# Multiple Third Spaces and
# Spirals of Organizational Dysfunction

## an analysis of the interaction of
## cultures and micropolitics
## in a military English language school
## in the Middle East

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# Abstract

Utilizing an ethnographic case study approach, this thesis reports an investigation into the interaction of cultures and micropolitics in a military English language school in the Middle East.

The research identified a number of 'large' cultures. It is shown these large cultures interacted with, influenced and permeated the school organization. The evidence indicates there were multiple, divergent organizational cultures rather than a single, holistic school culture. The research also shows how such cultural forces may be in conflict with teacher perceptions of what constitutes an effective learning environment. Furthermore, these overlapping cultures, sometimes complementary but often competing and conflicting, created multiple *organizational third spaces* which, in turn, afforded opportunities for micropolitical activity.

The research considers a number of incidents and the micropolitical processes which occurred during the six-month study. The findings indicate the application of 'non-legitimate' institutional power may lead to staff resentment and resistance. In addition, as the power relationship between management and staff is asymmetrical, it is shown such resistance is likely to be non-confrontational and 'off-kilter'. Staff resorted to a range of micropolitical strategies, including humour, to subvert the formal power structure. The model derived from the study, *spirals of organizational dysfunction*, is a means of explaining and understanding the organizational interaction in its various forms of oppression and resistance.

The study addresses a number of methodological issues arising from the investigation into the micropolitics of a small culture. It is shown the role of the *observant participant* affords unique insight yet raises ethical issues. Finally, the study indicates possible directions for future research.

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**Key Words**

cultures, micropolitics, third spaces, educational organization

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

The study began as an ethnographic investigation of the organizational culture of an English Language school in the Middle East. With the arrival of a new Commanding Officer in the school, the nascent study rapidly became engrossed in an investigation into the micropolitical processes at work. The interaction of culture, power and micropolitics drove the study forward, leading to an attempt to account for the events and processes that occurred.

## 1.2 Significant issues

The study addresses a number of issues, substantive and methodological, many of which have not been explored in detail in the published literature. The research indicates overlapping cultures generate *multiple third spaces* and such spaces are bounded with *fuzzy edges*. It is shown that organizational third spaces may be a source of misunderstanding and confusion and, at the same time, facilitate a wealth of micropolitical activity as organizational members seek to manipulate power and relationships to achieve particular aims.

The research attempts to understand the various processes taking place in the school during a period characterised by many teachers as a time of increasing conflict and dysfunction. The study offers a tentative model to account for the events that occurred in the school. The model, *spirals of organizational dysfunction*, illustrates organizational conflict enacted through overlapping spirals of oppression and resistance.

Methodological issues include a discussion of the role of researcher as *observant participant*. It is shown that the role of the observant participant, rather than *participant observer*, affords dynamic access and immersion yet raises serious ethical questions. Other methodological innovations include *synchronized online text-based interviewing* as a means of data collection, and

the introduction of the concepts of *pixellation* and *researcher distance* as key elements in the holistic analysis and synthesis of data.

## 1.3 Challenges

The organization is complex and any investigation presents significant challenges. The formal and informal organizational structures, various ethnic and national cultures, professional teaching and corporate and military cultures come together in a tangled and confusing web of micropolitical intrigue. Both culture and micropolitics are difficult and demanding areas of research; indeed, such research is not without personal risk.

Although the complexity and sensitivities of the situation were a source of rich data, the researcher, albeit as an organizational *insider*, was constrained by factors including access, ethnicity, trust and institutional position. At the same time, the researcher's culturally fixed perspective had to be balanced with an account that allowed participants' voices to be heard and their opinions and ideas valued. Such constraints on the researcher posed an additional challenge in terms of interpretation, trustworthiness and transparency.

It is shown that the notion of *insidership* is a complex construct as all participants, including the researcher, were involved in the day-to-day negotiation and re-negotiation of multiple identities and memberships across a range of cultural and micropolitical groups.

## 1.4 Description of the school

The research setting is introduced early in the study as an understanding of the school, the program and the dramatis personae permits the reader to situate the research design and contextualize the research questions. This description introduces the military structure, officer-managers and cadet-students; the corporate structure; the teaching program and the teachers; and the ethnic and cultural diversity of the staff. Security, rather than ethics, constrains much of the detail, for example staff and student numbers.

The school is a part of a larger military training college situated in a conservative Arab country henceforth referred to as Arabia. The mission of the school is "to provide English Language training in a disciplined environment to enable students to follow further academic and technical training" (taken from the school mission statement).

The school comprises two two-storey buildings, each built around a central courtyard. Staff must produce IDs to enter the college. Gates are manned by uniformed armed guards and vehicles are often searched entering and leaving.

At the time of the study there were frequent shortages of consumables, including pencils, exercise books, overhead projector transparencies and whiteboard markers. Such items were often purchased by teachers. Classrooms were equipped in a basic fashion. There were a few OHPs which were shared amongst the teachers. Despite the lack of technology in the classrooms, the school had a number of relatively sophisticated language and computer laboratories. The situation with regard to school maintenance has continued to deteriorate; at the time of the study there was no air-conditioning for much of the time. Not even a faint hot breeze was possible as windows were riveted closed for security reasons. Emergency exits were kept locked for the same reason.

There was a large organization chart, in English, at the entrance of the school. It showed a Commanding Officer (CO) and five sections reporting to him. An officer is in charge of each section. None of the officers has experience or qualifications in teaching English. The sections include Teaching, Testing, Course Development, Teacher Evaluation and Cadet Discipline. Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) support the officers in charge of each of these sections. School military staff are Arabian.

The male teaching staff are employed by an international company henceforth referred to as the Company. The Company is contracted to provide teachers, expatriate and local, to the Arabian military. Contractor staff do not appear on the school's organization chart. The Company teachers and supervisors

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include Arabians, Arab expatriates (mainly Egyptian) and Western expatriates (mainly British) who form the majority. Contractor staff include Arabian religion and cultural affairs instructors. Teaching staff wear a 'uniform' provided by the contractor while imams wear local dress: a thobe and gutra. There is no staff representation in the form of unions or teacher committees.

Western expatriates are generally accommodated on company compounds whereas Arabian and Arab staff are given a housing allowance. For a number of reasons, there is little social interaction between Western and Arabian teachers outside of work. Reasons for this include restricted access to compounds and Arabian tradition which does not permit the mixing of men and women.

There were four staffrooms – two in each building. These were inevitably crowded during breaks. There was a serious lack of preparation and personal storage space. In staffrooms teachers tended to cluster in their own ethnic groups but, anecdotally and from personal experience, relations between teachers were generally friendly, helpful and good-natured – a view corroborated by Nasser, the specialist informant (a position which is discussed below). On the other hand, there were over fifteen offices. Each office was usually allocated to a single occupant.

The students, who are termed cadets, wear military uniform. They live, ten or twelve to a room, in large barrack blocks with similar maintenance problems. They have a demanding daily regime. Cadets constantly report they do not have enough sleep. With the approach of summer and the time of first prayer moving forward, cadets are woken as early as 02:30. Cadets are drilled on a parade ground prior to coming to school. The school day starts at 05:15.

The program requires cadets to successfully complete all books of the course. The course was written in-house under strict military supervision. Cadets may be given up to four attempts at each book test. At the time of the study there was no selection procedure other than a school grade and a medical.

Immediately prior to the arrival of the new Commanding Officer (CO), the number of students in the program more than doubled. Teacher contact and class sizes increased significantly.

The researcher is a Western expatriate. At the time of the study he had held the position of Director of Studies for a number of years. As such he was functionally responsible to the Commanding Officer for the company's and the teachers' performance. He was also responsible to the company training manager. The implications of his cultural and organizational position with regard to the research are significant and are discussed in Chapter Three.

## 1.5 Overview of the study

### 1.5.1 Chapter two: Literature review

This chapter reflects the three intersecting and overlapping areas of referenced research: culture, organization and power. Part one of the chapter considers the concept of culture. The literature is gathered under sub-headings of Arabian and Western cultures; professional TESOL culture; military culture; and corporate culture. Part two reviews literature pertinent to organizations and organizational cultures. Part three reviews literature related to organizational power structures, political models and micropolitics. Aspects of micropolitics such as interest groups, conflict, bargaining and negotiation, legitimacy and compliance, and resistance are considered. Gaps in the published research are identified.

### 1.5.2 Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter details the research design and methodology used in the study and presents and discusses the key research questions:

What cultures influence and define the school organization?
What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bounded by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?
What kind of model can be constructed to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place?

After briefly considering the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher investigates various approaches to ethnographic case study. It is shown the research methods are driven by the research questions. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are considered. Problematic issues such as the nature of *insidership* and *participant observation* are examined and the concept of *observant participation* is proposed.

The methods of data collection are described in the chapter including observation (field notes), interviews, documentary sources and study group discussions. Research interviews were mainly conducted online; some asynchronous (email) while others utilized Microsoft Messenger and were conducted in real-time, ie synchronous communication. The researcher was also a member of a study group where research issues were discussed. The group members contributed stories and data to the research; one becoming a *specialist informant*. The role and function of the specialist informant as collaborator is discussed. Finally the chapter considers the processes of analysis and synthesis, and addresses issues regarding trustworthiness and ethics.

### 1.5.3 Chapter four: Findings

The first part of the chapter, 'Cultural confusion, competition and conflict', reports and considers the data gathered largely from interviews and the study group. The data is presented thematically and is organized under headings taken from the Literature Review chapter, namely, Arabian and Western cultures, the professional TESOL culture, the military culture, corporate culture and organizational culture. The data is contextualized and linked to the research purposes laid out in the research design. In the second part of the chapter data is presented regarding the micropolitical processes which occurred in the school.

### 1.5.4 Chapter five: Analysis, Synthesis and Discussion

In an attempt to answer the first research question with regard to the 'cultures' which influenced and defined the school organization the findings are compared and contrasted with the referenced literature. An analysis of the

various interacting cultures in the school supports the proposition that this organization was characterized by *multiple third spaces*. This perception contrasts sharply with the publicly displayed and neatly delineated corporate and military hierarchies.

To answer the second question with regard to the incidents and micropolitical processes which occurred in the school the findings are scrutinized in terms of their micropolitical significance. The data, referenced to the literature, indicate the exercise and manipulation of power was a significant feature of the organization. It is shown that individuals and groups, even those who are 'organizationally disenfranchised', resisted the formal power structure in a number of ways. This led to spirals of oppression and resistance. It is suggested the presence of organizational third spaces contributed to misunderstandings and confusion, and provided pathways and opportunities which facilitated micropolitical activity.

To answer the third research question with regard to the kind of model which may be constructed to show the incidents and micropolitical processes that had taken place, the *spirals of organization dysfunction* model is proposed. This model is offered as a means of conceptualizing how authority may proceed through *control* > *command* > *coercion* and, in response, staff may resort to strategies of *resentment* > *resistance* > *rebellion*. Such spirals are not distinct stages; rather they offer a means of illustrating a fuzzy, stuttering process of polarization where, in micropolitical terms, one party becomes increasingly authoritarian and the other increasingly resistant.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research methods, including *observant participation*, trustworthiness and ethics.

### 1.5.5 Chapter six: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the basic points and reviews the argument, showing how the original research purposes have been met. Original contributions to the field are summarized and evaluated. Consideration is made as to whether

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the study has addressed the identified gaps in the literature and to what degree the research questions have been answered. The limitations of the study and issues of trustworthiness are revisited. The researcher considers the ethical implications of the research, especially with regard to insider research. The chapter suggests possible directions for future research.

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

As the literature is large and diverse, the research questions necessarily focus and frame this review. As the literature reveals, the themes of culture, organization and micropolitics are closely interwoven and, as will be argued, inseparable. The literature review is presented in three sections:

'*Culture and cultures*' discusses the issues involved in defining culture and *large* cultures, such as Arabian and Western, military, TESOL and corporate.

'*Organizations and organizational cultures*' includes a discussion of organizational cultures and models of educational organizations.

'*Power and micropolitics*' considers formal and informal dimensions of power, especially with regard to the interaction of power, cultures and organization.

## 2.2 Culture and cultures

The many definitions of culture in the literature indicate the complex issues involved. Linton (1945) referred to the sum total of the knowledge, attitudes, habitual behaviour patterns shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society. Nida (1954: 28) defined culture as "all learned behaviour that is socially acquired". Goodenough (1964) stated culture is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. Dimen-Schein (1977) talks of intangible symbols, rules and values. Yang (1992) and Lieberman (1994) refer to the 'not always obvious' rules, meanings and beliefs. Kramsch (1998: 4) opines, culture refers to "what has been grown and groomed". Levine and Adelman (1993) use an iceberg metaphor: language, food and appearance being visible above the water line and communication style, beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions below.

Triandis (1993: 219) states culture is "a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival". Significantly, culture is not necessarily efficient or rational; Kluckhohn and

Kelly (1945: 78) define culture as "all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and non-rational". Furthermore, as Becker notes, culture may fossilize once patterns have been established and "other ways of achieving the same end, which might be just as satisfactory to everyone involved, [become] correspondingly less likely" (1982: 524).

Implicit cultural features are not manifest except through the actions and communications of the group. Hofstede (1994: 5) states implicit cultural features comprise "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another." Giddens (1979, 1990) offers a sociocognitive perspective arguing it is only through the interaction of 'culture in the head' and 'culture in the world' that cultures can truly be said to come into existence. Shore (1996: 5) refers to "an ethnographic conception of the mind".

Culture is concerned with difference, for example, a *large culture* approach focuses on "what makes cultures, which everyone acknowledges as existing, essentially different to each other" (Holliday 1999: 240). Even when cultures share the same ideas, there may remain deep differences as each culture has a different starting position, "each culture attributes different importance and meanings to the same ideas" (Dimmock 2002: 33). Culture is relative as different cultures perceive the world in different ways (Hoecklin 1994).

Several writers have attempted to show how culture differentiates social groups. Hofstede (1991, 1994) developed five (originally four) bipolar dimensions for describing cultural differences: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity / Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Long-term versus Short-term Orientation. Dimmock and Walker (2002: 73) formulated a set of seven dimensions which "provide a common baseline against which cultural characteristics at the societal level can be described, gauged and compared": power-distributed / power-concentrated; group-oriented / self-oriented;

consideration / aggression; proactivism / fatalism; generative / replicative, limited relationship / holistic relationship; and male influence / female influence. They contend these seven dimensions of culture "represent salient characteristic values underpinning societies [and] are present in every culture, but to different degrees – hence their expression in terms of a range or continuum" (ibid: 76).

The literature suggests Asian and Arabian cultures are group-oriented and collectivist, focusing on the maintenance of relationships, whereas Western cultures tend to be individualist, focusing on task achievement (Hofstede 1991; McAdams 1993; Cheng 1998; Dimmock and Walker 2002; Al-Rasheed 2004). Of particular relevance to this study are issues of status, respect and power (Hofstede 1991; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997). What may be acceptable in one culture, for example, a centralized and asymmetrical power structure, is frequently resented in another. The implications of this are discussed later in the study.

However, while Hofstede (1994) and Dimmock and Walker (2002) offer valuable insights into comparative culture, it is suggested they do not adequately address issues where cultures overlap, collide and interact. It is likely the consistency observed in single cultures will be modified in third spaces (Bhabha 1994).

It is evident there is no single perspective with regard to culture. As Gudykunst and Nishida (1989: 40) point out, all too often theories "glibly assume universality over time, situation and cultures". Indeed, recent postmodern commentators have challenged many of these assumptions to the point that "the term *culture* is sometimes avoided by those working in this vein as one that is so encumbered and compromised as to be misleading or dangerous" (Atkinson 1999: 627). In addition, Dimmock and Walker (2002: 81) point out, "economic, political, religious factors, for example, may also play a key role, and their relationship to culture is equivocal". Arguably religion, regardless of perceptions of immutability, is a dimension of culture.

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## 2.2.1 Middle cultures and third spaces

Cultures influence each other. Graddol (1997) emphasizing the dynamic and permeable nature of culture, writes of 'culture flow' as cultures overlap and mingle; Holliday (1999: 239) refers to a 'middle culture' and Kramsch (1993: 235) writes of a 'third culture' where people travel between or experience two cultures. At the same time, Fiske (1989) in Kramsch (1993:24), contends culture is "a confrontation between groups occupying different, sometimes opposing positions in the map of social relations, and ... is a social struggle, as different groups struggle to establish meanings that serve their interests." To Huntington (1996) culture is intrinsically linked to power. Holliday (2002: 152) considers, where cultures meet, there arises a "culture of dealing ... a dangerous arena. The dealing itself will inevitably involve each side in projecting their own preoccupations, agendas, images of the world and insecurities on to the other." Such definitions of culture embrace struggle, conflict and politics.

Taking a post-colonial perspective, Bhabha (1994, 1996) referred to this locus, where cultures meet, as *the cultural in-between*. He developed his concept of *third space* and *hybridity* from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity. To Bhabha the third space is a form of liminal or in-between space within which a new hybrid identity emerges from the interweaving of elements of the coloniser and colonised. Bhabha (1996: 58) proposed "the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity." Bhabha (1994: 1) contends the third space, regardless of contradictions and ambiguities, initiates "new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation", blurring existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity. As Holliday (2005b) comments, "Third spaces are a common phenomenon in social life, in a world increasingly difficult to define in terms of distinct cultures, where we daily move and negotiate between a multiplicity of cultural and discoursal spaces, in a multitude of settings" (notes taken in lecture).

Drawing on historical and post-colonial examples, Butz and Ripmeester (1999 online) argue the deliberate construction of third spaces is a strategy particularly amenable to the circumstances of the radically disempowered; those condemned to the agonal struggle (Foucault 1980) not to win, but merely to fight another day. They argue if the third space is a space of ambivalence, continually fragmented, fractured, incomplete, and uncertain then it is also, perhaps, a space commensurate with continuous and opportunistic resistance, focused on opportunities to exploit the ambiguities of power.

In summary, culture may be considered a system of human-made, learned and shared, values and beliefs which will be only partially accessible to an outsider. Culture is how members of a particular society perceive the world around them and how, in turn, this collective perception helps to bind the societal membership closer. Such cultural values may be rational, non-rational or irrational; members may be unaware of these deeply held values because they are likely to be *taken for granted*. Furthermore, third spaces arise when cultures overlap and connect. Such spaces provide opportunities which may lead to consensual social harmony or conflict and resistance.

## 2.2.2 Arabian and Western cultures

In this study Arabia and Arabian refer to the particular country in the Middle East where the school is located. Arab is a term reserved for other Middle Eastern countries.

Although 'real' differences (Holliday 1999) are perceived to exist between large Arab and Western cultures, any discussion should be approached with caution as perceptions of difference may contribute to a sense of mutual alienation and otherization. In a controversial paper, Huntington (1993 online) paints a bleak picture, referring *inter alia* to Islam and the West, "the most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another". Although Said (2001 online), challenged the use of "unedifying labels like Islam and the West: they mislead and confuse the mind which is trying to make sense of a disorderly reality that

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won't be pigeonholed or strapped down as easily as all that" (see also Lewis 1998), to some observers world events have vindicated Huntington's predictions.

Over thirty years ago, Patai (1973: 313) wrote of the anti-western nature of much of the Arab world, especially following the rise of Arab nationalism "the West assumed for the Arab mind the character of a sinister jinni, a hateful enemy and a convenient whipping-boy". As Scheuer (2004, 2005) has pointed out, recent events such as the attack on the Twin Towers, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and US support of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land have exacerbated perceptions. US and, by alliance and association, UK foreign policy have generated considerable anti-Western sentiment. At the same time, Western perceptions of the Arab world have changed from exotic (Lawrence 1922; Philby 1946; Thesiger 1959) to threatening; a concordancing of 'Islamic' and 'Arab' in any Western media reveals terror, kidnapping, and murder. Arab and Islamic stereotypes are frequently portrayed negatively in Western popular culture (Shaheen 1997). Islamic charity, tolerance, architecture and literature are rarely found. Furthermore, any researcher who writes of the 'real' differences between these cultures treads in the long shadow of the crusades.

Arabian culture is generally recognized as conservative. Patently, an understanding of Arabian culture is not simply a matter of acknowledging it is different because pork and alcohol are banned. The outsider is faced with an austere ethnocentricity; perhaps more than any other country, religion influences the national culture. Arabians would dispute the notion that culture is socially constructed and mutable; they consider their culture to be God-given, ordained and immutable. In a booklet issued to expatriate employees, Al Akkas (1990: 02) encapsulates these beliefs, stating "Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life. ... The whole land is a *masjid* (mosque) ... the whole of Arabia as a sacred place because Arabia was the cradle of Islam from which its light spread." Gardner (2000 online) writes, what is so striking about Arabia is that "it has clung tightly to its traditions." Arabians remain

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proud of their Bedouin heritage. Patai (1973) elucidates three core Bedu values, namely *wajh*, *wasta* and *qisma*, which underlie this inheritance.

## Wajh

> *Wajh* is associated with notions of 'face', although expressions like 'loss of face' or 'face-saving' give only a partial indication of the meaning. Patai states, "There is considerable difference between the intensity with which the concept of 'face' affects the thinking and the conduct of people in the West and in the Arab world. ... The difference is so great as to amount to one in kind" (ibid: 102). The Bedu ethos of *wajh* comprises concepts of honour, self-respect, face and shame (not associated with 'guilt'). "Physical discomfort, even danger, will be accepted readily if necessary to prevent loss of face" (ibid: 105).

## Wasta

> *Wasta* is a form of obligation to one's kith and kin. Al-Faleh, (1987: 20) writes, "Nepotism is regarded as natural and acceptable. Arab managers view their organizations as family units and often assume paternal control in them. They value loyalty over efficiency." Familial and tribal loyalty invariably takes precedence.

## Qisma

> *Qisma* is associated with the concept of 'fate'. Patai (1973: 153) writes that it "endows the Arab with a calm and equanimity in the face of adversity ... on the other hand, it engenders an attitude of passivity and of disinclination to undertake efforts to change or improve things." Indeed, Al Nimir and Palmer (1982: 102) argue there is an "absence of a strong sense of achievement motivation within [Arabian] society itself".

Customs and traditions are not necessarily compatible with religion; for example, although Arabians agree *wasta* is not Islamic (Al Maeena 2001), in general they accept *wasta* as unavoidable. To a great extent, their Bedu inheritance distinguishes Arabians from other Arabs and other Muslims. These values partially account for Al Olaiyan's findings (2000: 34) that

Arabians view themselves as friendly, hospitable and family oriented in contrast to Britons who are perceived to be "highly developed and civilized" but "aggressive, cold and reserved [and] punctual".

In summary, partially for historical reasons, Arabians and Western expatriates perceive 'real' difference between their cultures. Such differences do impinge on the organization and culture of the school.

## 2.2.3 TESOL culture

The primary focus of this section is on perceptions, beliefs and values with regard to the English language as a cultural artefact and the teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) as a professional culture.

While some Western commentators see English today as "acultural" and having a "universal functional value" (Bowers 1992; Smith 1981 in Strevens 1992), others perceive English as an imperialistic and a colonial tool (Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992). The literature suggests Arabians have an ambivalent attitude to English. Al Haq and Smadi (1996: 308) note, "English ... has been found to be an essential tool in the modernization of [Arabia]" but continue, "there is a sense of fear among [Arabians] that the use of English entails Westernization, and detachment from the country, and is a source of corruption to their religious commitment."

