and understandings (Yin,
Research methods should be purposely designed and carefully explained to enable those methods to be replicable and to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2013). Additionally, propositions, research models, or theories inducted from qualitative data should be developed to go beyond the findings of the specific study, which enhances their applicability in other domains and situations (Yin, 2013).

A number of mechanisms were put in place throughout this research to enable the transferability of the findings. First, the 'thick-description' technique was employed to allow readers and researchers to make an informed judgment about the transferability of the research findings in this thesis to their own situations (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln 2013). The researcher provided thick description, or a detailed account of her experiences throughout the research process. In the thesis, she discusses the location of the study, describes the participants, details where the interviews occurred, details the methods employed, and details her role in the study. More importantly, the researcher makes explicit connections to the sociocultural environment that surrounded the data collection in which this research inquiry was framed. This was done to give the reader a fuller understanding of the research setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln 2013).

A representative and information-rich research site was selected to allow the researcher to acquire data significant to the inquiry and to improve the transferability of the research outcomes (Patton, 2015). The Gulf State of Oman was selected, as it presents as a particularly well-suited research site in which to access rich information that is representative of the phenomena under investigation. The Omani context is an exemplar of countries that have strong traditional sociocultural values and which are emerging economically, although not yet transforming politically. The economic-based transformational process that is unfolding
clearly places Oman at the intersection between traditional Middle East culture and contemporary Western business ideology.

The generalisability of the research findings to the larger population, and the transferability of those findings to other situations was improved through the use of purposeful theoretical sampling and triangulation of data sources. Theoretical sampling enabled the researcher to diversify participants in terms of location, organisation type, and level in the organisation to capture within-population variation, and to enhance the accuracy of the interpretation (Saunders et al., 2009; Tracy, 2010; Silverman, 2015).

Additionally, although data saturation occurred after 20 interviews were conducted, another 15 interviews were held to obtain a larger range of data sources and to ensure the comprehensiveness of the information being generated (Creswell, 2009). To increase the rigour and legitimacy of the descriptions, the interpretations, and the explanations presented within this study, a systematic and holistic approach to data analysis was undertaken (Gioia et al., 2012). As detailed previously, this approach involved various coding methods: open coding, values coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The researcher also engaged in first and second-order analyses to ensure the validity of the subsequent emergent themes and data structure (Gioia et al., 2012; Saldana, 2013; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These approaches were accompanied by the use of cognitive maps to improve the comprehensiveness of the data interpretation and the theoretical explanation (Fiol and Huff, 1992). Further, the explanations and subsequent research model were well-grounded in the dataset (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Finally, the findings of this research demonstrate its capacity to refute elements of previous theory (Silverman, 2015) - that is, previous theory’s suggestion of a direct link between cultural values and workplace attitudes, motivation, and behaviour such as in Hofstede et al.
(1980; 1991; 2001) and Gelfand, et al. (2007). In doing so, the author demonstrates that the relationship between culture and workplace attitudes is dynamic, indirect, and multi-dimensional. This demonstration not only confirms but, more importantly, advances the work of scholars such as Erez and Earley, (1993) and Earley and Erez (1997), and with the explication of an interrelationship among the self, culture, and work practices, the researcher advances a theory of values-evolution by uncovering the self as the missing link in the values-evolution process.

5.10 ANALYSIS

Interview data were analysed to identify first-order codes and second-order themes were developed. Each passage of the interview transcripts, whether it is a particular activity, an event, or a coherent story detailed by interviewees in response to interview questions, was coded as a unit of data analysis. This was done using the techniques of open coding, values coding, descriptive coding, and in vivo coding, detailed earlier in this chapter. At the early stage of data analysis, the researcher compiled a list of repeated codes in the interviews from which major themes then emerged. An example of such a code was ‘control’—which emerged from the analysis of the very first interview, and which was found to be repeated regularly throughout the subsequent interviews.

To identify a clear set of themes, the researcher then worked to minimise and to maximise differences between the codes, supported by axial coding, to identify similarities and relationships between the codes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The codes which had been developed and the themes which were emerging were discussed with supervisors and subsequent data analysis was conducted to confirm the emerging themes. At the end of this process, a list of themes had been established. Themes were then divided into two groupings: culturally relevant themes, and workplace-practice-related themes. From those two initial
groupings, a total of nine themes emerged: five culturally relevant themes, and four workplace-practice-related themes.

The culturally relevant themes that emerged were: (1) Rule-based approach (2) Belief in ‘Nasib’ (Fatalism and Predestination) (3) Need for ‘almakanuh alaijtimaei’ (social reputation) (4) Need for ‘Al’aman’ (security), and (5) Importance of ‘altathamun alaijtimaei’ (social solidarity).

**Theme 1**: The Rule-based approach theme emerged from joining the codes of 'Control' and 'Obey'. It was most notable in the data for interviewees who spoke in terms of things being prohibited or permissible, and of the importance of following religious and sociocultural rules and (or) conventions.

**Theme 2**: Belief in ‘Nasib’ (Fatalism and Predestination) emerged from joining the codes of 'Fate' and 'Will of God'. This theme was most notable in the data when interviewees expressed belief in and dependence on God for the outcome of their actions, the actions of others, and the outcomes of events.

**Theme 3**: Need for ‘almakanuh alaijtimaei’ (social reputation) emerged from joining the codes of 'Status' and 'Honour'. It most notably emerged within interview data when interviewees referred to an individual’s social standing within their society.

**Theme 4**: Need for ‘Al’aman’ (a sense of security) emerged when the codes of 'Stability' and 'Security' were combined. It most notably emerged within interview data when interviewees described the best and most important thing in their society as being stability and security.

**Theme 5**: Importance of ‘altathamun alaijtimaei’ (social solidarity) emerged from the code of 'Social solidarity'. It most notably emerged within interview data when interviewees referred to the closeness of members of society, and what brings those members together as one unit.
Table 5.1 demonstrates how the culturally relevant themes discussed in this chapter were drawn from the interviewees' narratives. It provides illustrative quotes extracted from the interview data to provide first-hand evidence to support the themes.

The four workplace-practice-related themes that emerged were: (6) Participative leadership and decision-making (7) Self-managing teams (8) Challenging tasks and (or) goals and (9) Job autonomy and (or) employee empowerment.

**Theme 6**: Participative Leadership and Decision-making emerged when the codes of 'Collaborative Meetings', 'Decisions by Consultation', and 'Resentment of the Authoritarian style' were combined. It was most notable in the data where interviewees' comments reflected a preference for leaders who actively encourage and participate in collaborative decision-making.

**Theme 7**: Self-managing teams emerged from joining the codes of 'Working without a Leader' and 'Team-led Problem-solving'. It was most notable in the data when interviewees expressed dependence on themselves and their peers to achieve organisational outcomes, without input from their superior.

**Theme 8**: Challenging tasks and (or) goals emerged from joining the codes of 'Learning New Things', 'Taking the Challenge', and 'Opportunities for Self-development'. It most notably emerged within interview data when interviewees expressed enthusiasm for a difficult task or goal.

**Theme 9**: Job autonomy and (or) employee empowerment emerged from joining the codes of 'Taking Initiative and (or) Responsibility' and 'Freedom in the Workplace'. It most notably emerged within interview data when interviewees expressed a preference for having more freedom and power within their job roles, departments, and organisations.
Table 5.2 demonstrates how the workplace-practice-related themes discussed in this chapter were drawn from the interviewees' narratives. It provides illustrative comments extracted from the interview data to provide first-hand evidence in support of the themes.
### Table 5.1 Themes and illustrative comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and First-order Codes</th>
<th>Illustrative comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rule-based approach</strong></td>
<td>An events manager described the importance of adhering to the rules of Islam: “It’s a big role … you see by obeying the orders of Islam, you feel comfortable for being a Muslim, and you aren’t afraid of anything, as Islam protects you from everything, and the same thing goes for your children and family; … even if we haven’t reached an advanced stage of being religious ... we have Islamic values that help us to do what is permissible and stop us from doing what is prohibited.” An administration officer explained that his acceptance of his manager depends on how well his manager follows the rules of Islam: “Being a Muslim should control every step you make; you should remember the Islamic teaching before you decide to do anything … I hope that with God’s help I am achieving this. So in terms of my manager, I believe that he will be okay with me if he obeys the religious teachings … . If he is good with God, he will be good with me.” A business director identified the central role which his religion and culture play in the way he leads his life: “Let me tell you something …. In each stage of your life, Islam teaches you many things … each one needs to go back to Islam to take benefits from many things …. There are rules that tell you how to deal with, for example, your wife and children … not only the Qur’an, but even the story of the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) … he has guidance regarding how to lead your life … people get benefits from it and apply it … I mean the other type of education, has a role, I mean the general education in particular, it has a role in that … there are many books about how to deal with life … but I feel that it is best to follow my religion and culture.” A business analyst describes how following cultural and religious values guarantees permissible behaviour: “Our religion, culture, and history, I feel that they have planted values in us; these planted values make us behave accordingly; everything that happens in our life … we depend on these values to take care of what is allowed and prohibited in our lives, we just need to follow these values and avoid what is prohibited.” A telecommunications officer emphasised the importance of following cultural traditions: “We are thankful to our forefathers for the traditions they have passed down to us. Our cultural traditions have taught us many things, like what is shameful, so we obey those traditions to avoid shameful things.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A sales representative explained: “We must always adhere to our traditions and customs ... .”

A head of department explained that it is important to apply the orders of Islam across all areas of one’s life not only to avoid the wrong path, but also to uphold the reputation of Islam: “Islam orders tells us to do so and so, if we don’t do that, we deform the reputation of Islam; so, we have to apply the Islamic ethics regarding all our movements, dealings, and relationships. The orders mean what our Islamic path says regarding what is right or wrong, and we need to get away from the wrong things and always do the right things.”

**Nasib (Fatalism and Predestination)**

A teacher described the comfort that predestination brings her: “All of us as Muslims feel comfortable … I mean just everyone whether it be yourself, your children, your family, your relatives, and even your neighbour because the Great God has planned this life for you.”

“I wished that I could get a higher percentage to teach English, but what happened was the opposite; it didn’t happen. But that is fine, this is my fate and that was not written for me.”

An administrative clerk expressed fate as the reason for him not pursuing his dream profession: “Of course, I would have liked to have an adventure in a new field, as a pilot. I liked it because of my father; as a child my father used to talk to me what it would be like to fly; at the time it was a new and exciting profession here in Oman, but the fate didn’t let me do it.”

An administrative assistant explained that: “You find here in this type of organisation that the educational degrees vary, so you ask yourself why didn’t I reach that level? ... in the end though, it’s your fate and you have to accept it.”

“It comes down to the will of God … . If God wills you to get that you will have it and if he doesn’t you won’t have it.”

An executive coordinator noted fatalism as the reason for her acceptance of her current profession: “My profession now is not what I always wanted to do … . When I finish my bachelor degree in sociology or social studies and registered my paperwork with the department of public services for job placement, I was placed in business administration which is far away from the area of my study. I was really disappointed at first. But this is what was written for me, I know that God knows best, so this must be better for me than what I wanted.”

A marketing analyst indicated acceptance of an unfair work situation as a result of his belief in fatalism: “When I first came to work they told me that such and such is your responsibilities … but after only one week I had to do my colleagues' jobs when they were sent to the Emirates for an exhibition … that was okay, but when they returned I was still left with many of their responsibilities. I didn’t like this because it seems unfair. But at the end it’s okay because...
God must want this for me.”

A senior manager expressed acceptance of extra-long working hours as a result of his belief in fatalism “In my previous work as a laboratory technician in the army I worked very long hours … I hardly saw my family because I was at home only four hours a day. When I became exhausted from this, I told my manager and he said that he can’t do anything about it … this is the nature of your work and we have a shortage … . But I took this issue as my duty to my country and my duty was chosen for me by God.”

A project officer expressed acceptance of lack of recognition as a result of his belief in fatalism “I am always enthusiastic towards my work … I come up with good ideas, I put a lot of effort, I work long hours. But did you know that the credit for all of my work goes to my manager … ? It does upset me but I just take it as normal because that is what has been decided by God.”

A lawyer described how the reputation which his employment offers him raised his family’s social standing: “Nowadays the nature of your profession is very important, not only because better way but mostly because it brings a nice reputation. I worked so hard with my studies and earlier jobs to get to this position because my father actually sold gas bottles for a living … . But now everyone in our town comes to my family when they need help.”

A strategic planning officer indicated that the reputation which came with representing his work department offered him a sense of honour: “I was not at the management level at that time but I was chosen to represent my department to the board of directors. Even knowing there was no financial incentive or promotion and it involved a lot of pressure and preparation, I was really happy about this because it gave me the attributes of honour.”

A sales employee explained: “When I do something and then management let me do something bigger, I feel that I can really become distinguished. This is important because it will be reflected on my family … people will say 'your daughter reached this high position'. So, my parents will be honoured in the community.”

An English teacher explained the importance of her husband’s profession in terms of his social standing: “As a mother of six teenage daughters I worry … I worry that they do not have good marriage prospects. Honestly, the reason for this is their father’s weak social status … he is a good man, but people don’t respect him much because of his profession; he is a labourer … . You know that means people from good tribes won’t come to ask for my daughters.”

A personal assistant indicated that how members are viewed socially determines honour: “I was not going to do this job. I actually came here to forget my problem at home … I love somebody from xxxxxxx (known family name of non-Omani
or Arabian heritage). He has come to ask for my hand in marriage three times already but my family has strongly rejected him each time … . My mother is pressuring me to forget about him because she says that if I marry someone from those people I will dishonour my father in the community.”

A public relations coordinator explained: “The company had an important function to organise … we were expecting one member of the royal family. My department was responsible for the hall and everything. We initially had a time frame of five days, but then they said we had only three days to do it. There was a lot of pressure but thank God, I could save the company’s reputation by dividing the work among two companies to get it done in three days … . I had to come back at night to make sure everything was ready, because I knew that there were VIPs and I was responsible. The wali (governor) who is the representative of His Highness in the area saw me leaving at night, the next day at the function he publically thanked me and this was reported in the newspaper. This made me very honoured because it would be stated in my reputation.”

An air force officer expressed that recognition at work is about social reputation and notability: “They can’t change it as we were nearly 90 participants and they announced that. They apologised to me later, but who can give me my right? I was confident that I am the best and they were confident that I was the first but this won’t be clear to everyone ….What about my reputation? There might be employees who care more for money but for other employees like me you should make sure to recognise them first before others. It’s all about the notability … .”

**Need for ‘Al’aman’**

- **Stability**
- **Security**

An administrative officer explained: “The most important thing is that Oman is well-known for being the country of security and safety … .”

An archival officer explained: “Security and stability are the most important thing … stability is the most important thing … there are no problems especially the well-known problems in the nearby areas. It is true that our situation is a little bit less than the other countries in the Gulf … like in finances and such, but the most important thing is that we feel comfortable and satisfied … .”

A public relations coordinator described the security and safety as characteristics of Omani society: “I think that the best things which I see through my continuous travel outside Oman are the need for security and safety, which are a characteristic of Oman.”

A finance manager emphasised the presence of security and stability in Oman and described it as an outcome of Omani people’s ‘strong sense of togetherness’: “We have the security and stability in our country … so, wherever you go or wherever you sit, the door of your house will be open and the keys of your car will be in … and everything is like that,”
thank God ... why do we have security and stability? It’s because we are one hand ... the Omanis are like that ... so, each one of us is proud of being an Omani and would not do anything to compromise that ... .”

A human resources manager associated security with the social character of Omani society: “Security is a great bless, as we see now from the media what is happening in the other countries, this makes people worried; the media atmosphere creates anxiety; thank God, this is one of the greatest blessings that we should thank God for and preserve it ... the thing which makes me comfortable too is the humbleness, generosity and the good morals that the people have; you can, as a woman, go out without a family member with you like a father, brother, or anyone; ... you feel secure you can drive your car in the street safely, you don’t find someone bothering you with misbehaviour or other things; I have travelled to other countries, regardless of their names, and I was shocked with morals, and culture of that country ... .”

“A police officer described in society in general and employment security: “I studied in Egypt for five years and it struck me how privileged we are in Oman thanks to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos ... not only in relation to safety in society, but for instance myself as a Omani, when I finished my studies I submitted my paperwork to the government and within a month they assigned me to a stable job, whereas the Egyptians don’t have this system ... it is left up to them and they might still be without a stable job five or even 10 years after they finish their degree.”

A manager identified the need for security and associated the fulfillment of that need with government-enabled job opportunities: “The first thing is security ... the relationship of Oman with the other countries, it’s very quiet and peaceful; but the most important thing is security in life in Oman ... . I mean the life of the individual is not too difficult; the government gives many job opportunities ... . They are working hard to increase opportunities in the private sector, and the income the individual is good, thank God. The development projects are developing and ... so, I feel that everything is stable.”

Importance of ‘altathamun alaijtimaei’

Social solidarity

A finance purchase officer explained: “the social life is very beautiful here because it has harmony and the people are homogenous; this means that the people are homogenous, we love each other, we feel the others’ pain, sufferings and happiness; it’s nice here because when we there is a wedding party, everyone in your village and town come, and the same thing happens when you have a mourning when one of your relatives dies; the same thing happens as the people share it with you; this means that this social life is the most beautiful thing here.

A graphic designer explained: “it’s the social solidarity; so, you won’t be afraid when you leave your home as your friend or colleague would stand with you and won’t leave you; in other places it’s the opposite, where no one can leave his family alone because no one would help them; because the society is connected where you find a family where father with his sons in the same hour for a long period; after that, you find that there is a son who stays with them, they don’t
leave him; one day in his house and another day in their house; so, you will not be afraid of anything.”

A business solutions coordinator emphasized “There are connections between us. So, you have if there is a death incident or a wedding party, a small or a big incident, people cooperate with each other and doing many things. The same thing is applicable to the existing heritage, the castles, the water springs, the beautiful beaches, they make the citizen feel of a type of belonging to the country so he maintains his heritage and connections with others.”

A social worker explained: “No...; thank God...; I feel that the Omanis are still adhering to their identity so strongly; we adhere to our traditions and customs more than others...; so, these things don’t have influence on us; we go, come back, see and get influenced...; we have travelled to many countries, we were out and we didn’t get influenced with these things... that’s what makes us one hand.”

An assistant general manager’s explained that: “One of the most important things that distinguish the people of Oman is that we always stand together as one, we have this strong sense of brotherhood. The biggest evidence of this was when the cyclone hit in 2007. All Omani citizens came to help. Even those people who were not affected came down from the mountain areas to help their brothers and sisters... We Omanis, We are one hand.”

An administrative officer explained central to social solidarity is a shared history and common culture reality which all members live by: “The Omani society, by its nature has solidarity, with its heritage, culture, good-heartedness, simple life, even if you have money, life is simple for you because we all live simply like your fathers and grandfathers and that is connects us together.”

A manager emphasised on a shared religion as the essence of social solidarity: “Religion is always the essence of family and social solidarity in Oman, because as you are a Muslim and I am...we follow the same path... the path of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); but whenever you go away from religion, you feel that the solidarity is getting less; so it’s the essence of everything in life.”

A telecommunications officer expressed the importance of social solidarity: “We are used to be together for a long time; we are not like the foreigners. Here the family is important. It’s important for us to speak and participate... We don’t live alone in society... We live with a group of people.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and First-order Codes</th>
<th>Illustrative comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participative Leadership/Decision-making</td>
<td>“My manager always gives me self-confidence; he tries as much he can to make me a partner with him regarding a decision and he always consults me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative meetings</td>
<td>“When he makes you part in the decision-making process, he would ask you: 'If we do that, what do you think about it?' So, you feel that this would give you more motives for work; it’s more than when you think it’s only my job and I just do it. So, you feel that your work is like that, and he consults you and takes your opinion. This improves your belonging, and you feel you are close to him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions by consultation</td>
<td>“You see an employee whose degrees is less, but he has ideas that are about to be better than the manager’s; this means that he makes them feel he needs ideas from his employees; that’s why the meeting is very important, because when you take ideas, this is a modern method, you take a decision which is concluded from all these ideas; when you take a decision alone, you may fail with that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment of the authoritarian style</td>
<td>“Of course, it’s a big difference between current manager and previous manager and a big influence, because he understands your situation and that’s contrary to that person who only considers the work itself; this one considers your work, personality, and performance ... .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s very beautiful because every person feels ... if they give him the chance to give suggestions, he feels that he exists in that place, and not only the managers take decisions; he can also can do it even if ... .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I can give them my opinion; as a job, we sometimes write some things; we write our point of view; so, I am present at work; I am not nothing; I exist ... I am present; I am not someone who has no existence; I am not a computer or, for example, I just work at a computer or doing things like that; no. I have an opinion and I have my thinking; I can say that I don’t agree on something; I have an opinion; that’s really nice.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Within meetings ... of course when he asks me within the meeting ‘what are your ideas?’, I would give him my ideas ... this motivates me because the manager will be listening to my ideas and working on applying them so I feel a part of the team and that they have taken my suggestion.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|  | “This is a negative point about him ... he always takes his decision by himself and he likes to interfere in the authority of the sections ... we have this problem ... when you let someone participate in taking the decision due to his
experience … if you say him ‘come, what about this? What can we do about that?’ … . He will take the ideas from you and apply them … first he will make the employee feel happy and he would develop his work; and the employee will feel that he has a value as he applied his ideas … .”

“It will come; but, he will take the decision, and it will not be issued immediately, he would suggest the decisions and they can see it and they suggest if they see it suitable, they of course will implement it, or if it is not suitable, they can amend it or refuse it; if they just listen to his decision, he will feel that he exists in the place and they take his opinion; this will motivate him.”

“In most cases, it is better that the employee feels that he is building the organisation with the manager when he participates with him in building the organisation, instead of when the manager just gives him orders, he would feel that his duty is only to listen and obey.”

"He is supposed to sit with the employees … hold meetings periodically with the employees …. to ask the employees every now and then to present their ideas regarding how to develop their section, and to speak about the things which he can do … to participate with them in taking the decisions …. the decision should not be unilateral … there is no participation with the others’ ideas … marginalising their roles.”

“This manager doesn’t ask my opinion, he just says ‘do this; I don’t have time; go and do your job’—he makes me almost hate him.”

“I wish we could just do it the way we think is best instead of it just being considered like a suggestion for them to study it and decide … .”

“The manager’s decision is not always right … he may not see some things or he may forget something … the employee may have seen this situation and he may give his opinion as he can say about what he knows and that’s better … . The employee will benefit … he will think … yes, I can express my opinion in this organisation.”

**Self-managing teams**

**Working without a leader**

“My manager has placed us into teams without a leader and I am very comfortable with that because we work together to solve problems and what we do is up to us.”

“Our manager moves from location to location a lot of the time so he is not here to direct us. But we have never had any complaints against our section, because we work together well and we are always up-to-date.”

“The nature of my work means that I spend weeks or months at a time in remote areas away from home and workplace administration … . Of course, I am not alone I’m with my team … I consider my team members like my brothers … it’s..."
a bond that enables us to manage our work by ourselves without the need for authority.”

“In my work group, we hold meetings to come up with solutions to problems that we face without the help of our manager.”

“Of course, it’s the harmony between the employees ... we are working together as a group ... like brothers ... this motivates you as you find someone to help you solve the problem and they all help each other.”

“The most important characteristic of a job is that it shouldn’t stop you at a certain point; it should contain a challenge and it should develop you.”

“No. On the contrary, when I arrived here, I entered the ship, saw the work, understood that job, and I challenged myself to continue doing it, as the job was different and can give me the experience. I benefited so much from that job.”

“I didn’t like it because it was a full of routine; that made me go to a new job; there was not challenge in it; I knew everything I was doing; my current job contains challenges because I don’t have a background about business and so on; so, it is more beautiful when you learn something new.”

“For me it is important that my manager sets big goals … even if it is difficult for me to reach ... I will be driven to achieve it so I don’t embarrass myself and my family.”

An administration officer identified the challenging aspects of her sister’s work in police intelligence as positive: “I wish that my job was more like my sister xxxxx’s job … . She goes to work excited because her work involves investigating and solving tough problems … . My work is opposite to that, every day is the same and I don’t learn new things, or have the opportunity to develop my skills.”

“We have a little freedom, but it’s not complete.”

“We are controlled by many things; I don’t have a wide range of freedom in my job but I would definitely like to.”

“Enthusiastic for work? ... Of course, it was my first day of work here, when I entered on the first day of work here, I felt that there was nothing, and the place had nothing reliable, or essentially, it has nothing. So, since I started to work here, I started to establish it and I collected everything here; the important things; there should be a system to preserve them so that they won’t be lost; this made me enthusiastic to do something, to perform something, as I came from a
different place and I became in a different place; I wanted the responsible people here to know that I have experience and ability to work on my own.”