Without doubt, English is perceived by many to be a vehicle of Americanization which has "probably been harmful to religious values worldwide" (Mazrui 2000). More specifically, as Casewit (1985: 7) writes, "For the guardians of traditional Islamic values, [foreign languages] ... are felt to be a dangerous source of corrupting influence". Shafi (1983: 35) was concerned that learners would acquire alien values, commenting "Muslim youth, after being educated through the medium of English either at home or abroad, are transformed into split personalities". In response, Ozog (1989) advocated EIP (English for Islamic Purposes).

On the other hand, in their survey of Saudi students' attitudes to English Al Haq and Smadi (1996: 313-4) conclude "university students agree that learning of English neither is an indication of Westernization nor entails an

imitation and admiration of Western cultural values" (see also Martin 1996). Nonetheless, they argue for a "culturally neutral" form of English to be taught. Others argue language and culture are inseparable (Kramsch 1993, 1998). Indeed, El-Sayed (1993: 63) maintains all Western learning, even seemingly neutral like technology, "in actuality, is the crucial medium through which cultural and ideological dominance is effected in the westernization process".

Much of the literature suggests Westerners adopt a 'we know best' approach at the expense of the local culture (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994). Holliday (1994: 132) talks about misguided expatriate experts. As Bush (2002) commented, there are likely to be tensions when Western educational practices are applied to other cultures and contexts; indeed, one of the reasons Tomlinson (1990) reported the failure of the Indonesian project was a rejection of the teaching methodology as a new form of colonialism. Unsurprisingly, a number of researchers (Alptekin and Alptekin 1983; El-Sayed 1993; Medgyes 1994) have advocated the view that non-native speakers of the host country are best placed to teach English.

Holly (1990: 13) comments, "In relation to native speakers, the question of language teaching is everywhere highly political." Even in the West, 'standard English' was perceived "as the language of the politically and culturally powerful" (Fairclough 1989:56) and Phillipson (1992: 27) is critical of the linguistic hegemony of English which attempts to "legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources ... on the basis of language".

The majority of teachers in the school were British expatriates and, as such, with their experience and qualifications, members of the 'large culture' that is TESOL: a global professional culture. Dimmock and Walker (2002: 80) contrast professional cultures where "qualified personnel identify primarily with their profession, whose standards are usually defined at national or international level" with parochial cultures whose "members identify most readily with the organization for which they work." There always is a risk that

expatriate teachers with "an external frame of reference" may find themselves at odds with local cultures of learning whose origins lie in very different educational and cultural traditions (Cortazzi 1990; Cortazzi and Jin 1996; Lo Castro 1996). For example, rote learning is encouraged in Asia (Dimmock 2000) and in Arabian schools and *madrassehs*; a practice considered shallow by Western educationalists (Briggs 2002). Communicative skills of information transfer, summarizing, note taking and scanning and skimming are unfamiliar to Arabian students. Western teachers who adopt such language teaching practices, Pennycook (1994: 166) argues, are "non-neutral", and as such, are "always involved in cultural politics." Barmada (1994: 175) recalls an interview with one teacher who proclaimed, "We are all unpaid soldiers of the West. This made me very nervous."

Cultural misunderstandings may involve actions or statements which are perfectly acceptable in one's own culture but which unwittingly offend or impose unacceptable cultural values (Kale 1991; El-Sayed 1991; Anderson 1991; Hassanain 1994; Nelson et al 1996). Even well-intentioned and culturally informed expatriate teachers can find themselves on a collision course with local students and management over teaching and learning (Ozog 1989; Medgyes 1994; Nelson 1995; Jin and Cortazzi 1998) and the evaluation learning (Briggs 2002). Language programs which do not meet the perceived needs of host country end-users risk failure (Swales 1980; Barmada 1983). Holliday (1992: 227) terms such misunderstandings and conflict that may arise between local organizations and expatriate teachers as 'tissue rejection' suggesting the expatriate as an outsider is "always bound to have difficulty understanding the protocols of ... the foreign host institution". He continues, such protocols may be derived from the local national culture, from the culture of the host institution or of the classroom or influenced by local professional-academic cultures. Even teachers from the host culture may have difficulty challenging such protocols (Shamim 1996).

## 2.2.4 Military culture

In the same way as teachers share a global professional culture, the Arabian military staff belong to a 'large' *military culture* which transcends national borders. It is a culture characterized by bureaucracy and hierarchy: a model which Bush (1994: 37) suggests depends on tight discipline for its effectiveness; soldiers "are expected to carry out their orders without questioning or elaboration". Bush continues, such bureaucracies tend to "ignore or underestimate the contribution of individuals". Dixon (1976: 266) notes, in the military there is a "tendency to categorize people in terms of stereotypes" rather than as individuals. Beare et al (1989: 188) proffer a description of military culture as "regimented; authoritarian; hierarchical; inflexible; directly specific; tending to stifle creativity and innovativeness; an expectation of uniformity; directive; often insensitive; ignoring the specific and the individual." However, this is not to suggest that mechanistic approaches are always inappropriate. Morgan (1997: 27-28) states such approaches work well "when the human 'machine parts' are compliant and behave as they have been designed to do … [as in] aircraft maintenance departments … where precision, safety, and clear accountability are at a premium".

Dixon (1976: 185) noted military culture demands conformity and homogeneity "whether it is toecaps, buttons or dressing by the left, hair length, kit inspection or marching feet, the quintessence of perfection resides in conformity to a regulation pattern." More controversially, he opines (ibid: 264), as the military tends to attract 'authoritarian' personality types who are "unlikely to make successful social leaders"; a significant comment in light of the observation by Smircich and Morgan (1982: 269) that "leaders symbolize the organized situation they lead". Such leadership is likely to "work against the development of self-responsibility, self-initiative, and self-control [and] block potentialities for full human development" (ibid: 271). Little offered this disheartening view, "Continued immersion in the total institutional life of military organization is exceptionally oppressive, blocks insight, and contributes to early fatigue and intellectual despair" (1970: 183).

Notwithstanding such forthright opinions, it is evident teaching and military cultures are likely to make unhappy bedfellows: the military imposes a mechanistic view of organization while teaching is the most unmechanistic of activities. Bush and West-Burnham (1994: 24) recognize the inherent conflict of the 'bureaucratic-professional interface' which "comes down to an explanation of the relative weight to be given to the claims of the individual to exercise personal judgement in an autonomous manner and the claims of the organization to insist on conformity to common values, purpose and activity."


While teaching may be viewed as labour, craft, profession, or art (Bennett 1995), arguably, military cultures favour viewing teaching, often referred to as 'instructing', as *labour* which involves following set plans and procedures, covering exercises in a specified way, using laid–down teaching strategies, and sticking to a clear schedule. "The business of writing the scheme or syllabus and deciding what is to be taught and how, is not part of the teacher's responsibilities. Further, they will be supervised closely in carrying out the work" (ibid: 47). Teachers working in this environment become disenfranchised and deskilled, resulting in an inevitable tension between those who see teaching as craft, profession or art and a management culture that views them as labourers.

### 2.2.5 Corporate culture

Although many writers on management theory do not distinguish between *corporate culture* and organizational culture, there are grounds for making this distinction. Corporate culture may be considered a distinct 'large' professional culture, like teaching and military cultures, transcending borders. Corporate culture, seen as a belief and value set, is a resource to be manipulated and developed to achieve corporate goals (Hicks and Gullet 1981; Peters and Waterman 1982; Peters and Austin 1986; Peters 1987). In contrast *organizational cultures*, Holliday (1994, 1999, 2002) argues share many of the features of *small cultures* and usually exist within clearly defined and identifiable boundaries, for example individual schools, offices or factories.

While it has been argued corporate culture may establish primacy over local cultural values (Cray and Mallory 1998) usually corporate culture is unlikely to modify national culture and, if the two are in conflict, national culture will prove dominant (Hofstede 1991, 1995; Mead 1994; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 1994; Adler 1997). There are exceptions, for example, certain religious orders or military services (Rees 2005). In general, as Mead (1994) suggests, any plan for a corporate culture is unlikely to capture the loyalty of members of other nationalities if the plan attempts to separate those members from the expectations of their national cultural values (see also Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993). Yet, as Hofstede (1994: 28) notes, management theories are often assumed to have a certain universality about them and so many find it difficult to accept the "validity of theories may stop at national borders".

Hughes (1990: 3) argues "the uncritical transportation of theories and methodologies across the world, without regard to the qualities and circumstances of different communities, can no longer be regarded as acceptable". Crossley and Broadfoot (1992: 100) reinforce this observation, "policies and practices cannot be translated intact from one culture to another since the mediation of different cultural contexts can quite transform the former's salience". It is hardly surprising that "many Western managers visiting their clients and counterparts in other cultures, as in the Middle East, find themselves negotiating symbol systems which define quite different realities from those characteristic of the West" (Morgan et al 1983: 11). A *one size fits all* corporate approach is likely to be both ineffectual and undesirable. "The last thing we need is a Monroe Doctrine for management ideas", states Hofstede (1994: 46).

Such approaches may create resentment. Hallinger and Kantamara (2000: 202) comment, as with 'Western' pedagogical approaches, "western management innovations ... engender more suspicion than enthusiasm". Sinha and Kao (1988: 11) note the published literature is invariably about management in a Western economic growth model, "grossly disregarding the fundamental differences in socio-cultural constraints and local conditions and

circumstances". Even the language of Western corporate culture may offend local sensitivities: Welch, CEO of General Electric, is described by Dickson (1992: 25) as "a hot gospeller. ... anxious to stress that he has not yet found the corporate Holy Grail. We are on a crusade." Such 'crusades' are more than likely to clash with an Arabian management style that has been termed a 'bedo-aucracy' (Kassem and Habib 1989) characterized by a top down authority with loyalties to family and friends rather than goals and projects. Even when innovations are introduced, as Glatter (2002: 225) cautions, "It is easy to become over-impressed by apparent similarities between 'reforms' in various countries and to neglect deep differences at the level of implementation and practice."

The Company, at the time of the study, was globally promoting a Total Quality Management 'culture change' program (Peters 1987; Oakland 1993). The key concept of TQM is 'quality', defined by IBM as "Quality equals customer satisfaction" (Unterberger 1991: 3 in Sallis 1996: 2). Quality standards include 'conformance to specification'; 'fitness for purpose'; 'zero defects'; 'right first time, on time, every time' and a commitment to 'delighting the customer'. There have been attempts to apply TQM to education (West-Burnham 1992; Greenwood and Gaunt 1994; Sallis 1996). Sallis (1996: 27) states, "TQM is a philosophy of continuous improvement, which can provide any educational institution with a set of practical tools for meeting and exceeding present and future customers needs, wants, and expectations." In a TQM culture, organizations are "systems designed to serve customers" and objectives must be aligned (see 'Figure 6.3: Institutional alignment' in Sallis 1996: 72-73). Significantly, Sallis (ibid: 73) notes, "The first casualty is the traditional notion of organizational status" as the TQM 'inverted hierarchy' challenges the conventional notion of bureaucracy and power. Sallis continues, "The role of senior and middle management in a TQM culture is to support and empower the teaching and support staff and the learners, not to control them". Provocatively, Sallis (1996: vii) writes, "No longer are teachers able to hide behind the language of professionalism."

However, as Wilkinson and Witcher (1993: 53) comment, "this [TQM] approach is a very naïve one when applied to organizations which social scientists would argue are social constructs in which groups compete for power and influence". As Willmott (1993: 523) comments, with corporate TQM programmes, "every conceivable opportunity is taken for imprinting the core values of the organization upon its (carefully selected) employees. To the extent it succeeds in this mission, corporate culturism becomes a medium of nascent totalitarianism." Ultimately, many teachers may well agree with Smircich (1983:346) who writes, "Those of a sceptical nature may also question the extent to which the term corporate culture refers to anything more than an ideology cultivated by management for the purpose of control and legitimation of activity."

Even supporters of TQM recognize limitations. Looking back on this period West-Burnham (2002: 315) comments TQM "combined elements of scientific management, a Zen-based belief in perfectibility and the sort of corporate thinking found in companies like IBM in the 1950s." In hindsight, it has not delivered on its promises. Wendt (1994) describing a case study of a major university implementing a total quality management (TQM) program found that TQM hegemony, *inter alia*, privileged passive, bounded, regimented, and efficiency-focused thinking over critical, self-reflective, strategic, and creative thinking. West-Burnham (2002: 322) raises a further dimension, "The issue of culture is central to any debate about the application of TQM to education. Not only is there the issue of transfer across sectors there is also a major concern with what might be described as a new form of cultural imperialism."

In summary, 'corporate culture', especially in the form of TQM, which may of itself be a legitimate business model, is likely to generate misunderstandings and conflict when interacting with other cultures in the school.

The next section considers organizational cultures, as distinct from notions of corporate culture.

## 2.3 Organizations and organizational cultures

In this study the term *organization* is used to refer to the school and not the extended corporate or military organizations. Although any investigation into school organization is likely to draw on sources beyond education, the focus of this study is on educational organizations. For example, while Weber's bureaucratic model has been applied to many forms of organization, in this study the model is discussed in light of its applicability to schools. Other models, such as collegiality, are normally associated only with schools and colleges rather than other forms of organization.

### 2.3.1 Models and metaphors of educational organizations

While "there is no clearly agreed view of what an organization is" (Bennett 2001: 99), the literature presents theories and explanations of organizational life "based on metaphors that lead us to see and understand organizations in distinctive yet partial ways" (Morgan 1986: 12). While theory may provide fresh insight (Hughes and Bush 1991), as Greenfield (1993:71) writes, "theories are as much inventions about reality as they explanations of it". Although metaphors may be "the way we make sense of our world" (Beare et al 1989: 188), metaphors "may also act like fly bottles, to keep us trapped in invisible prisons" (Bates 1982: 7). Morgan (1997: 349) cautions, "Think 'structure' and you'll see structure. Think 'culture' and you'll see all kinds of cultural dimensions. Think 'politics' and you'll find politics." Thus, although a number of distinct organizational models are considered below, this study argues structure, culture and politics are inextricably interwoven.

#### *2.3.1.1 Bureaucratic models*

The *bureaucratic organizational model*, according to Weber (1946), is rational, disciplined, reliable and capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency. As in the military, there is a hierarchal authority structure: "power resides with the principal who has legal authority and is legally accountable" (Johnson 1995: 225 in Bush 2002: 17) and "goals are determined by senior staff and the support of other teachers is taken for granted" (Bush 1994: 34). This model is distinctly mechanistic, as "decisions and behaviour are governed

by rules and regulations rather than personal initiative" Bush (2002:18). In schools, it may be argued such rigid control over the curriculum results in teacher deskilling, as "teachers have limited scope to use their professional judgement" (ibid: 18). A broader criticism of this approach is made by Morgan (1997: 30) who states "much of the apathy, carelessness, and lack of pride so often encountered in the modern workplace is not coincidental; it is fostered by the mechanistic approach ... people in a bureaucracy who question the wisdom of conventional practice are viewed more often than not as troublemakers". Significantly "accountability to officials is regarded as more important than responsibility to clients such as students or parents" (Bush 2002: 19); it is more important to please those above than those below.

### 2.3.1.2  Collegial theories and models

*Collegial theories* assume an 'authority of expertise' and a 'common set of values' with shared aims (Coleman 1994; Evers et al 1992). The contribution of the individual is valued as there is an emphasis on equality and consensus. Arguably this is not an independent model but rather an aspect or part of the cultural or symbolic interactionist model (Busher 2001 personal communication). A collegial approach is attractive to many writers because it encourages the participation of teachers in decision-making (Wallace 1989; Campbell 1989). There is a recognition expertise is widespread and "the structure should facilitate the involvement of all staff ...professionals expect a degree of autonomy of operation" (Bush and Middlewood 1997: 59). Proponents of collegiality argue "the quality of decision-making may be better when educators participate in the process" and that "effective implementation of decisions is more likely if teachers 'own' the outcomes through their participation" (Bush 2002: 20). Inevitably, collegiality implies democratization and empowerment. Significantly, Bush (2002: 21) notes, "Collegiality is a Western concept".

Some organizations are characterized by a 'contrived collegiality' where processes are in place that are "regulated rather than spontaneous" and "designed to have predictable outcomes" (Hargreaves 1994: 195-6).

Principals may be required to make teachers feel involved rather than empower them, discussing "*how* to implement ... but not *whether* to do so" (Bush 2002: 22). Brundrett (1998: 313) comments, in such cases collegiality may become "the handmaiden of an ... increasingly centralized bureaucracy." On the other hand, some leaders may involve staff and encourage participation whilst retaining the right to take the final decision. The evidence suggests this *collaborative approach* may be very effective (Busher and Barker 2003).

### 2.3.1.3    Ambiguity theories and organized anarchies

Both the bureaucratic and collegial perspectives assume a rational decision-making model (Hoy and Miskel 1996). However, as they point out, most scholars consider the classical model to be an unrealistic ideal, if not naïve. Hoyle (1986: 72) states, "Rationalistic approaches will always be blown off course by the contingent, the unexpected and the irrational". In contrast to rational approaches, as Bush (2002: 25) writes, "*Ambiguity theories* stress uncertainty and unpredictability in organizations ... the instability and complexity of institutional life". March (1982: 36) writes of "the confusion and complexity surrounding actual decision-making. ... alliances, preferences and perceptions are changing; problems, solutions, opportunities, ideas, people and outcomes are mixed together in a way that makes their interpretation uncertain and their connections unclear". There is *fluid participation* as members move in and out of decision-making situations (Cohen and March 1986) and "different members of the school may perceive different goals or attribute different priorities to the same goals, or even be unable to define goals which have any operational meaning" (Bell 1989: 134). Noble and Pym (1989: 33) refer to the "the receding locus of power". Organizations are characterized by fragmentation and *loose coupling* (Weick 1976). It follows the ambiguity model presents a significant challenge to specific management activity and strategic planning (Lumby 2002).

In a not dissimilar manner, the *garbage can model*, as proposed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) occurs in organizations they term 'organized anarchies'. They suggest decision-making is rational but limited, as individuals and organizations settle for a 'bounded rationality' of 'good

enough' decisions. Hoy and Miskel (1996: 285) comment that "although no organization fits this extremely organic and loosely coupled system all the time, the model is often used for understanding the pattern of decisions of organized anarchy."

### 2.3.1.4    Subjective models

Subjective models emphasize the goals of individuals rather than institutions or groups. "Organizations are portrayed as the manifestations of the values and beliefs of individuals, rather than the concrete realities of bureaucracy" Bush (2002: 24). (One may take issue with the notion of bureaucracy having 'concrete realities'.) Bush (2002) summarizes the main features of subjective theories as: a focus on beliefs and perceptions of individuals; meaning is a matter of individual interpretation; structure is essentially a product of human interaction; and an emphasis on individual purpose denies the existence of organizational aims. Greenfield (1973: 571) challenges theories that "see the organization as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved in it". While the reasons and motives of individuals, although often construed in political terms, may be obscure and inaccessible, he asserts, "it is the individual that lives and acts, not the organization" (1993: 123). Greenfield rejects what he terms 'group mind' and "denies an over-arching social reality thought to lie beyond human control and outside the will, intention and action of the individual" (ibid: 123). The subjective approach has been criticized by postmodernists, such as Atkinson (1999), who assert the complex nature and multiple identities of 'the individual'.

### 2.3.1.5    Cultural models

Some commentators have argued the existence of a separate *cultural model* while others view culture as an ineluctable feature of all organizations (Pettigrew 1979; Smircich 1983). Much of the argument hinges on the degree to which commentators perceive organizational culture as something created and groomed by leaders or something more amorphous – *how we do things around here* (Bower 1966). Smircich argues a cultural analysis of organizations questions "taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of

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context and meaning" (1983: 355). To Schein (1985: 9) organizational culture is "a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and integration". Such organizational cultures develop structures, symbols, rituals and routines, and stories and myths (Johnson 1988). Bolman and Deal (1984: 268) state, "Our view is that every organization develops distinctive beliefs and patterns over time. ... They are reflected in myths, fairly tales, stories, rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic forms." Alvesson (1993: 3) also argues the importance of symbols, as organizational culture comprises "a shared and learned world of experiences, meanings, values, and understandings which inform people and which are expressed, reproduced, and communicated partly in symbolic form".

Beare et al (1989: 173) suggest the cultural model focuses on "that social and phenomenological uniqueness of a particular organizational community". This model, according to Bush (2002: 27), assumes "individual values will coalesce and lead to *shared norms and meanings* which gradually become cultural features of the organization, 'the way we do things around here' ... typically expressed through *rituals and ceremonies* which are used to support and celebrate beliefs and norms". This is a world populated by *"heroes and heroines* who embody the values and beliefs of the organization" (ibid: 27). White et al (1991: 17) note all organizations "have a history and traditions, rules and regulations (often unspoken), way of doing things, conventions governing relationships, which together constitute the culture of that organization." However, as Nias et al (1989: 11) caution, identifying these beliefs may be impossible as they may be "so deeply buried that individuals do not even know what they are." Furthermore, as discussed below, the notion of a single, holistic organizational culture is open to challenge (Smircich 1983; Firestone and Louis 1999).

## 2.3.2 Leadership and culture

The role of 'the leader' within an organizational culture is more problematic. Some commentators see the leader as *cultural manager*. Cheng (2002: 52) comments, "it is important for a leader to shape organizational culture and

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define the vision and mission of the organization" [and] "transform the existing values and norms of staff in the institution." Similarly, Dimmock and Walker (2002: 78) affirm, "Leaders are responsible for building and maintaining the organizational culture." Whilst appreciating customs, traditions, ceremonies, rituals, norms, heroes and heroines characterize each school, they argue, "Culture is a constructed reality, and as such, demands considerable thought, skill, integrity and consistency on the part of the leader to build and maintain in a way that connects all members of the school community" (ibid: 78). They argue that leaders "are instrumental in shaping the relative emphasis placed on process and outcome" (ibid: 79). Sergiovanni (1992; 1994) argues the place of moral leadership and the need to build a 'healthy' community. Grace (1995: 204) focusing on the interaction of leadership and culture argues the need for a democratic school culture "strong in participative leadership" (see also Fullan 1992; Busher and Barker 2003; Fink 2005).


While few would disagree with Morgan (1986: 138) when he states "since organization ultimately resides in the heads of the people involved, effective organizational change implies cultural change" and it is evident the leader has a part to play in the development of this culture. However, Dimmock and Walker (2002: 70) recognise "culture forms the context in which school leadership is exercised" and, as such, "exerts a considerable influence on how and why school leaders think and act as they do". As McMahon (2001: 125) points out, educational leaders are required to "work with the organizational culture within the framework of a macronational culture." Decisions and actions are bounded by what is acceptable to the organizational membership and the large cultures within which the organization functions. Busher (2001: 88) comments, "the changes proposed have to fit in with or appear to fit in with prevailing cultural norms". Alvesson (1993: 90) opines, although management will be able to modify culture, it is also "a product of culture" and, as such, is "constrained by it". Leaders are only one of a number of influences; organizational culture changes as "people move in and out of the organization ... [or] in response to internal or external challenge or pressure"

(McMahon 2001: 127). Indeed, Turner (1990: 11) doubts that "something as powerful as culture can be much affected by the puny efforts of top managers".