“He doesn’t see it; and I have also dealt with a third manager when I was working full-time; he was very careful ..., when there was something to be done, he used to review it many times to finish it; sometimes even the tasks which were like routine, so his excessive care and fear of having anything wrong wasted his time and he made me hesitate when I wanted to sign something, as maybe there is something wrong. It was like he didn’t have confidence in his employees and he had to watch everything.”

“When my manager was absent, I acted on his behalf; I was very enthusiastic to show him when he came back, to show him that the work was performed while he was not there ....”

“For example trust; when he gives you trust at work; if he is not there, you are in his place; so, you will have more motivation; you will get more responsibility and enthusiasm to work.”

“When I was working in the private sector I enjoyed it … the situation was not complicated ... ; I was responsible for what I do and there was no need to take permission from the manager; at least; but, in the government sector, everything should be done after the approval of the manager ... when he is absent, many things would stop ... we wish that we would have authority to do our jobs without going to the manager ... this order might have passed by him, and he signed it ... why should I take it back to him again after I do the purchase? This makes the work slow ... I hope they would find a solution for that ....”

“Yes … I take decisions, I have to take decisions; there is in this case no time to call my direct manager to ask him; I take the decision and I take the responsibility about what will happen ... as a result of that decision; of course this demands experience and If my decision is wrong, of course I will take the responsibility of the mistake ... I have to take the responsibility and I should try to correct the mistake ... in one way or another … .”

“Of course. I may not be afraid to the degree of not doing something, but if they take a decision and they approve it, this gives you a sense of responsibility; it’s nice; it strengthens your character and makes you feel more of the responsibility of the thing you are doing.”

“I felt I have achieved something two months after my emplacement when a group of engineers ... employees from our organisation, went to implement an inspection campaign, I wasn’t one of them, and I didn’t even have safety clothes; so, I took that from one of the employees and I went; I felt that I have achieved something, as I am a new employee and went to an inspection campaign for three days; and then they appreciated my initiative, because my name was not suggested and I took the initiative; so, when they honoured me and thanked me it made me feel that I have achieved
something while I was a new employee.”

“I think it is good. when the task and responsibility is only one task, you finish it and that’s it; but when there are more tasks, and you participate in them, this will give you more ability to work; so, you will work harder to do that; so, you feel you are busy with that and you have more than one task to finish; this is a motive to work more and gain experience and knowledge; it’s useful for you at your work.”
5.10.1 Initial Findings

The findings of this research are presented in two parts. The first part has the initial findings drawn directly from the data analysis and is presented here; the second part is a detailed and comprehensive interpretation and explanation of those findings, which is presented in Chapter Six.

In this chapter, so far, the researcher has detailed the key aspects of the data-analysis process used which led to the development the major themes, dimensions, and the data structure of this research. She then detailed the subsequent analytical and interpretative process which led to an explanation of those major themes and dimensions within the data structure. This, thereby, led to an exploratory framework that provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation, seen in the conclusion of Chapter Six.

In this first part of the findings section on the data structure, Figure 5.1 is presented to capture and display the data-analysis process used to arrive at the initial findings of the aggregate dimensions. Figure 5.1 presents an overall conceptualisation of the relationships between the first-order codes and the second-order themes, and the commonalities across both the first-order codes and second-order themes facilitated by axial coding that enabled the emergence of the aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012).

Interviewee comments - examples of which are provided in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 above - were coded as is seen on the left-hand side of Figure 5.1. Those codes were then grouped as themes, as set out in the middle of Figure 5.1. The themes are: (1) Rule-based approach (2) Belief in ‘Nasib’ (Fatalism and Predestination) (3) Need for ‘almakanuh alajitimaei’ (social reputation) (4) Need for ‘Al’aman’ (security) (5) Importance of ‘altathamun alajitimaei’ (social solidarity) (6) Participative leadership and decision-making (7) Self-managing teams (8) Challenging tasks and (or) goals and (9) Job autonomy and (or) employee empowerment.
The themes were linked, based on their commonalities and connections were made to the underlying conceptualisations on behalf of the interviewees who revealed paradoxical aggregate dimensions. Themes 1 to 5, the culturally relevant themes, are reflective of a high regard for traditional culture; they revealed the aggregate dimension of compliance and dependence. Themes 6 to 9, the workplace-practice themes, are reflective of workplace behaviours and attitudes consistent with Western management practices as revealed in the aggregate dimension of positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace; these are seen on the right-hand side of Figure 5.1.

The second part of the findings section, which begins in Chapter Six, introduces theoretical concepts and cognitive maps to the analysis and interpretation. Chapter Six returns to the sociocultural context to explore and explain how these seemingly paradoxical sets of themes come to intersect. The resultant understanding then enables the development of the explanatory framework which is discussed and presented in Figure 6.2 which shows how the themes reflective of traditional Omani culture that produce the dimension of compliance and dependence interact with the organisational context to facilitate positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. Based on the research findings and the explanatory framework, a research model and relevant propositions are developed and are presented in Chapter Eight.
Figure 5.1 Data Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Order Codes</th>
<th>2nd Order Themes</th>
<th>Aggregate Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>Rule-based</td>
<td>Compliance &amp; Dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBEY</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATE</td>
<td>Belief in ‘Nasib’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILL OF GOD</td>
<td>Need for ‘Almakansuh ala’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATUS</td>
<td>Need for ‘Alaman’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONOUR</td>
<td>Importance of ‘Altathamun ala’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STABILITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECURITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SOLIDARITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Order Codes</td>
<td>2nd Order Themes</td>
<td>Aggregate Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS</td>
<td>Participative leadership/</td>
<td>Positive attitudes towards the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>contemporary workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESENTMENT OF THE AUTHORITYSTAN STYLE</td>
<td>Self-managing teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKING WITHOUT A LEADER</td>
<td>Challenging tasks/goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM LEAD PROBLEM-SOLVING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING NEW THINGS</td>
<td>TAKING THE CHALLENGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKING INITIATIVE/RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREEDOM IN THE WORKPLACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve a rich in-depth understanding of the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards the workplace, the discussion in this chapter builds on the analysis and initial findings in Chapter 5 by addressing the following three secondary research questions:

What do contemporary workplace practices mean to the members of traditional Omani culture who experience them?

What processes underlie the relationship between traditional culture and employee attitudes towards the contemporary workplace?

What are the implications of the relationship between culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace for the design of more effective Omani managerial practices?

The findings of this research focused on Omani employees’ attitudes towards their workplace because there was good reason to wonder whether the researcher would uncover a problem to do with the traditional values of Omani culture on the one hand, and workplaces which are introducing Western management practices on the other. As a result of the strong consensus in the literature, it appears that members of a traditional Middle Eastern culture, such as Oman, are likely to experience difficulty with management practices that reflect contemporary Western culture. Middle Eastern culture is not a comfortable fit given the
cultural elements of high power-distance, collectivism, high uncertainty-avoidance (Hofstede, 1983; At-twajri and Al-Muhaiza 1996) and the various indications in the literature (Common, 2011; Al-Al-Kazemi and Ali, 2001; Rice, 2003; Jones, 2007). These previous authors and others referred to in the literature review, led the researcher to expect that negative employee attitudes towards these new workplace practices would exist.

Given that situation, the examination here of employee attitudes towards the workplace is in effect an examination of the collision between stability (the sociocultural values of a traditional culture), and change brought about by the importation and application of Western management practices as a result of advances in globalisation, economy, business, education and technology. It was only fitting to draw on cross-cultural theory in analysing the data to consider how individuals come to sit at varying positions along the culture continuum, from cultural divergence through to cultural crossvergence, amid this collision between traditional stability and contemporary change.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the initial data analysis using profile types constructed from concepts in the cross-cultural literature. It then moves to a discussion of what emerged from the initial data analysis. From there a puzzle arises as to whether the researcher was seeing convergence, divergence, crossvergence of cultural values or something else. The researcher then returns to the data, seeking to make sense of, and provide an explanation for, these puzzling findings. She achieves this through engaging in an in-depth consideration of the sociocultural context, supported by the construction of cognitive maps and theoretical concepts, to conclude the chapter with a framework which explains the research findings.
6.2 PROFILE TYPES

As seen in Chapter Three, after reviewing multiple cross-cultural theories, the following typology (figure 6.1) was constructed based on what the literature led this researcher to expect in terms of the ways in which Omani employees may arrive at different positive and negative attitudes towards the acceptance, adoption, or resistance of Western management practices. The development of the typology brought together a range of concepts from those cross-cultural theories. The typology was then used to guide the initial stage of the data analysis. In Section 3.7 of Chapter Three, table 3.2 details the basis of the typology’s construction.

Figure 6.1: Omani Culturally Informed Attitude Profile Types towards Western Management Practices
At the initial stage of analysis, it quickly became apparent that although these profile types had been constructed using multiple cultural theories, they could not be sufficiently supported with evidence from the interview data. Interview participants had not lived and worked in culturally diverse environments, and thus had not internalised more than one culture. However, they did seem to display positive attitudes towards the workplace and seemed to be accepting of Western-designed management practices.

6.3 IS IT A CASE OF CONVERGENCE?

The initial interpretation of the interview data led this researcher to conclude that a remarkable convergence is occurring in which local employees are finding positive meanings in new workplace practices. This would indicate that values are evolving rapidly, and are shifting away from traditional sociocultural perspectives. The expectation however, was to find divergence, or perhaps some indications of a developing unique configuration of values that signal crossvergence. Instead, the researcher saw an apparently remarkable value shift of a monolithic culture.

An example of apparent convergence came from a conversation that the researcher had with an Omani employee about self-managing teams. Kirkman and Shapiro (2001) point out that “high levels of power distance and determinism, which characterize people in the Philippines, may cause Filipinos to resist self-management” (p. 559) so the researcher expected that the same logic would apply to her Omani interviewees. What she found, however, were comments such as: “My manager has placed us into teams without a leader and I am very comfortable with that, because we work together to solve problems and what we do is up to us”.
A second example concerns respect for seniority and authority. According to Ali (1990) and Common (2011), Gulf State managers often use a hierarchical authoritarian manner to signal their status, so it was surprising to the researcher when she encountered interviewees who are apparently resentful of the authoritarian style. For instance, one interviewee said: “This manager doesn’t ask my opinion, he just says ‘do this; I don’t have time; go and do your job’—he makes me almost hate him”. And a third example of convergence came from an interviewee who said: “They didn’t appreciate me as a person regarding my work, performance and discipline ... ; so, of course, works vary; so, I didn’t get my chance”. The researcher initially interpreted this comment to indicate a rejection of power distance and a sign of a values shift away from collectivism and towards individualism.

A fourth example relates to participative decision-making. Gelfand et al. (2007) suggest that cultures with an individualist and low power-distance orientation would respond positively to participative decision-making, whereas cultures such as Oman which have a collectivist and high power-distance orientation would not. Therefore, it was a surprise to encounter interviewees who were supportive of participative decision-making. One interviewee said: “My manager always gives me self-confidence; he tries as much he can to make me a partner with him regarding a decision, and he always consults me”.

A fifth example of convergence came from an interviewee who said: “The most important characteristic of a job is that it shouldn’t stop you at a certain point; it should contain a challenge and it should develop you”. On reading the comment initially, the researcher took this as a possible shift towards individualism.

Based on the literature which discusses national cultures within the Gulf States, and the related difficulties which may be arising in Gulf countries as a result of the intersection between local traditional cultures and Western management practices, it is understandable
that such comments from interviewees were surprising and even puzzling. What was even more puzzling was discovered through a second—and more careful—reading of the interview data.

The interviewee who had said: “My manager has placed us into teams without a leader and I am very comfortable with that because we work together to solve problems and what we do is up to us”, had answered a follow-up question about whether the comfort he was feeling was something new. He said: “I am always comfortable with what my manager decides is best for us—it is an honour for me to be so trusted by him”. So now we had comments from the same person indicating reduced levels of power distance, along with comments indicating high levels of power distance: the code of ‘convergence’ had to be replaced - but with what?

The interviewee who had said: “This manager doesn’t ask my opinion, he just says ‘do this; I don’t have time; go and do your job’—he makes me almost hate him”, then compared her current manager with her previous manager for whom she had enjoyed working.

   So, he guided us, do you understand? He would say to us ‘do this and that and if this happens, this is the solution; if you want anything, just call me; if you are tired, you can go home’. He had a good style. He treated me like his daughter.

On this later reading, it seems that the interviewee had perhaps not shifted to an outright rejection of an authoritarian leadership style, but was instead explaining why an authoritarian style was valued when enacted within a patriarchal context.

In the third example, the interviewee had said: “They didn’t appreciate me as a person regarding my work, performance and discipline ...; so, of course, works vary; so, I didn’t get my chance”. The researcher took this to indicate a shift towards individualism. The researcher’s confidence was shaken, however, when she returned to the interviews and found
that this person had explained an acceptance of not being appreciated by saying: “But, we say in the end that God has given you that, and he didn’t decide that you will get it. So I said that this is the limit, and I will not reach more than that ..., so no need to work harder”. How should we interpret this interviewee’s statements? Should we conclude that a shift towards individualism is occurring, or that instead the interviewee feels that it is safe to complain about not being appreciated as an individual, because his background belief in determinism removes the force of his complaint, and this thereby enables him to feel that he is still loyal to traditional sociocultural values?

The interviewee from the fourth example said: “My manager always gives me self-confidence; he tries as much he can to make me a partner with him regarding a decision and he always consults me”. He answered a follow-up question about why this gives him confidence.

This way, my manager honours me in front of my colleagues and that gives me confidence, because it raises my position in the department; you see an employee whose degree is less, but because he has ideas that are better than the manager’s shows others that he is up to that level and should be proud of that.

His answer revealed to the researcher that what she initially interpreted as a shift towards an individualist and low power-distance orientation was actually the interviewee’s perception of participative decision-making as a way to increase his social status.

In the fifth example where the interviewee had said: “The most important characteristic of a job is that it shouldn’t stop you at a certain point; it should contain a challenge and it should develop you”. He was then asked a follow-up question about why challenge and development was the most important characteristic of a job. He responded: “The organisation should appreciate what you are doing so you get the promotions. This way, when you reach the
retirement age, you do not remain at the first organisational ranking that you started at. What I mean is that you can retire with position, power, and pride”. This response made it much more apparent that his first comment indicated the importance of social status, rather than individual self-achievement.

As explained above, the initial interpretation of the interview data was that it contained surprisingly strong indications of convergence. As the reader can see, when the interviews were read more closely - in the effort to understand why interviewees were expressing such positive attitudes towards new management practices - the researcher became less certain about what she had found.

The re-reading of the interview data made it far more problematic to interpret what the interviewees were saying than was initially thought; the convergence that was first seen in the data was illusory. Rather than a convergence of values, interviewees have a high and positive regard for their traditional Omani values. They were describing new workplace practices in ways that accorded with traditional Omani values, not Western values. Of what then were the interviews evidence? If the researcher had found divergence, why were the interviewees consistently expressing such positive attitudes towards new workplace practices, given that their traditional sociocultural values clashed with those practices, and that these had not changed? If the researcher is not seeing convergence, divergence, or crossvergence, and there was no clear indication of biculturalism, what could be the fourth possibility? What could be motivating them to make such positive comments?

Alvesson and Karreman (2007) discuss the use of problematic empirical material for theorising and they encourage “… researchers to actively work with, expand, and vary their interpretive repertoire by being open to and focusing on breakdowns [because breakdowns] make space for theoretical reconceptualizations and development” (p. 1278). It was at this
point that this researcher realised the limitations of both the typology and general cultural
theory when it comes to the problem that she is trying to understand, and the central puzzle
that she is trying to explain. Nonetheless, discovering that the different types that she
expected to find - and the assumptions of current cultural theory that underlie those types - do
not offer a complete explanation was a first important step because it led to the researcher
asking what is actually going on that departs so radically from what is said in the literature.

It became clear that the analysis needed to move towards a broader consideration of whether
the difficulties that the literature led the researcher to expect were in fact experienced by the
interviewees. To expand the interpretive repertoire of the research, and to reconceptualise the
interview data, the researcher combined a 'close to the ground' approach with a search within
cultural theory and social-cognition theory. The search was for something that could explain
what the unexpected and problematic attitudes towards new workplace practices that were
uncovered might reveal about the process of values evolution.

6.4 CLOSER TO THE GROUND APPROACH

This notion of a theory that is closer to the ground comes from the anthropologist Clifford
Geertz (1973) who explains the difference between scientific theory and anthropologic
tory. The key difference is that people act according to the meaning that they see in
situations, rather than being driven by physical forces. Adopting the perspective of Geertz,
the researcher refocused on the question of what meanings do interviewees see in their
workplace situations. To answer that question the primary focus needed to be on the details
of what is going on in the interviewees' environment or context, thereby getting 'closer to the
ground'.
This more finely grained analysis began with asking what we know about these people and their attitudes. And what do we know about them that might explain their attitudes towards this sort of workplace? The fact that they are in workplaces which are importing Western management practices does not provide us with the means of explaining their positive attitudes towards that sort of workplace.

Figure 6.2 outlines what this researcher knew about the interviewees at this stage of the analysis, and it highlights what was still a mystery to the researcher. The context in which the Omani interviewees live revealed to the researcher the antecedent conditions of traditional Omani cultural elements. These cultural elements are a compound of tribal culture and Islamic values that are internalised within an authoritarian political setting, and which together produce compliance and dependence. To comprehend clearly how that setting might activate and operate within individuals, the reader needs to understand that this compounded conjunction of elements is not always neatly aligned.

What was considerably mysterious were the socio-cognitive processes that enable individuals from a rule-based traditional culture to report positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. What can the interviewees' expressed commitment to their traditional culture reveal about the meanings they see in their workplace situations? In turn, what are the thought processes that are enabling the interviewees to frame Western management practices in such a way that they are in accord with traditional values, rather than being in conflict with them?
We may think about the culture of Omani people as being proud and concerned about reputation, as well as believing in fatalism and predestination, and adopting a rule-based approach—as the research data indicates. A very specific way of thinking about Omani culture emerges as a way of understanding it and, as a consequence, of understanding it in terms of attitudes towards the workplace. This research contends that largely without exception or negotiation in Oman, the strong emphasis on and acceptance of following the rules - whether it is the rules of Islam, the rules of the family and tribe, or the rules of the Sultan - has resulted in a society which views compliance as being very important.

This strong sense of compliance was evident in many of the interviewees' comments. “It controls you and you don’t move one step without considering that”, said one interviewee; another said: “It controls my life totally, especially the prayer; it organises your day; it..."
makes it divided into five parts; you feel from the dawn till noon you can do many things ... you think of the prayer, but if you think of the time, the day will pass”.

An additional example of an interviewee comment that accorded with a strong emphasis on compliance was: “I remember that I am a Muslim when I do everything, so it decides for me to do it or not”. Another interviewee suggested that even in the capital city, the government emphasises compliance with the traditional way of doing things. He illustrated his support for this with his concern for upholding reputation and honour by saying:

Even in Muscat, the government insists that this ... for example, you may see someone wearing a pyjama and walking in the market; this is not welcomed in Oman ... and it destroys the reputation ... secondly, it’s not only the clothes, even the behaviour that it represents, they act in a way that is not consistent with our Omani values that we have followed for hundreds of years, and this does not give me honour.

Here an interviewee explains how the strong emphasis on compliance extends to the workplace:

Thank God, we are Muslims; the first thing is to fear our Lord. There are many things we learn from Islam like love, cooperation, brotherhood; we have learnt to be afraid of our Lord, and the conscience is the same. These things also control us at work, at home or with yourself...For example, you feel that you are afraid to do something at work, because it is a trust, and you are doing your duty; there are some behaviours, we have to think about them before we do them; are they correct? Are they from our traditions?
This interviewee’s comment is indicative that people whose culture emphasises rule-following learn dependence, rather than independence, of thought and action. This outcome occurs because there is little encouragement in the culture to be reflective, critical, or self-determined. This dependence was also evident in the interviewees’ comments. One interviewee commented:

*Our religion, culture and history, I feel that they have planted values in us; these planted values make us behave accordingly; everything that happens in our life ... we depend on these values to take care of what is allowed and prohibited in our lives, we just need to follow these values and avoid what is prohibited.*

Another interviewee commented on the Omani people’s dependence on their ruler to guide them. They indicated their belief in fatalism and said: “*We are grateful to His Majesty our Royal Highness Sultan Qaboos, he has guided the Omani people to safety and prosperity, of course, with God’s help, and we will continue to rely on his guidance*”. In other words, the sociocultural emphasis on compliance and dependence is reinforced by the political setting in which the culture functions.

As explained in Chapter One of this thesis, politics in all of the Gulf States, with Oman no exception, unfolds within a framework of an absolute monarchy. It operates largely as a rentier state which also informs the culture. In Oman, the Sultan is not only the head of state, but is also the head of government (Katz, 2004). As a rentier state, Oman makes a large percentage of its income from extraction, and it exports natural resources. It shares part of the income with the society; there is no need to impose taxation on people, and free welfare services are provided. People are thus less inclined to push for greater political representation, and in this way even the contemporary situation has promoted compliance. Under this economic and political model, the state is the core provider of income and
employment for people, which has promoted dependence on authority (Gray, 2011; Levins, 2013; Beblawi and Luciani, 1987; 2015).

This authoritarian political system and the associated rentier-state mentality, in combination with a collective and tribal society which emphasises status, honour, fatalism, and rule-following, all encourage group unity in obeying religious, cultural, or political authorities. Loyalty reinforces the sense of dependence and compliance for individuals. An acceptance towards being compliant and dependant is developed within citizens because so much of life is out of the control of Omani citizens. This is in contrast to liberal democratic societies, where individual values such as freedom of choice and personal achievement are emphasised, regardless of the group.

Herb’s (2005) findings suggest that researchers need to move beyond the pure rentier political model. They should look closely at other societal factors to explain the prevailing compliance with authoritarianism in the Gulf States of the Arab world, rather than a push towards democracy, especially given the thrust of globalisation. This author’s research has identified a combination of cultural, religious, and political factors that produces a dependence and compliance type of mentality, which in turn supports and encourages the prevalence of authoritarianism.

However, knowing the strength of tendencies toward dependence and compliance leaves the researcher puzzled about how individuals from such a strongly rules-based traditional culture nevertheless manage to develop positive attitudes towards their contemporary Western influence workplaces. These positive attitudes are widespread among the interviewees, in spite of cultural elements that run directly counter to the egalitarian and libertarian nature of Western managerial practices in the workplace. How then, do the interviewees hold such strongly contrasting views?
This second analysis of the interview data needed to result in an explanation as to why the researcher’s expected results were not found and also to explain the apparent paradox outlined in the previous paragraph. The analysis therefore focuses on the cognitive processes that produce positive employee attitudes towards the workplace. Could the cultural elements that produce dependence and a compliance-type mentality be central to the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that explain the Omani interviewees' attitudes toward Western management practices?

Clearly, the interviewees are more than merely passive recipients of traditional culture. They are somehow able to apply their traditional attitudes and beliefs to new workplace practices in such a way that they see a concurrence, rather than a conflict, and that intellectual juggling act is a significant research finding. It is worthy of being called an act of framing, simply because those traditional values taken on their own and taken literally would conflict with, for instance, participative decision-making. What is interesting is that they may not be consciously framing Western workplace practices as concurring with traditional Omani values. It seems unlikely that if the researcher had asked 'what are you deliberately attempting to do when you think about the workplace?' interviewees would have said 'I am deliberately seeking to understand what is happening in the workplace through the lens of traditional culture in a way which is positive'.

Consequently, one of the main contributions of this data analysis is to bring that less-than-conscious process to the surface to uncover how it is that the interviewees managed to understand what is happening in their workplaces through the lens of their traditional culture. This thesis thereby contributes to values evolution theory by surfacing the underlying mechanisms which account for the interaction between culture and socio cognition at the individual level in the values evolution process. The central contention here is that
researchers cannot rely upon a direct link between cultural values and employee attitude because the interaction between cultural values and socio cognition processes can induce transformative apperception. In addition, the thesis contributes in a practical sense to the international business environment by offering heuristic guidelines for managers and organisations operating in traditional Middle Eastern societies to help frame the introduction of new management practices into organisations as being consistent with the traditional values of the society.