## 2.3.3　Multiple organizational cultures

Although many analyses of organizational culture, derived from a management / corporate perspective, stress what Meyerson and Martin (1987) describe as the integrative dimension of culture, as Smircich (1983: 344) argues, there is a "great likelihood that there are multiple organization subcultures, or even, countercultures, competing to define the nature of situations within organizational boundaries". Firestone and Louis (1999: 299), cited by McMahon (2001: 127), recognize individuals and groups will draw on 'cultural codes' differentially, arguing "rather than a holistic school culture there are likely to be a number of subcultures." Certainly simplistic accounts of a single school culture should be eschewed; as McMahon (2001: 126) notes, the concept is "a very slippery one." School culture "has been and will remain a multi-faceted construct" Maehr and Midgley (1996: 81).

## 2.3.4　Small cultures

There is a case for considering organizational cultures as *small cultures*. Holliday (1999: 240) argues small cultures are a heuristic means of interpreting group behaviour as they are "concerned with social processes as they emerge." This approach permits a distinction to be made between the *large cultures* "signifying *ethnic, national* or *international*" considered above, namely Arabian, Western, TESOL, military and corporate, and the *small culture* "signifying any cohesive social grouping" (ibid: 237) of the individual organization. Unlike many other commentators who discuss organizational culture within a single large culture, Holliday considers multiple cultures. Furthermore, as his study is set in an Arab context, his work has a particular relevance to this study.

Holliday (1999: 239) states that small cultures can exist as *middle cultures*, for example, "where people from different national groups come together to form a work or leisure small culture of their own. Multinational organization

cultures would fall into this category." Arguably, such organizations, like all small cultures, can never exist 'between' large cultures but rather 'within' overlapping large cultures. Holliday's school not only had 'links' to "the English Language teaching community... [but also to] a wider *international education-related* culture" (1994: 30). In a similar manner, this study considers the 'organization-in-context', ie its *situated identity*.

Within a small culture Holliday (1994: 129) distinguishes three spheres of deep action: psycho-cultural, informal order and micropolitical. The psycho-cultural comprises cultural features "such as hidden communication, tacit protocols governing classroom instructions, sanctity and hospitality, formality and informality, and the ritual aspect of classrooms" while the micropolitical "constitutes the internal politics of schools and departments." On the other hand, it is possible to argue the three spheres are intrinsically micropolitical. The next section explores the *micropolitical* dimension of organizations.

## 2.4      Power and micropolitics

This section considers aspects of power and how it is negotiated, contested and enacted within organizations, particularly schools. Various micropolitical approaches are considered and the relationship between micropolitics and culture is explored. This discussion of micropolitics is focused on educational organizations.

Although a number of commentators use the terms *political* and *micropolitical* interchangeably, in this study the author uses the term *micropolitics* specifically to refer to organizational politics, ie the often informal manipulation of power by organizational members to achieve particular aims and objectives.

### 2.4.1      Organizations as political structures

Educational organizations have overt structures which reflect power distribution by defining "both the constraints and the formal relationships within which individual members of the organization can take action"

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(Bennett 2001: 105). Yet, "despite their apparent rigidity and formality, the significance of organizational structures for organizational members lies in the ways in which they define their *relations* with colleagues and the *arenas* within which they are able to make decisions" (ibid: 106). Bennett contends organizations are political structures that both create and are created by power relationships.

Many commentators are uncomfortable with such realities. As Morgan (1997: 154) points out, "The idea that organizations are supposed to be rational enterprises in which their members seek common goals tends to discourage discussion of political motive. Politics, in short, is a dirty word." Hoyle (1982: 66) refers to the organizational underworld of micropolitics, "almost a taboo subject in 'serious' discussion, yet informally it is a favourite theme of organizational gossip as people talk about 'playing politics', 'hidden agendas', 'organizational mafias', 'Machiavellianism', and so forth." Notwithstanding, micropolitical processes are as much to do with generating consensus and resolving conflict as they are to do with promulgating conflict. Indeed, micropolitical actions may be driven by good sense and moral principle (Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Edwards 2000).

## 2.4.2 Power within organizations

The exercise of *power* is central to organizations (Bacharach and Lawler 1980; Ball 1987; Blase and Anderson 1995; Busher 2001; Bush 2002). As Greenfield (1993: 110) so eloquently states, power is "of great consequence in organizations since it has to do with the question of who holds the whip handle and who suffers the strokes of the lash". As Bennett (2001) comments, power in organizations is a resource that may be brought to bear on the exchanges that make up the relationships between their members. "The greater the disparity of resources between the two parties to an exchange, the more likely it is that one will be able to cause the other to act in the manner desired" (ibid: 112-3). Arguably, the more asymmetrical the formal power relationship, the more subordinates will resort to micropolitical resources to achieve their aims or thwart the goals of those holding institutional power.

Busher (2001: 89) suggests power derives from a variety of personal and organizational sources: *personal* qualities such as "warmth to colleagues, reliability, being well-organized and being enthusiastic"; *professional* attributes which include "being an effective teacher of a particular subject; understanding the workings of the school as an organization; having an awareness of changes in the external organizational environment ... knowing how to cope with change successfully"; and *institutional* skills which include the ability to wield institutional or bureaucratic power depending on a person's status, responsibilities, access to resources and access to power and authority. These sources differ from institutionally legitimated power accorded to post-holders, often enshrined in job descriptions (Busher 2001), sometimes referred to as positional power (Paechter and Head 1996). Coleman (1988: 157) writes of the "intangible network of personal relationships, shared knowledge, unwritten conventions, ethnic rivalries and internal political considerations ... sometimes in parallel with and sometimes in conflict with the formal overt structure." Burrell (1998) argues real power resides in this network of interconnected relationships: the 'micro-physics' of social life rather than the formal structure.

Dimmock and Walker (2002: 80-81) lay out several possible permutations of organizational power structure: *formal-informal* is "the extent to which their practices are guided by rules, regulations and 'correct procedures' on the one hand, and the extent to which they reflect a more relaxed, spontaneous and intuitive approach on the other; *tight-loose* "gauges the degree to which members feel there is a strong commitment to the shared beliefs, values and practices of an organization"; and *direct-indirect* "captures the linkages and patterns of communication through which power, authority and decisions are communicated".

### 2.4.3    Power and culture

Whatever the structure, power in schools is influenced by cultural norms (Hofstede 1991, 1994; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997; Hickson and Pugh 1995; Dimmock and Walker 2002). Arguably, power is a facet of culture as culture is a reflection of power. Busher (2001: 75) introduces the

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concept of *permeability*, "Much of what happens in schools is caused by a multiplicity of factors that are located outside schools but are imported into schools through the semi-permeable membranes of schools' institutional boundaries by students and staff of all qualities." The perceived legitimacy of power is influenced by and is a part of the *large* cultures.

Dimmock and Walker (2002: 77) note, "In societies where power is linked to extrinsic factors, leadership tends to be from the 'top' and exercised in an authoritarian or autocratic manner". They report, in Chinese cultures, principals "tend to avoid situations which risk conflict and to rely instead on authoritarian decision-making modes", whereas in Australia, "policies are challenged, questioned and negotiated at the school level and outside". Bell and Bush (2002: 8) suggest, "The differences may be explained by alternative perspectives on the nature of authority with those favouring bureaucracy more willing to defer to those holding positional power than people who feel constrained by it." It may be that teachers from certain cultures are more tolerant of hierarchies than others. However, this is not to say that this approach is unfamiliar in the West. Hargreaves (1995: 32) included the 'traditional' school culture in his typology where "the political structure is essentially feudal, the principal and senior teachers ... being like a monarch surrounded by barons".

### 2.4.4 Power and educational organizations

Hoyle (1982: 79) suggests schools are particularly prone to micropolitical activity for two main reasons: their "loosely coupled characteristic, which yield the 'spaces' in which such activity can flourish" and also "the competing forms of legitimacy in decision-making, which arise because the formal legitimacy of the head is challenged by alternative professional and democratic forms" leaving the head "with the problem of balancing their responsibility against the expectations of collegiality". Bacharach (1988: 282) asserts educational organizations are best conceived as political systems where competing individuals, as political actors, and 'sub-groups' are involved in "constant tactical power struggles" where "each sub-group will have a different view of who has the formal power (authority), who has the

informal power (influence), and who should have the power to make organizational decisions." Dismissing Bush's (1995) claim small schools are inherently less political, Busher (1999: personal communication) commented, "In any sized organization there will be politicization because people have their own agendas". A situation vividly illustrated by Baldridge (1989: 61) who quotes from an interview with a dean at New York University. The dean invited Baldridge to throw away his organization chart, saying if he wished to find out how the university is really organized, he would need to "understand the tensions, the strains, and the fights that go on between people. You see this is a political problem ... Of course, this doesn't necessarily imply 'dirty' politics. ... This place is more like a political jungle, alive and screaming, than a rigid, quiet bureaucracy."

Significantly, the dean stated, "this doesn't necessarily imply 'dirty' politics". In fact, some commentators see politics as a resource to be utilized by effective leaders. Cheng (2002: 56) defines political leadership as that which "builds alliances and coalitions, encourages participation and collaboration in decision-making, and resolves conflicts among constituencies." Leaders use strong interpersonal relationships to forge alliances (Blase and Blase 1994). As Busher (2002: 275) points out, "Leaders have an important mediational function ... They need to perform this function effectively to avoid staff feeling disempowered and resistant to, or alienated from, the changes being proposed by themselves or by external agencies". This function is variously referred to as bridging and brokering (Glover et al 1998) and advocacy (Bradley and Roaf 1995). On the other hand, Senge (1990: 273) defines a 'political environment' as "one in which 'who' is more important than 'what'. If the boss proposes an idea, the idea gets taken seriously. When someone else proposes a new idea, it is ignored. There are always 'winners' and 'losers', people who are building their power and people who are losing their power."

### 2.4.5 The micropolitical perspective

The *micropolitical perspective* recognizes the range of power and influence individuals may exert within an organization. As Bennett (1995: 64) points out, this perspective focuses on how "individuals pursue individual goals and

seek ways of improving their chances of achieving them." Micropolitics encompasses a wide range of activities. Hoyle (1986: 126) states, "Micropolitics is best perceived as a continuum, one end of which is virtually indistinguishable from conventional management procedures ... to the point where it constitutes almost a separate world of illegitimate, self-interested manipulation." A succinct definition is offered by Busher (2001: 93), "Micropolitics provides a conceptual framework for understanding the interactions of people in schools through analyzing the ways in which power is accrued, used and negotiated on principled and unprincipled grounds to try to implement the views, values and beliefs of participants and stakeholders in education."

Holliday (1994: 129) takes the view micropolitics is the "normal human endeavour to achieve natural aspirations, rights and allegiance within the confines of the work of the people involved. ... micro-politics represents the conscious dynamism of group behaviour." Maclagan (1988: 128) notes "political means can be used to further what the participants view as ethically desirable ends." He argues it is misleading and damaging to assume uncritically that politics in organizations is invariably "a manifestation of individual and group self-interest, distasteful attitudes and 'dirty tricks'" (ibid: 129) Fineman (1993: 12) cautions, "political actions are strategic, thought out, having an internal rationality: they are a means to an end."

Although micropolitical negotiations may be a positive, principled, consensus building activity, overt politicization and competition is not considered to be a feature of successful schools by some commentators. Hoy and Miskel (1996: 74) state, "The political organization, however, is a dysfunctional configuration for schools because it hinders learning and teaching". More contentiously they opine, "Schools are politicized from time to time and occasionally develop into political organizations, but such structures in schools are usually short-lived because of their ineffectiveness." Certainly, it is possible the competition between sub-groups, those with formal power (authority) and those with informal power (influence), will generate a level of conflict which may pose a major threat to the integrity of the decision-making

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process (Bacharach 1988). Furthermore, as Bolman and Deal (1984: 146) state, "the amorality that often characterizes political perspectives raises questions of values".

Micropolitics affects and reflects how various cultures interact within a school and how individuals and groups exploit such cultures to their own ends. Any understanding of how culture exerts an influence on a school must be cognizant of the ways culture can be manipulated in this manner. Indeed, Fiske (1989) defines culture in terms of social conflict. Certainly micropolitics cannot be separated from its cultural context as legitimacy is often a cultural norm. Moreover, micropolitical activity may extend beyond organizational boundaries.

## 2.4.5.1    Stories and myths

*Stories and myths*, often perceived to be facets of organizational culture, play important micropolitical roles. Stories, embroidered in the retelling, enhance or diminish the political power (authority or influence) of players. Beare et al (1989) find organizational stories are a method of conveying value-laden meaning, creating heroes and villains (Deal and Kennedy 1982). Stories and myths have a particular strength. "Myths may be fictitious but in many respects are more 'true' than real-life stories. ... Consider how difficult it often is, for example, to refute a case based upon anecdotal evidence; the anecdote often carries more evocative power than argumentation or statistics" (Beare et al 1989: 190). Tales of "accidents, cock-ups, and their attendant misfortunes, are the source of rich narrative material in organizations. ... We laugh at the misfortunes of those naïve enough to believe that the human spirit can be contained and controlled by bureaucratic or technological automatism" (Gabriel 1991: 431). It is not surprising that organizational tyrants are suspicious of laughter. As Griseri points out, "an autocratic manager who sees contented staff may well jump to the conclusion that they have somehow 'got one over' on the organization" (1998: 7).

## 2.4.5.2 Micropolitics and group activity

A micropolitical approach focuses on *group activity*. Individual interests are likely to lead to collaboration and the formation of interest groups, which may be temporary or enduring, legislated or voluntary (Bacharach and Lawler 1980; Bush 2002). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997: 59) argue that individuals naturally coalesce into groups. Their stated conviction is that "individualism finds its fulfillment in service to the group". Other commentators see individuals conspiring to manipulate the groups they belong to rather than serve them (Bacharach 1988). At the same time, individuals may belong to a number of coalitions based on proximity, date of arrival, education, friendship, interests, similarity of work. Van Maanen and Barley (1984: 335) note, "Such coalitions will be tenacious and, as we have suggested, not easily managed by those who fall outside its membership boundaries."

Busher (2001) points out continuing membership is based on each person's willingness to remain a part of those groups, even when the opportunities for leaving physically are limited. If people are dissatisfied with a particular group, they may change groups. If they can't change, "perhaps for reasons of legal contract or social pressure, they may find other ways of resisting being part of its actions or becoming disaffected with it" (ibid: 77). It is important to recognise that people may have multiple group memberships and that such memberships are likely to reflect varying degrees of commitment. His/her commitment may also vary in intensity depending on a number of factors, for example his / her perception of the likelihood of obtaining success. On the other hand, if individuals belong to a certain ethnic group or a particular religious group, these memberships are non-negotiable.

Busher (2001: 81), based on his earlier research (1992), proposes there are three types of group: formal organizational groups; curriculum activity groups; and networks. These networks "often consisted of people who shared similar interests outside school but could not be observed to constitute a working group or active pressure group inside school". As Coleman (1988: 158) notes,

"...in actual day-to-day decision-making this impalpable network is frequently of much greater importance that any formal organizational structure." It seems likely that a diverse staff from a range of cultural backgrounds, as in the study, will constitute an extensive network of interests.

The interrelationship between culture and politics is complex. Erickson (1987: 21) contends "it is not the presence of cultural difference between groups that causes trouble; rather, it seems as if trouble goes looking for culture as an excuse to start a fight and to keep it going". On the other hand, Butz and Ripmeester (1999) argue resistant cultures emerge from shared interactions and overlapping lifeworlds. Furthermore, conflict may promote social integration (Coser 1956). As noted by Scott (1990: 114), where individuals are subject to the same terms of subordination, they "have shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of dignity, of negation, of justice". Holliday (2005b: notes taken at lecture) comments, "Hidden counter-cultures exist as acts of resistance which go unnoticed or are not taken seriously within the dominant culture because they do not conform to normalized ways of seeing. In hidden third spaces ... teachers act out their identities."

It may be argued individuals project multiple identities which reflect their various group memberships. As Hall (1996:4) points out, such identities are "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses practices and positions [and] are constantly in the process of change and transformation". Grossberg (1996: 91) writes of *fragmentation* which "emphasizes the multiplicity of identities and of positions within any apparent identity". Furthermore, identity is closely allied to notions of power. Laclau (1990) cited in Hall (1996: 5) states "the construction of a social identity is an act of power". As Hall (1996: 5) writes, identities are "constructed within the play of power and exclusion". Identity enacted through group membership is a complex dimension of micropolitical activity. As such has a particular relevance to this study.

### 2.4.5.3 Negotiations and bargaining

Busher (2001: 85 citing Busher 1989) points out *negotiations and bargaining* over material and symbolic resources take place within the culture of the school, which "is created by its rites, rituals, customs and language which uphold and make visible the values and beliefs preferred, by and large, by the senior staff". Busher presents a series of negotiating strategies for innovation and resistance: *bureaucratic* - use of formal authority, *interpersonal* - using informal power (influence) and manipulating the culture, and *resistant*. Resistant strategies are considered in greater detail below. For strategies to be successful, various conditions have to be met, ie "the changes proposed have to fit in with or appear to fit in with prevailing cultural norms [and] all parties engaged in the negotiations need to believe that they can gain from proposed changes in some way" (ibid: 88).

### 2.4.5.4 Legitimacy

Central to any bargaining or negotiation is the concept of *legitimacy*. Legitimacy is a matter of perception; it is not usually something conferred by the institution. However, as Bennett (2001: 114-5) notes, structures tend to provide the legitimation of economic resources. The deployment of such resources in ways not permitted by the structure is likely to be seen as corrupt and therefore non-legitimate. Power resources whose deployment is legitimated through the structure of the organization tend to be used overtly. Cultures, on the other hand, are the basis for the legitimation of normative and much knowledge power, "since these forms of power reside in the individual rather than their office". Bennett's (ibid: 116) notes that weaker parties are "more likely to possess elements of knowledge and normative power than they are economic or physical power and so are less likely to recognize economic and physical power sources as legitimate. Consequently, when economic or physical resource power is brought to bear in an exchange, the response is likely to be one of compliance rather than commitment". The nature of such asymmetrical power relationships is micropolitical grist.

## 2.4.5.5 Asymmetrical power relationships

Where there is a large disparity in power, be it personal, professional or institutional there is a likely to be *compliance* on the part of the person or persons with less power. When there is a more equal distribution of these resources, compliance may have to be obtained through a more equal process of negotiation. Bennett (2001: 113) comments, "Economic power resources may have to fight the influence of knowledge power resources when this occurs."

The form of compliance depends on the perception of legitimation. Hales (1993: 30) notes the non-legitimate application of power results in *"alienative compliance"* and a search for countervailing power. Economic and knowledge resources result in a more calculative response, which might be *"cognitive compliance"*, wherein the person is persuaded that what is being required is correct, or *"instrumental compliance"*, which rests purely on a calculation of benefits and disadvantages, see Bennett (2001: 114). It is not uncommon for large companies to offer financial inducements to expatriate staff to compensate them for the rigours of overseas life. Busher (2001) offers a number of reasons why teachers choose compliance: *self-interest* (there is something in it for me); *fear* (this will happen to me if I don't); *bribery* (I'm paid enough); *professionalism* (this is what teachers do); *morality* (it is the right thing to do) and *trust* (I believe what you are saying).

## 2.4.5.6 Trust

*Trust* is a central element in the relationship between leaders and teachers (Covey 1989; Hopkins 1996; Busher 2001). As Middlewood (2002: 131) opines, "Trust is always the basis of sound manager/subordinate relationships". Blase and Blase (1994: 20) contend, "Without trust, people are likely to close up, to keep to themselves, to even close ranks in cliques or special interest groups". Indeed, a lack of trust may lead staff to become cynical or may generate organized resistance (Busher 2002). A lack of trust by either side means all decisions and actions are viewed with suspicion. Bok (1978: 31) states, trust "functions as a foundation of relations among human beings; when this trust shatters or wears away, institutions collapse". On the

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other hand, trust of itself will not eliminate micropolitics activity: "Although trust requires all parties to act in an open and honest manner it does not exclude the micropolitical processes which riddle institutions and through which participants try to influence decisions" (Busher and Saran 1995: 194-5).

### 2.4.5.7 Oppression and Resistance

Although alienative compliance is likely to invite *resistance*, arguably resistance is an inevitable consequence of organizational power. Following Foucault (1980), Butz and Ripmeester (1999 online) maintain "power and resistance are ontologically inseparable, that they exist as conditions of possibility each for the other." They contend the supposedly separate realms of power and resistance are more productively understood as mutually-constituted parts of the fluidity, play, or ambiguity of social life. In effect, where one sees power, one finds resistance.

*Strategies of resistance*

Hoyle (1981) points out teachers wield power against that of head teachers through a variety of different strategies. Busher (2001: 88) lists a number: non-involvement, colonizing meetings, proclaiming autonomy, reference to subject-based authority, filibustering, working to contract, using external contacts to support position, sounding out opinion / gleaning information, lobbying and appealing to traditional norms. Van der Westhuizen (1996), cited in Busher (2001: 90), divided resistance into three forms: passive, active and aggressive. In the first category he placed negative perceptions and attitudes. In the last category he included subversion and sabotage, although that might not necessarily be of a violent nature. One of the purposes of this study is to investigate resistance strategies employed by staff in the school.

*'Off-kilter' resistance*

Subordinated groups often work actively to nurture *third spaces* in order to create circumstances in which the power aligned against them can be safely unsettled, circumvented, and productively employed, rather than directly and dangerously confronted (Butz and Ripmeester 1999 online). They contend third spaces, and a third space sensibility among subaltern populations,

manifest a set of contingencies that enable 'off-kilter resistance' and tangential opposition (de Certeau 1984). They describe 'off-kilter resistance' as those "practices that manage to disrupt or partially subvert local conditions of domination or oppression, without aligning themselves in opposition to those conditions". They continue, "To limit our conceptualization of resistance to that which is confrontational or direct is to deny the more nuanced and creative ways in which subordinate peoples engage power" (Butz and Ripmeester 1999 online). It is argued in this study that such resistance may take the form of humour. As Dubberley asserts, in the case of conflict, humour reflects the differences between cultures and "highlights power in particular by its ability temporarily to distort social relations and structures and point to their absurdity" (1993: 91).

## Formal authority and informal resistance

Hoy and Miskel (1996: 39) recognize the informal political dimension that exists within and often subverts the formal structure and its goals and "spawns the informal power relations that emerge often to resist other systems of legitimate control." To management, this may be viewed as a Theory X employee response (McGregor 1960). However, resistance is of itself a normal part of the political process (Ball 1987; Ganderton 1991; Busher 2001). Resistance can take place for a variety of reasons but, importantly, amongst these is that of principled objection to innovation. Yet, as Hoyle (1988: 257) notes, objections may not be as principled as seems, "a proposed innovation which threatened the territorial interests of a teacher might well be resisted by mobilizing 'professional' arguments".

There may be a considerable degree of tension between the teachers' authority, based on expert knowledge, and the bureaucratic authority of a head teacher and other leaders, derived from their administrative positions (Busher 1998). Indeed, teachers may well agree with Samier (1997: 433) who states bureaucratization can be viewed as "a ritualized instrument of power bent to political, economic, or other ideological purposes, having disastrous effects through the legitimized disempowerment of social classes and status groups". On the other hand, Busher (2001: 87) points out, as teachers are able to exert

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power to resist change, "no proposed or planned change can be guaranteed successful implementation without skilful attention by the innovators to the politics of bringing about change." Similarly, when change is imposed too heavily by external agencies, internal actors tend to become demoralized and may resist strongly (Busher 2002). Staff may well consider themselves disenfranchised labourers or become rebels, thereby generating a culture of resistance (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Such resistance may mean teachers 'exit' or 'opt out' of the organizational culture (Barry 1974). Bennett (1995) quotes the work of Bell and Sigsworth (1990) who found evidence that conformity to policy requirements was more a question of lip service than practical activity; in the classroom, teachers got on with doing things their way. A point neatly summarized by a teacher interviewed by Lieberman and Miller (1984: 9), "I made a personal decision. I know a lot of teachers have done the same thing. You seal off the room and you deal with the students. You say, 'you and me and let's see what we can do alone.'"

At the same time, school organizations can exert coercive pressures on teachers (Paechter and Head 1996). However, as Busher (2001: 90) comments, "Resistance to such coercion is hardly surprising if attempts to exert control conflict with participants' principled values or interests, although it may not be viewed sympathetically by people in authority in a school organization, such headteachers or school governors, who want to uphold a particular structure and culture." Significantly, Van Maanen and Barley (1984: 337) note, "To the degree that coercive authority and the application of discipline in the workplace is required, hierarchical control can quickly get out of hand since strong cultures of resistance can be expected to develop." In turn, management responses can initiate a vicious cycles of rules (Gouldner 1954; Douglas 1970).

Bennett (2001) offers a model to illustrate the interaction of culture, structure and power. He sees organizations as collections of individuals (cf Greenfield and Ribbins 1993), where "relationships are sustained through exchanges between the parties to the relationships" (Bennett 2001: 118). How the parties

respond to each other depends on the power resources available and, importantly, the extent to which they are deemed legitimate. He states such an approach forces researcher "to look beyond issues of structure into questions of organizational culture and how they interpenetrate with structures" (ibid: 119). In a similar vein, this study, seeking to understand the interaction of structure, culture and power, will attempt to produce a model to account for the micropolitical events which took place during the case study.

## 2.5    Summary

The chapter has reviewed a selection from a large body of published work. Notions of culture and cultures have been considered, specifically Western and Arabian cultures, professional TESOL, military and corporate cultures. The discussion moved through a consideration of organizations and organizational cultures to an examination of the nature of power and micropolitics.

There are gaps in the literature. Fidler (2001) points out the lack of published qualitative research into school organizations. He notes, a collegial orientation with its expectation that staff work together closely in an interdisciplinary and non-hierarchical way, "removes any need to consider power as a potentially distorting influence on the process [so that] Problems are seen as educational and not as organizational" (ibid: 61). Clearly, there is a need to investigate further. Similarly, Bell and Bush (2002) point out research into school effectiveness and improvement (Hoy et al 1991; Stoll 1996) tends to focus on learning and teaching rather than educational management.

Busher (2001: 75) comments that despite the success of various studies (Rutter et al 1977; Sammons et al 1997) which have tried to characterize effective schools, "little attempt has been made to locate these characteristics in their dynamic socio-political environments or to indicate how those environments interact with the internal processes of schools". Notwithstanding more recent research by Busher and Barker (2003), in general, as Harris (2001) points out, with the exception of Stoll and Myers (1997), case study evidence into 'failing' or 'sick' schools is notable by its absence. Arguably, an awareness

of the nature and process of organizational dysfunction may illuminate understanding and contribute to educational management; not that good management necessarily produces good schools (Ball 1999). Nonetheless, as Harris (2001: 20) states, "Rich case study explanations ... are much needed".

Dimmock and Walker (2002: 71) state emphatically, "Whatever one's view on this issue, there is no denying that the influence of societal culture on educational leadership has been a neglected area of research." This is an area specifically addressed in this study. As they continue, the literature on educational leadership has "targeted English-speaking Western school settings, but without formally recognizing the influence of national or societal culture ... The systematic study of school leadership on a comparative and international basis – using societal and cross-cultural analysis – has yet to develop. In short, surprisingly little is known about the relationship between societal culture and educational leadership" (ibid: 70).

The literature suggests there is likely to be conflict between the opposing expectations of the various cultures discussed. For example, corporate culture which claims to put the customer first, while maximizing shareholder returns and directors' emoluments, is likely to be at odds with a pedagogical culture which claims to give primacy to the interests of students, learning and academic standards. Similarly, both cultures may sit uncomfortably with a military structure which has a strong hierarchical and authoritarian culture. In the same way, perceptions and values of Western staff may clash with the perceptions, beliefs and priorities of Arabians. The purpose of the case study is to explore the situation in this particular school. It is suggested the literature does not prepare the reader for the realities of the day-to-day micropolitical interaction: the negotiating, wheeling and dealing - and the conflict, humour and drama of staff swirling, and surviving, in a cultural maelstrom.

# Chapter Three: Research Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The *research design* presented below is misleadingly neat. In reality, the study began with no clear idea of purpose other than to conduct an ethnographic investigation into the school where the researcher was employed. The primary purpose being to practise the skills of ethnographic observation with the rather vague intention of 'learning something' about the culture of the school. In the process of observation, it became evident that issues were being 'uncovered' which necessitated a more rigorous research design being formulated. The researcher recognized he was observing and participating in an unfolding micropolitical drama played out against and within a rich, diverse and complex cultural setting. As the purpose and focus crystallized, research questions were formulated. Initially, these comprised a list of a dozen questions which were refined through a process of reflection and discussion to three. In the process of data collection, issues of appropriacy and efficacy of method and trustworthiness came to the fore. As the mist cleared, it became clear the researcher had blundered into a methodological and ethical minefield. This chapter records the researcher's attempts to impose order on the research and come to terms with the ethical issues raised.

The field study was conducted over a period of six months in the year before September 11th 2001 attack on the New York World Trade Centre. Extensive notes were taken during this period. Interviews were conducted during the period of the study and over the following three months. A table showing the dramatis personae and list of interviews is attached at Appendix A. The organizational relationship between the researcher and the main contributors in terms of reporting functions is attached at Appendix B. Selection of the contributors is discussed later in the study under the heading 'sampling'.

In this chapter, the focus of the investigation, its purpose and context, is presented first. This is followed by a discussion of the Research Questions.

The appropriacy of research paradigm and methodology leads to a description of the methods used in this study. Relevant literature is cited. Case study, ethnography, participant and insider research and researcher voice are discussed. Other methods of data collection used in the study including interviewing, study groups and documentary evidence are described. This section is completed with a note on analysis and synthesis. The next section discusses trustworthiness and explores issues such as validity, authenticity, adequate warrant, triangulation, feedback, member / validity checks, threats and bias, generalisability and limitations. The following section considers ethical issues concerned with features of the study including those of access, participation, insidership, power and status, informed consent, overt / covert research, confidentiality and identifiability, health and safety, conflicts, dilemmas and trade-offs. The chapter concludes with a note on the significance of the study in terms of research methodology and its limitations. Arguably, the quality of the research will be indicated by an assessment of the limitations and constraints of the study.

## 3.2 Research Focus

Maxwell (1996: 16) states research must begin with a sense of *purpose*; it must be "focused on *understanding* something, gaining some insight into what is going on and why this is happening." Bassey (2002: 115) comments, purpose "is about trying to discover something that was not known before and then communicating that finding to others." The purpose of the study is to better understand the cultures and micropolitical processes taking place in an educational organization prompted, in part, by the recognition that 'things were going wrong'. As Holliday (2002: 24) notes, "much qualitative research, even within formal educational settings, is in response to problematic or otherwise puzzling social realities that people find around them, whether personal, professional or institutional". The study became an attempt to record and make sense of the processes taking place when the management, in a complex cultural and micropolitical arena, was perceived to be at odds with the professional, educational culture.

Deciding on a purpose means questioning personal motives, considering ethical issues and confronting "how you are going to deal with their consequences" (Maxwell 1996: 16). For while personal involvement may provide valuable insights and data (Marshall and Rossman 1995; Strauss and Corbin 1990) and personal research may contribute to the "professional development of the individual" (Middlewood et al 1999), part of the researcher's obligation is to consider the implications of such research. Deciding on a purpose is not simply a matter of defining a broad area of interest to be investigated by the application of pertinent questions; it means having to confront likely consequences.

While the literature on research methodology offers numerous ways of looking at cultures and educational organizations, as Maxwell (1996: 36) warns, one can rely too heavily on existing theory, especially as it may involve "shoehorning questions, methods and data into preconceived categories and preventing the researcher from seeing events and relationships that don't fit the theory". The imposition of dominant theories may also present serious ethical problems (Lincoln 1990). Furthermore, little guidance has been offered in terms of research methods "to advance empirical study in the field of cross-cultural educational leadership" (Dimmock and Walker 2002: 81).

Dimmock (2002: 28) notes, "For too long, [research] assumptions, policies and practices emanating from Western Europe and North America have been imposed on societies with very different cultures". He argues, not only is the researcher 'culturally located', bringing his own values and beliefs to the data in both collection and analysis phases, but also the very methods of collection are not culturally neutral. For example, a respondent told the researcher, "Attitude questionnaires are a waste of time. Most of us look on them like multi-choice tests. One of the choices is correct, and the others wrong. You just have to work out what the researcher wants." All aspects of cross-cultural research need to be approached with caution, sensitivity and cultural awareness. As Holliday (2002: 12) cautions, qualitative research must avoid a prescriptive view of culture because "it implies how things are before the research begins and does not allow meaning to emerge."

Furthermore, research into the micropolitics of schools has been relatively neglected. One reason, Hoyle (1982: 67) suggests, is "the area is so sensitive that data is difficult to obtain – it is clearly tautologous to say that micropolitics is a politically sensitive area." Simply put, micropolitical research is difficult. As Busher (2001: 80) comments, philosophies and ideologies of individual participants may be publicly proclaimed or they may only be visible in how people interact with others and "without necessarily being clearly articulated." The overt, public stance may contrast markedly with enacted theory (Schon 1983). Interestingly, in his own research Holliday (1994) opts not to pursue a micropolitical approach as it would have been too sensitive and difficult. These difficulties are compounded by the particular challenge of conducting research within a military culture (Little 1970; Dixon 1976). Furthermore, when informants feel that there is risk involved, there is some doubt as to whether they will be truthful (Dean and Whyte 1958) or politely tactful. Bell (1987: 76) noted with regard to her study, "Diplomacy rather than concealment seemed to be their overriding consideration."

The *research context* comprises more than organizational details, a description of the school and the program, and a list of the dramatis personae; as Morrison (2002: 20) points out, context comprises "the holistic picture in which the research topic is embedded. ... [as] researchers can only make sense of the data collected if they are able to understand the data in a broader educational, social, and historic context." Hence, in the study, efforts are made to situate the research locus in the larger cultural context.

The researcher's *conceptual framework* is also a part of the research context. As Janesick (1994: 212) states, the qualitative researcher should articulate the ideology or conceptual framework early in the study for "by identifying one's biases, one can see easily where the questions that guide the study are crafted." Miles and Huberman (1994: 18) note a conceptual framework "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them". Maxwell (1996: 25) defines this conceptual framework as "what you think is going on ... a tentative theory of what is happening and

why". Strauss (1987) calls this *experiential data* – the researcher's technical knowledge, background and experiences. Reason (1998: 12) talks of *critical subjectivity*, where researcher experience is used as part of the inquiry process; indeed, any view "incorporates the stance of the observer" (Maxwell 1996: 29). In other words, along with other factors, one's own experience influences and informs the research process. In this study the researcher locates himself as Western expatriate. There is an attempt to ameliorate his particular biases and ideology by seeking the assistance of an Arab *specialist informant*.

## 3.3　Research Design

The *research design* (overleaf) signposts the proposed researcher path through the body of published research and the various approaches to data collection and analysis. In this study, the research design model, modified from Maxwell (1996), comprises six elements: *purposes, contexts, research questions, methods, trustworthiness* and *ethics*. 'Ethics' has been identified as a separate component as this aspect features strongly in the study.

The model is dynamic and interactive, permitting and recognizing the inevitability of change, adaptation and re-focusing as the research progresses. Each element of the model interacts with the others. The hub of the design lies in the research questions which clearly influence the selection and approach in terms of referenced literature and appropriacy of methodology.

## Purposes

To describe the organization
To identify the cultures affecting and comprising the organization
To investigate the interaction of cultures and micropolitics
To understand the processes leading to organizational dysfunction
To consider the implications of these processes
To understand the role of the researcher as active participant

## Methods

Ethnography
Case study
Observant Participation
Insider research
Interviews
Documentary evidence
Study group
Specialist informant
Holistic interpretation

## Research Questions

1 What cultures influence and define the school organization?
2 What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bounded by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?
3 What kind of model can be constructed to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place?

## Contexts

Conceptual Framework
Small cultures
Critical subjectivity / Experiential knowledge
Cultural
Social
Political
Thought experiments
Exploratory research
Extant theory and research

## Trustworthiness

Triangulation
Feedback
Member checks / study group
Specialist Informant
Reflexivity
Generalizability
Threats / bias
Limitations

## Ethics

Power and status
Cultural dimension
Gaining access
Informed consent
Overt / covert research
Confidentiality & identifiability
Health & safety – (participants & researcher)

## Research Design

*Figure 3.1 Research Design*

## 3.4 Research Questions

The *research questions* interact with all aspects of the study, namely purpose, context, methods, ethics and trustworthiness. Maxwell (1996: 52) writes research questions "need to take account of why you want to do the study (your purposes) and of what is already known about the things you want to study and your tentative theories about these phenomena (your conceptual context)". Bassey (2002) comments research questions set the immediate agenda for research, establish how the data is to be collected, limit the boundaries of space and time within which it will operate, facilitate the drawing up of ethical guidelines, and suggest how the research should start.

Maxwell (1996: 49) expresses the opinion research questions should not be formulated in detail until the purposes and context of the design are clarified and "they should remain sensitive and adaptable to the implications of other parts of the design. Often you will need to do a significant part of the research before it is clear what specific research questions you should try to ask." Light *et al* (1990: 19) make a similar point, "A good set of research questions will evolve, over time, after you have considered and reconsidered your broad research theme." Miles and Huberman (1994: 75) also note research questions may be revised as the researcher interacts with the data. In this study the initial expectations of the researcher were regularly challenged and had to be revisited and revised; as a result, research questions were reformulated and finally refined into the following.

**What cultures influence and define the school organization?**

**What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bounded by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?**

**What kind of model can be constructed to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place?**

## 3.5 Adopting a qualitative approach

Given the sensitivities of researching cultures and micropolitics, a *qualitative approach* was adopted as the best means of answering the research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) define qualitative research as: "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach ... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them..."

While Huberman and Miles (1994: 17) caution new researchers "a loose, inductive design is a waste of time", Maxwell (1996: 3), referring to Martin's (1982) *garbage can* model of research, points out "research design does not begin from a fixed starting point or proceed through a determinate sequence of steps". Maxwell argues "any significant prestructuring of the methods leads to a lack of flexibility to emergent insights" (1996: 63). The approach of this study acknowledges "day-to-day research comprises shortcuts, hunches, serendipity and opportunism" (Holliday 2002: 7) and that "decisions about research instruments are made in gradual response to the nature of the social setting being investigated as its nature is revealed" (ibid: 8).

## 3.6 Case study

Cohen and Manion (1994: 122) point out the interpretive, subjective dimensions of educational phenomena are best explored by *case study*, "best thought of as a generic term that describes a methodological approach rather than a specific method." Richards (2003: 20) indicates the difficulty of defining case study, "as its practitioners readily admit, [case study] means different things to different people ... some researchers claim that case study is nothing more than a method, there are those who would elevate it to the level of paradigm." There are numerous definitions (Yin 1989 and 1994; Stake 1995; Bassey 2002). As Richards (2003: 20) notes, "more or less any qualitative methods are appropriate [to case study] provided that there are multiple sources of information generating sufficiently rich description." At best, case studies allow readers to judge the implications of a study for themselves (Katz 2002).

Nisbet and Watt (1984) caution that case study involves systematic collection of data; it is not simply a matter of collecting anecdotes. A 'family of research methods' are used, comprising mainly interviews, observation and documentary evidence (Adelman et al 1984; Bassey 1999; Johnson 1994). Bassey (2002: 110) states case study is an empirical enquiry, the starting point of which is the collection of data, "usually by asking questions, observing actions or extracting evidence from documents". It has a "localised boundary of space and time", a "natural context" and a "singularity". Bassey (ibid: 110) points out, "Case study research entails being where the action is, taking testimony from and observing the actors first hand."

This study falls within the parameters of case study in that it "involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 1993: 52). It comprises a single locus and is of finite duration as the beginning and end of the study is marked by the arrival and departure of a new military commander.

## 3.7 An ethnographic approach

This case study adopts an *ethnographic* approach. This involved "gathering information by moving closely among people, sometimes quite literally 'living among people'" (Pearson 1993: ix). In ethnographic studies "researchers are part of the social world they study" (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994: 16). *Engagement* is a key concept; being part of the social world which we study "is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 15) and the researcher himself is central to the research process (Burgess 1982). May (1997: 139) comments "ethnographers have explicitly drawn upon their own biographies ... Our own cultural equipment is thereby used reflexively to understand social action in context." Van Maanen (1988) terms the approach: autobiographical ethnomethodology. However, as observed above, the centrality of the researcher may be problematic.

Richards (2003: 15) suggests ethnography "enables the researcher to move from outsider to insider status, although the aim is not to become a complete

insider because this would mean taking for granted the sorts of beliefs, attitudes and routines that the researcher needs to remain detached from in order to observe and describe." Herein lies the challenge: the researcher has to maintain an *etic* perspective while permitting the participants to articulate their *emic* reality.

Etic and emic are key concepts within the ethnographic tradition and "refer – rather crudely – to an insider's perspective on events (emic) as opposed to an outsider's perspective (etic)" (Richards 2003: 15). Indeed, definitions of these terms have been contested (Lett 1996). In anthropological terms, Lett argues etic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers and are in accord with the epistemological principles deemed appropriate by that science. In contrast, emic constructs are accounts, descriptions and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the members of the culture under study. Emic knowledge is essential for an intuitive and empathic understanding of a culture while etic knowledge in essential for cross-cultural comparison. The point to be taken is the terms should not be used with evaluative force implying one view is 'better' (Richards 2003). However, in the discussion that follows below, it is argued that notions of *outsider* and *insider* are more complex constructs than the literature suggests.

Other key ethnographic concepts include "the idea of getting a fix on things" (Richards 2003: 15), ie the process of triangulation, which is discussed below. Ethnographers also refer to thick description – an account that is rich in detail and embracing different perspectives. To obtain such an account requires extended immersion in the field as in this study.

A particular challenge of ethnographic data is that often the author is the only one informed about much of what is written. May (1997: 154-5) notes the approach may be criticized as it "relies so heavily upon the researcher's powers of observation and selection." He continues, "the observation of

small-scale settings leaves it open to the charge that its findings are local, specific and not generalisable; it lacks external validity. ...participant observation has, for want of a better phrase, practical limitations". These criticisms are considered later in a discussion of *trustworthiness*. On the other hand, as Atkinson and Hammersley (1994: 248) point out, ethnography is seen as "exploring the nature of particular social phenomena rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them".

## 3.8   Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a form of ethnography. Crawford (1996 cited in Stephenson 2005 online) argues ethnography "becomes autoethnographic because the ethnographer is unavoidably in the ethnography one way or another, manifest in the text, however subtly or obviously." Ellis and Bochner (2000: 739) define autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural ... [They] focus outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by, and may move through, refract, and resist, cultural interpretations."

The term autoethnography was first used by Hayano (1979). He used the term to refer to anthropologists involved in research of their own people, where the researcher is a full insider by virtue of being 'native', acquiring an intimate familiarity with the group, or achieving full membership in the group being studied" (Hayano, cited in Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739). The expressions 'full insider', 'intimate familiarity' and 'full membership in the group' presage the later discussion of observant participation.

Autoethnography may be autobiographical where the researcher is the sole subject. This approach is frequently characterised by evocative stories of personal pain and suffering, for example, White (2003: 23) records "my first injury [severe, chronic back pain] cost me my marriage and the chance to have children." Unsurprisingly, a criticism of the approach is its potential voyeurism - "peeking in on damaged selves" (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 749).

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On the other hand, the stories are often inspirational and tell of triumph over misfortune and adversity. Such stories have "therapeutic value" (ibid: 754). For example, White's story is one of overcoming distress, deprivation and stigma.

In narrative autoethnography the ethnographer's experiences become part of the ethnographic description and analysis of others' experiences; the emphasis is on the "ethnographic dialogue or encounter between the narrator and the members of the group being studied" (Tedlock, cited in Ellis and Bochner 2000: 741). It is a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay 1997). Spry (2001: 710) contends, "Autoethnography can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts." Stephenson (2005) uses the term to mean a form of self-narrative that places the self within a particular social context, in her case, a university. In this study, as the author records unfolding events, thoughts and emotions in his field notes, his narrative is written in the first person. These aspects of the research reveal the author's 'vulnerable self' - his frustrations and sense of failure – placing himself within and as a part of the social and cultural context.

It follows that one of the challenges of autoethnography is to make the 'self' strange, to view the 'self' as 'other'. As Spry (2001: 716) points out, "Dialogical engagement in performance encourages the performer to interrogate the political and ideological contexts and power relations between self and other, and self as other". There is a process of critical introspection. Ellis and Bochner (2000: 737) write, "I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand the experience I've lived through." Similarly, Serper (2004 online) discusses his devotion to his grandfather and the premature loss of his only child using "an autoethnographical narrative involving reflections and reflections on the reflections". The process is not simply one of reflection but of interrogating these reflections.

Stephenson (2005 online) chose an autoethnographic approach "as a way of making sense of the University's organizational life …. it gave a voice to the difficulties, risks and ambiguities of organizational life in this Middle Eastern University." She was attracted to the approach as it is "grounded in reality through personal experience; grounded within a specific social context; subjective; longitudinal; multi dimensional; reflexive; and it combines methodologies of narrative inquiry and personal experience methods (narratives of self)". She was able to draw on case study (one university is studied), critical ethnography (culture is an important construct) and autoethnography. In a similar manner, this study draws on elements of autoethnography to explore the interaction of cultures and micropolitics within a single educational organization.

At the same time, autoethnographies have been criticized for being too self-indulgent and narcissistic (Coffey 1999). Holt (2003 online) notes there are those who dismiss autoethnography as unscientific and others who value autoethnography but have concerns over its rigour. This debate is revisited later in the study section regarding scientific rigour.

In summary, it is argued that the most effective means of investigating the research phenomenon and answering the research questions is to adopt an ethnographic case study approach.

The following section considers the four methods of data collection utilized in this study: observant participation; documentary evidence; online interviews; and study group / specialist informant.

## 3.9    Observant participation: a research method

As a form of observation, *participant observation* is a recognized and commonly utilized method within ethnographic case study. As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994: 249) note, "in a sense all social research is a form of participant observation". However, in the following section the concept of *observant participation* is proposed.

Much of the published research is devoted to issues such as how the *outsider* becomes an *insider* in order to access and collect data, for example by *negotiating entry* (Marshall and Rossman 1995) or *gaining access* (Bogdan and Biklen 1992; Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Gold (1969) recognized there were different levels of researcher participation and used the term *complete participant* (see also LeCompte and Preissle 1993). However, this term was reserved for outsiders, researcher immigrants, who relocated for the duration of the data gathering. May (1997: 140) notes such roles were often "covert for their intentions are not made explicit ...it is argued to produce more accurate information and an understanding not available by other means" (see also Humphreys 1970; Whyte 1984).