6.5 IN SEARCH OF AN EXPLANATION

To uncover this apperceptive process, and to better explain the findings, the researcher looked for a way to understand what this behaviour of making primarily positive comments about their workplaces and workplace practices might mean to our interviewees. By asking what a commonly found kind of behaviour means to members of a culture, we are asking what its significance is for those people - what might they be wanting to achieve, and why might they consider it to be an acceptable or even desirable form of behaviour? In deciding how to structure this type of analysis, the author turned to an exemplar of a cultural, values-based interpretation of what a similarly puzzling kind of behaviour means to the people who enact that behaviour.

The anthropologist Brigette Steger has insightfully interpreted the Japanese practice of *inemuri* which involves falling asleep in public. Steger (2003; 2006) investigated the widespread phenomenon of Japanese students falling asleep in classes; Japanese commuters falling asleep on buses and trains; Japanese workers falling asleep at their desks; and even Japanese politicians falling asleep during sittings of their parliament. She asks “If diligence and reducing nocturnal sleep are considered highly valued traits, why is sleep—even in

223
school and at work—tolerated?” (p. 182). In other words, there is a contradiction inherent in *inemuri*, just as this author considers that there is a contradiction in her interviewees’ responses of expressing approval of workplace practices that run counter to deeply held traditional sociocultural values.

To explain the meaning that *inemuri* has for the Japanese, and thereby resolve the contradiction, Steger (2003) points to “Confucian and Buddhist traditions, both of which frown on excessive nocturnal sleep” (p. 186). Her reading of traditional Japanese thought leads Steger to conclude that:

> The purpose of the demand to reduce sleep is not only to increase the hours available for study, work, and other social obligations. An equally important point is that, by reducing sleep … one learns to suppress emotions and control inclinations towards weakness and laziness … [meaning that one is] reliable and trustworthy enough to take over important tasks (p. 187).

She then aligns that insight with the cultural value of humility within Japanese society. From the importance of humility it follows that it is wrong to speak directly about how hard one works. This alignment provides us with an insightful understanding of what *inemuri* means as a form of behaviour: “Thus, when someone falls asleep, exhausted from previous hard work, *inemuri* can even serve as proof of his or her diligence” (p. 187). When understood in this way, *inemuri* is no longer contradictory or paradoxical.

Most notable about Steger’s method of interpretation is the combination of cognitive and emotional factors. She demonstrates that the traditional belief that reducing sleep is evidence of a person being reliable and trustworthy is not enough, on its own, to provide the meaning of *inemuri*, and neither is the felt cultural value of humility enough on its own. Both factors are required; it is the interaction of those factors that provides *inemuri* with a positive
meaning. This researcher therefore decided that to uncover the underlying reasons for the expressed attitudes of her interviewees, she should pay particular attention to the characteristics of traditional Omani sociocultural values and beliefs, and the ways in which in combination they might be functioning as an interpretive mechanism for her interviewees. Additionally, the researcher employed cognitive mapping in her second round of data analysis because cognitive maps can capture and display what is felt and believed by individuals in relation to core cultural themes, and thereby can show the reasoning behind, and the meaning of, common forms of behaviour (Fiol and Huff, 1992).

6.6 BACK TO THE DATA

Guided by Steger (2003), the researcher's return to the data focused on ways in which interview material reflected or resonated with elements of traditional Omani culture and Muslim culture. Value-based and belief-based data analysis was performed in conjunction with the construction of cognitive maps (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009) to arrive at the findings (Fiol and Huff, 1992). Cognitive maps are defined as "internally represented schemas or mental models for particular problem-solving domains that are learned and encoded as a result of an individual's interaction with their environment" (Swan, 1997, p. 188). The researcher used cognitive mapping to uncover the process whereby new management practices are integrated into interviewees’ existing cultural-knowledge structures to produce their attitudes towards the workplace.

The flexible structure of free-form cognitive mapping allowed the researcher to gain insights into participants’ non-linear and associative thought processes; by combining cognitive mapping with the search for underlying cultural values, she was able to group beliefs, attitudes, and values in relation to the behaviour she was seeking to understand. Making
sense in this way involved back and forth interpretive movement between her developing cognitive maps and the interview data. Through this process, an iterative 'constant comparison' and recursive interplay was made between the interview data and cultural values and beliefs making it possible for the researcher to develop new insights (Doz, 2010). The core cultural belief of *Nasib* and the important cultural values of *Almakanuh alaijtimaehi* and *Al’aman* were most strongly supported by the interview data as informing and providing meaning for the behaviour the researcher seeks to understand.

6.6.1 *Nasib*

Omani culture is without doubt heavily influenced by Islamic traditions. A particular Islamic belief that is deeply embedded in the Omani culture is that of *Nasib* (fatalism and predestination) which influences how Omanis feel and how they view their work. The vast majority of Omanis are *Ibad* Muslims, which is a sector that differentiates itself from the other Muslim sectors of the Sunnites majority, and from the Shiite, on jurisprudence grounds (Mahrugi, 1995). Nevertheless, in the notion of *Nasib*, the *Ibad* Muslims of Oman hold a view of *Nasib* consistent with mainstream Muslims (Mahrugi, 1995).

The notion of *Nasib* in Islam can be traced back to two of the main and early schools of thought—the *Mo’tazliah* and the *Ash’aries* (Fakhry, 1983). The former means, in Arabic, “the separated or segregated group”, because such groups disagreed with the rest of the Muslim theologians on topics such as the divine’s attributes, human predestination, and freewill (Algar, 2001). The *Mo’tazliah* strongly held that God left the choice or the responsibility to act freely to man, while the opposite view held by *Ash’aries* is that God must be omnipotent at all time (Fakhry, 1983). The Al Mo’tazliyah school of thought does not
exist now in the Muslim world, as it dwindled away in favour of the more powerful mainstream Ash’aries conventional views on Nasib within Islamic societies.

In the present day Omani society, Nasib is adopted from the Ash’aries viewpoint. That is, all human actions are thought to be controlled by God, despite distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary human actions, since leaving anything outside the knowledge of God contradicts Quranic verses (Robinson, 1998). To put it simply, this culturally significant concept of Nasib can be characterised as the belief that people have little control over the outcomes of their actions, because the future is already determined for them. This belief encourages dependence on authority figures such as divinities, religious figures, and respected leaders and the feeling that it makes sense to follow the rules provided by authority is thus reinforced. Belief in Nasib reduces the importance of individual achievement and reasoning, which reinforces the need for guidance from traditional values concerning the right way of living.

The Omani interviewees’ adherence to the notion of Nasib means that they are more likely to accept what they might otherwise consider to be negative changes within the workplace. This is because they view what happens as what God has willed for them. One of the interviewees, for instance, said: “Here, you find the educational degrees vary, so you may ask yourself: ‘Why didn’t I reach this and that level?’ In the end, it’s your fate and you have to accept it”.

Another interviewee, when talking about missing out on a promotion, said:

*They didn’t appreciate me as a person regarding my work, performance, and discipline; so I didn’t get my chance, but we say in the end that God has given you that and he didn’t decide that you will get it. So I said that this is the limit, and I will not reach more than that.*
Nasib is consistent with the notion of locus of control which is explored in the personality, motivational and organisational psychology literature (Judge and Bono, 2001). Nasib indicates the development of an external locus of control. The concept 'locus of control' stands for either a person being internally focused where they believe that they are in control of their life, or being externally focused where they believe that their decisions and outcomes in life are controlled by factors which they cannot influence. These are determining factors such as the social or business environment, religious forces such as destiny, powerful others, or luck (Rotter, 1990). Individuals with a high external locus of control believe that they personally have little or no control over the outcome of actions and events—things that happen to them—and they believe that what other people do is outside of their control. Such people are inclined to be fatalistic, making them more passive and accepting (Rotter, 1990). Employees with an external locus of control are likely to be dependent on social rules and judgement, and experience acceptance of, and a positive attitude towards, the contemporary workplace.

The free-form cognitive map presented in Figure 6.3 - which has Nasib as its central factor - has been developed to capture and visually display how Omani interviewees’ cognitive processes related to fatalism and predestination are associated with the development of an external locus of control, which leads to an acceptance of, and a positive attitude towards, the contemporary workplace. This is so, even if technologies and work practices are being introduced which conflict with other sociocultural values.
6.6.2 Almakanuh Alaijtimaeih

“… others would see you and they would say “see how this person is acting and what he is doing so and so...”.

The collective and judgemental nature of a society such as Oman, where reputation and status are given high value, supports the development of dependence and compliance. In such a society, a person’s sense of worth and accomplishment is built almost exclusively by external social judgements, rather than by intrapersonal judgements. This situation influences how Omanis view their work.

The Arabic term *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih* refers to the importance of social standing or reputation, and it relates to the distribution of power within Omani society. The term is made up of two Arabic words: *Makanhu* refers to status, and *Ajtimiah* refers to society; together, they refer to an individual’s social status or social standing. *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih* holds central importance in Arabian social settings such as that of Oman. This importance is a
result of the society’s tribal lineage structure, where collective honour is a fundamental
element (Peristiany, 1965; Moxnes, 1993). *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih* is strongly related to the
society’s underlying ethical framework of honour and shame which is discussed further in
Chapter Seven.

The underlying honour and shame ethical framework central to such cultures usually
originated from the necessity to manage a lawless environment that lacked the state structures
needed to protect individuals, and enforce contracts or punishment (Leung and Cohen, 2011).
This was the case in the Arabian Bedouin society, including Oman. In the early formation of
Arabian Bedouin society, before the development of the modern Gulf States, society
functioned according to tribal systems. Within tribal system, members formulated their own
framework of ethical conduct to manage society. This framework was embedded in the
culture with a strong emphasis on self-reputation, achieved through honourable conduct as a
requirement for becoming powerful (Pitt-Rivers, 1965; Moxnes, 1993).

Attaining social status and thus becoming powerful through a reputation of honourable
conduct meant gaining economic, political, and social benefits. These benefits reflect on the
tribe and on the individual. Individuals are seen as representative of the collective by
advancing one’s tribe's position over other tribes, and as an individual by advancing one's
position within one’s tribe. In other words, people must be honourable to strive for a higher
social status than others to have more chance that they will become powerful enough to gain
benefits. These are benefits that enable the attainment of social goals. Individuals without
such social status are prevented from reaching those social goals, because the lower a
person's social standing, the less honour they have.

Essentially, honour is the recognition of one’s social standing by others in society. Honour
comes in two forms. Ascribed honour is the basic honour status inherited at birth from family
membership. Acquired honour is the ongoing attainment of honour in society. Acquired honour involves a continual struggle for recognition from other society members. Acquired honour is linked to the individual’s representation of the collective family and (or) tribal honour, in a society which emphasises the importance of social reputation. Acquired honour means that the value of an individual in their own eyes, in their family’s eyes, and the value of that individual’s family and (or) tribe is dependent on public recognition of that individual’s conduct (Pitt-Rivers, 1966; Moxnes 1993).

Honour has to be claimed by the individual through conduct which is considered honourable but honour must be recognised and be paid to the individual by other members of society. Importantly then, “A person who claims honour, but is not paid honour does not in fact have honour” (Leung and Cohen, 2011, p. 509). Society claims the right to be confer honour through a process of recognition, based on the fulfilment of the code of conduct within the society which governs what is right and wrong (Pitt-Rivers, 1966). Consequently, a continuous cycle is established where honour paid results in status, and from status follows the expectation of honourable behaviour. The importance of honour encourages behaviour which is honourable, and that behaviour is given recognition in honour paid and status granted (Leung and Cohen, 2011; Pitt-Rivers, 1966; Moxnes, 1993).

In countries such as Oman, there is a heavy reliance on social feedback to feel worthy and honourable. Consequently, social achievement matters more than personal achievement; members of Omani culture cannot help but feel that they ought to think and believe as the society or group does in order to be accepted and considered as a worthy, honourable person. One significant way of achieving status is by having a good job and being part of a reputable organisation; this situation encourages Omani employees to have positive attitudes towards the workplace.
As one interviewee commented: “I have the honour of working for XXXX (organisation name); … it’s a university that has a high position in the area, and I am proud because I belong to it”.

Another explained that:

*Wherever you reach in the end, your position in life is this … . So, it’s not useful for you and will not give you any increase because the salary you will get is yours, not for other people. But here, I will be proud because everyone will know that I am good, that I have reached this level.*

Clearly, by claiming to be proud of the level he has reached within his workplace, this interviewee is engaging in self-enhancing behaviour, rather than the self-diminishing behaviour of expressing unhappiness about his status within the workplace.

The free-form cognitive map of *Almakanuh alaijtimaeih* in Figure 6.4 captures and displays how the Omani interviewees’ cognitive processes, which are related to status and reputation, can lead to the expression of a positive attitude toward the workplace.

**Figure 6.4: Cognitive Map of Almakanuh alaijtimaeih**
6.6.3 Al’aman

Traditional Omani sociocultural values and practices also place great importance upon security, or Al’aman, which entrenches dependence upon a largely state-controlled economy and its resources, government lifetime-employment policies, and government-led job placements. Valuing security is not just traditional. Despite the recent emphasis on tourism to reduce oil dependence, the Omani economy is still largely commodity-based.

Most resources are government-controlled which means that new developments and economic diversification are limited, free-trade benefits are restricted, and movement towards a free-trade economy is slow, resulting in an underdeveloped private sector. This situation, in combination with the government's lifetime-guaranteed employment policy over the years, has left Omani citizens feeling that both opportunities and decisions are out of their control. As a result, they are feel dependent on the government and the majority seek the security of government jobs.

When Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970, an extreme personalisation of Oman’s political system began which saw: “Omanis told for forty years to rely on the reassuring paternal figure of the Sultan to resolve all public matters, [with many of them developing] the idea that the fate of all Qaboos’s subjects depends on his goodwill” (Valeri, 2015, p. 5). This impression was further reinforced by the monarch’s decision to offer a limitless pool of jobs in the public sector, following the influx of oil revenues and that decision saw droves of Omanis becoming government employees in ministries, the police force, intelligence departments, and the national army, amongst other government departments (Valeri, 2015).

By the late 1970s this emphasis on government employment, along with the development of new roads, schools, and healthcare facilities that cater for even the most remote villages, promoted feelings of loyalty to, and reliance on, Sultan Qaboos as the icon of the welfare,
prosperity, and the unity of Oman (Valeri, 2015). Consequently, the vast majority of Omani citizens have not only been dependent on the government for their survival, but they are also compliant with the government to the extent that any alternative to that of Sultan Qaboos holds no credibility (Valeri, 2015).

Here is an example of an interviewee comment which demonstrates this attitude of loyalty and reliance:

Thank God, everything is good about life in Oman; since we were born till now, the circumstances are easy; we hear from our fathers that they suffered in the period of the 1970s, or before that, because that was before His Majesty the sultan became the ruler; after His Majesty the sultan became the ruler, the contrary happened, and everyone started to feel comfortable and bless with security.

Another interviewed commented that: “Our leader is a good man and he is a man of peace who provides security and stability in our country...; thank God...; so, this makes me proud of being an Omani.”

Here is a comment made by another interviewee in which the high value placed on security is expressed: “Security and stability are the most important thing; there are no problems. The most important thing is that we feel comfortable and satisfied...”. Another interviewee said: “Thank God; what makes Oman distinguished, before everything, with God’s help, is the existence of the sense of security and safety”. And this interviewee’s comment about how he gained employment is indicative of a high level of dependence: “I just submitted my documents to the government and they distributed me to XXXX (organisation name) ... according to Sultan Qaboos’s orders...”. The importance of feeling secure in general and in employment in particular, discourages criticism of management practices and encourages expressions of positive attitudes towards the workplace.
Figure 6.5 is a free-form cognitive map of Al’aman, which captures and displays how Omani interviewees’ cognitive processes related to security within the socioeconomic context led to a positive workplace attitude.

**Figure 6.5: Cognitive Map of Al’aman**

6.6.4 Altathamun Alaijtimaei

Traditional Omani sociocultural values and practices place great significance upon *Altathamun alaijtimaei*. The Arabic term *Altathamun alaijtimaei* refers to the importance of group-based social solidarity, which is a form of social solidarity consistent with the Durkeim (1969) notion of mechanical solidarity. An interviewee commented: “*We don’t live alone in society .... We live in a group of people. We Omanis, we are one hand*”.

According to Durkeim (1969; 2014), social solidarity measures the strength of a society based on what unifies the people and what holds the society together. It consists of two fundamental components: social regulation and social integration. Social regulation is
concerned with the extent of sociocultural, religious, or legal rules that individuals within that society have to adhere to, the strictness of the enforcement of those rules, and the predictability and stability of life. Social integration is concerned with the level of connection that individuals feel to their society, and the frequency of individuals’ interaction with other members of the society. Durkheim (2014) contends that traditional societies and tribal-based societies have mechanical solidarity.

“Mechanical solidarity is said to result from homogenous beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group with the effects of resemblances generating mutual sympathy that extends to the collectivity that unites them; thus not only do fellow citizens like one another, seeking one another out in preference to foreigners, but they love their country. When such solidarity is at its maximum individuality is zero” (Durkheim, 2014, p. xxviii).

The following interviewee comments demonstrate the collective resemblances which generate and uphold a strong sense of Omani identity.

*I told you before, I am proud of being an Omani because the Omani is distinguished; he is distinguished with his speech, education, costume, good-heartedness, and regarding everything that the word 'distinguished' means; the most important thing is that if you put the Omani in any environment, he can adapt and preserve his Omani existence.*

Another interviewee commented:

*I am honoured to be Omani because of our rich culture and history ... I feel that they are our past; we don’t have a past without them .... This makes me optimistic that the future will be good, as they say if someone has no history, he will not have present or future.*
In societies with mechanical solidarity like that of Oman, this sense of sameness or homogeneity comes from shared religious beliefs, cultural norms and values, and similar education, as well as similar work environments as a result of there being little division of labour. Conservative and repressive religious or penal law is a key feature in such societies. The division of labour, which produces similar work and job responsibilities, is maintained in modern countries like Oman and other Gulf States. It is perpetuated through factors such as oil wealth, government-led employment, and a strong reliance on expatriates for skill and labour gaps, and the unwritten social rules concerning what constitutes honourable employment. Solidarity in Oman is built upon kinship ties to familial networks, and territorial ties as a result of the tribal structure (Durkheim, 2014). According to Durkheim (2014, p. 63) "The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or common consciousness".

The following interviewee comment is evidence of the central role of religion in the collective consciousness of Omaniis, and of its importance to social solidarity in Oman.

*Religion is always the essence of family and social solidarity in Oman, because as you are a Muslim and I am ... we follow the same path ... the path of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); but whenever you go away from religion, you feel that the solidarity is getting less; so it’s the essence of everything in life.*

These interviewee comments emphasise a sense of sameness that holds people together. One interviewee remarked: “The Omani society, by its nature has solidarity, with its heritage, culture, good-heartedness, simple life, even if you have money life is simple for you, because you all live simply like your fathers and grandfathers, and that is what connects us together”.
Another interviewee also emphasised a sense of sameness that holds Omani people together, but he then made a connection between that sameness and the high value placed on the interests of society. He commented:

*The social life is very beautiful here because it has harmony and the people are homogenous; this means that the people love each other, we feel the others’ pain, sufferings, and happiness; it’s nice here, because when we there is a wedding party, everyone in your village and town come, and the same thing happens when you have a mourning when one of your relatives dies; the same thing happens as the people share it with you; this means that this social life is the most beautiful thing here.*

The following interviewee comment is indicative of the transcendental and absolute nature of the Omani collective consciousness.

*Thank God ... I feel that the Omanis are still adhering to their identity so strongly; we adhere to our traditions and customs more than others ... ; so, these things don’t have influence on us; we go, come back, see and not get influenced ... ; we have travelled to many countries, we were out and we didn’t get influenced with these things ... that’s what makes us one hand.*

*Altathamun ala’ijtimaei* ingrains a strong dependence on the collective consciousness and is in line with religious practices, the tribal system, and a rules-based culture; it further promotes compliance, largely without question, with religious rules and cultural norms. Such compliance produces a somewhat blind trust, which enables a supportive attitude toward beliefs and ideas, and allows those belief and ideas to spread more easily within society, again reinforcing the idea that Omani people are particularly accepting. The Omani interviewees’ adherence to *Altathamun ala’ijtimaei* points to the idea that they are more likely to accept what they might otherwise consider to be a negative change within the workplace,
particularly if they view their manager and (or) their organisation as being consistent with their commonly shared beliefs and sentiments.

The free-form cognitive map of *Altathamun alaijtimaei* in Figure 6.6 captures visually how the Omani interviewees’ cognitive processes that are related to mechanical solidarity and collective consciousness are associated with the acceptance of and a positive attitude towards the workplace.

**Figure 6.6: Cognitive Map of Altathamun alaijtimaei**
6.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Taken together, the cognitive maps in this study indicate that Omani employees are predisposed to express positive attitudes towards the workplace, regardless of whether new work practices and technologies agree or conflict with some of their traditional sociocultural values. This predisposition exists not because Omani employees are shifting away from traditional values, but because if they express negative attitudes towards the workplace, they are putting their sense of self-worth and social status, their employment security, and their incomes at risk.

A remaining mystery, however, is that if our interviewees were motivated by a concern to avoid risk, why did they feel obliged to speak in such positive terms when there was no risk? Kirkman and Shapiro (2001) have similarly sought to explain the unexpectedly positive attitudes of Filipino employees towards self-managed work teams. They found that even though Filipino “cultural values suggest that they may not like the self-managing aspect of self-managing work teams”, that dislike was not translated into high levels of demonstrated resistance (p. 559). The reason for that lack of resistance, however, according to Kirkman and Shapiro, is that “people from high power-distance countries like the Philippines are likely to behave submissively in the presence of managers and thereby to avoid disagreement” (p. 559).

That line of reasoning does not work for the interviewees in this research. The interviewer was from another country, and the interviews took place outside working hours and away from the workplace. Instead, it seems that the present interviewees making only positive comments about the workplace was an outcome of self-regulation, rather than management regulation. The role of culture in cognition and self-regulation has been highlighted by Haritatos and Benet-Martinez (2002) who argue that “cultural meaning systems guide socio-
cognitive processes (p. 600) [to the extent that] culture and the psyche mutually constitute each other” (p. 605). Stam et al. (2010) provide an account of how culture and self-regulation come together in the form of ‘possible selves’.

**6.7.1 The Self-Concept**

The 'possible self' is a part of one’s self-concept. One’s self-concept is formed through the combination of a person’s beliefs about themselves, their attributes, their goals, and their social roles. The self-concept actively mediates and regulates the individual’s behaviour (Bolino, Harvey and Bachrach, 2012; Markus and Wurf, 1987). The possible self focuses on the future and deals with motivational and self-regulatory processes such as identity development, long-term self-regulation, and social-comparison processes (Stam et al., 2010; Ibarra, 1999; Oyserman and Markus, 1990). Possible selves refer to the “cognitive components of hopes, fears, goals, and threats” (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954) that produce images, thoughts, and beliefs about the type of person one should be or should attempt to become - which is directly relevant to this inquiry (Stam et al., 2010; Markus and Nurius, 1986).

There are two types of possible selves, the ‘ideal’ possible self and ‘ought’ possible self. The ‘ideal’ possible self relates to positive ideal future images of the self that represent what a person could aspire to become. The ‘ought’ possible self relates to images of the self that represent what a person should be, according to their responsibilities and duties (Stam et al., 2010; Higgins 1987; 1996; 1997).

The tendency of a person to emphasise either an ‘ideal’ possible self or an ‘ought’ possible self is dependent on their self-regulatory focus. There are two types: a promotion focus and a prevention focus. The ‘ideal’ possible self has a promotion self-regulatory focus, which tends to strive towards desired, ideal end-states, self-regulating its behaviour in relation to those
positive future images of the self that represent what a person could aspire to become. The ‘ought’ possible self has a prevention self-regulatory focus, which tends to approach end-states with an attitude of fulfilling duties and responsibilities, self-regulating its behaviour in relation to those images of the self that represent what a person should be, according to their responsibilities and duties (Stam et al., 2010; Higgins 1987; 1996; 1997).

In explaining the genesis of each type of possible self, Stam et al. (2010) refer to childhood experiences and propose that:

Children who are raised in an environment that stresses the importance of duties and responsibilities are more likely to develop what is known as a chronic prevention focus, whereas children who are raised in an environment that stresses the importance of personal ambitions and dreams are more likely to develop a chronic promotion focus (p. 459).

As a key determinant of social and family environments, some cultures emphasise the importance of duties and responsibilities more so than others. The comment from one of the interviewees which the researcher included in Chapter 1 of this thesis is worth revisiting:

Islam has a great role in our life as we are Muslims, and it defines our life too; there are prohibited things and permitted things in Islam. I feel that Islam is suitable for every time and place. For example if I want to do something, I have to take the Islamic rule regarding this into consideration. Of course, there is no explicit text that says this is permitted and that is prohibited, but there are limits and rules, so I have to see them; if the thing is allowed, I can do it, and if it is not going according to the Islamic rules, I don’t do it.
It is the contention of this researcher that traditional sociocultural values and beliefs within Omani society promote compliance and dependence. As such, those values and beliefs emphasise the importance of duties and responsibilities to such an extent that Omani children develop an ‘ought’ self with a dutiful self-regulatory focus. From this ‘ought’ self develops the felt internal need to be respectful towards and loyal to one’s manager, organisation, country, and culture. This felt need explains the behaviour of our interviewees—not external managerial pressure or a shift away from traditional sociocultural values.

Other authors allude to factors which further support this contention of the development of an ‘ought’ possible self. Levins (2013) suggests that, “Gulf Arab children are taught that good citizens are those who are loyal to the government and that diversity and critical thinking are treasonous” (p. 422). Henry and Springborg (2001) identified that, “universities have tended to expand religious studies at the expense of disciplines more suited to the needs of the private sector” (p. 181). Al-Hamed (2002) reports the former ruler and symbolic father of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed, as saying: “Education is like a beacon lighting your way in the darkness. It teaches you many things, the most important of which is to know your duties towards your nation, homeland, families, and the realities relating to your present, future and your past” (p. 262).

This notion of an ‘ought’ self with a preventative self-regulatory focus as a background factor explains why those very same traditional sociocultural values and beliefs that led the researcher to expect negative attitudes towards the workplace, can be used to explain why the interviewee attitudes are instead positive. This is because of the interaction between the workplace environment and the self-concept of members of Omani society. Since this research seeks to discover in what ways the interviewees are making sense of their workplace situation, the researcher can now say that the ‘ought’ self and the associated socio-cognitive self-regulatory processes play a key mediating role between traditional culture and workplace
attitudes which serves to explain this particular way of making sense. The mediating role played by the Omani self-concept explains not only why what interviewees were expected to have expressed (such as dissatisfaction of and discomfort with new management practices) did not happen; it also explains how the interviewees’ expression of positive attitudes was an act of self-regulation, rather than managerial regulation. This explanation makes it clear that researchers cannot rely upon a direct link between cultural values and employee attitudes because the interaction between cultural values and self-concept can induce transformative apperception.

6.7.2 The Organisational Context

Another factor important in this analysis is the organisational context. Johns (2006) suggested that the influence of context on organisational behaviour and attitudes is often underappreciated or unrecognised, and yet it plays a key role in shaping the meanings underlying organisational behaviour and attitudes. He emphasises the importance of organisational context when studying organisational behaviour and attitudes: without understanding the organisational context, understanding personal interactions is not possible (Johns, 2006, p. 389).

In line with Johns’ argument, this thesis has referred to the cultural context and the organisational context to highlight an additional self-regulatory force that is at play to explain this study’s findings. Organisational context is a further reason for the interviewees expressing acceptance of new workplace practices because the strongly Omani nature of their workplaces provides a frame within which our interviewees are influenced to see all workplace practices as being in accord with traditional sociocultural values. Stam et al. (2010) have shown that self-regulation can be operationalised in two ways: chronic and
contextual. Whereas a chronic regulatory focus “indicates stable individual differences, 
[contextual regulatory focus] is brought about by the individual’s environment” (p. 459).

The chronic regulatory focus is central to one’s identity, is rather stable and seemingly 
dispositional, is informed by one’s personal and social history, and is the most readily 
accessed focus which gives way to well-developed cognitive structures. Nevertheless, the 
contextual regulatory focus can be activated by context-specific cues that increase the 
salience of a particular self-regulatory focus (Bolino, Harvey and Bachrach, 2012; Markus 
and Wurf, 1987). The organisational setting, a particular leadership style, or a particular 
organisational culture - among other contextual factors - can influence the orientation or 
degree of a particular self-regulatory focus (Bolino, Harvey and Bachrach, 2012).

The contextual regulatory focus can be either consistent or inconsistent with the chronic self-
concept and an associated self-regulatory focus, depending on the situation (Bolino, Harvey 
and Bachrach, 2012). Here, the contextual regulatory focus is consistent with the ‘ought’ 
self’s chronic, prevention, regulatory focus that enables a positive view of new workplace 
practices and which plays a moderating role in Omani employees’ acceptance of such 
practices. This consistency became evident as part of the author’s field research for this 
thesis. The author found that the sights, sounds, and smells within the workplaces she visited 
signal those settings as being undeniably Omani in nature. In the foyers and offices of Omani 
organisations, one encounters large framed photographs and paintings of Sultan Qaboos, 
along with historical depictions of Omani forts and castles, particularly that of 'Nizwa'. 
Similarly, the architecture of the buildings is traditional and Islamic-inspired, yet uniquely 
Omani rather than following the style of Western skyscrapers.

In Omani organisations, employees do not wear Western corporate attire of shirts, suits, and 
ties. Instead, they follow traditional dress codes such as 'Libis Omani' at all times. Men wear
'dishdasha' or 'thobe', which is a full-length shirt-like garment with long loose sleeves. Men also wear a headdress of either an embroidered 'kuma' or a turban known as a 'massar'. Women wear an 'abaya', which is a black full-length jacket or cloak with long sleeves. This is always worn with a 'hijab' or 'tarah', which is a long scarf wrapped around the head to cover the hair and neck.

The atmosphere within Omani organisations is quiet, yet welcoming. Omani employees adopt a relaxed, calm, simple, and quiet manner, which is consistent with the Ibathi interpretation of Islam. It is common to find boswellia, sandalwood, musk, and oud-inspired scents floating through the air as a result of burning 'bukhoor'—the Arabian form of frankincense. In Omani organisational settings, therefore, practices do not differ a great deal from what you would expect to see in Omani local homes, with clients and guests even greeted with traditional Omani coffee and the national sweet 'Halwa Omania', just as they would be outside the organisational setting. Little wonder then, that when an Omani manager explains that they are going to establish self-managing teams, employees are inclined to see this as an Omani initiative.

It is not surprising that the Omani organisational setting is in sharp contrast to that of the Western organisational setting, being reflective of the strong emphasis on traditional societal culture and national identity, given Sultan Qaboos’s vision and direction for Oman. His determination is to modernise Oman without Westernising it, preserving its traditional social mores, and retaining its traditional architecture (Funsch, 2015; Jones and Ridout, 2015).

The organisational context which embodies a strong expression of traditional culture and national identity serves to reinforce positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, and moderate the acceptance of new workplace practices. This traditional culture and national identity embedded within the organisational setting supports a contextual self-regulatory
process which activates cultural cues that accord with the Omani employees’ sociocultural environment outside the organisation, rather than activating context-specific cues that are exclusive to the workplace.

The organisational contextual representation of cultural cues reinforces the 'accessibility' of a culturally informed subconscious stream of thought, which is consistent with the ‘ought’ self. In other words, members of the Omani culture engage in culturally informed subconscious forms of thought when encountering new Western work practices. That sense making process enables them to view these work practices as positive, and to be accepting of them because the nature of this culturally informed automatic thinking includes a very strong suggestion that these work practices are Omani. Therefore an employee can think and / or feel that “this practice is good, this is Omani, I am a proud Omani citizen, this is an Omani organisation and therefore this is a good thing”.

6.7.3 Culturally Informed Automatic Thought

The idea of culturally informed automatic thought is the opposite to that of cultural metacognition and serves as a supporting mechanism to further explain how chronic and contextual self-regulatory processes of the ‘ought self’ mediate and moderate the relationship between traditional culture and attitudes towards the contemporary workplace.

The ways in which cultural researchers emphasise cultural intelligence, and the subsequent great emphasis on cultural metacognition, to explain the relationship between culture and attitudes indicates a neglect of the opposite phenomenon of subconscious, culturally informed automatic thought. There do not appear to be many, if any, previous attempts in the culture literature to try to explain its importance. Instead, the discussion has focused on cultural metacognition, which proposes that individuals can achieve some sort of distance from their
culture to allow self-reflection and self-questioning of their cultural assumptions (Thomas et al., 2008).

The process of cultural metacognition involves paying greater attention to one’s “conscious cognitive experience” of current reality, along with the related affective and motivational experience that comes with it, having a heightened awareness of one’s cultural assumptions and how they inform not only the cognitive, affective, and motivational experience of this reality, but also the consequent course of action, decision, or judgement. This process “allows for that distance between one’s self and one’s culture to promote self-regulation of cognitive activities and the evaluation of potential reactions in terms of goals and prevents the propensity to act automatically” (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 131).

Undoubtedly, the process of cultural metacognition, specifically the degree to which it consists of the individual’s conscious awareness of themselves as a deliberate actor in the given milieu, lay in sharp opposition to the nature of the subconscious automatic thinking and interpreting that has been uncovered in this author’s research (Thomas et al., 2008). However, traditional and rules-based cultures like that of Oman which produce compliance and dependence, and the development of a prevention-focus ‘ought’ self, hinder the capacity for self-reflection and self-questioning, which is essential for the development of cultural metacognition. One could argue therefore that in Oman, subconscious, automatic, culturally informed thought and interpretation of events would be a more likely habit than would cultural metacognition. This situation increases the likelihood that Omani people will interpret events, and in this case workplace practices, through this culturally informed stream of thinking - particularly within the organisational contexts that emphasise and cue traditional culture and national identity.
The notion of subconscious automatic thought is not new. There are various discussions of this notion across the disciplines, for instance in psychology with the Beck (1993) cognitive theory of depression (Clark et al., 1999; Locke, 2007); and in marketing with the Trappey and Woodside (2004) research into consumers' brand choice. Beck's cognitive theory of depression was developed based on what his patients experienced. He discovered that individuals experience double streams of thinking that are active alongside one another in one's mind. The first stream of thinking is the most conscious, and the thoughts that people produce here are more freely expressed. The second stream of thinking, which provides great insight for the psychologist, lies on the border of consciousness; it can be considered as a part of the subconscious, and not the kind of thoughts that people are likely to verbalise to others. Beck termed this second stream of thinking 'automatic thoughts' which involve immediate automatic interpretations of events and evaluations of the self (Locke, 2007).

In a similar fashion, Trappey and Woodside (2004) have explored two streams of thinking regarding consumers' brand choice. They found firstly that automatic processes which are unconscious and learned change very slowly, and are not subject to the capacity limitations of working memory; and secondly that strategic processes are conscious and are subject to the capacity limitations of working memory. Based on their research, Trappey and Woodside concluded that the cognitive process in which consumers engage when deciding on their choice of brand is largely an automatic unconscious process and is not based on conscious thinking. They claim that "unconscious information processing sets the limits within which conscious information processing can occur" (Trappey and Woodside, 2004, p. 11).

Beck's work examined the streams of thought that were psychologically informed, and the way that some patients interpret too much of their lives in a negative way because of the patients' habit of thinking in a negative fashion (Locke, 2007). In this thesis, the researcher postulates that just as individuals can engage in negatively informed automatic thought, so
too can individuals, as members of a culture, engage in culturally informed automatic thought. Culturally informed automatic thought, as a second stream of thought, acts as an accompanying mechanism within the ‘ought’ self to further explain how members of the Omani culture are able to view Western work practices within Omani organisations as being positive. Those positive perceptions occur because the nature of culturally informed automatic thinking includes a strong suggestion that these work practices are Omani and, therefore, are viewed as local workplace initiatives.

The ‘ought’ self’s chronic prevention regulatory focus makes the subconscious automatic and culturally informed stream of thought easily accessible because such thinking is develops within the context of the individual’s sociocultural environment (Bolino, Harvey and Bachrach, 2012). The self-regulatory force of the culturally embedded Omani organisational context then presents cultural cues which act as initiating stimuli to activate the easily accessible, subconscious, automatic, culturally informed stream of thought in the organisational setting. This argument is consistent with the concept of accessibility within the dynamic constructivist approach to culture.

The dynamic constructivist approach to culture asserts that individuals can shift between interpretive frames embedded in different cultures in response to cues from the social setting (Hong et al., 2000). To examine this interaction between culture and situation and of how specific parts of cultural knowledge come to be activated in specific interpretive tasks, the dynamic constructivist approach looks upon the theory of knowledge-activation which involves the concept of accessibility (Hong et al., 2000; Hong and Mallorie, 2004).

The concept of accessibility emphasises that parts of an individual's knowledge differ in terms of accessibility. The more accessible a theory, knowledge structure, or belief, the more likely it is to rise to the top of the mental stack in the individual's mind and thus guide
interpretation and greater accessibility is heightened by recent use (Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al. 2003).

As previously explained in the literature review, Hong et al. (2000) have proposed that when Chinese-American bicultural people enter either a Chinese setting or an American setting, the parallel (Chinese or American) cultural-knowledge system will be activated as a result of the images which they encounter and, in so doing, will become more accessible (Hong et al., 2003; Hong et al., 2000). To demonstrate this phenomenon, they conducted an experimental manipulation of the accessibility of cultural-knowledge systems, known as 'cultural priming'. They showed Chinese-American bicultural people pictures of Chinese or American cultural icons to increase the accessibility of cultural-knowledge systems. The results were that this cuing did indeed activate the parallel cultural-knowledge systems (Chinese or American) causing frame-switching. The outcomes were patterns of behaviours representative of Chinese or American individuals (Hong and Mallorie, 2004; Friedman et al., 2012).

The Omani employees are not bicultural. It does stand to reason however that the process of accessibility and activation of Omani cultural knowledge and (or) informed thought applies to the Omani employees’ interpretation of new workplace practices. This activation and accessibility would result from the continuous high degree of automatic culturally informed thought within the ‘ought self’ chronic socio-cognitive regulatory processes, as well as the culturally embedded Omani organisational context that presents cultural cues which act as initiating stimuli within the organisational setting. Therefore, activation of the Omani employees' socio-cognitive self-regulatory processes of automatic culturally informed stream of thought makes it likely that an Omani employee’s mind will be influenced to interpret workplace practices as being Omani, and therefore to be good. The Trappey and Woodside (2004) findings strengthen this author’s claim of such activation of a subconscious stream of thought by providing a practical definition of unconscious automatic processing as the
"activation of some concept or response whenever a given set of external initiating stimuli are presented" (p. 11).

6.8 EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

At this concluding stage of the findings chapter, the research analysis and interpretation of the interview data and organisational observations has provided an explanation of why the interview data does not support expectations derived from the literature about the likelihood of negative employee attitudes. Supported by theoretical concepts and cognitive maps, the analysis has returned to the sociocultural context to explore and explain how these seemingly paradoxical themes of a high regard for traditional culture and positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace come to co-exist. The author’s analysis uncovered the socio-cognitive regulatory processes within the self-concept that activate a culturally informed automatic interpretation of the new workplace practices. These processes occur in a manner that enables Omani employees to frame new Western workplace practices as Omani.

The data analysis and interpretation has offered a sophisticated context-specific and finely grained explanation of the reasons for the co-existence of these apparently paradoxical themes. The resultant understanding has enabled the development of the explanatory framework (figure 6.7) which shows how the themes reflective of traditional Omani culture which produce the dimension of compliance and dependence interact with the organisational context to facilitate positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. Based on the research findings and the explanatory framework, a research model has been developed and is presented in Chapter Eight.

Figure 6.7 visually displays the findings of this research and, in particular, it highlights what until now has been neglected: the role that socio-cognitive processes play in the relationship between cultural values and employee attitudes. In the initial data analysis, the researcher
detailed the antecedent conditions of traditional Omani cultural elements, which are a compound of tribal culture and Islamic values and beliefs integrated within an authoritarian political setting which results in compliance and dependence. The data also revealed an outcome of positive rather than negative attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. Subsequent data analysis and interpretation revealed the socio-cognitive processes that mediate and moderate positive or negative employee attitudes towards the workplace. The socio-cognitive processes can explain how individuals from a rule-based traditional culture report positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace by taking into account the self-concept and associated self-regulatory processes.

In this research, a culturally inscribed ought self with a chronic prevention self-regulatory focus mediates employee attitudes towards the workplace. Mediation enables Omani employees to report positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, because they feel that doing so is their duty. This feeling is combined with the contextual self-regulatory focus and moderates the acceptance of new management practices as a result of the identification of cultural cues within the organisation, which act as a frame enabling the employees to interpret Western management practices in such a way that they concur with traditional values, rather than being in conflict with traditional values.

Interestingly, a recent study by Stahl and Tung (2015) suggests that there is an imbalance of theoretical assumptions between research on the negative role of culture over the positive role of culture in the international business field. They assert that it is probable that a one-sided viewpoint may have impeded our understanding of the whole range of dynamics, processes, and conditions that help organisations to take advantage of the benefits of cultural differences (Stahl and Tung, 2015, p. 393). By taking into consideration the possibility of the positive role of culture in organisations, this researcher has discovered positive workplace attitudes in
the Middle East and has revealed the underlying processes that lead to these positive attitudes. The understanding arising from these research findings provides three significant contributions that can benefit organisations practically and advance cross-cultural organisational research.

First, by uncovering the role of the self-concept in the cognitive process which enables interviewees to formulate positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace, this study has found that researchers cannot rely upon a direct link between cultural values and employee attitudes. This is because of the interaction between cultural values and the individual’s self-concept, which can induce transformative apperception. This finding contributes to future research by highlighting the importance of investigating the role of the self-concept when studying the relationship between cultural values and employee attitudes.

Second, the researcher can now contribute practically to the international business environment by offering a set of heuristic guidelines for managers and organisations operating in traditional Middle Eastern societies. The primary guideline is that organisations should frame the introduction of new management practices as being consistent with the traditional values of the society. The research findings presented in this thesis indicate that managers can take advantage of the apperception process by deliberately framing the introduction of Western management practices in ways that assist employees to see those practices as being aligned with local values. Being a member of a self-managed work team, for instance, could be framed as being a member of a workplace family. Performance feedback that might otherwise be experienced as putting an employee’s status at risk could be framed as fatherly advice. Additionally, creating an organisational identity that is consistent with that of the national identity will aid the apperception process.
The third and most significant contribution from this research is made to values evolution theory. By explaining how the culturally inscribed self-concept determines the ways in which new workplace practices are seen by people who are in the midst of crossvergent situations, this research provides the missing link ‘how’ of values evolution theory. The concluding chapter will provide further discussion of the linking role of the self-concept in the values-evolution process and will present a ‘missing link’ model that clarifies the role of the self-concept in the overall process of values evolution.

Figure 6.7 below, brings together the work of the present chapter by displaying the relationship between interview material used in the data analysis, key instances of the cognitive mapping conducted by the author, the nature of the self-concept which emerges from a rule based culture such as Oman’s, and the nature of the organizational contexts experienced by Omani employees – all of which contribute to the eventual automatic thought and apperception process associated with the employee attitudes expressed by interviewees.
Possible Self-concept:

Belief in ‘Nasib’

Rule-based approach

Chronic ‘ought to’ prevention self-regulatory focus

Contextual ‘ought to’ prevention self-regulatory focus

Need for ‘almakanuh alaijtimaeih’

Need for ‘Al’aman’

Importance of ‘altathamun alaijtimaei’

Compliance & Dependence

eg. A business analyst describes how following cultural and religious values guarantees permissible behaviour: “Our religion, culture and history, I feel that they have planted values in us; these planted values make us behaviour accordingly; everything that happens in our life...., we depend on these values to take care of what is allowed and prohibited in our lives, we just need to follow these values and avoid what is prohibited.”

eg. An executive coordinator noted fatalism as the reason for her acceptance of her current profession: “My profession now is not what I always wanted to do … When I finish my bachelor degree in sociology/social studies and registered my paperwork with the department of public services for job placement I was placed in business administration which is far away from the area of my study. I was really disappointed at first. But this is what was written for me I know that god know best so this must be better for me that what I wanted.”

eg. A lawyer described how the reputation which his employment offers him raised his family’s social standing: “Nowadays the nature of your profession is very important not only because better way but mostly because it brings a nice reputation. I worked so hard with my studies and earlier jobs to get to this position because my father actually sold gas bottles for a living… But now everyone in our town comes to my family when they need help.”

eg. A manger identified the need for security and associated the fulfilment of that need with government enabled job opportunities: ‘The first thing is security...the relationship of Oman with the other countries, it’s very quiet and peaceful; but the most important thing is security in life in Oman.... I mean the life of the individual is not too difficult; the government gives many job opportunities... They are working hard to increase opportunities in the private sector and the income the individual is good, thank God. The development projects are developing

eg. A financial officer explained the sense of social solidarity that holds Omani people together: “The social life is very beautiful here because it has harmony and the people are homogenous; this means that the people love each other, we feel the others’ pain, sufferings, and happiness …”
CHAPTER SEVEN: RESEARCHER AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INQUIRY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As previously mentioned in Chapter Five, a major part of the findings unavoidably involves a culturally informed interpretation of interview material by the researcher. It is therefore important to provide additional information about why and how the researcher was able to confidently engage in that interpretation. Given that this chapter is centrally about the researcher, it is appropriate to now employ first person.

When analysing the data, as researcher, I encountered unexpected positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace. In the findings chapter, I proposed an explanation for this. As is the case with all qualitative studies, the researcher’s explanation for attitudes is at least in part an interpretation of those attitudes. Therefore, I believe that it is important to add substance to the grounds on which I claim that the interpretation of the research is a well-founded and useful interpretation. The first way in which I demonstrate this is clearly outlined in the findings chapter. There, I detail the understanding enabled as a consequence of my interpretation; it is an understanding that was not available prior to that interpretation. The second way in which I demonstrate that my interpretation of the research findings is well-founded is detailed in this chapter. My aim is to substantiate credibility for myself as interpreter.

My experience of being confronted by the key aspects of Arabian culture, and my subsequent experience of becoming bicultural are presented here in narrative form. My interpretive
abilities come from my cultural understanding, which is an outcome of who I am; and, who I am, is an accumulation of the experiences and knowledge which made me bicultural.

Qualitative research is founded upon constructivism, which holds that meaning is not something that you simply discover or come across lying out in the open; instead, meaning comes to exist through its construction by human beings, as they interact with one another and engage in an interpretation of their interaction (O’Leary, 2004). In other words, constructivists take the position that ‘to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it’ (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). This means that socially reality is understood in the form of various intangible mental constructions. Consequently, I and my research participants are interrelated - actively and mutually we produced research findings together. As part of constructing meaning I sought to gain an understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes experienced by the research participants from within their frame of reference (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As a result, I was an instrument of the data collection and the interpretation of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). How then did I maintain a balance between my personal assumptions or perceptions, and accountability towards the inquiry being undertaken, and the research participants' accounts of their experiences?

The solution was not to eliminate, deny, or hide myself and my prior experiences that influence my thoughts and behaviour, and that crafted my identity. Instead, it was to accept, embrace, voice, and to allow—where relevant—those experiences to guide the research process. I felt strongly that my bicultural experiences played a significant and beneficial role within this research. That benefit was in terms of gaining access and building rapport with the research participants and, even more so, in terms of enhancing the analysis of the data to arrive at a sound interpretation of the underlying cultural meaning of interviewees' accounts.
Even with the best effort, trying to eliminate prior knowledge and experience related to this research area would not have been possible. Knowledge is not something objective that can be removed or set aside; it is something that is created through one's experiences of the social world, and it is through experience that one makes sense of and relates to their social reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Crotty, 1998). Accordingly, an effort to achieve a completely impartial and objective view will lead to misinterpretation if the social reality loses its meaningfulness. Essentially, what can occur is that the meaningfulness of the experience being explored is omitted (‘bracketed out’) (Safranski, 1998; Frede, 1998). The existential philosopher Martin Heidegger emphasises this position in the following statement: “I cannot look at the world objectively because the world is not, and cannot possibly be, outside me, since I am—and always have been since birth—in the world existing as part of it. I am inextricably linked to all other entities in the world-wide web of significance” (Heidegger, cited in Watts, 2001, p. 12).