Although the author initially considered his own research to be *participant observation*, as the study progressed, the realization grew this stance was increasingly untenable. A different research approach had emerged, which I have termed *observant participation*.

This term recognizes the primary function of the researcher as *participant* rather than *observer*. In other words, it accepts the ineluctable primacy of 'the day job'. Indeed, during this case study on many occasions the pressures and demands of the job necessarily relegated the researcher-observer role. This was the reality of the research process. Although, as Holliday (2002: 26) states, "people doing research as part of their job have the huge advantage of starting out with a normal role within the environment in which they work which can double as a research role", the researcher has to decide which role is preeminent: participant or observer. Usually the imperative is fending off the alligators rather than making field notes on the size of their teeth.

As a research method, observant participation lies somewhere between traditional research where "the researcher was required *not to influence the situation being studied*" and action research where "the researcher intentionally sets out *to change the situation being studied*" (Lomax 2002:

123). Unlike the traditional researcher, the observant participant's involvement may well lead to changes generated by research outcomes. At the same time, unlike action researchers, observant participants are not necessarily setting out to change the situation as a direct result of the research.

### 3.9.1 Field Notes

Observations recorded as *field notes* were the prime ethnographic data source in this study: hundreds of pages of scribbled notes, quotes, thoughts, impressions and contexts. However, while there is a freshness to this form of data collection (Cohen et al 2000) and observation can be powerful, flexible and 'real', as Moyles (2002: 173) cautions, observations skills "are often determined by what we *think* or *hope* we are going to see. Whatever it is we observe and want to understand undergoes significant *interpretation*. ... we cannot divorce our underpinning values and beliefs from the ways we ourselves perceive a situation or what we expect to occur." As Morgan (1997) noted, our preconceptions and expectations influence our findings. Attempts to minimize observer effect are very naïve (Gubrium and Holstein 1997: vi). As Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 11) state, "the concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned." Observation is a value-laden research instrument.

In this study, the primary data source was observational field notes recorded in pocket note-books. There were also transcripts and documents. Later in the research a PDA (electronic Personal Digital Assistant) was also used to record observations. On balance, I was more comfortable using notebooks as they attracted less attention. The notebooks also contained the usual day-to-day jottings and reminders of the day job; the original, job-related purpose of the notebooks. While taking notes, the researcher commented on such items as the context, explanatory background and initial thoughts, feelings and responses.

The process of taking field notes usually involved scribbled entries in small pocket-sized notebooks. A notebook was always carried by the researcher as a part of his daily routine as DOS. The notebooks contained memory joggers and 'To do' lists. Items included cracked window panes, broken door handles, letters to be written, and informal lesson observations. Where possible, entries

were made at the time. In effect it was an unobtrusive means of gathering data. When I returned to the office I typed up a fuller version of the notes as 'Field Notes'. Samples are attached at Appendix C. As may be seen from these extracts, a strength and weakness of this method lies in the very personal nature of much of the interpretation which is involved in the act of choosing what to record and how it is written up. To compensate, where possible, I have quoted participants verbatim. Yet, such quotations require contextualization to be meaningful. It must be born in mind that the data is being gathered by a researcher who has a particular institutional status as DOS. This issue is addressed below.

### 3.9.2 The presence and influence of the researcher

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 17-18) point out, "rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about understanding them." This is especially the case with observant participation. As Holliday (2002: 145) states, "the presence and influence of the researcher is unavoidable, and indeed a resource, which must be capitalized upon." When Sarah states she will not let her personal experience of having breast cancer bias her research, Carolyn Ellis responds, "Of course you will ... as you should" (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 736). This has implications with regard to the nature of the data collected; the bedrock of the study. There is a need for transparency and honesty: "the researcher does not pretend to escape subjectivity, and must therefore account for that subjectivity wherever possible" (ibid: 147) - however uncomfortable.

Initially, the researcher chose not to identify himself as the Director of Studies as it was felt that this revelation would be potentially compromising and could have serious ramifications in terms of his own job security. However, in the interests of transparency and rigour it was felt that the organizational position of the author required disclosure. On one side, there were staff who were affected by my role in the organization, eg James and clearly this could affect the information and experiences that staff were prepared to share with me. On the other side, a recognition of the degree of my involvement in the management of the school and concomitant access is also important. An

illustration of the relationship between the author as DOS and the participants identified in the study is attached at Appendix B.

As Richards (2003: 9) notes, "the place of the researcher within the research process needs to be addressed." The researcher is central to the process of observation and interpretation; his is a cultural lens, permitting him to see some things more clearly than others. Her expectations, conceptual framework, her experiences shape what and how she is able to see. To immerse oneself in the data means becoming a part of that data; one must not underestimate the importance of the self as instrument (Wolcott 1994). Furthermore, notions of multiple identities (Grossberg 1996; Hall 1996) raise issues of the problematic self; given a small change in circumstance even the same phenomenon may be observed differently by the same researcher. In addition, the researcher's *degree of insidership*, discussed below, influences the observations he may make and the impact of observer effect (Moyles 2002). The challenge is to allow the participants to speak for themselves. In this study, in recognition of the limitations of data obtained through observation, strenuous efforts were made to triangulate the data through other means such as interviews and discussions.

In this study, the researcher was open with colleagues in advising them he was conducting research into organizational culture. The day-to-day note-taking and observation were carried out as a part of the regular work routine 'strolling' round the school (Bauman 1992: 155). Observations were made in the notebooks alongside regular work notes and, in this sense, were unobtrusive to the point of being covert. The ethical dimensions of this are discussed later in the study.

Having discussed the role of the researcher in this study as observant participant and the strengths and weaknesses of observation as a method, the next section considers the nature of *insider research*. It is proposed that *insidership* is a complex construct, influenced by postmodern concepts of multiple identities and the nature of organizational microcultures, micropolitical groups and *third spaces*. In this study, research perspective,

access, interpretation and analysis were influenced by the *degree of insidership* the observant participant enjoyed.

### 3.9.3 Insider and outsider perspectives

Following the earlier discussion of emic and etic perspectives, Morrison (2002: 20) comments, "the aim is to investigate 'from the inside' through a process of *verstehen* or empathetic understanding". This begs the question: what is an insider? It would appear through a process of immersion *outside* researchers are morphed into *insiders* thereby gaining access to riches otherwise denied them. Others who are already insiders, ie those who have a *normal* role, presumably enjoy this privileged position already. Popularly, being an insider affords confidential access to truths concealed from others: the news scoop, for example, *Inside Story* (Dyke 2004) and *The Insider* (Morgan 2005). However, both books tell only one side of a story: they fail to meet the standards of qualitative research.

However, being an outsider has advantages, as Maxwell (1996: 66) noted, "people may be very open about personal matters to strangers whom they never expect to see again." While observant participants are privileged by their insider knowledge, they may be disadvantaged by their organizational status and prior history, raising questions with regard to the likely honesty and openness of informants. Dimmock (2002: 36) points out, "In societies such as those of Arabia ... participation is more likely if the researcher is perceived by the respondents to have power, standing and status." Nonetheless, although having high insider status may encourage teachers to participate, it certainly raises questions over the value of such data.

As Holliday (2002: 145) points out, "because qualitative research is itself social action, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is an issue which inevitably pervades all aspects." Pretending one is able to divorce one's research role from 'the day job' is unconvincing and will not result in honest exchanges, especially when researching the culture and micropolitics of an organization. As Holliday notes, "the presence of the researcher is entangled in the politics of the research setting" (ibid: 145). Indeed, although

being Director of Studies gave the author insights into the organization and an ability to see nuances an outsider might not see, it brought the hindrance of being seen as a micropolitical agent in his own right.

Clearly the situation is multifaceted. In response, the notion of *insidership* is proposed. There are a number of aspects related to insidership, such as *trust*. If a researcher has a high degree of insidership, arguably that researcher is more likely to be 'trusted' and, in turn, colleagues are more likely to be open with someone they trust.

### 3.9.4  Group membership

It is proposed that insidership is closely allied to group *membership*. The organization comprises a number of microcultural and micropolitical groups. The degree of insidership will depend on the extent to which the researcher is a member of a group. One may be a full member of certain groups, an occasional member of others, enjoy guest status with some and be excluded from others. It is argued the researcher constructs multiple identities as he interacts and negotiates group memberships. Maxwell (1996: 66) writes of "the continual negotiation and renegotiation of your relationship with those you study". The researcher needs to be aware as he moves from group to group, exchanging ideas, conducting his day-to-day affairs, constructing appropriate identities to foster successful interaction, he could be affecting and possibly compromising the data he is collecting.

Group membership may be no more than a shared interest in a football team, or it may involve ethnicity or religious persuasion. Herrera (1992: 15) found, researching in Egypt, that she was received with "hostile and suspicious glances" which changed to "warmer and more friendly expressions" when the teachers discovered she was the wife of a Muslim, a mother and of Arab ancestry. As a Western expatriate Director of Studies, the researcher is a 'fully paid up' member of the expatriate senior group. He enjoys a lower degree of membership of other Western expatriate teacher groups. He has *guest membership* of a number of Arabian groups which grants him a lower order of access. He is a full member of certain sports groups but holds guest

status in others. The sum of the researcher's memberships is a measure of his *insidership* which, in turn, influences the breadth and trustworthiness of the data gathered.

In summary, researcher position is not simply a matter of being an insider or an outsider but one of *insidership*. It is suggested *insider* and *outsider* are more useful as terms to define researcher origin rather than terms to define researcher stance. Insidership is multi-dimensional and reflects the various levels of membership of the microcultural and micropolitical groups within an organization. Researchers adopt different identities as they participate within and interact between these groups. In turn, they need to be aware that access and understanding is limited by the level of membership. One approach to reduce the effect of this is for the researcher to allow members to speak for themselves and observe them in context. Another approach is to invite a colleague who has other organizational memberships, for example, someone who may be from a different cultural background, to collaborate on aspects of the research process. Both approaches are used in this study.

## 3.10 Documentary evidence

In general, documentary evidence was collected during the observant participation stage. As such, the evidence is not presented separately but within field notes. In addition to providing new evidence, documentary analysis provided triangulation (Cortazzi 2002). While Lincoln and Guba (1985: 277) state documents usually comprise diaries, memoranda, letters or field notes, in this study, cartoons were also collected.

Texts should be approached with caution (Gottschalk *et al* 1984; Scott 1990). As Cortazzi (2002: 198) points out, "Texts in education also generally conform to various other social expectations (*genres*) that relate to the social context in which they are used". The organization is likely to determine to an extent the format, style and organization of meaning. In the same manner, a military organization is likely to produce documents reflecting the approved 'military' format. In this study, documents variously reflected educational, corporate and military cultures. As Cortazzi notes (ibid: 199) each text "has

some kind of social function or social action that it performs; it gives information, displays knowledge and skills, promotes an image of the writer or institution, requests or recommends further action, wards off challenges or anticipated negative reactions, and so on".

In research, the document is usually read by someone who is not the intended recipient. However, in observant participant research, it may well be the researcher is the genuine recipient, originator, or copy addressee. Although risking a biased interpretation, the researcher is able to access, in such instances, privileged data.

Crucially, documents offer "unwitting evidence for such aspects of educational institutions as the exercise of power and control, the presentation of real or contrived images, the leaking of attitudes, values and social expectations which the authors might have thought hidden" (Cortazzi 2002: 202). Potentially they are a rich source of micropolitical data. Every document reflects values and ideology (Fairclough 1993). As Holliday (2002: 96) notes, documents "can also reveal secret, hidden worlds which are difficult to fathom through observed behaviour and secret events or participants' accounts." Even what appear to be straightforward administrative documents, as Johnson (1994: 27) writes, "are no neutral reports of events. They are shaped by political context and cultural and ideological assumptions."

The question arose as to whether the researcher had adequate documentary data. He had access to some correspondence in English from the military to the contractor but no access to private memos in Arabic. From interviews, there are indications that these were few in number. At the same time, understanding correspondence was made more problematic because key decision-makers were writing in a foreign language. Furthermore, while there may be occasions when primary documentary sources may be appended to a study (Halton 1999) in this research it was not possible for security and contractual reasons. Finally, there remains the ethical decision with regard to what documentary evidence can be used and how it should be used.

## 3.11 Interviews and discussions

This section considers the nature of what may be termed formal research interviews and, secondly, how such interviews were conducted in this study. There is a distinction between formal and informal interviews "done 'on the hoof' ... when time is available and the spirits amenable" (Ely *et al* 1991: 57). Spradley (1979) refers to friendly conversations and Whyte to "simply listening ... and sometimes asking" (1997: 25). Conversely, Kvale (1996: 05) defines a *research interview* as "a conversation that has a structure and a purpose" namely "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena". Kvale favours a postmodern social construction of reality, emphasizing the "constructive nature of the knowledge created through the interaction of the partners in the interview conversation" (ibid: 11). While Fine's (1994: 72) *"working the hyphen"* reflects the complexities of the interaction of researcher / respondent identities.

There are particular challenges when interviewing peers, not least that "respondents might assume that it is unnecessary to go into details that they might expect the interviewer to know" (Halton 1999: 72). The researcher has to be aware interviews "may also be anxiety provoking and evoke defense mechanisms" (Kvale 1996: 35) especially, as in this study, where both parties share a degree of risk in discussing organizational cultures and micropolitics. The researcher was aware that data may be distorted by a number of factors, such as "interviewing a fluent English speaker with a very different educational and cultural background to our own, which may lead us into making unwarranted assumptions about what can be taken for granted" (Richards 2003: 84). Furthermore, "Teachers are generally very articulate, and reliance on interview data can give a misleading impression of their thought processes" (ibid: 80). Atkinson and Silverman (1997: 322) argue we live in an 'interview society' where "we take at face value the image of the self-revealing speaking subject at our peril." As Wragg (2002: 143) points out, "Respondents may not tell the truth, particularly if they believe their answers may show them in a bad light or reach the ears of their superiors".

## 3.11.1 Sampling

In this study, a number of research interviews were conducted. Sampling was both opportunistic and *purposeful* (Patton 1990; LeCompte and Preissle 1993); "selecting those times, settings and individuals that can provide you with the information that you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions" (Maxwell 1996: 72). Following earlier research, it was determined that any attempt to include all members of staff, for example by using a survey, would be an ineffective method of accessing attitudes and details with regard to sensitive issues. It was evident that the researcher's position as the Director of Studies impinged on the selection of informants. Some teachers were clearly uncomfortable with the researcher / manager relationship (see Appendix E Extract Four).

There were a number of face-to-face interviews including two with senior officers who stated they were prepared to participate but not be recorded. There were twenty *asynchronous* online text-based interviews in total but, on balance, the data obtained was limited. There were five *synchronous* online text-based interviews with senior members of staff. The list of interviews conducted is attached at Appendix A.

## 3.11.2 Asynchronous online text-based interviews

*Asynchronous* interviews generally utilize email; "a modification of the use of traditional postal interviewing" (Chen 2001 online). There is time lag between questions being asked and responses received. On the other hand, *synchronous* interviews involve the interaction being carried on in 'realtime'. Realtime interviews may be one-to-one, using a program like Microsoft Messenger or via chat rooms (Hamman 1998 online) or online forums (Anderson and Kanuka 1997 online). I have termed these approaches: *asynchronous online text-based interviewing* (AOTI) and *synchronous online text-based interviewing* (SOTI). It is suggested both online interview methods facilitate the co-construction of data, although there are clear differences in the two approaches.

As a method AOTI offers significant benefits (Boshier 1990; Ferguson 1993; Hakken 1999). For example, Murray and Sixsmith (1998) report online communications result in more honest responses, particularly from participants who are asked to reveal sensitive, personal information. This position is supported by Coomber (1997) who researched online the habits of illicit drug dealers. However, asynchronous interviewing lacks the spontaneity usually required in a 'conversation' (Selwyn and Robson 1998). As one respondent in this study noted, "intercommunication is not a series of set monologues". In addition, respondents reported being overwhelmed with full inboxes and information overload (Burkeman 2001; Steele 2002).

Twenty-five invitations were issued. There was no attempt to explain beforehand face-to-face the nature of the research as it was intended to maintain a record of all interaction online. Twenty replies were received from respondents who comprised teachers, seniors and fellow researchers. Of the twenty respondents, only seven maintained an exchange of more than eight emails. None of the exchanges were completed to the point where all items on the Interview Guide were covered.

There were a number of comments on the informality of email discourse – as well as reservations. Martin wrote, "It seems to me that email in general is relatively informal (like speech), but leaves a permanent record (like writing a letter). So it's a bit of a hybrid, and you could look at how these intrinsic characteristics of email as a mode of communication affect the types of responses you are likely to get. Your research tool is not neutral, is -- I think -- what I am saying." Examples of informality are found throughout the corpus, eg "Does any of it strike a chord, or do you think I'm barking mad?  :-) " On another occasion the comment was made, "With your background here and elsewhere in [Arabia] you will be able to comment on our situation with authority" resulted in the riposte, "CRAWLER!  : ) "

As Tony commented, "Although literacy is a constraining factor, I don't need to spend time worrying about handwriting, layout formalities, spelling or punctuation. The computer takes care of most of that, and, if it doesn't, it doesn't matter. The message, not the medium, is paramount."

Another respondent, Jack, stated that "email is a lot less intimidating" than face-to-face perhaps because "it is also probably less demanding for the interviewee as he can think about what he's going to write." "The interrogator is not really 'there' in any real sense." As Matthew pointed out, "responses tend to be more considered and therefore may well be more valuable and definitely more thoughtful."

One respondent, Christopher, included, "By the way, I've heard from C__ that D__ has between three and six months to live. The cancer has spread to the liver. Poor old D___!" Whether such comments should be recorded or edited raises a number of ethical issues.

Several respondents commented that email lacks the spontaneity of face-to-face communication. As Dermot commented, "it does have the disadvantage of removing the spontaneity associated with face-to-face interviews ..." One respondent pointed out, "There is also the absence of 'adjustment'. In the course of a normal interview the parties concerned react to the other person's ideas or thoughts when their turn comes." This may contribute to making the exchange less intimidating "as I express my thoughts here, you are not going to interject or modify your second question based on what I'm writing." However, as Martin pointed out, this is a disadvantage in that "intercommunication is not a series of set monologues, as in the more notorious of George Bernard Shaw's plays, it is indeed exchange (whatever the underlying motivation). The one person will want to react to what the other says - in mid flow." He continues "Thinking in front of a computer, so e-mailing: well, yes then, for a chain of thought(s). But for an "exchange of ideas and opinions", no, too lacking in subtlety."

Nonetheless, as the interview extracts at Appendix E and Appendix G may indicate, a large body of data was gathered through these interviews.

### 3.11.3 Synchronous online text-based interviews

On the other hand, SOTI was found to foster a dynamic, lively and coherent exchange which constituted a genuine coauthoring and coproduction of data. Revisiting the issue of interview 'quality' (Kvale 1996: 145), SOTI does offer a technique that fosters "spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers". Furthermore, the method permits the interviewer the opportunity to "verify his interpretation, probing, rephrasing responses and passing them back to the interviewee". There are limitations, for example the abbreviated format can lead to "ferocious misunderstandings over simple textual utterances" (Stone 1995: 175); however, this was not considered a major challenge as all parties had similar frames of reference. Hamman (1998 online) stated he was able to ask questions he would not have felt comfortable about asking in a face to face interview, "I've found that asking about intimate details online is very easy and feels non-threatening" (see also Hamman 1996).


The SOTI method required the interviewer and the interviewee to be online. On each occasion they were at home. During the interview the interviewer had two windows opened on the computer desktop. One window contained MS Messenger sized to cover approximately two thirds of the screen. The other window contained a Microsoft Word document – the Interview Guide, also sized to approximately two thirds of the screen and offset from the Messenger Window. This meant, although overlapping, both windows could be viewed at the same time.


The Interview Guide (Appendix F) listed a number of questions that were considered essential to the interview as well as notes and reminders, like the importance of probing and follow-up questions and a few short examples like: "Could you expand on that?" and "Could you give an example?" Prior to the interview, it was intended, in word-processing parlance, to 'cut and paste' questions, for example, as questions were selected from the Interview Guide they were cut from this document and pasted into the MS Messenger window. This made it easier to see which questions had yet to be asked. In addition to

'pasted' questions, it was possible to type extempore questions and responses in the Messenger text input box.

During the first interview it became apparent that the open Word document, the Interview Guide, was also very useful as a 'scrap board' (Appendix G). As the interviewee's responses were read and re-read, it was possible to type into the Word document a number of follow-up questions or to modify questions that already been prepared. Depending on the responses of the interviewee, the new questions could be selected or modified. This meant that the respondent did not have to wait long for responses and questions and facilitated the flow of the discussion.

Respondents could review responses before hitting the 'Enter' key and sending the message. He could revise or delete text. This means that, although the 'conversation' is synchronous, each response was considered and editable. Although most 'key participants' in the School are familiar with 'MS Messenger' or a similar online program and email, the interview commenced with an explanation of the process, including a request for their 'informed consent' and an assurance of confidentiality.

Reading through the 'transcriptions', SOTI interview data is self-communicating, "a story contained within itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations" (Kvale 1996: 145). He considers this is a measure of quality. The fact respondents are able to reflect before transmitting their thoughts and ability to maintain a persistent textual record (Herring 1999) supports the proposition that the SOTI method is inherently more ethical than spoken discourse. Respondents also have time to read and reread the interviewer's comments. Weber (1986: 67) points out that an interview is "private and confidential, but it is also social and public." With SOTI, the interviewee has the opportunity of seeing and editing his public exposure. Although difficult to establish, it appears likely that responses in SOTI are more honest. If so, SOTI enhances *trustworthiness*. Perhaps not surprisingly, SOTI data obtained in this study tended to corroborate earlier

field notes. It is suggested that the method offers spontaneity yet does not pressure the interviewee to give instant or ill-considered responses. In fact, it offers the opportunity for the occasional cup of tea.

Interviewees, although they found SOTI demanding and intensive, reported enjoying the process. The lack of visual and aural cues appeared not to affect the value of the data, and it is possible that the lack of cues stimulated the exchange while lessening the impact of face-to-face consciousness of relative institutional status and 'power relationships' (Yow 1994: 2). Interviewees were, on the face of it, prepared 'to tell the truth' as they perceived it (Dean and Whyte 1958). Notwithstanding the sensitive nature of insider research into micropolitics (Hoyle 1982; Ball 1987), especially in a military institution (Little 1970), respondents were prepared to discuss contentious issues openly; indeed, some opinions were outspoken. SOTI, as an interview technique, offered the opportunity for a 'real' conversation with 'give and take', making the interview "more honest, morally sound and reliable, because it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings, and therefore presents a more 'realistic' picture than can be uncovered using traditional interview methods" (Fontana and Frey 1994: 371).

Five synchronous online text-based interviews were conducted. The respondents comprised five senior members of staff who were all considered to be key informants in terms of the research project. Each had participated in the earlier study into the use of asynchronous online research. Four of the five had familiarity with Microsoft Messenger or a similar program. The interviews varied in length and intensity and were occasionally interrupted by coffee breaks and 'comfort stops'.

Below is tabulated the duration, number of turns and word count of the interviews. Interview A was interrupted because the Internet connection 'crashed'. Interviews A and B were conducted in the researcher's home. Interviews were paused for coffee/tea breaks and 'comfort stops'.