Heidegger supports the view that there is no pure, external vantage point from which to achieve an objective and pre-positional viewpoint on things. Human beings are never without a context, and they use the context in which they find themselves to understand the world (Watts, 2001). As both the research inquiry and the interpretation of the data are unavoidably influenced by a researcher's social and cultural identities, it is important for them to uphold an informed reflexive consciousness throughout the research process. This contextualises their subjectivity in the interpretation. Any qualitative researcher needs to be able to describe relevant aspects of their self, including any biases, assumptions, and experiences that qualify their ability to conduct the research. This gives their interpretation credibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

I know that my knowledge and experiences have informed the choice of topic, motivation for this research, the theoretical underpinnings of the research, and the chosen method.
Consequently, I felt strongly that by not eliminating my prior knowledge and experience, this inquiry would benefit greatly from my insider cultural knowledge of the research participants’ social reality. Therefore, it is important to explain briefly how my prior knowledge and experience came about and the benefits it brings. In this way, I am clearly acknowledging my position and commitment to declaring and explicitly owning that position throughout the research process.

As the researcher, I offer my experience and reflection as a 30 year-old bicultural and bilingual turban-wearing female, of Australian heritage, who can function in both Western and Arabian cultural environments, and who speaks English and Arabic, researching the attitudes of Omani employees towards the workplace at the intersection of Western-infused business ideology and the employees’ traditional culture.

7.2 MUSLIM CULTURE

I was introduced to the Islamic faith and Muslim culture as a 14 year-old in a mosque “masjid” in the Melbourne suburb of Fawkner. I began my transition to biculturalism, which included accepting Islam and becoming submerged in the Muslim culture, over the following years. I came to an in-depth understanding of the belief system and its accompanying rituals. I now explain the source of my interest in Muslim culture, my initial thoughts, and where this interest led me.

This transition began in 2001. Until then, I gave little thought to whether there was another way of living beyond the Australian way in which I was raised. With increased refugee immigration to Australia, the school-yard dynamics began to take an obvious shift, with an increase in the number of non-Australian refugee students, particularly from the Middle East and Africa: the vast majority were Muslims. Generally, social groups form based on ethnicity. Australian teenagers socialised with other Australian teenagers, and the Middle
Eastern and African teenagers socialised with one another. Most of the Australian teenagers dealt with the new students - who they saw as vastly different people - in the typical ethnocentric way of avoiding them or targeting them for being different.

My large Australian social group chose the latter way to deal with their confusion and anxieties about the ‘other’. The series of incidents that followed provoked my thinking about what it meant to be different. My group found a vulnerable target. She sat alone at recess and lunchtime. She was a Year 10 Muslim girl from Iraq. I rename her here as “Iya”. She became the subject of bullying and discrimination. She was regularly verbally abused, sworn at, mocked, and had things thrown at her.

Iya simply accepted the abuse. I felt sadness for her and I wondered why my friends didn't. Perhaps it was the combination of the idea of a 'fair go', along with my working-class spirit of supporting the underdog. My thoughts moved to wondering why Iya did not try to be more like us, more Australian, to avoid bullying.

This issue began to consume me. I made a decision to speak up. I turned to my friends and said, ‘I think that’s enough, there must be a reason why she is different. Maybe we should ask her about where she is from, why she dresses the way she does, and why she does not want to be like us'. I was shouted down: 'we are just having some fun … don't wreck it'. The comment that challenged me was when one of the girls said, 'You go and ask her, if you want to be a tea-towel head lover'. I agreed to ask. I decided not to socialise anymore with my regular friends. I had an overwhelming feeling of empathy along with my ever-increasing curiosity of why it was important for Iya to be different. I approached Iya, apologised for my friends’ behaviour, and asked if I could sit with her. She was surprisingly welcoming and shared her lunch. I asked her why she did not wear something more Australian. She said family and culture were important to her; she was proud of them. I wondered why dressing in
a certain way, and not changing, is so important to Iya, her family, and her culture? It seemed to be more than trivial. I wondered why we thought differently.

I began to realise that although there are differences in the world - different cultures, religions, and languages – those differences did not mean that Australia or America were better, right, or superior to other ways. When I probed Iya about why she wore a scarf she said,

*Why not? I am smart and capable, and I want be seen and judged on that. If I show how nice my hair is, and wear tight things to show my behind, I won’t be judged on whether I am smart or not. I will instead be judged on whether I am beautiful or not.*

She remarked: "It does not mean that I don’t want to be beautiful. But beauty should be cherished and if it is always displayed it becomes normal and stops being special". I found these ideas interesting.

Iya recognised my curiosity and that I was not judgemental; she invited me to her home. Iya greeted me there in Western dress. Maybe she wasn’t so different after all. It was then that I first heard the Arabic language. Iya’s mother welcomed me with “*ahlan wa sahlan*” and kissed me on each side of my face. Iya served black tea in a small glass. Shortly after, they served a dinner spread out on the floor on a cloth. Dinner was a large main dish of white and yellow rice topped with shaved carrot and stewed lamb, accompanied by small bowls of tomato-based sauce and a variety of side dishes. These included stuffed vine leaves, zucchinis, eggplants (*Dolma*), mincemeat and rice patties (*Kubba*), cheese pastries (*sambusak*), and an Arabic-style salad (*fatoush*). This meal contrasted greatly with my usual dinner of meat and three vegetables on an individual plate, eaten at the kitchen table using cutlery.
A half-eaten piece of pastry fell from the plate that Iya was carrying. She picked it up and placed it in the bin and said, ‘astaghfurallah’, and looked disappointed. She told me that it was a religious phrase which meant ‘I repent my sins to God’. Iya said that food is ‘nam’ma’—God’s blessing.

One distinct sound that struck me was a Muslim-prayer pocket alarm clock which sounded five times a day. Iya explained that it was the call to prayer—‘athan’, and it reminded her to pray to God at the particular times that he expects throughout the day, to remain close to him and then she rushed off to pray. “Why right now?” I thought, "It is not normal, it's lunch time". This behaviour was foreign to me. I wondered why religion was so important, and why it was important for young people to obey God.

Iya invited me to visit the mosque and see a Muslim prayer service. This was the point at which I felt that I had truly been introduced to Islam. It was a Friday morning, and the local Muslim community had gathered at the mosque for their weekly religious ritual of communal
Friday prayer ‘salat al jummah’. As we entered the female side of the mosque, the ‘khitba’ weekly guidance speech began on noble living, made by the mosque’s ‘Imam’, the religious leader. Everyone sat quietly and listened to advice that reminded them of God’s expectation of them to remain submissive to him, performing only moral acts. The call to prayer ‘athan’ was when everyone rushed to perform ‘wudhu’, the washing and cleaning ritual performed before prayer, before they presented themselves before God. The women were in rows with around a metre between them. I did not know the words to say, or how to act. Ilya said, "If you want to participate, just follow what I do and do not worry about the prayer words for now".

As I performed the prayer, I was overcome by a peaceful energy. I felt inspired and warm. This was an emotional and spiritual experience for me. Nothing seemed to matter apart from this peaceful and calm connection, an awareness of something bigger than me and the world in which I lived. The spirituality drew me along, with the idea that you don’t just put your hands together before bed, or close your eyes and ask for something that you want. You perform a physical and spiritual ritual five times a day to make and maintain a connection with God. By doing this I was satisfying someone or something greater and more important than the others and me. I read books about Islam, and watched videos of famous Western people who were Muslims. I was already becoming a part of it and embedded in it.

The reason for explaining this experience is to demonstrate how I wanted to understand Iya’s culture. That interest in understanding was a key part of my development of a higher level of cultural intelligence. According to the cultural-intelligence literature, one of the three fundamental elements is to be motivated to seek to understand another culture (Earley and Ang, 2003). Seeking to understand another culture was an early indication, before I became a researcher, that I was already interested to the extent that understanding something involves interpreting it.
My initial interest in Muslim culture was, to a large extent, ignited by Iya’s early comment of a different feminist approach. The mosque atmosphere, and reading about Islam, came to be about my satisfaction of being part of a noble way of living, with a strong sense of belonging and community.

### 7.3 ARABIAN GULF CULTURE

The Islamic notion that marriage is the fulfilment of half of one’s religion, as in the following Islam teaching, led me to an intercultural marriage.

“When a person gets married he has completed half of his religion, so let him fear Allah with regard to the other half” (Munzari, 2007, p. 378)

Below is a wedding photograph which was taken on the night of my intercultural marriage.

My transition to biculturalism and my intercultural marriage began while living in my in-laws' home. I experienced uncertainties and confusions while getting to know my husband’s
family, but I moved beyond those uncertainties to arrive at a deep understanding of my new family’s culture.

I was thrust into a world that extended beyond the basic Islamic beliefs to which I had already been drawn. A view exists that someone who becomes a Muslim—particularly a Westerner—is special, has been chosen, and is even sacred. My in-laws mistakenly believed that because we shared common Islamic beliefs, I would automatically understand and behave in ways consistent with their Arabian culture. In Melbourne in the early 1990s, they were a large family living in a 'cultural diaspora'. Their priority was to maintain and express their Arabian identity, and adhere to the Bedouin tribal traditions.

Bedouin tradition is an exceptionally strong force as a sociocultural aspect of the Arabian Gulf. It remains a basis for many judgements about how to live as a good person. Bedouin origins and traditions extend beyond the representation of the region’s history. They embody a code of ethical behaviour which is respected and largely still practised among Gulf Arab people. The meaning of these traditions is greater that the naive interpretation or understanding achievable by an outsider which my journey below will demonstrate. These traditions developed over centuries, are based on how historically the Arabian Bedouin society operated in response to the harsh desert environment, and out of the need to coexist. This history has resulted in an emphasis on collective tribal kinship and noble character.

I entered into social relations and social dynamics that essentially led me to understand what it means to be a member of an Arabian Gulf family and society. It quickly became apparent that this lifestyle sharply contrasted to the Western, individualistic, egalitarian life of my upbringing. Their lifestyle was instead collective and hierarchical. My father-in-law was the ultimate decision-maker; his adult children, including my husband, obeyed his wishes. It was commonplace for family members to be involved in other family members' affairs - marital,
financial, or social, which surprised and worried me. I was taught to be independent and self-reliant; I always had considerable decision-making freedom. For instance, I did not face much resistance when deciding to marry, even at a young age; that was my decision to make. However, the differences intrigued me, and a collective sense of belonging attracted me.

The way that the father figure in the Arabian Bedouin culture assumes that all family members seek his approval, and the way all family members behave in response to that assumption is mirrored in Omani workplace environments. In the workplace, the manager is seen as similar to the head of the family; employees are motivated to obtain approval; they are unlikely to express disapproval of their managers and organisations.

7.3.1 Initial Misunderstandings and Observations

While living with my husband’s family, many experiences and observations puzzled me and spurred my need to comprehend. One was a memorable cultural misunderstanding with my father-in-law. I was sitting on the couch watching television and he entered the room and sat to the left of me, on the floor. I crossed my legs; my foot was pointing towards his upper body. Within moments, he began to cough loudly. Wanting to be the model daughter in-law, I fetched him a glass of water. I offered it to him, but he turned his back and ignored me.

I knew that I had upset him but I could not ask him what I had done wrong because I knew little Arabic and he spoke little English. I waited for other family members to explain what had happened. Their response surprised me; they were concerned and upset. They said ‘ayb’ (shame), "He is going to think so bad of you because you have offended his honour".

I was still confused, and asked for clarification. I was told that the sole of a person’s foot is seen as dirty and low, because it is in contact with the ground. If you point your foot towards someone, particularly towards the upper body or face, it is interpreted that you view them as low and unworthy. I understood this idea but wondered if there was more behind it? All
humans, regardless of their culture, walk on dirty ground; not everyone interprets feet in this way. I learned the historical point of view: the Bedouin Arabian tribes roamed the vast flat Arabian Desert. As a result of their flat natural environment, height was valued, but was not always available. It was respected. Height was important to see potential danger: perhaps an enemy tribe approaching to find water for their livestock. Over time, height has manifested within Arab society as important for displaying respect. It is used in everyday actions of people to honour one another. Kissing of the foreheads of older members of society is a common practice, and it symbolises respect. My reflection on this particular experience was highly beneficial. I realised that history was going to be important in understanding their culture and way of living. By paying attention to historical stories, I would begin to understand the meaning and reasons that lie beneath their attitudes and behaviour.

Another lesson was the way in which my father-in-law chose to communicate with me. His cough meant far more than I thought. It was his indirect way of indicating his discomfort with my behaviour. However, I did not interpret it this way. As a result, I did not notice that subtle non-verbal cue. I later learnt that there was a lot more to communicating in the Arabian way than simply speaking your mind, and that these subtleties extended to the way in which the Arabic language is used. Conversations can often be ambiguous and that includes the choice of and the meaning of words. The social context, in which the conversation occurs, as well as the large social history of the culture, needs to be seen as part of the process of interpreting the intended message.

A related example was a discussion about the potential marriage of my sister-in-law. Arranged marriage is a common practice in the Arabian culture and the family of a potential suitor had asked for my sister-in-law’s hand. Most interesting to me was my sister-in-law’s response when her parents asked if she was happy about it, and whether she accepted the potential suitor. She did not give them an actual answer; she looked towards the ground and
quietly said, "I don't know". Everybody was happy; her mother and sisters proceeded to discuss wedding plans. When I asked her if she was really happy to be getting married, and accepted the suitor; she smiled and told me that she was very happy. I asked her to explain her answer to her parents. She said it would be ‘ayb’ (shameful) for her to express her happiness outwardly. The reason for this ambiguous and indirect style of communication is to ensure that shame is not bestowed on anyone.

Other observations related to expressing emotions and the importance of social judgement. On many occasions, I noticed that when young children would approach an adult, crying over something that had upset them while playing with other children; they would firmly be told ‘ayb’ (shameful), "Stop crying. What is everyone going to think of you?" This was very different to my upbringing. If, as a child, you were upset and crying you were comforted and told to “Let it out”. This observation, among others, taught me that social judgement plays a fundamental role in the regulation of personal behaviour. As a result, in the Arabian culture, your emotions need to be controlled, or there is a strong negative social judgement attached, such as inadequate, immature, weak, and vulnerable. This observation taught me that subtle body language and silence mean something and they are often used to express emotions.

7.3.2 The Beginning of Understanding

I threaded together some common key elements that I felt were helping me to make sense of my new world. Everything seemed to revolve around this notion of ‘ayb’ (shame). The idea of right and wrong was part of a larger framework. It seemed to extend beyond internal feelings of guilt and freely representing yourself, as long as your conduct brought no harm to others, or an external sense of ‘ayb’ shame. Consequently, behaviour is governed by a strict code of conduct and is regulated by external social judgement. One must conduct oneself in a way that is honourable, so that as a representative of your family and tribe, you do not to
bring shame. Communication is ambiguous, and understanding the social context is necessary to grasp the intended message. The Arabian Desert heritage seemed to be linked to everything. My understanding of the meanings behind this framework, and the attitudes and behaviour that it produces, depended on learning their social history.

I learned about the meaning that lies beneath attitudes and behaviour, and how that meaning relates to the traditional Bedouin ethical framework. This code of ethics dates back to pre-Islamic times. It is based on the tension between ‘sharaf’ (honour) and ‘ayb’ (shame). It is how social control is exercised, and it defines an individual, his family, and tribe.

7.3.3 ‘Ayb’ (shame)

The term ‘ayb’ is to do with shame. Depending on how ‘ayb’ is used, it can mean rude, immoral, or shameful. ‘Ayb’ is of central significance in Arabian life and tradition. It regulates peoples’ actions to ensure that one’s ‘sharaf’ (honour) is upheld in others’ eyes. The traditional code of ethics includes the three central, interrelated, cultural virtues of ‘thyfah’ (hospitality), ‘karam’ (generosity), and ‘alent’maah alqablli’ (kinship and collective loyalty). These are used to express ‘sharaf’ (honour). Actions that are considered dishonourable, inhospitable, ungenerous, lacking courage, or unsupportive of collective loyalty are ‘ayb’, because actions that go against these ethical codes compromise the preservation of honour. It is strictly ‘ayb’ to speak to somebody outside your home without inviting them in, even if it is your neighbour. It goes against being hospitable and generous; you should open your home, and offer the best of what you have.

Another example considered ‘ayb’ is for fathers and brothers to celebrate their sisters’ and daughters’ weddings openly, unless they are marrying their first cousins. The practice of a male family member’s non-attendance at wedding celebrations relates back to the idea of honour. Historical intermarriages between tribes were used to secure alliances. Historically,
this meant that tribesmen felt, in some circumstances, that they had to use female family members as commodities, in order to increase their strength and power to protect the tribe from threat of invasion and raiding by rival tribes. Even though such marriages were deals between tribes, they were still viewed in a way that their female family member had been taken, and her future children would not belong to them. It therefore became a cultural norm for male family members not to attend or celebrate their female family members’ marriages openly. Although this practice is slowly changing, it is still widely followed.

7.3.4 Confusion, Insecurities and Uncertainties

I was gathering an understanding, succeeding in social interactions, and was rapidly learning Arabic. The first year of my marriage nevertheless quickly went from me being viewed as ‘chosen by God’ to being ‘the outsider’, the illegitimate and unworthy daughter or sister-in-law. I had become the target of ethnocentrism. I began to feel like a second-class citizen. This treatment was largely a result an old Bedouin tradition which was linked to the tradition of ‘sharaf’ (honour), and which suddenly appeared to be important. It was an implicit rule that marriage must occur within your tribe ‘qabila’ or between a particular set of tribes. Marriage between tribes is considered an act that displays honour. Thus a tribal ‘qabaali’ man who marries a tribal ‘qabaali’ woman is honourable and respected.

The importance of Arabic tribalism dates back to pre-Islam when two main tribes were formed by two brothers: Adnan and Qantan. Over time, as these tribes grew, branches were established which later became more independent mother tribes, with their own branches (sub-tribes). Today, the Bedouin Gulf Arabian tribes can be placed into three groupings: Northern ‘shimal’ tribes, Middle ‘najd’ tribes, and Southern ‘janoob’ tribes. They are based on the locations within the Arabian Peninsula in which the mother tribes were first established. Many of the tribes can be distinguished from another based on their particular
pronunciation of words. However, all tribes, by keeping a strict record of their forefathers, still proudly trace their patrilineal roots back to their larger tribal group, and from there through the two blood lines back to Adnan and Qantan.

The notion of tribalism remains very significant within Gulf society as a form of identification. Being tribal distinguishes a person as being of pure race ‘asil’ that is superior to others. While there are other historical families in the region, which over time have formed tribes out of necessity to have support and fit into the Arabian Gulf society, they have been, and remain to a large degree, considered ‘mosh qabaali’: non-tribal, or not of pure Arabian race. Non-original tribes are viewed as the descendants of gypsies, and as the leftovers of the crusaders who historically did not follow noble practices according to the Bedouin tradition. Therefore, they are far less trusted and respected, and are considered unworthy of marriage. This attitude has manifested within society to mean that a person who marries from outside the pure Bedouin tribes (whether that is from a tribe that is considered ‘mosh qabaali’, or a foreigner) must be a person who is dishonourable, and thus denied a spouse from the pure Bedouin tribes. Consequently, that person is viewed as bringing shame to themselves, their family, and their wider tribe. The level of shame depends on which of the tribes is considered ‘mosh qabaali’, or with which foreign nationality they married. As a result of this style of thinking, the comment of “labis lib’aas mosh libsu” became a common sound to me. It meant that my husband—their son or brother—had put on clothes that were not his clothes. I was those foreign clothes.

My husband, the eldest son, had an important and respected position within the family. However, with that position came a heightened level of responsibility, which intensified the pressure on him to ‘uphold the family’s honour’. It was then that the threat of a second wife arose. Islamic religious teachings and law accept that a man may have up to four wives. This notion is far less significant on religious grounds, because the Quran warns men that they
must be fair. It emphasises the difficulty of treating wives fairly and equally. It states that if a man cannot be fair, he must only have one wife. The original rationale for second wives came about at a time of war. Widows and orphans were left vulnerable and without support. Accordingly, a man marrying more than one wife supposedly did so for the reason of looking after the women and orphans who required protection. Married men were usually seen as the best option to provide financial and emotional support and a family environment. This original rationale is supported by the following quotation from the Quran. It is among other quotations which pertain to the regulation of behaviour towards wives (orphans) in such an arrangement:

> And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course (Quran, chapter 4, verse 3).

It is important to note that the practice of multiple wives is a pre-Islamic Arabian practice, regulated by Islam which restricted the limit to four wives, and defined the rationale and circumstances for which it was acceptable. Islam thus imposed equal treatment of all wives.

From a traditional Arabian Bedouin perspective, however, the practice of marrying more than one wife was done for political reasons; circumstances where the decision to marry more than one woman was viewed as serving a greater social need of the tribe or family. From this perspective, the idea of marrying more than one wife carries more cultural significance. Marrying a second wife was a significant action which carried a very clear and loud social message about the kind of man the person was. It was usually viewed as one who values his honour and status. This is because families do not easily accept that their daughters become
second wives. One of the main factors that determine a family’s acceptance will depend on how much they value the man, and on the society’s perception of how honourable and respected he is. Members of society are aware of difficult it is for a man to satisfy and treat multiple wives fairly, not to mention the financial and emotional responsibility of raising and blending multiple children and families. An old saying is: “An ordinarily man between two women is a lamb between two wolves” (Gannon, 2001).

A man with the courage to marry more than one wife, and to maintain those marriages, is considered to have ‘hai’ba’, which is a revered sense of charisma and respect. This increases the man's and his family's honour and social standing. However, if it became a public view in society that the man clearly favoured a particular wife, or a particular wife’s children, the respect given to him would be reduced. This practice is diminishing, as recent generations of women refuse to accept such arrangements, and as men hear about or witness the stress and difficulties associated with such arrangements. Nonetheless, there is a large sense of acceptance in the Gulf Arab mindset of this practice, with a common light-hearted saying among women, particularly the older generation of women, “myaraf hadry ilaa ya jarb ghari”, which means he doesn’t know my worth until he tries another.

My feelings of confusion, hurt, and anger, and the anxieties that came with being viewed as an unworthy second-class citizen, along with the threat of a second wife (which if put into action would have ended my marriage) soon became my motivation to overcome such treatment. Being viewed as unworthy presented me with a challenge to prove them wrong. I knew that I could rise above this challenge because of my confident and audacious nature. The situation further spurred my need to understand and satisfy my curiosity of how and why they did those things. I began to make the connections - although sometimes at a subconscious level - about the relationship between practising cultural virtues of hospitality (‘thyafah’), generosity (‘karam’), kinship and collective loyalty (‘alent’maah alqablli’), and
upholding honour ('sharaf'). I looked for ways to use this growing understanding to my advantage in being accepted as a legitimate member of the family.

### 7.3.5 'Sharaf' (honour)

'Sharaf' is a concept that represents the preservation of one's honour and that of the tribe. 'Sharaf' is inherited and maintained through noble and brave acts. A key element of its maintenance involves protection of the women of the family and tribe. A man’s ‘sharaf’ is determined by his individual behaviour and the behaviour of his male relatives and tribe members. A woman’s ‘sharaf’ extends beyond noble acts, and is largely defined as being related to chastity, in the physical sense and in the conceptual sense. It is seen as something that once lost cannot be regained; and it is the responsibility of male relatives to uphold it. If a woman’s ‘sharaf’ is taken or compromised, tremendous shame will ensue. Any noble or ‘asil’ (pure race) man who fails to protect the females of their family and larger tribe is seen as weak, immoral, and cowardly. Thereby, he cannot be seen as honourable.

From a Western perspective, many traditional Bedouin Arabian practices linked to ‘sharaf’ that look oppressive towards women actually carry the underlying intention of fiercely protecting women; these practices are related to generations of segregation. Some of this can be better understood through the historical narrative of the Arabian Peninsula tribes. In historical nomadic times, the Arabian tribes’ harsh desert environment did not offer anything of value. It required men to be hard, and often violent. Women were highly valued, as they were seen as the opposite to that: gentle, beautiful, and precious but the harsh environment also made women vulnerable. This, coupled with the lack of resources, meant that through raiding enemy tribes, women, as well as livestock, became one of the ways to gain wealth and power.
Therefore, women as vulnerable targets became a commodity; if captured by an enemy tribe, they would be sold as slaves as a way to bring income, or be enslaved within the enemy tribe and be sexually violated to weaken the rival tribe emotionally. As a result, noble tribesmen would hide and protect their women from the public sphere. In this way they could control perceptions about the number of women in their tribe, because tribes with large numbers of women were more vulnerable to ambush.

Far back in history, a practice called ‘waad’ existed where Bedouin tribesmen went to extraordinarily extreme lengths, in their view, to protect or prevent the potential grievous harm that their daughters would face when they grew up by burying them as infants. Infants were thought to be much less conscious of their surroundings and likely to feel less pain. Learning of this old pre-Islamic practice shocked me and I quickly interpreted it as cruel and an indication of females being viewed as less than human. However, I later learnt that given the social context at that time in history, in the eyes of the Bedouin father ‘waad’ was seen as a noble act towards the daughter he considered sacred. An insight into this view is given by the origins of the word ‘woman’ in Arabic; it is ‘hurrma’, which comes from the word ‘haarm’ that means sacred and protected. The word ‘haarm’ is different to the widely known religious term ‘haram’, which means prohibited, and is used in combination with its opposite of ‘halal’ which means permissible. This is to distinguish what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, according to Islamic ruling. The inside of the home is referred to as the ‘haarm’, as it is considered to be the private sanctuary of female family members, where no stranger or non-relative male guests are allowed.

The segregation between men and women that I began to see after my marriage was not completely new, as I had experienced it from an Islamic religious perspective when I visited the mosque, and when I investigated the reasons behind the hijab. Those reasons mainly were that a person’s focus should be on their relationship with God, and due to the innate human
tendency of possible attraction between genders, this focus could be compromised. However, the behaviour which I observed could not be contained solely by that religious explanation.

For example at my in-laws’ home there was a separate closed room at the front of the house called ‘majalis’ designated for receiving male guests. When male guests visited, all hall doors were closed to ensure that the visitors did not catch even a glimpse of the female family members—me included. This extended beyond not seeing them, but to not hearing them as well. When our female family members needed to gain the attention of our male family members who were entertaining guests, they would gently knock on the wall of the ‘majalis’, because male guests should not have any awareness of the presence in the home of female family members; a female voice would signal their presence to the guests. I could recall a time where my brother-in-law came in from the ‘majalis’ and asked his sister to lower her voice because she was laughing too loudly.

Although this behaviour might seem to align with Islamic practices, it was on the whole more comprehensible from the Arabian Bedouin historical and anthropological perspective. A man who doesn’t protect his female family members by concealing them from men, and a woman who does not wish to be concealed from men, are considered the equal of the gypsies. Historically, gypsies travelled around using their women to entertain and pleasure men for money, which is considered the opposite of what a noble and honourable tribesmen would do, and what noble and honourable tribeswomen would accept. In modern times, this has come to mean that the social integration of female family members, on any level, is not acceptable and is thus considered ‘ayb’. If a family engages in such behaviour, exposing the sacred value of their women, others would view both the females and males of that family as lacking in honour and not being raised nobly.
By deepening my understanding of their history, I extended my understanding of the ‘hijab’ and how it could relate back to the pre-Islamic concept of ‘sharaf’ (honour). The word ‘hijab’ originates from the Arabic word ‘hajaba’ meaning to conceal, veil, or hide from view. The hijab is considered to be an Islamic concept, and the following quote from the Quran supports that and seeks to regulate dress and behaviour codes.

_Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty
And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and adornments except what [must ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers’ sons, their sisters' sons, their women [friends and associates], their [female] slaves which they own, or male servants who lack [sexual] desire, or children who do not have shame for the naked body [children who have not reached puberty]_ (Quran, Chapter 24, verses 30-31).

I recognised that the formulation and interpretation of Islam were unavoidably influenced by the culture of the Arabian Peninsula where it originated, but in many instances those interpretations acted to reinforce mutually the concept of ‘sharaf’. In some other instances perhaps, the cultural and religious sides may contradict one another. It seemed to be a complex and entangled relationship of which I believe many ordinary Gulf Arabs and Muslims are not overly aware.

One debated interpretation is that in the very early days of Islam, prior to Islam’s abolition of slavery, the then second ‘calipha’ (governor) of Islam, Omar bin Al Khatab, after the Prophet Mohammed (to whom the Islamic revelation was revealed), ordered tribeswomen to cover and don a ‘hijab’, so as to distinguish themselves as women who carried the status of being
free and honourable, from the women who were slaves and who were commonly propositioned for sex with no right to refuse. The following historical quote supports this interpretation.

“A slave girl of Muhajirin or Ansaar came to Umar wearing Jilbab (complete Hijab); he said: “Have you been freed?” She said: “No!” He said: “Put it off your head!”” Jilbab is for the freed women. So she hesitated, so he got up to her with the whip (Darrah), and he hit her on the head, until she threw it” (Al-Albani, 2003, p. 204).

From an anthropological point of view, Omar bin Al Khatab, grew up in ‘Quraysh’, now known as the area of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, as a member of that particular society and culture. This is the Arabian Bedouin society and culture, which emphasised ‘sharaf’, and which no doubt informed his thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is said that the religious revelations or orders pertaining to the ‘hijab’ outlined in the Quran came later.

From that point, as Islam grew it moved to prohibit prostitution, sexual promiscuity and indecency, and sexual harassment of women which were large social problems in pre-Islamic Arabia. This change, combined with the Islamic rulings that pushed for the freedom of slaves and the further spread of Islam, widened the notion of ‘hijab’ to include any woman who considered herself a Muslim be covered with a ‘hijab’ to distinguish herself from the indecent non-Muslim sex sellers who continued to engage in indecent behaviour, and over whom Islam did not have control. This resulted in the hijab qualifying women as belonging to a noble and honourable group of women who were protected in society. The following quote from the Quran seems to support this: “Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to put their cloaks close round them [when they are outside the house]. That shall be better so that they may be recognized [as believing women] and not be annoyed [by men].” (Quran, Chapter 33, verse 59).
Understanding this history and how the thousands of years of it were manifest in everyday norms within Arabian Gulf society today enabled me to understand the ways in which current cultural practices can be explained by earlier circumstances. This gave me insight, and allowed me to move from struggling with, for example, gender-segregation-related practices, which I initially felt belittled women, to being able to feel the sense of importance given to practices through an understanding of their relationship with the pre-Islamic concept of ‘sharaf’ (honour). The latter resulted from their ancestors' need to survive the dynamics of their harsh Arabian desert lifestyle.

Additionally, understanding the ways in which current cultural practices can be explained by earlier circumstances illuminated the fact that they can be interpreted in a positive or a negative way. For instance, the argument presented pertaining to the hijab—which aligns with a cultural view that this practice is to protect the modesty and virtue of our women—is an example of how members of the culture are motivated to produce a positive interpretation. It demonstrates the ethnocentric tendency—not limited to the Middle East, and present in all cultures—for people to describe what they are doing in positive terms. What is interesting in this case, is that this tendency is reflected in the way that interviewees for this research were looking for a positive interpretation of new workplace practices, particularly given that these were already being viewed as Omani: their views were presented within a traditional Omani organisational context.

7.3.6 ‘Thyafah’ and ‘Karam’ (hospitality and generosity)

‘Thyafah’ and ‘Karam’ are interconnected cultural virtues, inherited from pre-Islamic Arabian Bedouin culture. Historically, it was essential for the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula to depend on each other's kindness, particularly when travelling—to survive the cruel desert climate—and as a basis for building alliances. The concepts of ‘thyafah’ which
means hospitality, and ‘karam’ which means generosity, are cultural virtues that are fundamental to the Bedouin code of ethics and are thus taken very seriously. I quickly learned that ‘thyafah’ is the expression of honouring a guest through the practice of ‘karam’. How generously the host gives to the guest also gives the host honour in return. Therefore, any opportunity to honour a guest generously should be taken, because it demonstrates noble character, which in turn displays and upholds a family’s ‘sharaf’ (honor).

My father-in-law, husband, and brother-in-law once returned from a large dinner where my father-in-law was the guest of honour. My father-in-law was cheerful and full of praise for the host and his family; he praised the host’s wife who prepared the lavish dinner of two whole lambs and six large trays of rice. He commented that she was ‘harma sharafa’, an honourable woman. He had my undivided attention. I realised that this could be the way for me to represent the family honour: mastering the preparation of their traditional and lavish meal, and serving it to guests. He further reported that the host had ‘Karam Hatim Ta’i’. I did not know what that praise meant, so I asked. He sat, asked for a pot of Arabic coffee to be made, and began to tell the historic story of Hatim Al Ta’I, the most generous man in Arabia.

Hatim Al Ta’i was a Bedouin tribal man from the Tai tribe located in the desert of Ha’il in Saudi Arabia on the Arabian Peninsula. He lived during the pre-Islamic period (Jahiliyyah). Hatim was famously known for his enormous generosity. He is famous in Arabian culture and among all Arabs, with word of him stretching from Mauritania on the western coast of Africa to Palestine on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The expression ‘Karam Hatim Ta’i’, which means the generosity of Hatim Al Ta’I, or more generous than Hatim Al Ta’I, is commonly understood and widely used among Arabs.

The reason for this tradition is that Hatim generously gave to his guests and friends from a young age. By the time he was middle-aged, he went from being a wealthy man with
hundreds of herds of camel and sheep to a poor man with just one horse. But Hatim’s horse was revered as loyal, brave, and reliable. Three men had crossed the desert to visit Hatim and when they arrived, after many long nights of travel, Hatim had nothing to feed them. He resorted to slaughtering his beloved horse, He knew well that his horse was his only asset—his only mode of transport and means of hunting. He realised that he still needed wood to light a fire in order to cook the horse. He proceeded to use the wooden pole that was holding up his family’s tent. Once his guests finished their meal, they asked to see his horse. Hatim informed them that they could not see the horse, and his guests then explained that they would like to see it, because their actual reason for coming to him was to buy it. Hatim explained to his guests that the reason they could not see his horse was because he had fed it to them for dinner.

To comprehend how generous Hatim’s act was, one should understand what horses meant to the Arabian Bedouin people. They considered a pure-bred Arabian horse a gift from God. It was revered, cherished, and almost worshipped for its light weight, tall frame and its speed, agility, endurance, and courage. These characteristics gave them the ability to withstand the harsh desert lifestyle. The horses were cared for by their owners as a father cares for his children. The Arabian horse was highly valued as a Bedouin tribesman’s primary means of survival; it was an instrument of defence in times of battle, ambushes, and raids, and for herding, hunting, and transport.

Given the significance of the horse, the story the Hatim Al Ta’i became the historic landmark for the importance of hospitality and generosity in the Arabian Bedouin culture. This story exemplifies the extent of his generosity and it is from this story, in particular, that word of Hatim Al Ta’i’s generosity spread widely. This in turn ingrained in almost every Arab the importance of being hospitable and generous, and the respect and honour that comes with it.
Accordingly, the expression “If you have much, give of your wealth; if you have little, give of your heart” became a common Arabic proverb.

There was a particular code of conduct pertaining to hospitality and generosity. If you receive a guest, even if the guest's visit is out of character, upon receiving them they must not be asked about the reason for their visit. If necessary, they are to be sheltered and fed for three days and nights before the guest can be asked about the reason for their visit. It is offensive towards the host if a guest visits for only a very short time, and it is offensive towards the guest if the host seems eager for the visit to end. Upon receiving guests, specific phrases should be used to signify the host's respect for the guest, and their happiness and willingness to receive them. Another extremely important requirement is serving Arabic coffee. The particular rules about how it is served underlie its use to express honour. It is served in a small round cup called a ‘fenjal’, and a guest must drink three cups. The act of the host pouring three cups for the guest and the act of the guest in drinking the three cups offers a way for each to bestow honour on the other.

In the process of my internalisation of many of the underlying elements of the Arabian culture—as in-laws now say ‘shrubita kila’, meaning that I drank it all—I learned that the most widely carried out hospitable and generous act is sharing food. The traditional Arabian Bedouin custom of inviting guests to a feast ‘azeema’ of sacrificed lamb(s) ‘thabe’ah’ originated from a pre-Islamic historic religious event. This historic religious story is included in all of the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is the story of when Abraham, or Ibrahim, was tested by God over the sacrifice of his son. It demonstrates his whole-hearted devotion to God. When Abraham, or Ibrahim, demonstrated willingness to do this, God rescued the son at the last moment and, instead, accepted the sacrifice of a lamb.
From this story came the Islamic Eid ul-Adha practice that commemorates the ransom of a son by sacrificing a lamb. The practice then extended to inviting guests to feast on a sacrificed lamb on the birth of a child (particularly a son) to celebrate and give thanks to God for the new life. From there, the practice expanded in the Arabian Bedouin culture to become a hospitable practice used to celebrate many occasions, particularly those which involve receiving important guests. The willingness to slaughter or sacrifice generously lamb(s) from their herd—which represented an Arabian Bedouin tribesman’s wealth—expresses to the guest that they are highly valued, thereby bestowing honour on them. It demonstrates the courage and generosity of the host for giving up part of his wealth which, in turn, bestows honour on him. In addition, to demonstrate further to the guest how much they are honoured and valued, the ‘thabe’ah’ (sacrificed lamb) is preferably cooked at home, usually by the wife or daughters of the host, because there is no greater generosity than one can give than the effort of one’s family.

The practice of ‘thabe’ah’ (sacrificed lamb) and ‘azeema’ (inviting guests to feast on the sacrificed lamb) is a traditional custom of hospitality and generosity still widely practised within Muslim society to express honour. When I became aware of this practice, I saw it as
an opportunity for me to become an accepted or legitimate member of the family by representing the family honour through mastery of the preparation of their traditional meal and serving it to their guests. Recalling some mental notes which I had made when I had casually observed my mother-in-law cook this traditional feast and having already developed reasonably good skills in Arabian cooking and the use of spices, I then confidently told my husband to convince my father-in-law to allow me to cook the ‘thabe’ah’ for the next ‘azeema’. The time came for the next ‘azeema’ when my father-in-law was surprised by a long-time friend who was visiting from overseas. At this time, my mother-in-law had travelled to support one of her daughters who had recently given birth. So although my father-in-law was hesitant for me to prepare the traditional feast in honour his friend, he had no reason stop me.

On the morning of the ‘azeema’ my father-in-law presented me with two freshly slaughtered lambs in a very large pot, and 30 kilograms of rice. He told me he expected 30 guests. I needed to spread the food over five extra-large trays and make sure that they generously covered the trays' width and height. I needed to place the lambs' heads and the ‘efatah’ (which is a particular cut of meat consisting of both legs and the rump of the lamb) with the layer of fat on top of the ‘efatah’, intact, together on the main tray, the one which the host of honour sits at to eat. The meaning behind the ‘efatah’ cut of meat is that it is considered to be the fattiest and meatiest part of the lamb, and thus signifies generosity. There are two meanings behind placing the heads on the main tray: it is proof to the guest that the host has slaughtered a whole fresh lamb(s) and also the number. The brains, back of the eye, and in some cases the tongue, are considered delicacies that reinforce the host's generosity. He pointed me in the direction of the traditional stove and gas bottle which I would use to cook the meal.
I began to prepare the meal with my sisters-in-law nowhere in sight. My stress increased at the enormity of the task, not so much in terms of the vast volume of food, but regarding the significance of the meal and the responsibility that came with that resting on me. It did not overwhelm me. It energised me. In the following six to seven hours, I watched over the spice-infused lambs cooking, and prepared the saffron-infused rice and accompanying side dishes. I carefully arranged the well-cooked aromatic rice and lamb on the trays and garnished them ready to be served.

Later, my father-in-law and husband praised me on a well-cooked and tasty meal. My father-in-law commented that I was ‘ryeiat bait’, which means he considered me to be an able head of a home. I knew I had exceeded my father-in-law’s expectations. I managed to prepare and serve the feast. I felt I had done my duty towards the collective honour of the family. I began to notice that I was becoming like my in-laws, and moving closer towards not only understanding their culture but feeling it.

Below is a photograph of one of the many times when I prepared this meal.
Below is a photograph of the main tray with ‘efatah’ and the lamb’s head.

Based on my experience and understanding of the importance of maintaining honour and avoiding shame, this underlying cultural assumption and related elements were relevant to my interpretation of the interviewee data. My experience about preparing the lambs is a custom that reflects a very old environmental circumstance. That this custom has remained of crucial importance to family honour indicates, again, that in Arabian Muslim society, honour takes precedence over many other considerations. It indicates that members of that society need to demonstrate their worth constantly. It confirms why the interviewees said positive things about their workplaces: because of their ongoing concern about maintaining honour and avoiding shame.

7.3.7 Kinship and collective loyalty 'alintm aa alqablili'

I alluded earlier to the collective and hierarchical nature of the Arabian Bedouin culture, which reflects the cultural virtue of kinship and collective loyalty ('alintm'aa alqablili'). The maintenance of this strong sense ('alintm'aa alqablili') has to do with the patrilineal nature of Arabian society. Bedouin Arabs are members of large patrilineal descent groups of sub-
tribes, or branches (‘af’khaath’ plural) embedded within a larger ancestral mother tribe ‘qabila’—the whole genetic group. These sub-tribes or branches are governed by a council of elders, often directed by the mother tribe’s leader. Within this framework of ethical loyalty and collective responsibility, marriage alliances are forged, disputes are settled, justice and order are maintained, and interests are pursued. It is common for Bedouin Arabs to recite the names of five to 10 generations of patrilineal forefathers. I have memorised the 10 generations of patrilineal forefathers of my husband’s tribe that preceded my father-in-law. I have heard the list many times and appreciate its significance.

Relationships among sub-tribes or branches ‘af’khaath’ are conceptualised in terms of a segmentary lineage framework. The popular Bedouin saying of "I and my brother are against my cousin, I and my cousin are against the stranger" exemplifies this collective hierarchy of loyalties. It is based on kinship closeness that runs from the nuclear family ‘bayt’ through the blood line to the sub-tribe or branch ‘fekheth’ (singular), and then to the larger mother tribe ‘qabila’. I first heard the saying during a visit from my husband’s first cousin to my in-law’s home. Then, they were in disagreement over marital problems between my husband’s sister and her first cousin. However, their first cousin’s visit was not about the martial problem. Instead, he came to vow support to my in-laws in relation to a property dispute that they faced with members of another family and (or) tribe branch abroad.

Kinship and collective loyalty (‘alintm’aa alqablli’) is a cultural virtue that is represented by many practices. These reflect loyalty to the family and tribe, which is considered vital to maintaining honour. Some key practices are expressions of this cultural virtue, related to money and marriage.
7.3.7.1 Marriage

Marriage in the Arabian Bedouin culture has strong social dynamics and significant meanings which persist in marital customs across the Gulf. This is particularly evident among Gulf people who interact less with others from non-tribal backgrounds due to their geographic locations, such as in villages and small towns across the Gulf region. Nonetheless, it is not exclusive to villages and small towns; these dynamics and meanings are deeply rooted in mainstream society, and are very influential in the majority of marriage arrangements.

Historically, marriages between the Bedouin people of Arabia go beyond the spousal relationship between a man and a woman and their immediate families, to a relationship with a larger segment of the society. Marriage usually takes place between people from a single tribe to promote and maintain kinship and loyalty among its members and is seen in the fundamental difference between a man marrying from another tribe and a woman marrying from another tribe. While it is not usually approved for the man to do this, it is far less accepted if a woman marries from another tribe. This is because her children’s loyalty follows their father’s kinship to his tribe. Thus, marriage is preferred between members of a single tribe ‘qabila’ or between the sub-tribe ‘fekheth’. Marriage arrangements among people belonging to different tribes are fundamentally different from an arrangement within a single tribe. Usually, the main reason for different marriage arrangements is when they are motivated by the need to settle disputes, or to form and strengthen alliances between two tribes.

This social meaning makes marriages between the Gulf people of Bedouin tribal heritage and people of non-tribal backgrounds far less acceptable members of the society, and they are even frowned upon. This is because such a marriage goes against the priority of maintaining kinship, and of forming tribal alliances. These dynamics of the marriage arrangements in the
culture appear to be slowly changing, but because of the increasing interactions with others, many people remain faithful to traditional arrangements.

7.3.7.2 Money

Money is perceived as not belonging to one person in the family; rather, it belongs to the whole family, regardless of whether only a few members of that family generated the money. Money is viewed as a way to display family loyalty rather than individual wealth, and in this type of culture and society an individual is not viewed as a sole entity, but is instead an interconnected part of the family and (or)tribal entity.

In the middle of the night, in an overseas call, my father-in-law was asked by their tribal leader to perform ‘Fez’ah’. This is the practice of demonstrating kinship and collective loyalty through monetary means to reflect social support and protection. My father-in-law collected money from his adult sons to send overseas to support a relative of a troubled tribe member. I learned from this of the unwritten tribal laws that relate kinship and collective loyalty (‘alent’maah alqablli’). These are known as ‘oraff’. The two main practices of ‘oraff’ are ‘deeyah’ and ‘aa’nayih’.

‘Deeyah’ is the practice of the payment of compensation between tribes for crimes perpetrated by a tribe member. The tribe is considered responsible for each member's actions. Over time, set prices of compensation have been established for particular crimes. However, if a tribe member has committed one of the following three crimes, the tribe will not stand by them; they are considered acts of shame from which one cannot recover. A person with noble and honourable character would never perform such acts. These crimes are intentional murder, rape and (or) sexual assault, and stealing. The practice of ‘deeyah’ is diminishing, as its need has been replaced by national laws. Nonetheless, there are provisions within the law
which allow for ‘deeyah’. There are still tribal leaders who hold the ‘sundooq’ (box), which in effect is an account for money given by each family, ‘bayt’, in the tribe as their share of any potential ‘deeyah’.

The practice of ‘aa’nayih’ is a wedding ritual in which all guests give money on entry to the wedding celebrations. This is a sign of support and acknowledgement of the heavy costs of the wedding to the host. At each wedding, a member of the groom's family records the amount given to ensure that the same amount is given when each guest's family has a wedding.

Although the practical importance of many of these practices has decreased with the establishment of civil institutions, their symbolic importance is still embedded in the Gulf Arab mindset and society, with related practices still widely practised to express loyalty and courage and thereby to maintain honour. This collective mindset, combined with the Islamic rules-based approach, continues to reinforce a high degree of conformity mutually, and the high importance of collective social judgement. Again, the social pressure to conform and to be honourable came into play when I was at the stage of interpreting my research data.

7.4 SOCIAL STATUS

The fulfilment of these ethical codes within society maintains ‘sharaf’ (honour). Their fulfilment results in achieving, maintaining, and elevating one’s social position. How well one fulfils their duties related to ‘thyafah’ (hospitality), ‘karam’ (generosity), and ‘alent’maah alqablli’ (kinship and collective loyalty) determines the level of respect given to them by society, and their social standing. In this collective society, everyone is striving for high social standing, because it can be equated to a higher social class.

Understanding the Arabian Bedouin history and how the thousands of years of this history have manifested in everyday norms within Arabian Gulf society enabled me to feel the
importance of these practices, and how they relate to social status. It came through an understanding of their relationship to the world-view of ‘sharaf’ (honour) verses ‘ayb’ (shame), which resulted from their ancestors' need to survive in their harsh Arabian desert lifestyle.

Not all Gulf Arabs have a comprehensive and conscious understanding of the origins of practices that drive their needs for social reputation and preservation of honour. Practices through which many generations and over hundreds of years have come to be defined as duties and responsibilities have become the norm. They are central and deeply important norms, many of which have been reinforced by Islamic teachings and rulings that people obey and take for granted. They illuminate the importance of the hermeneutical approach taken to analyse and interpret the interview data.

All cultural practices and the underlying historical meanings discussed in this chapter align with my interpretive use of the promotion of an ought-self within members of Omani culture. Members perform and adhere to these cultural practices because that is what is expected in order to be an honourable member of society. Acting in accordance with the ought-self provides them with an emotional benefit: a sense of pride and honour. Pride and honour, being central values in the Arabian culture, promote self-enhancement. Additionally, by fulfilling these cultural practices, members gain the social benefit of being considered an honourable member of society, which directly relates to an individual’s social position. This is indicative of members of this society being motivated to behave always in accordance with the ought-self which again fits with the interviewees' expressions of positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace because their high regard for traditional culture leaves them feeling that this is what they ought to do.
7.5 GOING NATIVE

I moved from being a second-class citizen to being a member of an Arabian Gulf family and an honorary Arabian Gulf citizen. ‘Khobiz eidna’ was a comment that thereafter I commonly received from my in-laws; it meant that I was ‘their hand-made bread’. To an outsider, it may seem demeaning that I was thought of as a piece of dough that needed to be kneaded by their traditional technique to become bread worth buying. It signified my acceptance into the family, and their pride and appreciation that I learned their way of life.

As kinship and collective loyalty would indicate, having a group mindset where maintaining harmonious relationships is very important, my obedience to their culture and way of life eased concerns and, in a sense, restored family honour. I was now a fully functioning member of that society, approaching life through a world-view concerned with upholding honour, avoiding shame, and maintaining reputation. It was a form of social prestige that a Westerner chose to become one of them. I was named Fatma, which was my father in-law's mother's name. It was a name with religious and cultural significance, and was the name of the Islamic prophet Muhammad’s daughter. This secured me a special place in the family, and signified me as an honourable member of society.