Table 3.1 Duration, turns and word count of SOTIs

| Interviewee | Duration | Interviewer turns | Interviewee turns | Word count |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dermot | 2 hours 5 min | 85 | 80 | 3,638 |
| Nasser | 1 hour 30 min | 50 | 50 | 2,003 |
| Alistair | 1 hour 35 min | 57 | 51 | 2,544 |
| Andrew | 3 hours 30 min | 77 | 84 | 3,953 |
| Conor | 1hour 50 min | 83 | 79 | 2,967 |

Extracts from the interviews are included at Appendix E and Appendix G.

### 3.11.4 Summary

SOTI and AOTI were both utilized to level the organizational playing field, avoid the face-to-face relationship, give respondents time to consider their replies, avoid the notion of trickery or being caught out, ensure that the transcription is accurate and "because people think in front of their computers" (respondent comment). This is not to say that all respondents were able to come to terms with dealing with 'the boss' (see Appendix E Extract Four). Although there is a certain loss of spontaneity, arguably the ability to hover over the send button is an advantage to both the respondents and the interviewer. The interviewee is certainly less likely to feel like "a bumbling illiterate" (Yow 1994: 235). Having a level playing field is especially important as we are discussing organizational cultures and micropolitics. Arguably both online interview methods contribute to "a process of building up trust and cooperation" (May 1997: 119). A summary of the strengths and limitations of asynchronous and synchronous online text-based interviewing is attached at Appendix I.

### 3.12 Study group and specialist informant

Inevitably research will be constrained, as noted above, by the researcher's access to the various competing cultural / micropolitical groups. Outsider perspectives are limited; Holliday (1994: 142) writes of the "influence of psycho-cultural, informal and micro-political factors which are often hidden

from outsider view". Becoming a "marginal native" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) would not adequately address the issue. Acknowledging the challenges, Dimmock (2002: 37) suggests 'cross-cultural teams' as a way of "capitalizing on the strengths of both insider and outsider researchers". In response the author used a *study group* and a *specialist informant* as a both research instrument and as sounding board.

The *study group* met fortnightly. It comprised two senior members of staff (one Arab and one Western expatriate), a teacher assigned to curriculum development, a classroom teacher and the author; all of whom were pursuing doctoral research. Importantly, these individuals enjoyed a range of cultural, micropolitical and organizational group *memberships*. They had *insiderships*, in some cases, quite distinct to the author. At each meeting the observations and tentative comments of each researcher were discussed with the group. This approach offered new dimension to the research method itself as well as allowing group members to share their own research experiences. It was possible to put the researcher's data and findings back to fellow *observant participants* who were immersed and working in the same organization. They sometimes contributed additional data (more tales from the field) while, at other times, offered interpretations which illuminated the researcher's own findings. As Kvale (1996: 208) suggests, "By using several interpreters for the same interviews, a certain control of haphazard or biased subjectivity in analysis is possible." The study group became a means of compensating for 'the lone researcher' syndrome. Although study group comments fall under the categories of member checks and triangulation, in another sense they exemplify case study methodology: an approach which seeks multiple perspectives.

One fellow researcher, an Arab supervisor, continued to collaborate with the researcher throughout the duration of the research, including the writing up of the thesis, as a *specialist informant*. His role is considered in more detail below.

To summarize, this section has considered four approaches which were used to collect data. The next section of the study considers issues that arose with regard to interpretation, analysis and synthesis and related issues of insidership, third spaces, pixellation and researcher distance.

## 3.13 Interpretation, Analysis and Synthesis

It is immediately clear from the literature that *analysis* is not a distinct stage in the research process. Analysis is multi-layered, complex and elusive; "the researcher's equivalent to alchemy" (Watling 2002: 262) appearing to pose as many questions as it offers solutions. Furthermore, as Coffey and Atkinson (1997: 10) comment, "Analysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques." Indeed, the methodologically eclectic nature of case study research means there is no particular method of analysis unique to it (Bassey 2002). The very freedom of choice is daunting as is the breadth and depth of the data.

Analysis is implicit in the act of choosing what to record or what to ask; regardless of any methodological predilection, the researcher inevitably finds himself propelled into some form of analysis. Watling (2002: 263) notes, referring to interviews but in remarks applicable to other research situations, "You are bound to form judgements, hunches, prejudices, theories, hypotheses and further questions as you go along". Atkinson and Hammersley (1995: 19) take the position "data should not be taken at face value, but treated as a field of inferences". Maxwell also recognizes "all description and interpretation are inherently theory-laden, rather than being pure, objective accounts of events or meanings" (1996: 33). Richards (2003: 80-1) comments, it is important not to treat the data as representing some 'pure' pre-analytical resource: "analysis is embedded within analysis."

As in this case study, early analysis often resulted in research being refocused. As Bassey (2002: 119) comments, "some [analytical statements] stand and some need modifying, while others lack verity and are rejected. ... It is quite possible that the first round of enquiry will stop at this point and the central

purpose of the research be refocused". Maxwell (1996:77) argues "the advantages of being able to progressively focus your interviews"; what Glaser (1978) calls *theoretical sensitivity*. Initially the researcher set out to look at 'the organizational culture [singular]'. It was evident early in the research the unfolding micropolitical drama being played out against, within and as a part of the organizational cultures [plural] was a rich source of data and offered a potentially rewarding and insightful perspective which could contribute to extant knowledge.

## 3.14  Codes, categories and themes

Richards (2003: 15) states, in an ethnographic study, "the analysis of data will depend on the identification and categorization of key themes, perspectives and events, working toward an account that embraces adequate description and interpretation." He (ibid: 272) details this process (Box 6.3 *Aspects of Analysis*): collect data; think about the data, the aims of the project, other research, etc, in order to inform categories; categorize – code the data in order to assign it to categories: reflect – add notes, comments, insights, etc; organise – arrange the categories in different ways in order to see the data from different perspectives, looking for connections, relationships, patterns, themes, etc; connect – link discoveries generated by these procedures to concepts and theories, seeking explanation and understanding; collect – in the light of insights gained, collect further data (see also Bell 1999; Blaxter et al 1996; Cohen and Manion 1994; Denscombe 1998; Hopkins 1993; Miles and Huberman 1994; Robson 1993; Silverman 2000; Watling 2002).

Strauss (1988: 20-1) defines coding as "the general term for conceptualizing data" while Dey (1993: 139) explains, "We split categories in a search for greater resolution and detail and splice them in a search for greater integration and scope." In this study, codes and categories derived from the data gained in observant participation were tested against data derived from other sources, in some cases generating additional categories. Interview transcripts were analyzed using codes generated using the 'grounded' approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and from the participants' descriptions and a "start list" (Miles and Huberman 1984) generated from earlier studies. The start list included a

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number of cultural and micropolitical observations which the researcher had previously noted. The start list was not exhaustive and, appreciating the risk of only looking for what was expected, the author also used the list as a means of identifying his own biases.

The field notes and transcripts were printed out with a wide right hand margin. This meant the data could be easily annotated by hand. For some reason, it seemed easier for me to deal with the material manually in the first instance. The search was for recurring variables which together appeared to indicate categories or themes. For example, humour was identified early in the analysis. Each instance of humour was noted. Once the exercise was complete the electronic text was edited on screen and comments incorporated. Similar items were copied and pasted into larger blocks of text for further scrutiny. For example, one category was identified as 'Humour'. Initial coding had marked up many of these instances as 'Humour as a coping strategy'. Other labels included 'Humour as cultural artefact', 'Humour as social bonding' and 'Humour as resistance'.

The categories were then printed out again, with a wide right hand margin, for revised annotation. In a number of instances these revisions were discussed with study group members and with Nasser, the specialist informant.

On re-reading the data and in consideration of the context, ie opposition to military authority is not lightly tolerated, a number of these themes were revised. In micropolitical terms, some of the instances of humour appeared more a case of 'humour as subversion'. The data was then recoded. For example, the occurrence of the acronym 'IDRM' ('it doesn't really matter') was first recorded as a coping strategy. Its regular recurrence in the data suggested to the author that it had become a resistance mantra. The data was recoded as 'humour as resistance'. However, coding is not clear cut. The mantra also served the purpose of bonding expatriate staff into a social as well as a cohesive micropolitical grouping. The mantra 'they know what they are doing' served the same function.

Other instances of humour had obvious connotations quite removed from the micropolitical and shed light on cultural aspects. Such an instance was the joke told by Abdullah about the old father who alarmed his sons by announcing he wanted to marry again. The sons saw their inheritance being diluted and told their elderly father that he could not possibly marry. The following day the father announced to his sons that he had found a young wife in the local village – a K... girl. This tribe was seen as having lower status and the sons knew if their father married her, the family name would be blemished and compromised. As a result they rushed out and found him a suitable girl from a 'respectable' tribe. Of course, there never was a K.... girl.

In the same way, it was difficult to code the joke, recounted later in the study, told by the company manager at the TQM briefing. It was intended to be 'humour as ice breaker' and 'humour as social bonding'. In reality, as is shown later in the study, the joke served a very different purpose to that intended.

The cartoons which appeared on the notice boards, which are reproduced later in the study, were initially coded as 'humour as resistance and 'humour as social bonding'. In light of the processes taking place in the school, these instances were re-coded as 'humour as subversion'. Indeed, the process comprised a cycle of printouts which were coded, then electronically copied and pasted into new documents, which, in turn were printed and annotated afresh. A number of themes did not emerge until late in the process, such as the significance of multiple third spaces and the nature of their 'fuzzy edges'.

The author found it beneficial to stand back from the data to allow larger patterns and categories to emerge. Such categories ultimately contributed to an understanding of the cultural milieu, an understanding of third spaces, and the micropolitical processes at work. Micropolitical categories included control, command, coercion, expectations, orders, threats, resentment, resistance, rebellion, reluctance, disobedience and subversion. These categories are considered later in the study.

While analysis should be "methodical, scholarly, and intellectually rigorous" it also needs to be "imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive" (Coffey and Atkinson 1997: 10). One of the challenges of observant participation is that the researcher is, necessarily, totally immersed in the data. Researchers need an appropriate *researcher distance*.

## 3.15   Synthesis

Finally, there is the process of synthesis: the data has to be woven into a meaningful account. Yet, even the process of *synthesis* is a form of analysis. As Watling (2002: 275) points out, "The final threading together of the piece, the weight you give to each part of the argument, the elaboration of a line of thought - all these constitute a final round of analysis." Even then, this may not constitute finality. The researcher should not be alarmed if the answers to the research questions appear partial or inconclusive; perhaps the value of this study lies in its contribution to the ongoing debate with regard to organizational cultures and micropolitics.

Analysis, like the quality of data, is affected by a researcher's various degrees of *insidership*: his group membership level and concomitant access and trust. Within the organization, he is working and researching within multiple cultures and micropolitical groups. Holliday (2002: 146) recognizes the risks but advocates a proactive approach, "The researcher acknowledges the unavoidability of interacting with, and perhaps changing the culture she is investigating, but opens all channels of perception to capitalize on what is revealed about the culture, during this process."

There are limitations as to what the researcher is able to understand, for example, in this study, the complexities of the tribal links, the various microcultures where he has no more than guest status, and the micropolitical groups from which he is barred. A lone researcher who is socially, ethnically, organizationally, and culturally 'fixed' needs to mobilize and utilize other tools of analysis / synthesis.

As the ability of the researcher to access data was constrained by his institutional position as the Director of Studies, the researcher has attempted to offer something beyond an autoethnographic account of his involvement by seeking multiple sources, including the study group and the specialist informant. In this manner, he hopes to offer a more convincing and balanced account recognizing multiple interpretations are acceptable and expected. As Kvale notes, "hermeneutical and postmodern modes of understanding allow for a legitimate plurality of interpretations" (1996: 210).

In this study, as mentioned above, the researcher discussed much of the analysis with an Arab doctoral research colleague, Nasser, who worked in the same school; a solution akin to that offered by Cortazzi (2002: 209), who worked with his wife Jin, "for two researchers from different backgrounds ... to work together to draw on the strength of their identities and cultures of research to work toward a research synergy". The co-researcher, a *specialist informant*, was able to offer a non-Western interpretation of many events and insights into issues which would otherwise have been inaccessible because of the researcher's own limited insidership. Nasser's role was essential in terms of helping to balance the narrow insider perspective of the author. Many Arab and Arabian informants considered Nasser's perspective typical of many in the Arab world. As Sultan, one of the senior officers commented, "He represents the voice of the Arab street." Furthermore, Nasser, as a key member of the school's senior staff, had an insightful perspective on the events taking place. He actively contributed to the research process through data collection, analysis and synthesis. Many, many hours were spent discussing 'third spaces' and 'spirals of organizational dysfunction'.

The reflexive nature of the cycle of action and reflection enabled Stephenson (2005 online) as autoethnographical researcher to move from an unreflexively subjective position to one of critical subjectivity. Her field notes are concerned with reflexivity and consciousness in the midst of action. To avoid criticisms of 'self absorption', "these field texts then became the subject for mutual reflection and analysis by critical friends". She compared and contrasted her perceptions as researcher with two critical friends, who shared

similar positions within the department, "My perceptions were then interwoven with the reflections of the two critical friends." In a similar manner the author compared and contrasted his perceptions and reflections with Nasser, the specialist informant, thus weaving an analysis comprising reflections upon reflections.

## 3.16 Researcher distance and pixellation

In addition to utilizing a researcher colleague, opening all channels of perception includes looking at situations anew: 'making the familiar strange'. As Holliday (2002: 4) comments, "a major tenet of qualitative research is that all scenarios, even the most familiar, should be seen as strange." To an extent, this is a matter of mind rather than observation, reflecting a willingness to revisit the data many times, liberating new insights and meaning. "Even where the researcher scenario is familiar, the researcher must find ways of recovering the stranger position" (ibid: 13). However, recovering the stranger position is not easy when one is overwhelmed with the lived day-to-day experiences of the data.

Holliday notes, "the researcher needs to work hard to distance herself from and thus make scientific sense of the mélange of interaction within the culture of dealing in which she herself is a major actor" (ibid: 153). While qualitative research requires wading in detail, qualitative analysis and synthesis require *researcher distance*. The *appropriate* researcher distance with regard to microcultures and micropolitics may be at the postmodern level of multiple identities (Irvine 1998) while the appropriate distance with regard to cultures is likely to be at group level and larger. Although cultures are enacted through individuals, to see cultures in their larger sense one needs to step back.

At the same time, the researcher must avoid *pixellation*. A pixel (a contraction of 'picture element') is one of the many tiny dots that make up the representation of a picture in a computer's memory. Usually the dots are so small and so numerous that, when printed on paper or displayed on a computer monitor, they appear to merge into a smooth image. Pixellation, the researcher argues, is the process of looking too closely at the data, magnifying

the image to the point of only seeing pixels and not the picture. For example, it is suggested postmodernism, often considered antithetical to cultural studies (Atkinson 1999), has a tendency to pixellate the cultural image: it goes too close, magnifies too greatly, has its nose to the screen and fails the *researcher distance* criterion. Finally, the measure of a research study is its synthesis, ie the degree to which the researcher able to reconstruct the pieces in a way that is meaningful to the reader.

## 3.17 Trustworthiness

Bassey (2002: 110) states, "The question 'Does this really mean what we claim it means?' should always be in mind. ... I prefer the term *'trustworthiness'* to the terms 'validity' and 'reliability'". Bassey argues trustworthiness "successfully illuminates the ethic of respect for truth in case study research" (1999: 75). He is of the opinion the researcher should construct a worthwhile and convincing argument or story "expressed in a readable way for the intended audience [and] provide an audit trail [which] may validate or challenge the findings" that "enables others to examine the evidence for the trustworthiness of the study and also enables them to exercise their own creativity in finding alternative interpretations. The idea is to invite a colleague to conduct an audit of one's research and to comment on its perceived trustworthiness" (2002: 110). Bassey's suggestion to discuss the research with a colleague(s) as a means of addressing the import of the lone researcher and enhancing trustworthiness is consistent with approach taken in this study, namely *study group* and *specialist informant* (see also *member checks* below).

## 3.17.1 Researcher bias

Maxwell (1996) notes the importance of addressing issues of *researcher bias* early in the process. An honest declaration enhances trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985) as "biography is a fundamental part of the research process" (May 1997: 21) and the orientations of researchers "will be shaped by their socio-historical locations" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 16). The sense one makes of the world "is reflected in, and affected by, the norms and values that have been absorbed as part of life experience" (Morrison 2002: 22). The

challenge to observant participators is to "reflect upon, and even celebrate, their key roles as contributors to, and participants in, the principles and practices of their educational research projects" (Morrison 2002: 23). At the same time, eliminating *reactivity*, the *actual* influence of the researcher, is impossible. Arguably, in *observant participation*, reactivity is lessened when observation is unobtrusive or covert. On the other hand, in traditional interviews "reactivity is a powerful and inescapable influence; what the informant says is *always* a function of the interviewer and the interview situation" (Maxwell 1996: 91). A response is to accept interviews are co-constructions (Kvale 1966) while promoting interview techniques which reduce the direct influence of the researcher. In this study this has been addressed by utilizing online interviews.

### 3.17.2 Member checks

*Member checks*, the regular presentation and discussion of emerging conclusions with colleagues familiar with the setting (Denzin 1970; Miles and Huberman 1994), were conducted. The data was regularly submitted to the *study group* and a number of teaching and management staff, "systematically soliciting feedback about one's data and conclusions from the people you are studying, a process known as member checks" (Maxwell 1996:94). Informal and online interviews, detailed above, also contributed to this process. By making the process of data collection and analysis transparent, readers are able to make their own judgements. As Vrasidas (2000: 16) notes, although it is not possible to renounce one's prior knowledge and preconceptions, by "discussing some of the factors that might have influenced my interpretation, it allows the readers to be co-analysts of the study and reach their own conclusions about the validity [trustworthiness] of inferences". Stake (1976) argues such discussion and feedback is quasi-ethical as informants have a right to know what the researcher found.

### 3.17.3 Transparency

Transparency is an essential aspect of trustworthiness as "qualitative analyses can be evocative, illuminating, masterful – and wrong" (Miles and Huberman 1994: 262). As Griseri (1998: 335) comments, "Where any research is based

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on personal testimony, there will be a significant danger that what the researcher hears reflects not the actual behaviour but simply an expression of a location of control". Miles and Huberman (1994: 262) warn of the risks of the "one person research machine" with his "vertical monopoly"; risks including the holistic fallacy, elite bias, going native and the 'confirmability' bias. Miles and Huberman (1994: 264) caution, "'Plausibility' is the opiate of the intellectual." In this study, the process of analysis has been made as transparent as possible; extensive extracts from field notes / primary data are included in chapter four to facilitate readers in determining their own interpretations. At the same time, the author reports other participants' comments and analyses of events as a natural outcome of a research process which emphasizes the importance of multiple perspectives. The researcher has also made clear his organizational role as Director of Studies and the impact this may have had on data collection, sampling and analysis.

### 3.17.4 Triangulation

Nisbet and Watt (1984: 85) write, the basic principle for case study is "to check your data across a variety of methods and a variety of sources." Consequently, *triangulation* "to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen and Manion 1994: 233) is not so much a distinct validity testing strategy (Denzin 1970; Fielding and Fielding 1986) as intrinsic to case study's multimethod approach. This study includes both *methodological* and *respondent* triangulation: researcher observations, comments by participants, interviews, documents, member checks combine to triangulate and enrich the findings.

### 3.17.5 Scientific rigour

The case study approach relies heavily upon the skills and judgements of the researcher. Johnson (1994) argues this lack of scientific rigour needs to be defended. This is particularly apposite in autoethnographic studies which have been challenged for their lack of scientific rigour (Holt 2003 online). However, some scholars have suggested that the criteria used to judge

autoethnography should not necessarily be the same as traditional criteria used to judge other qualitative research investigations (Sparkes 2000).

Richardson (2000: 15-16) described five factors she uses when reviewing personal narrative papers. The criteria are: (a) Substantive contribution. Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life? (b) Aesthetic merit. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring? (c) Reflexivity. How did the author come to write this text? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? (d) Impactfullness. Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action? (e) Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? Ellis and Bochner (2000: 743) contend the effect of reality is created in narrative autoethnography by the texts and stories produced where characters are shown "embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle"

Notions of reliability, "the probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results" (Bush 2002: 60; see also Bell 1987; Hammersley 1987; Yin 1994) are dismissed by many commentators as a measure inappropriate to ethnographic case study; for example, Bassey (2002: 110) states reliability is "an impractical concept for case study since by its nature a case study is a one-off event and therefore not open to exact replication." Ellis and Bochner (2000: 751) opine, "there's no such thing as orthodox reliability in autoethnographic research. However, we can do reliability checks." They propose taking work back to those involved and "give them a chance to comment, add materials, change their minds, and offer their interpretation."

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) claim traditional notions of validity are inappropriate for qualitative / interpretative research. Vrasidas (2000: 16) opines, "There is no bias-free point of view in any approach to research. ... I can never enter a setting as the 'fly on the wall'." Wolcott (1994: 351) argues for "subjectivity as a strength of qualitative approaches rather than attempt to

establish a detached objectivity that I am not sure I want or need". He recognizes that traditional concepts of validity are inappropriate, "I do not accept validity as a valid criterion for guiding or judging my work" (ibid: 369). Ellis and Bochner (2000: 751) contend, "validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible." As Holliday (2002: 35) argues, in ethnographic research, "the notion of exploration rather than validation becomes even more prominent."

Richards (2003: 20) comments, "there seems to be a growing willingness among researchers to resist the call for generalization" (see also Brock-Utne 1996; Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Maxwell (1996: 55) states the primary concern of a case study "is not with generalization but with developing an adequate description, interpretation and theory of this case". Adelman et al (1984: 95) suggest that generalization may be possible but "during the conduct of the study the description of the case will increasingly emphasize its uniqueness". Alasuutari (1995: 156-7) states, the term generalization should be "reserved for surveys only ... *extrapolation* better captures the typical procedure in qualitative research." Stake (1994) offers the notion of 'naturalistic generalization' which "brings 'felt' news from one world to another and provides opportunities for the reader to have vicarious experience of the things told" Ellis and Bochner (2000: 751)

In earlier research, Bassey (1981) considered aspects of case study research could resonate across situations which on the face of it are quite different, arguing cases may be 'relatable' rather than generalizable. Refining this position, Bassey (1999: 12) offered the notion of *fuzzy generalisation* which "arises from studies of singularities and typically claims that it is possible, or likely, that what was found in the singularity will be found in similar situations elsewhere." Bassey (2002: 110) argues, "It is of limited value for a researcher to conclude 'if teachers do x then y may happen'. It is much better to go beyond this and try to discover why this may happen for this may contribute to a theoretical understanding that illuminates other events." He offers as a solution fuzzy generalization and best-estimate-of-trustworthiness.

One of the research questions asks if it is possible to explain events and happenings in terms of a model. Glatter (1997: 30) appears to dismiss such an approach, arguing "we have passed through the phase of over-reliance on generalised models". Certainly when the study commenced it was not the researcher's intention to construct a model, yet in the process of analysis/synthesis it became apparent that a model may illuminate the sequence and meaning of events in this particular case study and offer a way of conceptualizing the micropolitical processes at work. While this model may have a degree of applicability to other situations, in recognition of the 'uniqueness' of case study, no claim is made for universality. On the other hand, the model may contribute to a kind of fuzzy generalization. Perhaps the traveller (Kvale 1996), seeking an understanding of his own organizational environment, its cultures and micropolitics, has stumbled across aspects which would be familiar to others. Richards (2003: 21) eloquently articulates this sense, "In a field as broad geographically, socially and intellectually as TESOL, where generalisations are likely to be blandly true, suffocatingly narrow or irresponsibly cavalier, the power of the particular case to resonate across cultures should not be underestimated."

Although a number of documents have been referenced, much of this evidence is sensitive or categorized as 'restricted' or 'secret'. To this extent, the researcher accepts trustworthiness has been compromised as a result of ethical or security constraints. Although names have been changed, anecdotes and details are recorded as accurately as possible, raising, as in the Springdale case study (Vidich and Bensman 1968), concerns with regard to identity.

Nonetheless, in general, this study meets Bassey's tests of trustworthiness (1999, 2002). There was prolonged engagement with the data source. Observation of emerging issues was persistent. As far as practicable, data were checked with its sources. There was triangulation of data leading to analytical statements (Denzin 1970, 1978). An emerging story was tested against the analytical statements generated and a critical friend tried to challenge the findings thoroughly. It is suggested that the account is

sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence and an audit trail is offered. The fact the researcher was surprised by his own discoveries may be a further indication of trustworthiness.

There remain concerns. In this study, as discussed above, access and sampling were problematic. Most especially, despite working with him on a daily basis, the author was not able to interview the senior officer involved in school management. On the other hand, the researcher was able to interview other senior officers who held similar positions. Furthermore, as Busher (2002: 76) notes, "Foucault (1990) points out how membership of institutions of every type constrains the actions of individuals, distorting the views that they may be allowed to give or feel able to give to people researching the processes of those institutions."

There remains what Holliday terms the *paradox of research*: by which he means the process of analysis and synthesis, as it is reworked and written up, inevitably becomes increasingly a personal construct and more remote from the research context. As Holliday (2002: 100) comments, "The written study takes on an agency of its own – its own story – the argument. However, in doing this, it also expresses a reality which distorts the social world from which the data is taken." An unavoidable limitation perhaps, but one a researcher should consider.

In this study, the principle offered in both data collection and analysis is consistent with Holliday's notion of 'showing the workings' (ibid: 47). Within ethical constraints, the author shows the workings. Holliday argues this is the major way in which rigour can be maintained.

## 3.18 Ethics

Ethics as a major constituent of research is commented on by many writers (Punch 1986; Deyhle, Hess and LeCompte 1992; Pring 2000; Holliday 2002; Richards 2003). Maxwell (1996: 7) states emphatically, "ethical concerns should be involved in every aspect of design". Yet, defining ethics is problematic. Zimbardo (1984 cited in Cohen *et al* 2000: 58) opines, "Ethics

embody individual and communal codes of conduct based upon adherence to a set of principles which may be explicit and codified or implicit, and which may be abstract and impersonal or concrete and personal." Bassey (2002: 110) states case study should be conducted, "within an ethic of respect for persons (and of respect for truth and of democratic values)", that the people must be willing to be studied and research presented "in such a way that it is not prejudicial to their best interests."

Arguably, case study is implicitly about local constraints and the pragmatic recognition that such constraints influence what is ethically possible. Busher (2002: 74) writes the discussion of ethical principles and moral guidelines has "to be located within their contemporary and historical social, political, cultural and epistemological frameworks". Similarly, Kvale (1996: 122) eschews deontological and teleological positions and proposes a contextualized ethical position where ethical behaviour is seen "less as the application of general principles and rules, than as the researcher internalizing moral values". More pragmatically, Punch (1994: 91) contends, "One need not always be brutally honest, direct and explicit ... One should not directly lie to people. And, although one may disguise identity to a certain extent, one should not break promises made to people."

The use of documents in the study is problematic. Often correspondence was addressed to the researcher – but not for the purpose of conducting research and physical ownership does not necessarily confer authority to divulge contents. Halton (1999: 174) chose to attach correspondence to his study and plead, "Thus all readers of the appendices to this thesis are asked to maintain confidentiality." The author contends this is unrealistic and unethical. However, this issue was discussed in the study group and it was agreed that the use and reference to the contents, as long as anonymity was guaranteed, was permissible but not the reproduction of the documents themselves.

Bassey (2002: 121) lists criteria for measuring *respect of persons*. This study may fail to meet these exacting criteria in some aspects. Permission was sought and granted by management to conduct and publish the research as a

part of a doctoral study but, as there were a number of authority centres, it was not possible to ensure that the research was approved by all 'interested' bodies given the extent of "the levels of power and decision-making" (Bruyn 1966: 202). Permission to use interview transcripts, *informed consent* (Cohen *et al* 2000), was sought and granted by those involved. A more problematic issue is raised by Bassey in terms of the arrangements agreed for either identifying or concealing the contributing individuals and the particular setting of the research in the case report; the researcher has chosen not to identify the organization, military service, international company or country. In this study, the identification of staff listed at Appendix A has been fictionalized. While Clandinin and Connelly (1994: 422) point out that "anonymity and other ways of fictionalizing research texts are important ethical concerns", as the 'Springdale' case demonstrated, assurances of confidentiality do not assure anonymity (Vidich and Bensman 1968). The beneficial consequences of the study have to be weighed against the possible harm to or exploitation of participants (Patai 1988; Busher and Barker 2003). As in Busher's research (2002: 80) it was imperative to sustain the confidentiality of participants "while allowing their voices to be heard".

Researchers should be prepared to confront "the consequences of their acts" May (1997: 55). Should one record references to students as "slime"? (Ironically, a comment made by a teacher who is highly regarded and enjoys excellent relations with his students). How should offensive and racist comments be reported? As Holliday (2002: 183) notes, the researcher has to be careful with others' words, even when "using their own verbatim accounts as the major data source. ... much care must be taken about how it is selected and interpreted. ... verbatim data is as open as any other to distorting the world of the people involved". Within consequentialism, issues of *health and safety* extend to the researcher. Unlike an outside researcher, the insider has to live with the consequences of his research. May (1997: 138) talks of researchers "incurring some personal risk in their fieldwork". This appears to be a feature not considered by many commentators, although Blaxter et al (1996: 128) caution, "Health warning: In seeking to negotiate a contract with

your supervisor, manager or mentor, be aware of the power relationships and institutional constraints involved".

Punch (1994: 83) notes, ethnographic research is "mostly a solo enterprise with relatively unstructured observation, deep involvement in the setting, and a strong identification with the researched. This can mean that the researcher is unavoidably vulnerable and that there is a considerably larger element of risk and uncertainty than with more formal methods." Indeed, as noted earlier, there were occasions when the researcher was reluctant to make public his research role as he felt this could be misconstrued and put his own employment at risk. Nonetheless, in his own case, he felt compelled to reveal details of his position as not to do so would have compromised the standards required of an ethnographic case study, especially one which included autoethnographic elements. It is acknowledged that the author played a significant political role in the organization which itself was heavily politicized. Marcus (1994: 569) refers to the "politics of location" and Holliday (2002: 146) notes "researchers and their methods are entangled with the politics of the social world they study" (see also Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Gubrium and Holstein 1997).

The question also arises whether the researcher was engaged in *covert research*. In this study, the researcher unobtrusively took notes as a part of his day-to-day routine. Data collection in this study did involve covert note-taking, sometimes consciously and, on occasion, simply as a pragmatic expedient. While Humphrey (1970) took a teleological view, where ends justify means, Kvale (1996: 116) offers the ethical principle of 'beneficence' meaning "the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible." Covert research is not without risk (Goodridge et al 1996) and it does raise ethical issues (Foster 1996; Hitchcock and Hughes 1997; Warwick 1982). Moyles (2002: 117) contends covert research "is very unlikely to be tolerated in educational research because of the sensitivity associated with children as direct or indirect research participants". On the other hand, opportunistic observation is intrinsically covert; and as Holliday (2002: 24) points out opportunism is "the essence of the qualitative research."

Busher (2002: 80) explores these ethical issues, not least "about whether or in what ways information gathered for research purposes might be used within the micro-political (management) processes of a school." Insider research imposes moral dilemmas on the researcher. Both unconsciously and consciously, on occasion, information gained in the process of research did influence the observant participant as micropolitical actor. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 125) comment, "politics suffuses all social research." Punch (1986: 72) somewhat cynically remarks, "Subjects are conning you until you gain their trust, and then once you have their confidence you begin conning them." In this study, respect and a determination not to abuse the trust of colleagues was a constant concern for the researcher. The researcher accepted that the data could cause harm to respondents if presented to certain authorities. Busher (2002: 78) referring to research conducted by Wragg (1984) notes, "data raised an ethical minefield for the researchers because of their political sensitivity and the risk of causing harm to participants in those turbulent environments." Judicious care and moral responsibility when handling and publishing data is obligatory: "Researchers have a duty to avoid causing harm" (ibid: 83).

In turn, ethical openness raises issues. Shamim (1993: 96 in Holliday 2002: 157) discussed her research with teachers and was later informed by one of them that "by discussing my research plan, I had inadvertently alienated myself from their culture, ie the culture of practising teachers." She reports, "Another mistake I made ... was to put all the cards on the table at once ... as a result of my belief in the ethics of coming clean in ethnographic research." To the teachers, it was apparent that the purpose of the research was to get the researcher a higher degree and not to benefit them in any way (Holliday 2002: 158).

Miles and Huberman (1994: 296) note, in many accounts they had read of ethical dilemmas in qualitative studies, describing 'compromises', 'trade-offs', 'balances', and 'unhappy choices'. "If ethical issues were clear-cut and totally approachable on a deontological basis, life would be simple." As Busher

(2002: 74) comments, "Carrying out ethical educational research, then, involves researchers in a dialogue that is informed by social moral frameworks, whether codified or not, as well as by their own moral predilections and views." Ultimately, the researcher has to be able to defend his decisions – and live with the consequences.

## 3.19 Summary

In summary, this chapter has analyzed the existing state of knowledge, restated the research design, aims and objectives and clarified the key research questions. The researcher has described the methods of investigation and analysis, their strengths and weaknesses, and the reasons why these methods were considered appropriate. Issues of trustworthiness and ethics have been discussed.

# Chapter Four: Findings

## 4.1    Part one: Cultural confusion, competition and conflict

## "What cultures influence and define the school organization?"

This chapter largely presents data gathered via email and online interviews (AOTI and SOTI) with a range of staff and a number of face to face interviews, including senior officers. Data was also obtained in discussion with the study group. Extracts from field notes (observations) are included and are indicated by the day-month, for example (1-5) refers to the 1$^{st}$ of the fifth month of the study.

The findings are collected under the following headings: Arabian and Western cultures; TESOL and teaching culture; military culture; corporate culture; and organizational culture. It should be noted all names and locations have been fictionalized.

The researcher, as Director of Studies, writes in the first person in this chapter. It is suggested that this lends an immediacy and transparency to the account. The Specialist Informant is Nasser.

## 4.2    Arabian and Western Cultures

Across interviews, it was evident Arabians perceive themselves to be culturally distinct to other Arabs, albeit sharing a Muslim heritage, and very different to non-Muslim Westerners. Similarly, Western expatriates consider themselves to be culturally very different to Arabians. At the same time, Arabians do not perceive themselves to be a single homogeneous society and acknowledge significant differences between tribes. The [Arabians] are "a very mixed bag in themselves ranging from religious, tribal, geographical,

world view, educational, job history, family influence, etc" (interview data - Andrew).

When asked what characterizes Arabian society, the most prevalent answers were *pride* and *honour*. In contrasting the West and Arabia, one respondent gave marriage customs as an example. It's not just the ceremony which is different (men and women do not meet at the wedding; they celebrate in separate marriage halls) but also there are complex, unwritten rules which govern who can marry whom. Families phone round to check credentials and genealogies (interview data – Abdullah).

A related aspect is *face*. An Arab expatriate, Mohammed, commented, "*Face*. Those who are in charge pretend that they know what is happening in the [school] and they tend to convince themselves of that. This usually results in wrong decisions in spite of our advice to them. They are not willing to go back in their decisions if they make mistakes." Blame avoidance may be an aspect of *face*. One Arabian teacher, Saleh, teacher commented, "Everyone is looking for someone to blame. No one wants to risk losing face" (15-1). On the other hand, on another occasion an Arab teacher, Wahid, says, "He seems stubborn but people don't understand. It's a matter of face. Once something is announced you can't go back on it" (1-2). It is a matter of honour.

Interview data from Arabians reflects concerns over *wasta* which most considered an unavoidable and yet un-Islamic aspect of Arabian culture. It is evident wasta is a complex phenomenon. One senior supervisor, Waleed, related how he had refused to recommend a relative for a particular job. He explained he would say no perhaps six times, but in the end he would have no choice. "It is an obligation. I know it is wrong but what can I do?" It was pointed out the commander of the college was always under huge pressure to 'help' people. An ex-officer, Sameer, explained how when he had not stopped the discharge of a relative, he had been ostracized by much of his family. Another officer, Sultan, commented, "The [ruler] said he could fix everything except *wasta*. I have to switch my mobile off on Mondays [the day tests are

given.] You can't always say no." In fact, a number of interviewees quoted the [ruler's] words. "The [country] is influenced by the culture more than the religion or the law..... Here it is not what diplomas you have or how good you are ...IT IS WHO YOU KNOW [sic].......... things will seem to go smoother when you know whom to go to and how to approach that person. In Islam that is unacceptable," wrote Saleh, an Arabian teacher. "In [Arabia], the family comes first. But you do not expect thanks because you are obliged to do it – or risk rejection."

During the study, *wasta* featured strongly. Rashid, an Arabian teacher, commented, "Everything depends on your name and your position. It's wasta. Of course every country has a problem, even in America. But if you have a chart, America is 5% and we are 99%" (21-3). 'Obligation' often placed both military and teaching staff in a difficult position: two officers insisted, "We don't want to work with [an Arabian] supervisor. Don't put [an Arabian] senior in charge of [Arabians]" (20-2). Even expatriates attempted to exploit the network of obligations, Alistair commented, "The captain's doing it [a favour] for me which means he'll be nice to me because he'll think I owe him a favour ... if you follow the logic of that" (8-2). At the same time, to a certain extent this comment reflects the complexity of *wasta*.

Yet wasta is no guarantee of success. As two Arab teachers stated (Appendix C Extract One): "It is an obligation to help. ... Often you have to say yes but then pass the problem on to someone else who will say no. You have gained status by saying yes and avoided the embarrassment of saying no" (25-3). Indeed, one incident is recorded which indicates the ramifications of not helping: "One of the officers is furious with that 'lying captain'. He said he was going to help. How can I go back to my family? My wife's son has failed. I will be blamed." (13-2).

A common thread was the importance of *loyalty* to family, tribe and friends. As one Arabian supervisor, Hamad, commented, "It is even difficult for football players to play against their previous football team." This was recognized by the military as an issue: "We [the military] need to keep them in

the barracks to make them loyal to [Arabia] rather than their tribe" (27-1). At the same time other comments included, a case is quoted by an Arab teacher, Hassan, "where an individual changed his name before he was recruited in order to disguise his family connection to the CO [commanding officer]" (27-1).

A senior officer, Sultan, contrasted the West, where he had lived for many years, with Arabia. He said the difference was not one of developed and undeveloped but rather industrial and agrarian. "We are agrarian. Routine is important. Tradition is important. ... There isn't an urgent need to take decisions. Things take time."

In addition, there were a number of examples recorded of the sense of individualism and personal rights. Even students feel they have a right to appeal to the highest authority. "... Arabian culture permits the lowliest to go to the [ruler]. It is a common practice for the cadets to go directly to the college commander after the mosque – and complain about anything. There is the notion of *majlis* management (17-4). (The *majlis* is the open room where plaintiffs can go directly to a prince or minister). One teacher, William, commented, "You do your best professionally so the cadets don't complain about you. ... Even the officers are afraid of them" (17-4). Nasser agreed with this sentiment and pointed out it was also true that cadets often had their own *wasta* which could not be discounted. However, repercussions may result. One incident recorded was an occasion the cadets complained to the college commander that they were not being helped enough in the school. The school CO immediately demanded a Thursday program (the weekend is Thursday and Friday) and an additional daily lesson for everyone. An Arabian teacher, Abdul-Hamid, commented, 'He's just punishing the cadets for complaining to the commander' (14-3).

Most Arabians said the majority of their compatriots considered Western culture as decadent even if they acknowledged its attractions. This view of the West was common throughout the Arab world reported Nasser. Waleed wrote, "I believe that young [Arabians] like the Western culture because it

gives them freedom, but as soon as they get married and have babies then the attitude changes and they want their children to be raised with the [Arabian] Muslim values."

Arabian staff pointed out the centrality of Islam in local culture, "that's not negotiable, as you probably already know. The only thing that can benefit any problems is a better understanding of the religion and tolerance of it, because in the end, that is one thing that no one will compromise." Again, a view strongly supported by Nasser. As one Western teacher, Matthew, commented, "You need to look at the cultural implications of working in a culture that views reality with a certainty that is now missing in the West. There is also a fatality and acceptance alien to the West." This was exemplified in an incident I recorded in the field notes. It left a deep impression.

> "I recall [an Arabian teacher] asking to take a day off work. I
> asked him to bring back some supporting documentation. He
> came back the following day with his son's death certificate. It
> was God's will. I still have difficulty coming to terms with the
> strength and acceptance. It is culturally impossible to reconcile
> this attitude to the death of a child with a Western attitude to the
> death of a son. There is an impressive stoic acceptance of death,
> buoyed by the certainty of the afterlife" (14-3).

In addition, even sympathetic consideration for Westerners may highlight cultural differences, for example, a room is provided for non-Muslims to eat and drink during Ramadan, the month of fasting. Staff relations during Ramadan are more sensitive than usual. The two groups, Muslim (who are fasting dawn to dusk) and non-Muslim, are immediately delineated. Some Westerners interpret the provision for non-Muslims as discrimination rather than consideration, "The tea boy is hidden away and prepares tea surreptitiously for the infidels". Some practices such as ritual ablution "in public" disconcert Westerners. On the other hand, as Hamad commented, "many Arabians consider Westerners to be less fastidious than themselves. Culturally the perceptions are negative on both sides" (9-2). On one occasion,

a senior officer, Homayed, reprimanded an expatriate "for using an Arabic greeting; he is told that it is inappropriate for an unbeliever" (14-2). (I noted that I had never heard of a reaction like that before.) However, as Jonah commented, "The distrust between the two groups has been diluted to a certain extent by having a number of British Muslims on the staff; it fuzzies the line."

There is little social interaction of Westerners and Arabians. The former reported they felt 'ghetto-ized' by having to live in compounds. In turn, in a later discussion, Nasser commented that compounds were seen as places of sin - many Arabs were suspicious of what was going on behind high compound walls. Observations by colleagues in the study group included, Arabian society is difficult to access, "I don't know any Westerner who has talked to an Arabian woman", said William, a fellow researcher. On the other hand, as Saleh wrote, "I mean, they [Westerners] don't really have to isolate themselves, even if the locals encourage it. But I for one found myself as an undesirable component of certain expatriate gatherings, that's if I were ever invited to one because I'm a local. It doesn't matter what's inside my head - what matters to Westerners is that my skin is brown and I associate mostly with my countrymen. But here we're getting into colonialism and racism, and I don't think that's what you want to talk about." Perhaps ironically, the only other recorded instance of discrimination was the occasion an officer objected to the photograph of a black cadet included in the training materials on the grounds he was not a 'proper' Arabian.

## 4.3   TESOL culture

Most interviewees commented on 'teaching' as a culture in conflict with the other cultures. An Arab supervisor, Mohammed, commented, "There are areas of [cultural] congruencies and others of conflicts. ... When teachers, regardless of their nationality, talk about language teaching, a profession they all share, the areas of difference are few. On the other hand, when they talk about their own cultures as individual they may differ or I think they really differ." An Arabian supervisor, Abdullah, added, "When I was in the government school, we (the Western and Arabian English language teachers) all sat together. We were different [to others]."

Teachers' views converged around notions of teacher and students working together regardless. As Read stated, "The important thing here, as in any teaching environment, is to get along with the students and to concern yourself with what happens in the classroom - and as far as possible not to worry about what goes on outside it. That inevitably there will come a time, no matter how dedicated he is, when he will come a cropper and feel unfairly treated - but that that is the part and parcel of working in a place like [Arabia]." One supervisor, Conor, commented teachers are "doing their best. Giving students skills; however flawed. Teachers – good lads – but our job is to keep them [students] off the streets. There remains that obligation." Nasser confirmed most non-Western teachers felt similarly.

Concomitantly, a number of teachers stated they considered "the function of supervisors is to keep [the military] off our backs". Stresses and demands at work were exacerbated by communal living. One respondent commented, "The problem with some teachers ... is that they take their school problems home with them and living on compounds where people 'feed' on each other doesn't help!"

Despite challenges, there is a tangible air of professionalism and commitment. Christopher wrote, "One of the most enjoyable aspects of the school despite all the bitching and backbiting is the feeling of camaraderie and in my own personal experience, a sense of belonging. I actually feel that I am a part of the school and have contributed something to the place!" Other comments include, "There are also times when I bump into old students who thank me personally for getting them through tests. I was quite touched when I went to J--- recently and met an old student from ten years ago who thanked me for all my efforts. He made a point of saying that he had always wanted to thank me personally but had never had the chance." As Theo said, "We do it for the cadets, like Mohammed Saeed, not the officers." It was a comment said with real feeling (13-5).

A Western expatriate supervisor, Dermot, noted, "It is very valuable having an increasing number of [Arabian] teachers on the staff. Their presence helps to overcome the [military] comment 'you don't understand our culture'. In fact, the [Arabian] teachers have difficulty adapting to the military culture." Data gathered indicates Arabian teachers see themselves as part of the EFL professional culture and distinct from the military culture. One senior, Andrew, commented, "In fact, the [Arabian] teachers have difficulty adapting to the military culture." "We have more in common with you [the expatriate ELTs] than the officers," said Ibrahim (9-2).

Alistair, an experienced Western teacher trainer and study group member commented, "There are cultural attitudes to the role of the teacher and the role of the student; the notion that the student should sit at the feet of the teacher. It's at variance with experiences and expectations of Western teachers." Yet, as another member, William, pointed out, Arabian staff, having completed the equivalent of an UCLES CELTA, hold not dissimilar pedagogical views to Western teachers. However, Nasser pointed out that respect and status was more important to Arabian teachers.

However, Arabian teachers did report their perceptions of English were not necessarily typical. In response to an attitude questionnaire issued as part of an earlier pilot study, one Arabian ELT commented, "The connection some people make between English as a language and the West - which they learned to hate without discrimination – is the main reason behind disapproving of the language." Another Arabian teacher, Abdul-Majid, noted there were religious reasons for avoiding English, namely the language imported the [undesirable] culture. Arabian staff reported common feelings to the West range from hate to suspicion. They reported English was considered a threat by many and one teacher recommended cultural aspects should be filtered. "We should only use it [English] if it is necessary in some fields." This issue was discussed at length with Nasser who reported such attitudes were common.