I dressed according to Arabian Gulf customs in a long black dress, ‘abaya’, with a rectangular black scarf wrapped around my head and neck. I adopted the role of host happily and energetically for many social gatherings. My home became the location of the weekly men’s social gathering, ‘majilis’, which my husband hosted. I represented great hospitality and generosity, behind the scenes preparing and serving vast amounts of traditional lavish dishes for large numbers of guests. I was concerned with teaching my first-born son the names of his forefathers, right back to the mother tribe. I understood this way of life and what it meant to
be a member of this culture - and believed in it. I felt the importance of this world-view and maintained its traditions and customs.

I had become fluent in Arabic, including the regional Arabian Gulf dialect and the specific tribal dialect. Learning the language went beyond the meaning of words, which anyone could learn through attending Arabic language classes. I gained another soul, or consciousness, as I absorbed the language through social interaction in its original context. This essentially allowed me to understand the culture and move beyond a cognitive understanding to an emotional understanding as I felt part of the culture and became fully submerged in it. The Arabic language instilled in me implicit preferences, tastes, and even biases that were consistent with those of the members of my new culture.

7.6 LIVING IN OMAN

On a holiday in Oman for us to visit Australian friends, I was approached to work at a local university. Our holiday led to us living in Oman for two years. It was during this time that I realised that I had ‘gone native’. I fitted in, and nothing felt unusual. I was living the world-view which I had internalised while living as a member of my husband's family in a larger society. Over that two-year period, I became close to a large family in the village in the Batinah region who lived together in a family compound. This family belonged to a highly respected man who was at least 80 years old. He was the tribal leader of the area. He was well-known for solving social problems. He had four wives and 40 children—the oldest was in his late 50s and the youngest was a six-month-old baby.

I took part in many social gatherings, meals, and evening Ramadan feasts where the women of the family would gather in the courtyard around the fountain. This strong sense of collectivism did not surprise me, nor did many of the daughters' choices to marry men who lived close to their father’s compound.
I became part of the social fabric. I was cognitively and emotionally living the same sociocultural reality as everyone around me. Morning coffee and dates with the three older wives was a regular event. I became the social adviser and confidant for many of the sisters and daughters in the family. It was not unusual and was expected that I would give my opinion to older female members when deciding upon potential brides for their men.

I noticed differences in my expectations of reality at work in Oman. The university in which I worked was affiliated with an Australian university: processes and procedures seemed consistent with Australian practices. The Vice Chancellor behaved like an ultimate father figure. He received a lot of visitors and was expected to solve student problems when approached by family members. I witnessed a visit from two older men to the Vice Chancellor regarding the university's failing their sons for not sitting their engineering exams. The fathers were outraged at that because the sons were royal guards, protectors of the national identity. The university's act was dishonourable, as it was against national loyalty. The fathers believed that their sons, based on their social status, had the right to pass the exams, even though they knew that they had not sat the exam. Such experiences sparked the curiosity which led me to conduct this research.

A Vice Chancellor behaving like a father figure fits with ideas of traditional cultural norms extending into an organisational setting. Positive attitudes towards the workplace were prevalent in the interview data gathered for this thesis and the explanation for employees being unlikely to express disapproval of their managers and organisations was apparent in the behaviour of the Vice Chancellor and the university’s employees.
7.7 RETURNING TO AUSTRALIA AND BECOMING COMFORTABLY BICULTURAL

After two years in Oman, we returned to Australia. I was happy to be back, but I felt conflicted internally. I questioned whether I still belonged. I was making critical judgements about society that were consistent with an 'honour and shame' world-view. I belonged to two different worlds that were each a part of me. I was intentionally switching between my Arabic Muslim self and my Australian self, depending on the situation. With the Australian supermarket cashier, a teacher, or my family, I was an Australian; interacting with my Arabic hairdresser, an Arabic mother from the school, or my in-laws, I was an Arabic Muslim. As time went on and I re-entered university as a postgraduate student and later a PhD candidate, I felt myself internally negotiating my two cultures and moving towards an internal mid-point that balanced those cultures. My two cultural identities merged into an integrated bicultural identity where somehow internally my two different world views had come together to combine the different values within me making my personal identity one that sits between the two cultures. That is a point from which I can comfortably and with minimal conscious effort, take a step either side to function in either culture. I went from wearing a traditional ‘hijab’ scarf to a hat-like turban, which I felt better represented my bicultural identity.

I have noticed that I have less to say here about being bicultural than I had to say in earlier parts of the chapter where I was explaining the nature of the Arabian culture. What this suggests to me is that the experience of being bicultural is an experience which is for the person partly mysterious and not fully available to consciousness experience. Rather it has considerably more to do with what comes to seem like second nature to me - what comes to feel as if it's natural even though it is from another culture. This difficulty is because I am talking about what it feels like to be bi-cultural, but what it feels like has become so much a part of who I am that is not fully available for me to articulate. If we talk about people
becoming acculturated through immersion in culture, then becoming acculturated requires immersion. It therefore follows that the outcome will not be fully accessible to the conscious mind of that person.

During this early stage of reflection, I learned a lot. I began thinking about the differences that comprised my bicultural identity and considered what the collision and merger within me of these two different ways of being a person could reveal to me about myself. One new understanding that I learnt about myself related to my pursuit of higher education, a PhD and a subsequent academic career. I mentioned earlier feeling like a second class citizen. Experiencing that feeling from within the Arab honour and shame world-view is very different from experiencing it from within the Australian right and wrong world-view.

Arabian society includes factors which indicate social class; the Arab 'honour and shame' world-view in relation to external social judgement allows room for, and often forces, a person to take actions that elevate their social status. Taking action may remove feelings of shame and of being unworthy. This Arabian Muslim part of my self-concept allowed me to think differently about my place in society. My actions in attaining higher education could elevate my external position in society to a higher social class that would, in turn, shift my feelings of wrongdoing and of being less entitled by doing exactly that, becoming an honourable person in society. My understanding of shame and feeling like a second-class citizen within the 'honour shame' world-view played a part in my motivation to overcome obstacles associated with an Australian working-class world-view that left me feeling less entitled to complete a doctorate and to become an academic.

Being bicultural is a powerful advantage. A feature of being a member of a single culture is 'cultural blindness'. We may only see our own culture clearly when we experience something different, and we begin to compare and contrast. Being familiar with more than one culture
and alternative ways of seeing allowed me to stand back from my Anglo-Saxon culture and my Arabian-Muslim culture. I now question both to loosen their hold upon me.

**7.8 A BICULTURAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER**

Biculturalism makes my world-view a mixture of very difference cultures. I question the values and beliefs that are embedded deep within me. This greater sense of cultural metacognition enhances my ability to question and think about each culture; it gives me an understanding of and appreciation for the values and beliefs of others' cultures. This 'insider' position allows me to take advantage of my Arabian identity when conducting and analysing the data, for this thesis, and when identifying bias rooted in the culture.

Insider status that comes with my biculturalism provides legitimacy to my in-depth approach to qualitative inquiry: a qualitative researcher may be considered an instrument of data collection and interpretation in research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). As an insider, I have access to, and an in-depth understanding of, underlying cultural beliefs and local language. That access enables a shared knowledge of the normative rules, values, and beliefs of that culture. This supported my ability to gain access to, and to conduct interviews with, the research participants. I understand how to establish rapport and build trusting relationships. Understanding the meaning of cultural cues and body language, and fluency in the Arabic language, enabled me to use my perception and judgement, rather than the way a non-Arabic interviewer would direct the interviews and make different judgements about the interviewees.

This insider status enhanced my analysis of the data to arrive at a deep interpretation of the underlying cultural meaning of interviewees' accounts. In interpreting the data, I was guided by concepts from the literature, and because of my biculturalism I am better able to interpret interviewees' comments that departed from what the literature had led me to expect. I noticed
whether an interviewee said something that was not a good fit with the notion of a clash between traditional sociocultural values and contemporary workplace practices. This is something that a non-bicultural researcher conducting research outside of their culture would be less capable of doing.

In terms of identifying bias rooted in either culture, I have been able to recognise potential bias explicitly. For instance, in the early stages of conducting the literature review for this research, I recognised my feeling of wanting to reject the suggestion in the academic literature that Arabian Gulf culture was having a negative impact on organisational behaviour, performance, and development.

However, having observed something puzzling while working in Oman, and given my respect for Western business practice and research, I respected the literature because of my biculturalism. This essentially spurred my curiosity and commitment to conduct value-adding research in an under-researched area to achieve an in-depth understanding of the interaction between local traditional culture and theory-driven Western business ideology. Throughout this chapter, I have shared my prior experiences which have not only informed my understanding of Arabian Muslim culture but also led to me becoming a member of the Arabian Muslim culture and subsequently crafting my bicultural identity. In effect, I had already conducted ethnographic research as part of my life experiences before I entered the research field. I have confirmed my ability to conduct this research, and the significant and beneficial role that my bicultural identity played in the research process. I have credibility as an interpreter of the findings.

In Chapter Five, I explained that, surprisingly, given their expression of high regard for traditional culture, most of the interviewees made positive rather than negative comments about their workplaces. In Chapter Six, I presented an interpretation of these puzzling
comments. In Chapters Two and Three, I explained the many reasons to expect that the interviewees would make negative comments about the workplace within the context of the introduction of new workplace practices derived from Western thought and values. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I questioned whether there was a way of understanding what might have motivated interviewees to offer such positive comments. Was there a way of understanding that provides us with an intelligible and convincing interpretation of the seemingly paradoxical data, rather than a speculative interpretation?

In Chapter Six, I turned to theory about the nature of Middle Eastern culture, in particular, to theory which discusses the ways in which national culture shapes an individual's self-concept. I discovered an important distinction between cultures that shape either an 'ought-self' or an 'ideal-self'. This discovery aided an interpretation which explains why so many interviewees made such positive comments: the interaction between the cultural environment and the self-concept leaves individuals feeling that they ought to make positive comments. At this point, a question remained. Could it have been the case that as an interpreter I saw what I wanted to see, guided by the theory of which I am aware, rather than seeing through alternatives that might explain the data in a different way? Could it simply be a straightforward situation, where for reasons as yet not understood, the interviewees express positive attitudes towards the contemporary workplace? If an interpretation is guided by a particular theory of culture and the self-concept, that would increase the likelihood that we find a reading of the data that fits with the theory. Was there an additional way to increase confidence in the interpretation?

As detailed this chapter, the researcher’s experience in becoming bicultural, particularly in becoming a member of the Arabian Muslim culture, provided her with additional confidence, thus strengthening the credibility of her interpretations presented in Chapter Six, the findings chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this research suggest a rejection of the direct link between cultural values and employee attitudes due to the mediating role that the culturally inscribed self-concept plays in the relationship between cultural values and employee attitudes which surfaced in this research inquiry. The discovery of the role played by the culturally inscribed self-concept revealed intermediate socio-cognitive processes that explain how Omani employees, who hold their traditional culture in high regard, nevertheless report positive attitudes towards the Western-influenced contemporary workplace.

Interaction between the cultural environment and the self-concept produces a culturally inscribed ‘ought self’, with a chronic prevention self-regulatory focus. This type of socio-cognitive regulatory focus within the 'ought' self-concept leads to the act of apperception on the part of Omani employees: they frame Western workplace practices as Omani. Consequently, employees report positive attitudes towards their contemporary workplaces. The socio-cognitive regulatory focus within the 'ought' self-concept also enabled the organisational context to play a moderating role in the acceptance of new workplace practices which, in this case, acts to reinforce the outcome.

The idea that there is not a direct link between cultural values and employees' attitudes is significant in understanding what new work practices mean to Omani employees. Subsequently, that idea provided an answer in this crossvergent situation to the primary research question of: 'What is the relationship of Omani culture and employee attitudes towards the workplace?'. The researcher has brought to the surface a missing link in values-evolution theory. It is therefore necessary to explain further how the underlying processes of
the relationship between culture and workplace attitudes, presented within the explanatory framework of Chapter Six, can be integrated into a broader research model. Such a model would serve the wider purpose of capturing and displaying a better understanding of the value-evolution processes at play in crossvergent situations.

The researcher has, in effect, taken an approach which moved from the specific to the general in terms of analysis and interpretation, and in the contribution that the research findings make. The research approach identified and described context-specific elements of the phenomena under investigation. It moved to a broader understanding and explanation of the data to address the primary research question, while remaining context-specific, to illuminate the practical benefit of the findings. From there, through integrating the findings, the researcher moved to more general theoretical discoveries in order to develop a comprehensive research model with related propositions. The model development provides a wider benefit: it is transferable to other researchers, across different sociocultural contexts, who are exploring workplace attitudes and the ‘how’ of values evolution.

In this final chapter, the researcher presents and explains the construction of the ‘missing-link’ model of values evolution by taking into account the mediating role of the culturally inscribed self-concept, and the moderating role of organisational context in terms of potential values evolution. In doing so, the model reflects the research findings reported in Chapter Six, and offers a significant contribution to theory and practice.

The model serves as a guide for researchers who wish to investigate workplace attitudes in other crossvergent situations. Many countries observe the continued influx of Western-derived work practices and Western multinational enterprises in emerging economies, and in economies with traditional cultures and traditional workplace practices. In addition, the model can serve as a guide for scholars who wish to explore the underlying processes of
values evolution further, at a time when we are witnessing an alarming rise in the clash between traditional cultures and Western ideology. In particular, the model informs researchers, scholars, and practitioners of the need to pay attention to the culturally inscribed self-concept and the related self-regulatory focus when investigating, exploring, and trying to understand individuals’ responses and attitudes to crossvergent situations.

8.1 VALUES-EVOLUTION THEORY

The Ralston (2008) ground-breaking research advanced the study of cultural change and values evolution by revealing the significant ways in which sociocultural and business ideology influences interact to trigger the nature and degree of cultural-values evolution. His crossvergence theory of cultural-values evolution offers an alternative to cultural divergence (that is, remaining different), or cultural convergence (that is, becoming the same). Cultural-divergence theory tells us that “sociocultural influence is the driving force that will cause individuals from a society to retain the specific values system” (Ralston, 2008 p.29). Cultural convergence theory tells us that “technological influence is the catalyst that motivates individuals to develop a value system consistent with the technology of their society” (Ralston, 2008 p.29). Cultural crossvergence theory, however, advances upon this idea, by explaining that business ideology through its dynamic interaction with the sociocultural setting is “the driving force” which can accelerate the development of new and unique value systems in societies (Ralston, 2008 p.29).

The cultural crossvergence theory of values-evolution as reflected in Ralston et al. (2008) has explained a great deal about what occurs when traditional culture and contemporary technologies and business practices intersect. Thus far, however, it has not been able to provide an explanation for how the values-evolution process occurs at the individual level. Therefore, rather than relying on concepts such as a ‘catalyst’ and a ‘driving force’—which
have roots in the natural sciences of chemistry and physics—to explain values evolution, this research leaned on the human sciences to focus ‘meaning’: that is, the meaning of business ideologies and new technologies to the people who are experiencing them. In doing so, this research answered Ralston's call to dig “beneath the surface to understand the how, when and why of the values evolution process” (Ralston 2008, p. 38).

The researcher’s further exploration into what is involved in the values-evolution process has uncovered what business ideologies and new technologies mean to the people who are experiencing them. As a result, this deepens the current understanding of ‘how’ values evolution actually occurs, particularly in traditional monocultures facing crossvergent situations.

The following section of this chapter outlines the contribution to values-evolution theory made in the present research. It does this through its presentation and explanation of the components of the ‘missing-link’ model of values evolution. The model is explained with propositions that relate back to the relevant findings and literature discussed in the earlier chapters. The propositions sum up the theoretical and practical implications of the model.

8.2 MISSING LINK MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS

Throughout the explanation of the research findings, the researcher has shown that understanding the ‘how’ of values evolution requires understanding how the culturally inscribed self-concept determines the various ways in which new workplace practices are seen by people who are in the midst of change. In the case of Oman, employees have a positive attitude towards new workplace practices, but that attitude only reflects a potential, not an actual, evolution in values. The researcher considers that although the experience of working in new ways could eventually lead to a genuine shift towards the values embedded in those practices, it has definitely not happened to date. The linking role that the self plays in
values evolution has been missing from values-evolution theory. This is in the sense that although it has been mentioned by Ralston (2008), it has not been attended to fully. This research presents a missing-link model of values evolution, depicted in Figure 8.1.

The model accepts the fundamental principles of crossvergence theory. These can be summarised as stating that the introduction of new technologies and work practices to organisations in which employees hold traditional sociocultural values can lead to either convergence, divergence, or crossvergence by strengthening or weakening those values. However, the relationship between new practices and value shifts is mediated by the nature of the culturally inscribed self. In addition, identity cues within the organisation constitute a frame within which the meaning of workplace practices is seen. This thereby moderates the extent to which the ‘ought’ and the ‘ideal’ selves perceive new technologies and practices as agreeing with, or departing from, traditional sociocultural values.

**Figure 8.1: Missing-link Model of Values-evolution**
The sites at which traditional sociocultural values and beliefs intersect with new technologies and workplace practices are economies, organisations, and groups, but primarily the experience of that intersection occurs within individual selves; and the meaning that individuals find in their experiences is what determines their attitudes towards such changes. Consequently, if we want to understand how values evolution occurs, we need to understand the role that selves play in the values-evolution process and, conversely, we need to understand how cognition, perception, and self-regulation are guided by cultural-meaning systems.

Proposition 1: when new technologies and workplace practices that reflect Western values are introduced to organisations whose members adhere to traditional sociocultural values, the meaning of those technologies and practices will be experienced within, and perceived by, culturally shaped selves

The cultural-meaning systems that have the most impact on self-regulation are those which relate to what a person should be or what a person should become. Cultures which emphasise the importance of duties and responsibilities tend to produce members who regulate their own behaviour based upon beliefs about how they ought to behave. On the other hand, cultures which stress the importance of personal ambitions, dreams, and achievements tend to produce members who regulate their own behaviour based upon beliefs about what they ideally want to become. Ought selves value dutiful attitudes and behaviours; ideal selves value aspirational attitudes and behaviours.

Proposition 2: culturally shaped selves take the form of having either an ‘ought’ orientation or an ‘ideal’ orientation depending upon whether the background national culture and social context stress the importance of duties and responsibilities, or stress the importance of personal ambitions and dreams.
The Steger (2003) analysis of *inemuri* revealed the crucial role that self-enhancement plays in the meaning of, and the enactment of behaviour. At a practical level, *inemuri* is tolerated in classrooms, at work, and in parliament. This is partly because it provides compensation for excessively long working hours and shortened sleeping hours at home, but it also provides the further benefit of sending a positive message about the virtuousness and diligence of the napping person. What provides self-enhancement for an ideal possible self will differ from what provides self-enhancement for an ‘ought’ possible self.

*Proposition 3: ideal selves are likely to embrace new technologies and work practices that enable self-enhancement through personal growth and achievement*

What provides self-enhancement for an ‘ought’ possible self will differ from what provides self-enhancement for an ideal possible self. The researcher provided evidence that for the interviewees, the traditional sociocultural belief of *nasib*, and the values of *almakanuh alaijimaeih*, *al’aman*, and *altathamun alaijimaei*, in conjunction with embodying the felt imperatives of being an ‘ought’ self, mean that the behaviour of approving new workplace practices introduced to Omani organisations will provide self-enhancement for Omani employees.

*Proposition 4: ought selves are likely to accept new technologies and work practices that enable self-enhancement through behaviour that demonstrates loyalty and duty*

Organisations provide a contextual frame within which their members judge the meaning of workplace practices as being in accord with or departing from traditional sociocultural values. A contextual regulatory focus is cued by the individual’s environment; some organisations provide cues related to traditional sociocultural values which activate an ‘ought’ self; other organisations provide cues related to values that activate an ideal self. To the extent that multinational enterprises are identified by local employees as being ‘other’,
managers in those organisations face a greater challenge in providing a contextual frame within which those employees judge the meaning of workplace practices as being in accord with local traditional sociocultural values.

**Proposition 5:** identity cues within the organisation serve as a moderating perceptual frame. The more the organisational context is suggestive of traditional values, the more likely it is that employees will see new workplace practices as being in accordance with those values. The less the organisational context is suggestive of traditional values, the more likely it is that employees will see new workplace practices as departing from traditional values.

When employees regulate their attitudes and behaviour in relation to becoming ideal possible selves, they will approve of new technologies and work practices that provide opportunities for advancing towards personal ambitions and personal or professional development and growth. When employees regulate their attitudes and behaviour in relation to being ought possible selves, however, new technologies and work practices will not be accepted or rejected based upon whether they provide opportunities for advancement towards personal ambitions, and personal or professional development and growth. They will instead be accepted or rejected based upon whether the acceptance or rejection is seen as being something that a 'good' person should do. Consequently, expressions of positive attitudes towards new work practices does not constitute acceptance of the values embedded in those work practices.

**Proposition 6:** accepting new technologies and work practices will not be tantamount to values evolution, but it could eventually produce values evolution; as a consequence of engaging in those new work practices, over time employees may come
to understand and approve of the underlying values experientially and thereby move
towards genuine values evolution and the outcome of convergence or crossvergence

The missing-link model of values evolution reflects a deeper understanding of how values
evolution occurs - and why it does not always occur. Divergence theory provides us with the
straightforward observation that sometimes local traditional sociocultural values are stronger
than the values embedded in new technologies or work practices, and so those technologies
and practices are resisted. There is an ongoing divergence between the values of new
business ideology and traditional sociocultural values. That observation does not help us to
understand the processes which account for a gradual movement away from divergence and
towards crossvergence, or even convergence. Similarly, convergence theory does little more
than refer us to the observation that sometimes local traditional sociocultural values are
replaced by the values embedded in new technologies or work practices. It does not tell us
how that replacement occurs, or why it does not always occur, or only occurs slowly.

By placing the experience and culturally inscribed self in the middle of values-evolution
theory, the researcher has identified and explained the processes of evaluation and attitude
formation that are central to values evolution. In particular, she explained why expressed
attitudes of acceptance towards new work practices should not always be read as evidence of
values evolution. She explained how ongoing reverence for traditional sociocultural values
can be consistent with an apparent acceptance of new workplace practices. Perhaps of most
importance is the way that her explanation leaves open the possibility of an eventual shift in
values. This could be because the intermediate situation that she identified enables employees
to engage in new workplace practices, and, through that experience they may come to
understand and accept the values which underlie those practices.
Throughout writing this thesis, the researcher was keenly aware that the term ‘evolution’ is itself value-laden for many people. Referring to a shift from traditional sociocultural values as ‘values evolution’, could be taken to mean that contemporary Western business values are of a higher order and are ‘better than’ traditional values. This problem is compounded by the Stam et al. (2010) distinction between ought and ideal possible selves. The ideal self is characterised as growth and achievement-focused - a characterisation which aligns with contemporary Western values. The word ‘ideal’ unavoidably suggests ‘better than’, which then leaves the ‘ought’ self - which has been associated with Middle Eastern cultures as less than ideal, as ‘worse than’, and could understandably lead some readers to accuse the researcher of ethnocentrism.

The intention in using the term ‘values evolution’ is to refer to the notion of ‘fit for purpose’, rather than a movement towards a higher or better level. Nevertheless, the researcher considers that it may perhaps be better to remove the word ‘evolution’ entirely, and instead refer to ‘values adoption’. This is because the real challenge is to understand how the adoption of values that conflict with traditional sociocultural values arises.

8.3 PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

The findings of this research offer three significant contributions; one is a practical contribution which will benefit organisations and two are theoretical contributions which will advance cross-cultural organisational research.

In this research, the missing-link model of values evolution has significant implications for managers who seek to introduce new work practices which may conflict with local traditional sociocultural values. When the symbols of organisational identity strongly cue employee loyalty to the local sociocultural values, new work practices are more likely to be interpreted by employees as being in accord with those traditional values and are, therefore, more likely
to be accepted. In effect, managers and organisations have opportunities to frame the
meaning of new work practices in ways that suggest that those practices belong to the local
way of being a good organisation: one which has loyal and respectful employees. When
multinational enterprises are identified by local employees as being ‘other’, however,
managers face a greater challenge in providing a contextual frame within which their
employees judge the meaning of workplace practices as being in accord with local traditional
sociocultural values.

Nevertheless, even within a multinational enterprise, local symbols such as portraits of rulers,
historical artefacts, and emblems of local sporting clubs could be prominently displayed. In
addition, being a member of a self-managed work team could be framed as being a member
of a workplace family. Performance feedback that might otherwise be experienced as putting
an employee’s status at risk could be framed as being similar to parental advice. If such
framing makes it possible for employees to enact and engage in those new practices, it
becomes possible that, over time, genuine acceptance of, and enthusiasm for the values that
are intrinsic to those practices may be adopted.

The model, therefore, informs all practitioners and organisation types of the need to pay
attention to the apperception process when introducing and implementing new work
practices, and the background importance of culture as a shaper of that process. It informs
practitioners of the need to pay attention to the significance of the national sociocultural
identity when crafting the organisational identity to aid the apperception process.

In effect, the practical contribution of this research to the international business environment
has answered the secondary research question of: ‘what are the implications of that
relationship for the design of more effective Omani managerial practices?’ This answer was
achieved through providing heuristic guidelines for managers and organisations operating in
traditional societies. Managers could adopt those guidelines to frame the introduction of new management practices in organisations as being consistent with the traditional values of the society.

8.4 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

Two significant theoretical contributions come from the findings of this research.

8.4.1 Contribution to a better understanding of the role of the self-concept in the interplay between cultural values and workplace attitudes

In terms of cross-cultural theory, considerable attention has already been paid to the role of culture in socio-cognitive processes; there has been a suggestion of the interrelationship among the self, culture, and work practices in the cross-cultural management literature. But little attention has been given to the ways in which these components come together in operation to explain what underlies the interaction between cultural values and the self-concept adequately, and subsequently to explain their links to workplace attitudes.

The findings here have significant implications for future cross-cultural management research and theory. This is through its contribution to a better understanding of an intermediate process, which influences the interplay between cultural values and workplace attitudes, and the advancement of our understanding of the interrelationship between the self, culture, and work practices. The researcher has shown that exploring the interaction between cultural values and the self-concept at a more granular level is essential to provide an explanatory account of underlying socio-cognition processes linking the cultural inscribed self-concept to workplace attitudes. This discovery establishes the importance of investigating the role of the self-concept when studying the relationship between cultural values and employee attitudes.
8.4.2 Contribution to a better understanding of the ‘how’ of values-evolution theory

The missing-link model arrived at in this research of values evolution makes a significant theoretical contribution to values-evolution theory. By advancing our understanding of interrelationships among the self, culture, and work practices, and understanding the linking role of the self-concept between culture and work practices, this research has uncovered the self as the missing link in the values-evolution process (Ralston, 2008). The researcher showed that exploring how the culturally inscribed self-concept determines the ways in which new workplace practices are seen by people in the midst of change is essential, in order to provide an explanatory account of how the values-evolution process occurs. In effect, it has been revealed that the relationship between new practices and value shifts is mediated by the nature of the culturally inscribed self. This discovery contributes to future research by highlighting the central importance of investigating the processes of evaluation and attitude formation when researching the values-evolution process.

8.4 THESIS DISCUSSION AND OVERVIEW

This research began by exploring what the literature suggests about issues which may be arising in Gulf countries as a result of the intersection between the local traditional cultures and Western management practices. Given the Gulf region’s transitional stage of development, not surprisingly, dual sets of conflicting local traditional and Western values were recognised as a source of inconsistent organisational attitudes and behaviour (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). Some authors suggest that the developments in the economy, education, and global exposure have brought about some slow acceptance of contemporary organisational values (Abdalla and Al-Homoud, 2001). Nevertheless, the vast majority of the research literature indicates that Gulf organisations demonstrate poor adaptability to Western management practices, due to difficulties associated with Western cultural-value orientations.
being embedded in these practices (Rice, 2003; Common, 2011; Jones, 2007). There is a strong consensus in the literature that members of a traditional Middle Eastern culture, such as that of Oman, are likely to experience difficulty with management practices that reflect a different culture—in this case, Western culture. That consensus led the researcher to expect that negative employee attitudes towards these practices would exist.

However, the suggestion of some form of acceptance towards contemporary organisational values, as a result the new developments, left the researcher wondering whether such acceptance was reflective of an emerging shift in Gulf cultural values, or whether it was superficial and limited to workplace situations.

Consequently, the examination of employee attitudes towards the workplace in this thesis became, in effect, an investigation of the crossvergent situation that this region is facing. The region is at the intersection between stability of the traditional sociocultural values, and change brought about by the importation and application of Western management practices as a result of advances in globalisation, economy, business, education and technology. . The exploration of what is going on at this intersection revealed centrally important elements of Gulf State culture, and unexpected positive, rather than negative, attitudes towards the workplace. It uncovered what contemporary workplace practices mean to the members of traditional culture who experience them. The central contention was to deepen our current understanding of the subtle and dynamic relationship between the elements of the Gulf State of Oman’s culture on the one hand, and the attitudes of employees towards the contemporary workplace on the other, amidst this crossvergent situation.

This thesis has provided a thick contextualised description of, and explanation for the interplay between culture and workplace attitudes, paying close attention to the mediating role of the self-concept in understanding employee attitudes. The thesis explored the role of
culturally inscribed self-concept in understanding the ‘how’ of values evolution, and has provided a comprehensive model which integrates the research findings. The model was supplemented by six specific propositions concerning the implications of the model for researchers who want to advance our understanding of the values-evolution process further, and the meaning of individuals’ experiences of crossvergent situations.

8.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher acknowledges the argument that the sample size and qualitative sampling techniques of this research might throw doubt upon the generalizability of the data and findings (Creswell, 2009; Silverman 2015). However, she attempted to make the findings of her research generalizable by offering explanations which go beyond empirical evidence to give "wider resonance" (Mason 1996, p. 6; Gioia et al. 2012). Most importantly, this research developed an explanatory framework and model based on the qualitative data, which goes beyond the findings of this specific inquiry to contribute to theory and to enhance its applicability to other domains (Yin 2013). The researcher conducted in-depth interviews where rich data was collected to uncover deep meanings and understandings (Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Yin, 2013). This approach provided a thick description, which could allow other researchers to make an informed judgement about the generalizability of the research findings to their domains and situations (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln 2013). In addition, a systematic approach to the research design, data collection, and data analysis was taken to ensure the replicability of this research approach, and the validity and rigour of the findings (Gioia et al., 2012).

A follow-up study which involves interviews with a much larger number of employees, across a larger range of industries and organisational types, perhaps not just in Oman but across the Gulf region is something that this researcher will aspire to undertake. To explore
the scope of applicability and transferability of these findings further, future research should consider whether these findings are applicable in other cultural, professional, and situational domains. Some interesting areas have emerged from this research that could provide a focus for future theoretical exploration. For example other researchers could expand on this research by gathering interview data which includes employees of multinational enterprises as a means of comparing and contrasting the meaning-making processes across the differences between local and multinational organisations that are introducing new work practices, and which have the potential to conflict with traditional sociocultural values.

Another important expansion would be to conduct similar research in other crossvergent situations to discover the various ways in which culturally informed self-concepts lead to differing attitudes towards the workplace as a result of apperception. It would also be important to conduct research in other monocultures to discover whether there are other ways in which culturally informed self-concepts appear in expressed attitudes towards new workplace practices. Due to the importance of the culturally inscribed ‘ought’ self and its underlying prevention self-regulatory focus in explaining the positive attitudes of Omani employees towards the workplace in this inquiry, conducting research on whether there is a linear relationship between these positive attitudes and subsequent behaviour and performance is also worthy of exploration.

8.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

When the researcher began her quest to answer the question: 'What is the relationship between Omani culture and Omani employee attitudes towards workplace?' Her research motivation in asking the question was not only academic, but also a deep and personal curiosity she had regarding the collision between a traditional Middle Eastern culture which she had come to value and Western ways of doing business. She feels that at least part of that
curiosity has been satisfied, and also that the task of articulating her thoughts in thesis form has sharpened her capacity for cultural metacognition, which is a personal benefit that she had not expected. In spite of the hard work, long nights, and frequent headaches, she would now recommend engaging in PhD research and thesis writing to anyone who will listen.
REFERENCES


Lapadat, J. C., and Lindsay, A. C. (1999). ‘Transcription in Research and Practice: From
Standardization of Technique to Interpretive Positionings’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 5, pp. 64-86.


Popay, J., Rogers, A. and Williams, G. (1998). ‘Rationale and standards for the systematic review of qualitative literature in health services research’, *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 8, pp. 341-351.


Dear potential participant,

My name is Jessica Bellingham; I am a PhD Candidate at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. My research area involves the relationship between culture and workplace attitudes in the GCC region. I am very passionate about the GCC region, Oman in particular. I have a deep understanding of and appreciation for the culture, Islam and the Arabic language.

I would be delighted if you would participate in my PhD research. My research focus is concerned with ways in which Oman’s national culture can make a positive contribution to workplace attitudes. The research will involve face to face individual interviews. The interviews will explore the ways in which Omani culture has a shaping influence on people's experience of and attitudes toward their workplace.

In the near future I will be asking some of you, if you would be willing to participate in an interview. Your cooperation would be most helpful. The aim of my research is to provide information that will aid in the future development of Omani organisations. It would be much appreciated if you could join me in achieving this.

Thanking you in advance.

Kind Regards,

Jessica Bellingham

PhD Candidate
Graduate School of Business and Law
RMIT University
Building 13
405 Russell and Victoria Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Tel: +61405307267
Email: jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW 
AS PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Project Title: A Study of the Relationship between Culture and Workplace Attitudes in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States - the proposed participants will be employees in varying levels of employment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Investigators:
Jessica Bellingham, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au
Dr. Paul Gibson, Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au
Dr. Doug Thomson, Higher Degree Research Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted as part of PhD research with RMIT University. This information sheet provides you with an overview of the research project in plain language. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

This research is being conducted by Ms Jessica Bellingham, as a part of her PhD research at the Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University. Dr. Paul Gibson is the senior supervisor and Dr. Doug Thomson is the second supervisor for this project. The aim of this research is to explore and detail the characteristics of the culture of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state of Oman and their relationship with workplace motivation. This aim is to understand workplace attitudes from an Omani perspective so as to eventually construct a heuristic framework to guide more effective management. This research project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.
This research is focused on employees in varying levels of employment in the Sultanate of Oman. You have been approached with this invitation because you have been identified as fitting within this criterion. Identifying you or your organisation as a potential participant has been facilitated through the Consulate of the Sultanate of Oman in Melbourne, my fellow Omani PhD candidates at RMIT University, other research participants, or my personal networks in Oman such as former colleagues and local friends.

The primary research question being addressed is “what is the relationship between GCC culture and workplace attitudes, and what are the implications of that relationship for the design of more effective GCC managerial practices?” The individual interviews are intended to explore the ways in which Omani culture has a shaping influence on people's experience of, and attitudes toward, their workplace. The individual interviews will include 30 participants from the GCC state of Oman, half of these participants will be male and the other half female. Participants will be Omani nationals aged between 18-60 in varying types of employment (e.g. factory, administration and management).

You (the participant) will be asked to provide information in response to open-ended questions about your lifestyle in Oman, job, management practices, motivational techniques and strategies for improving management/ motivational practices. Each interview will take approximately 2 hours, and be audio-recorded with the consent of participants. Participants will be informed about the reasons for recording and may opt to switch the recorder off at any time.

There are no perceived risks outside your normal day-to-day activities. The only disadvantage is a loss of time but your participation will make a valuable contribution to this research. If you are unduly concerned about your responses to any of the interview questions or if you find participation in the project distressing, you should contact any one of the above investigators as soon as convenient. We will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up, if necessary. If you wish to make a complaint about your participation in this project please see the complaints box below and please follow the complaints procedure. It is likely that there will be no direct benefit to you as a participant apart from a free electronic report briefly summarising research findings upon request and after completion of the project. However your participation in this research will likely benefit organisations in Oman and the wider GCC region. This is because this research intends to provide outcomes that will assist the future development of organisations in Oman and GCC region.

Confidentiality and privacy will be strictly maintained during all stages of the research. No information you provide will be passed on to your organisation. Only codes or numbers will be used to represent participants and their organisations in reporting results, which will be
made public in the forms of thesis and papers published in journals or conferences. Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) a court order is produced, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. All electronic data will be stored on password secured university network systems. Hard copy data will be archived in the locked filing cabinet and locked office at Graduate School of Business and Law at RMIT University. The research data will be kept securely at RMIT for 5 years after publication, before being destroyed. Please note that due to the nature of data collection we will be requesting written informed consent from you.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. There are no penalties if you decide not to participate. As a participant, you have the right:

- to withdraw from participation at any time
- to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant; and
- to have any questions answered at any time.

If you have any questions or enquires regarding this project or your participation you can contact Jessica Bellingham, Tel: (+61 4) 05307267 Email: jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au, or Dr. Paul Gibson, Tel: (+61 3) 99250105 Email: paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au or Dr. Doug Thomson, Tel: (+61 3) 99250108 Email: doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

__________________________  ______________________  _______________________
Jessica Bellingham    Paul Gibson   Doug Thomson
PhD candidate,    Senior Lecturer  Senior Lecturer
RMIT University    RMIT University  RMIT University
jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au    paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au    doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au

If you have any complaints about your participation in this project please see the complaints procedure at

http://www.rmit.edu.au/research/human-research-ethics
CONSENT FORM FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWEES

Name of Participant (interviewee) __________________________________________

Project Title: A Study of the Relationship between Culture and Workplace Motivation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States.

Investigators:
Jessica Bellingham, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au
Dr. Paul Gibson, Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au
Dr. Doug Thomson, Higher Degree Research Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. Email: doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au

I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet

1. I agree to participate in the research project as described

2. I agree:
   - to be interviewed
   - that my voice will be audio recorded

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
   (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to me upon request. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant Consent

Participant: ___________________________ Date: _______________________
(Signature)
Appendix D: Ethics Approval

Notice of Approval

Date: 26 November 2013
Project Number: 15786
Project title: A Study of the Relationship between Culture and Workplace Motivation in the Gulf Cooperation Council States
Risk classification: Low Risk
Principal Investigator: Dr Paul Gibson
Student Investigator: Ms Jessica Bellingham
Other Investigators: Dr Doug Thomson
Project Approved: From: 26 November 2013 To: 4 March 2017

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of the principal investigator
   It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by BCHEAN. Approval is only valid while the investigator holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from BCHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment submit a request for amendment form to the BCHEAN secretary. This form is available on the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from BCHEAN.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify BCHEAN immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF must be distributed to all research participants, where relevant, and the consent form is to be retained and stored by the investigator. The PICF must contain the RMIT University logo and a complaints clause including the above project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. BCHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by BCHEAN at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Regards,

Professor Roslyn Russell
Chairperson
RMIT BCHEAN
Appendix E: Interview Question Guidelines

**Interview Guide:** Questions designed to explore the interface between culture and workplace attitudes while conducting semi-structured interviews

7. Would you please give me some information about yourself, e.g. education and professional background, age, religion, occupation, position and organisation?

8. What do you enjoy most about living in Oman?
9. What do you enjoy least about living in Oman?
10. In what ways are you proud to be Omani?
11. In what ways are you uncomfortable about being Omani?
13. Do you watch the news or TV shows? Which ones? English/Arabic
14. What is your favorite food?
15. What role does Islam play in your life, and has that changed over time in any way? Is it, for instance, different now to when you were a child, and when you were a teenager?
16. Where did you go to school and what did you learn there that has equipped you for the workplace? What do you wish you had learnt? Why
17. When you first started work, what surprised you?
18. When you first started work at your current workplace, what surprised you?
19. What do you like most about this organization?
20. What other organisations have you worked at?
21. What do you like most about your job?
22. What do you like most about your manager?
23. What do you do in your job?
24. Why are you doing this job?
25. Are there parts of the job you really do not like?
26. What are the most important job characteristics for you?
27. Is your job good for the country?
   a. Does that matter to you?
28. Now let us think about a scale from one to ten. One being a day where you have gone into work and it has been really unsatisfying and has left you feeling bad in
some way. Ten being a day where you have gone into work and you have felt great; this is a highly satisfying day at work?

b. Let’s start with a number one ranking day on the scale. What comes to mind?
c. Now tell me about a number ten ranking day?

d.

29. In your job who do you report to? Tell me about him/her?
e. What is it about him/her that……..

30. Have you reported to anyone else? What was that like?

31. Do you have some freedom to make your own decisions about your job? For instance…..
f. How do you feel about that? Why?

32. How do you feel about taking on responsibility at work?
g. Probing: Stressful, worrying-Why? OR Rewarding-Why?

33. Can you tell me about a time when you felt disheartened/ disappointed at work?

34. Can you tell me about a time when you felt enthusiastic/excited/passionate at work?

35. Can you tell me about a time when you felt a sense of achievement at work?

36. Can you tell me about a time when you felt a sense of satisfaction at work?

37. Can you tell me about a time when you felt something (e.g. task) was challenging?

38. Can you tell me about the friendships you have at work?

39. Is there anyone who you would not like to be friends with? Why

40. In what ways do you think your manager attempts to motivate you?

41. How effective do you find those attempts, and why do you find them effective / ineffective?

42. What do you think would be more important / more motivational, for you?

43. I would like to give you some scenarios

44. There are some managers who motivate employees with the idea of succeeding at their work and there are other managers who motivate employees or the idea of preventing failure within the organisation. Which type do you think would motivate you and why?

45. There are managers who hold lots of meetings and ask their staff to participate to decision making about their job/department/organisation and there are others who make the decisions and explain to staff how to follow those decisions. Which type of manager would you prefer and why?
46. In some workplaces employees are given a variety of tasks within their jobs to make their job interesting? What do you think of that?
47. Is there anything that I have not asked but you had hoped that I would?
48. Is there anything you want to clarify in more detail?
Appendix F: Arabic Invitation to Participate in an Interview/ Participant Information Form

General Information

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of digital technology on the learning outcomes of students.

We are looking for participants who are willing to share their experiences with us.

If you are interested, please fill out the attached form and return it to us.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Fadhil Mohammed Abdullah Al-Rubai’ey
Certified Translator
и يوجد أي مشكلة في ذلك. فعندما يكون هناك منظور، يمكن إعداده ويبدأ الاحتكار على أساس الممارسة الشخصية أو إذا واجب
المشاركة في مشروع البحث. أما نقص مكاسب مشتركة في هذا المشروع، ودفع مكونًا منístico بالنسبة للشريك.
فإن المراجع لا يكون هناك أي فائدة مباشرة للبحث مترشحًا، وهو يؤكد أن النتائج تأتي عند الطلب بعد استكمال المشروع.
ومن ذلك فإن المشاركون في هذا البحث الآكدياني سوف يتخذوا دورًا في منصات دولة مجلس التعاون الخليجي. ولأن هذا البحث يعتمد منهج البحوث الساز على مستقبل تطوير المؤسسات
في عمان وروابط دولة مجلس التعاون الخليجي.
سوف يتم المحافظة على سرية المعلومات والتعامل معها بصرامة في كل مراحل البحث. لن يتم تمرير أي معلومات تتلنى بها إلى
المؤسسة. فقط من خلال أرقام أو رموز يتم استخدامها لتثبيت المشاركات وتسجيلها في تقدير النتائج والدور سوف يتم
نشره في جميع هذا البحث. كما سيكون مطلاع في الجرائد أو المؤتمرات. وأي معلومات تتقاسمها يمكن أن تكشف عنها فقط إذا
(1) لم يخصص أو حساب الآخرين. (2) يتم إصدار أمر قضائي أو (3) تدفق للمؤسسات لحل المسألة.
جميع البيانات الإلكترونية يتم تخزينها على شبكة معلومات بالجامعة ممهوطة بكلمة "سر". ويتم حفظ نسخة الأوراق في خزانة
حفظ مغطاة مع مكتبة من كل صنف على كل المؤسسات العليا لإدارة الأعمال في جامعة ربيت. ويتم حفظ بيانات البحث في
سيرة تامة لمدة خمس سنوات بعد النشر وقبل إفراشها. يرجى ملاحظة أنه نظرًا لأن نظافة البيانات التي تم تصميمها سوف يتم
طلبه موثوق حفيدًا من زعيم بيروي.

Fadil Mohammed Abdullah Al-Rubai'ey
Certified Translator
إن شاركتكم في هذا البحث هي أمر اختياري بالكامل. فلنفرض عليه عوامل إذا قررت عدم المشاركة وبوصفك شارك.

تشديد الحق في:

- الانسحاب من المشاركة في أي وقت.
- استعداد أي بيانات لم يتم التعامل معها أو عناها ويمكن تجديدها على نحو موثوق. وتحاول بالطريقة التي لا تزيد من مخاطر.
- إن كان لديك أي استفسارات يمكن الرد عليه في أي وقت.

إن كان لديك أي استفسارات أو تساؤلات بخصوص هذا المشروع أو بخصوص شاركتك يمكن الاتصال بالفاضلة جيسيكا بيلنجهام على هاتف رقم (03) 9215 1616 + البريد الإلكتروني (jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au) بالدكتور بول جيبرسون على هاتف رقم (03) 9926 0100 + البريد الإلكتروني (paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au) أو الاتصال (doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au) بالدكتور دوج تومسون على هاتف رقم (03) 9926 0108 + البريد الإلكتروني.

المختصين

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>دوج تومسون</th>
<th>بول جيبرسون</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>محاضر أول</td>
<td>محاضر أول</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>جامعة رميت</td>
<td>جامعة رميت</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>بريد الكتروني: <a href="mailto:doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au">doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
<td>بريد الكتروني: <a href="mailto:paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au">paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>بريد الكتروني: <a href="mailto:jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au">jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

إن كان لديك أي شكاوى حول شاركتك في هذا المشروع يرجى مراجعة إجراءات الشكاوى على الموقع الإلكتروني:

http://www.rmit.edu.au/research/human-research-ethics

Fadhal Mohammed Abdullah Al-Rubai’ey
Certified Translator

www.abqrienghid350.com موقع: abqrianghid@hotmail.com 9851304589-98884854-2683451282 تم ترجمة هذه المقالة بحثاً عامياً حقوق النشر رئيسية في المجلة في مكتب الترجمة ووزير الترجمة في المشروع. © 2010 مكتبة عامة روضة الفكر بلاد شرقية LG
نموزج إقرار للمقابلات الشخصية

اسم المشاركة: دراسة العلاقة بين الثقافة ومكان العمل في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي

الباحثين:
جيسكا بيلينغهام: مرشحة للدكتوراه - كلية الدراسات العليا لإدارة الأعمال والقانون - جامعة رميت
jessica.bellingham@rmit.edu.au

جيمس بول جيبسون: محاضر أول - كلية الدراسات العليا لإدارة الأعمال والقانون - جامعة رميت
paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au

دكتور دوغ تومسون: منصق درجة بحث دراسات عليا ومحاضر أول في كلية الدراسات العليا لإدارة الأعمال والقانون - جامعة رميت
doug.thomson@rmit.edu.au

أقر أنا بأنه قد تم شرح المشروع لي ولقد قرأت وفهمت صيغة المعلومات:

- أوافق على المشاركة في مشروع البحث كما هو موضح

(1) قد قدمت بك معلومات هو أمر اختياري ولي تفهم المخاطر في الانسحاب من المشروع في أي وقت وسحب أي بيانات سبق تقديمها ولم يتم معالجتها (لم تتلقى من الضرر أو السلمة) أو
(ب) المشروع هو هل تؤثر البحث العلمي. وقد لا تؤثر فيه بشكل مباشر.
(2) الخصوصية المعلومات الشخصية التي قد تثبتها سوف تكون محفوفة، وتمتلكها فقط بناء على موافقتك على الكشف أو
(2) أقصي للمؤلف
(3) لتلبية مراقبة معلومات البحث علاجات الإخلاصة من الدراسة. وقد تنشر البيانات التي تم جمعها خلال الدراسة
ومن الممكن الحصول على تقرير بنتائج المشروع بناء على طلب.

فاضل بن محمد بن عبد الله الربيعي
مترجم معتمد

Fadhil Mohammed Abdullah Al-Rubai’ey
Certified Translator

www.abqriengflzl350.com; abqriengflzl@hotmail.com
98513513-58-58894854; 2684625252; 098513513-58-58894854

المؤلف

جامعة رميت

اريخ
“Wasta” is an Arabic word that literally means connection. The practice of Wasta is using a connection to get something done that would be otherwise unattainable, or difficult to attain. The connection is with a person with the means to perform the favour being asked of them. The concept of Wasta comes from Bedouin tribal culture and heritage. There, performing favours (particularly for the tribe and in groups) is expected, shows generosity, and promotes the status of the person performing the favour. An example of Wasta is when a family or tribe member asks a fellow family or tribe member who is an employee of an organisation to obtain employment for a relative in the organisation, even though the relative may not necessarily be the best person for the position.