Other demands impinge on the professional TESOL culture. Jonah, a study group member said, "They [our teachers] want to teach in a certain way but

don't because it would appear [to the military] that they have 'lost control'". Students also have certain perceptions which affect teachers: "Even cadets, culturally cadets help each other – there's a different view of cheating – they see nothing in helping each other. You are expected to help. I've tried to explain that helping is not giving someone the answers." Supervisors recounted a number of occasions when officers required all the answers written in a course book for a relative. A note taken at the time records: the CO has changed the training profile again 'to help the cadets' (13-3). The effect of this is that cadets qualify to take the final exam much earlier in their training. Cadets are now going to be hastened through the course. No discussion has taken place with the teaching staff. Even the earlier decision to give the testing section to "the authority to award or deduct up to five marks from a cadet's test score depending on his discipline" is greeted with suspicion. A teacher, reading the staff notice, comments, "You mean depending on his connections" (9-1).

One senior, Dermot, commented that staff are "under constant pressure to amend marks for certain individuals" (13-2). One account recorded in the notes was "the story of John S [an examiner] who was nearly dismissed last week for following an officer's instruction to change a cadet's exam mark. This instruction was subsequently amended by an order from the CO to hugely change the marks of all cadets 'in the interests of fairness'. The culture leads to an erosion of standards. These stories are passed around the staff leading to cynicism. It reinforces the commonly held opinion that we are only here to keep young [Arabians] off the streets" (14-5). Bradley's comment, "You have a clash of cultures – and that's not to do with eating with your right hand and sitting on the floor" (5-6) was a reference to the clash between the military and the teachers.

This is not to say *wasta* does not influence situations. One note records the time an expatriate teacher sent a badly behaved cadet to the Discipline Office. Instead, the cadet went to a teacher who was a relative. The expatriate teacher was furious – here was a clear case of wasta. Later, Nayef, an Arabian teacher, apologized, explaining: "he had no choice but to deal with the student

and besides it was the best thing to do. He had to look after a relative and he had made him promise to behave in future or else he would put him [the teacher] into a difficult position where he would lose face (10-1). It was a case of culture versus the rules - and the Arabian teacher genuinely felt he had acted in the best interests of both his relative and the expatriate teacher.

In interviews with teachers and supervisors, a view was articulated that Company / corporate policy actually hinders the development of a professional teaching ethos. Alistair wrote, "The Company recruiters universally seem to emphasise the large salary is to compensate employees for the social deprivation of living in [Arabia]. There is no emphasis on challenge, opportunity or personal/professional development. The largest font in the advert was the salary figure and the words 'Tax Free'. The Company has created a money culture. How do you make the job professionally challenging and rewarding?" Conor commented, "Sometimes I feel that it is like persuading troops on the Somme that digging trenches is a professionally enriching experience".

On the other hand, certain senior managers did attempt to improve matters. One interviewee recounted the story of when, at a time of severe financial cutbacks, the Company invested in attitude and psychometric entrant selection tests. Some time later Arthur, the General Manager, was advised by Abdul-Wahab, a senior officer, that the whole exercise was a waste of time, effort and money. The results of the last selection test were never consulted. "We have to take certain applicants. It is our culture. You know." Robert mentioned the same thing happening at a local university, "Someone spent a year devising an Entrance Test. He was told it was an excellent job. Then it was ditched. It was never used."

## 4.4   Military culture

Although the military are readily distinguished from civilians by their uniform, as one Western expatriate teacher, Steve, who was himself ex-military, commented, "There is definitely a military mindset. It's called painting rocks." His comments recalled similar sentiments expressed by other

expatriate ex-military staff, "If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't, paint it." The consensus suggested being military involved indulging in pointless, irrational exercises. Furthermore, disobedience or complaint, however sensible, resulted in censure or punishment. I vividly recall being told by Crocket, an expatriate senior ex-military officer, then a Company manager, on receiving what appeared to me a very innocuous and reasonable complaint from an ELT supervisor, "If he had been an officer working for me, I would have ruined his career." Unlike teaching, in the military your file follows you. Mark W, another ex-military officer now employed in the college, referring to the time after he had resigned from the UK military, commented, "Once the fear has gone, they don't know how to deal with you. Everyone is trying to push the other down. It's all part of the competition for promotion and the fear of dismissal."

In interviews with teachers, Arabian and Western, the topic of 'the military culture' evoked a negative response. Alistair, a member of the Study Group, reported, "Nine out of thirteen stories I collected mentioned either military culture, or military ethos, or military environment and the problems of adapting to the military. Teachers [expatriates] seemed quite prepared to adapt to a different culture. That wasn't the problem. The problem for us is that this 'military culture' is one of those problematic 'taken for granted' cultures." Similarly, Arabian teachers perceive the military as being 'different'. Homayed, one of the Arabian teachers, said to me with obvious distaste, "Until I came here I'd never met *them* [the military]." A staff meeting with local Arabian teachers resulted in a universal complaint the officers treated them with a lack of respect. Ahmed wrote, "As for the military *culture* I don't think there's much to say there. The British military has its values and every other military has its values. They're always based on machismo and intolerance. How else would they survive? These are codes that can't be broken. One thing that they can be made aware of is the fact that if they don't learn to respect the civilians they're working with, or other military personnel, then they would be doing harm to the project that's paying their wages." This resentment occasionally erupted into strong exchanges, eg the 'stand up' public argument, in English, between an Arabian teacher and an

officer, where the Hamad shouted "I am not your slave. You work for me. Your job is to protect me and my family."

As one Western expatriate supervisor, Peter C, wrote: "There are so many occasions when the military and civilian cultures clash. Even simple greetings and politeness conventions differ. Salute versus wave. Orders versus requests. Commands versus persuasion. Obedience versus respect. All these elements impinge on meetings and decision-making. Interpersonal skills are hardly necessary if you have sufficient stars and crowns."

A particular feature commented on by both Arabian and Western staff was, "One of our problems is that authority is invested in the person and not in the post. When the major is away no one is able to sign for him. Remember Colonel M----. When G---- was away he had to check with him daily to obtain specific approval to sign things on his behalf even though he was away for a year" (28-1). Clearly this reluctance to assume responsibility hinders the effectiveness of the organization. On the other hand, there appeared to be no reluctance to delegate responsibility: "[As DOS] I was advised by the Deputy CO that there are 100 students arriving tomorrow. Neither classrooms nor materials, nor teachers are available. [I was] told by the Deputy CO, 'I've told you. You will arrange everything.' He then walked away. The expectation is 'now that I've told you it is your responsibility and I don't have the problem any more.' It's a *pass the parcel* concept of delegation" (8-2). I discussed this later with Nasser who said he had encountered similar modes of delegation elsewhere but more usually had found head teachers insisted on involving themselves in all aspects of delegated duties.

While Arabian teachers readily distinguish between themselves and 'the military', in the study group, one Western member, William, commented, "I still find it difficult to distinguish between 'Arabian' and 'Military'. It's not really military – not like the British." Alistair commented, "The third strand is Islamic. There is 'Islamic', 'Arabian' and 'Military'. They magnify each other in some way." The exchange continued, "And obscure at the same time." Stories reported in other interviews supported the notion that clear lines are

difficult to draw, cultures are difficult to define, especially for outsiders. Referring to a complaint against an officer, Hamza, an Arabian teacher, commented, "They [other military staff] have complained to the deputy Commandant [about him]. He will move him. There is no loyalty only family and contacts." The teacher was explaining to an expatriate, regardless of the chain of command, there is no loyalty other than to family and 'contacts'.

In a study group discussion, one member commented, the adoption of Western military uniform, symbols and rituals is one of the reasons why Westerners, military and civilian, 'misread' the Arabian military culture. The cultural reality is very different. Jonah commented, "The baubles, gold braid and medal ribbons of the military contrast with the simplicity of *thobes* and, especially, *ihram* [where two cotton cloths, one worn round the waist, the other over one shoulder, identify pilgrims to Mecca]." The discussion noted modern military culture sits uncomfortably with local culture. As Alistair pointed out, this was a comment with which T E Lawrence would have agreed.

Similar comments were made by a Western expatriate ex-officer, Brian, who is now a senior Company manager. "The cultural differences are not so evident to someone who is British or American [ex-military]. The [Arabian military] looks the same as Western militaries. They even wear a crown on the shoulder. The manuals are the same. The 'rules' are the same. But culturally there is a completely different way of viewing relationships and implementing rules." He argued the essential difference is the [British military] is task oriented and the [Arabian military] is culture oriented. "Many expatriates are confused because it is very difficult to distinguish between what is military culture and what is local culture." Interestingly, when asked to investigate a matter objectively - disregarding *wasta*, Mohammed, an Arabian military officer, commented with a smile, "I'm not [Arabian], I'm military." He recognized the cultural difference. I suggest the smile was an implicit acknowledgement separating the cultures at times proves impossible. The same officer opined, "[Arabians] do not want to join the military. It is not our culture."

A note records: "Observing the students' military Graduation parade, one notices the amalgamation of religious, military and political strands in the taking of the oath of allegiance, which is a copy of a Western military ritual. A military band plays Scottish bagpipe music. An officer points out that some cadets have cotton wool in their ears so that they don't hear the music – for religious reasons" (6-5). Nasser confirmed this as a relatively common occurrence.

Patrick, a senior serving British officer commented, "I've worked with [Arabians] for almost twenty-eight years. I thought I knew them well till I came here. I'd always met them in UK. They are like chameleons. They blend into the cultural background in the UK. Perhaps because they naturally avoid confrontation. Being here, I suddenly realised that people could be so different and have such different values.' He related a story told him by one of the officers he worked with. The [Arabian] saw that he was becoming impatient with the lack of a decision in a meeting. He told him how years ago, when a well was drying up, it would become necessary for the tribe to move to another location. A decision would not be taken by any one individual because he would then be blamed if the new well was dry. Instead the members of the tribe talked about things and talked and talked and eventually, without anyone actually taking a decision, they all knew where they were going. They arrived at a consensus over time. [It's a case of blame avoidance. No loss of face.] You need patience. Sometimes Westerners don't realise when a decision has been taken. It's not obvious."

A senior manager based in company headquarters, Paul, related how the military had decided against advertising certain posts. 'They [the military] can't cope with the numbers of applicants they have already. You should see the General's [in charge of recruitment] office. They [applicants] are walking in at the rate of twenty an hour, each with a green file; usually accompanied by fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins. When they are told there are no vacancies they will go to the head of the [military] who will write on their file 'Please help this man'. Culturally there is an obligation to assist, especially

those of one's own tribe. Then if you help one, others will complain, if necessary, to the King." Problems arise when cultural expectations are not satisfied. For example, one Arabian ex-military supervisor was enraged to discover a critical 'secret' report had been raised on him, when he was an officer, by an evaluation committee. A friend had been on the committee. To him it was unforgivable that his friend had neither fixed the problem nor told him.

On the other hand, in the study group, William commented, "The military code of 'ours is not to reason why' transcends the local culture. The senior officer is on transmit mode, the acceptance of impossible orders. There's a culture of 'it's got to be ready' – tell me it is ready and I'll pass it on. Tell me what I need to hear. That's cultural. Military?" Alistair added, "You keep control by telling porkies. You say it will be finished. This is not an [Arabian] thing. It's military – once you're given an order, you have to carry it out." The exchange continued, "The military culture is the thing that confounds both [Arabian] and expatriate teachers – officers' visits to classrooms are given a lot of weight – and then overgeneralizations – like I can't do communicative activities. If they had the evidence they would have come to different conclusions. It's a big impact on new teachers. It's what they perceive as military culture. But it's not." At the same time, Nasser cautioned, "Personality plays a part. It's not just culture and dress." In a not untypical comment, one person said he had met officers out of uniform and they behaved quite differently: charming, generous and hospitable. He wondered whether it was a case of give someone an alien role and a uniform and they become culturally disorientated.

## 4.5   Corporate culture

The corporate culture is perceived by teachers to be remote and largely irrelevant to their day-to-day lives. Arabian teachers, while acknowledging their benefits package is attractive, do not trust the Company which employs them as they believe 'it' wishes to reduce their salaries. Nasser reported this was a common sentiment. Many managers are British ex-military and, therefore, perceived to be unsympathetic to civilians, especially English

Language teachers. And, as one senior Company manager, Brian, commented, "The [Arabian] military is only interested in the Company as a source of gizzits and freebies."

Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer was determined to implement his culture change program across the Company's global operations, even down to the staff in the school; expatriates and Arabians alike. The 'corporate culture' was encapsulated in a book written by Evans and Price (1999). During the study, the book arrived in the school. "Believe me. It's required reading," commented a senior manager. Evans laid out five corporate 'values': *Performance, Customers, Innovation, People* and *Partnership*. Little was conceded to the local culture, holding up Welch (cf Chapter Two) as an icon of corporate culture: "Welch did not hesitate: the *cultural foot-draggers* were told to leave the company" referring to those not prepared to support *the programme* as "*unbelievers*" (ibid: 35). Quoting Harper, CEO of RJR Nabisco, they state, "Culture is a mindset. It's the greatest weapon a CEO has" (ibid: 48). Given the societal and professional cultures in the school, this 'weapon' could well contribute to misunderstandings and conflict.

In the study group, Jonah noted, "There is the mismatch of the Corporate culture. What the Company is trying to sell to its workforce: TQM. Live the values – or we'll sack you. It's Stalinesque. Exhorting staff to live the values. Nobody has considered how those values relate to the local culture or the local environment. The corporate culture is a product of the Western business culture: OK it's been widely praised. The mapping of this culture on the local culture is probably impossible." Arabian and Western staff, and the military, uniformly viewed the Company as only being concerned with making money. Indeed, a senior manager in HQ was quoted by Arthur as saying, "TQM is about cash, cash, cash."

James, a Western teacher, commented, "We want to feel proud that we work for a [Western] company – especially with an international reputation. We all want to do our bit. Most people want to do a decent job." On the other hand,

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as Maxwell said, "Who do we work for? Although the Employee Opinion Survey gave the impression that it [the Company] was in charge, in reality ... [The Company] has no control over the workplace, promotion, environment, movement." Even extractor fans for the smoking room had to be purchased out of contributions from staff. "The general feeling is 'if you want anything you have to buy it yourself' (10-3).

Brian, a senior manager, commented the mistrust of the Company is exacerbated by having an integrated workforce and not being able to say some things in public. This results in 'secret briefings' for the [Western] workforce, holding them on compounds or during prayer time, or selecting individuals from different networks to spread the word. Bill L laughed, "Again they [the Company] are just incompetent. I remember my induction [before coming to Arabia]. Our 'cultural awareness' briefing amounted to an HR man telling us, 'Islam is a very old, very deep and very mysterious religion. In many ways Islam is a complete enema [sic].'"

Interviewees contrasted Western business practice with Arabian. A senior officer, Sultan, with considerable experience of living and working in the West, commented, "You have the problem of meetings: an [Arabian] will not immediately say what he thinks and therefore is disadvantaged in an argument. [Arabians] prefer to negotiate one to one. You always have to think of 'Honour': you have to think of the effect one's behaviour has on the family. ... Generally [Arabians] take things personally. They will always suspect the manager's motives are personal. He has his own agenda. For the Brits when a manager takes a decision they tend to consider it part of the job."

I made the following notes when discussing with Arab and Arabian staff the influence of *wasta* on corporate culture (see Appendix C Extract One). "There are two cultures. Culture A is Western, impersonal, and task oriented. Culture B is Arabian which is family and loyalty oriented. ... There is an obvious mismatch." They explained, "Arabs value family obligation. ... the inner circle is family / tribe, often bound with *wasta*. The outer circle comprises the workers: hired help, those who cannot be trusted. Culture B

values trust and loyalty over achievement. Objectives are focused on maintaining the integrity of the inner circle rather than aligned in pursuit of a particular task" (25-3).

An illustration of Arabian corporate culture was given by one of the study group. He was taken to the company headquarters of a local billionaire. "Everyone milled around in a very large office. There were chairs all round the walls and a large, imposing desk at one end of the room. Groups of people sat together in discussion. It turned out that the man behind the desk was a manager but the real power was held by Mohammed, the owner, who was immersed in discussion within one of the groups. I was advised, 'Just sit here. Have a cup of tea. He'll come over and talk to us when he is ready.' There is a cultural right of going to the person at the top. He is the one who is expected to resolve all issues. He is the only source of resolution." As one of the Arabian supervisors, Abdullah, commented, "We expect access to the manager. ... we can go to [the ruler of the country]."

Another supervisor commented, the hierarchy and rank of the military is in many ways very un-Arabian. Previously, the Colonel's office was always open and anyone could walk in. Multiple conversations and meetings may be going on in the office at the same time. The same is true of the contractor manager and DOS. The manager's door is only closed when there is an urgent private matter, but more often than not, personal and sensitive issues are dealt with outside the office. Expatriates quickly adapt to *majlis* management. Meetings are seldom held on time. Appointments are rarely fixed. Struggling with the frustrations of *majlis* management, one Arab senior, Mohammed, had all the visitor chairs removed from his office, "Actually, it's deliberate. It was just like a club. Everyone came in and sat down for a chat."

The following, taken from field notes (31-4), recounts the launch of the Company TQM program. The extract is lengthy but exemplifies much of the cultural issues at the heart of the organization:

"The Company has sought (for the first time) permission from the Commander to gather together all Company employees, Arabian and Expatriate, for a senior management presentation on the most significant Corporate Culture Change program ever launched by the Company, which I will call 'TQM'. Millions of pounds have been spent on the program at all levels of the Company. The Chairman has even written a book which encapsulates the philosophy (shades of Chairman Mao says one teacher). It is significant that senior Arabian military representatives have been invited and are present. TQM is designed to encapsulate all that is forward looking in Western management philosophy. The program is developed around five core values. English Language teachers are a significant proportion of the audience. Many resented being kept behind after work. Corporate culture change programs seem very remote when you are "fighting in the trenches" (teacher comment).

The General Manager, Arthur, introduces the presentation and then Benfield, the main speaker, ascends the podium. He briefly introduces himself and then attempts to put his audience at ease with a little light humour. He tells a joke:

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*Box 4.1 The Deputy General Manager's Joke*

'Two English Language Teachers are standing in Hameed Street [the high street of the local town]; one of them has a new mountain bike. 'That's very nice', says the first teacher, 'Where did you get it from?' 'Funny thing', replies the second teacher, 'I was standing here last week when a girl came cycling down the street. She stopped, took all her clothes off, lay on the ground totally naked and told me I could have anything I wanted. So I took the bike.' 'Good move', says the other teacher. 'The dress probably wouldn't have fitted anyway.'

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The audience was outraged. There has been a flood of letters demanding his resignation. In a couple of minutes a senior manager, with several years experience living in [Arabia], torpedoed the single most important management initiative the Company had ever launched. The telling of this joke demonstrated a singular lack of cultural awareness. In [Arabia], women

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do not ride bikes, throw their clothes off in public and invite sex. This is a country that punishes women for adultery by stoning and homosexuality by beheading. The Arabs [and Arabians] in the audience were stunned by his performance. Those who were not seriously offended simply dismissed him as 'an idiot'. The Expatriates were offended by his incompetence and by his insult to half his audience and embarrassed by his lack of sensitivity. Of course, his comments were grist to the mill to those who saw all foreigners as undesirable and cultural polluters. The rest of the presentation was ignored. Why on earth did he do it?"

Regardless of its 'disastrous launch', the Company pressed ahead with TQM. Three weeks later a report is made available to all staff. It stated the Company TQM Culture Change program is not being fully supported. The report is greeted with derision. One senior, Conor, comments, "It's positively Stalinist. Living the Values! It's Stakhanovite. Total bullshit" (19.5). A local manager, Mark W, commented, "The whole process is ethnocentric. It is failing to involve [Arabians]." An instance was quoted, "We have M— who is an [Arabian] Value Champion. He doesn't have to do anything. I prepare all the figures for him" (19-5). My note made on the same day records, "TQM is rather like an organizational release valve. Western expatriate teachers can rail against it without risking censure or dismissal. The military and Arabian staff are somewhat perplexed and appear to have little idea or interest in it." A view confirmed by Nasser.

I have noted that part of the difficulty is that the Company is perceived to be out of touch and ineffectual. A field note taken at a Health and Safety meeting reads: "Fire safety is raised at a supervisors' meeting. In the school the CO instructs cadets to remain in class if a fire alarm goes off. It is always assumed to be a false alarm. The Company includes Health and Safety prominently in its TQM Value Plan but to date there has still been no ruling from Company HQ on what Health and Safety measures the Company is liable for" (6-5).

While teachers felt they could ignore the corporate culture, there was a real sense that supervisors and managers had to buy into the corporate vision or risk dismissal. Part of the corporate literature included the slogan: 'Change people – or change people'. This could be very difficult at times. As Brian, a senior Company manager, said, "Sometimes you can't bridge the [cultural] gulf simply because of the party line. The loyalty pills are more and more difficult to swallow. It gets more and more embarrassing" (3-6).

## 4.6 Organizational culture

Referring to the organizational culture, James wrote, "It is very hierarchical - but that's to be expected in a military environment." He continued, "... all is not always as it seems."

A Western expatriate supervisor, Dermot, commented, "It [the school] doesn't have one organizational culture so to some extent I cannot describe it. It is also experienced very differently depending on one's position within 'it'." Nasser wrote, "... there are a number of cultures that affect what happens in the [school] e.g. the military, the Islamic, the Arabic, the [Arabian] and the western. These cultures do not represent discrete identities. However, they usually overlap in the organization and mix so that it is difficult to identify which culture is the driving force in a particular situation or instance." A Western supervisor, Andrew, commented on the organization, "There are so many different aspects, (Sunni and Shi'ite for example), military, bureaucratic, and subcultures (the cynics, the professional TEFLers). The organization is chaotic, fragmentary, conflictual at times. They do not really allow for the School as an integrated entity."

As Alistair wrote, "I wouldn't try to describe [the organization] to anyone unfamiliar with the Middle East and possibly not even to people who were. It is unique in its size, the constraints, the two hierarchies, the materials and their history, its relationship with [military] HQ, its middle management, and its management. My job ... is frustrating, invigorating, absurd, chaotic, satisfying, deeply ironic, and just plain daft in turns, and sometimes several of these at the same time. You have to have a wicked sense of humour to survive

relatively sane, as I know from when I was too sick to see the funny side!!"
"It would be very difficult to describe the [school] to someone who doesn't know it. In a nutshell, 'madhouse', would be an apt description," wrote Nasser.

Conor, a Western supervisor, wrote, "I'm not sure that official wiring diagrams can easily reflect the position. It has a certain nebulous quality about it. ... It has distinct cultures. On the part of [military], they have their own perceptions in respect of what should be done and how it should be done, rightly or wrongly. Senior staff, who are originally as I understand it, are advisors, find themselves on many occasions as message carriers to [teachers] that over the years have developed their own cultures (beliefs and ideas about how the place is run)."

The message from the teaching staff is the organizational culture appears divergent, confused, and certainly not in accordance with 'official' organization charts, be they military or corporate. Although strict military bureaucracy is a façade, says Ibrahim, "Junior officers are afraid of senior officers, it is more important to please them than follow the regulations." Clearly, this contributes to perceptions of organizational culture.

Christopher comments, "It is a place of extremes. Staff can be completely content with their lot while others are in despair. Student staff relationships can veer from happy to disastrous in a very short time. Relationships with the [military] can run the gamut from congratulations to threats of the sack all in the space of a day. What this means to many in the [school] is a sense of unease, of never knowing what is likely to happen. Add to this the confinement of so much talent with so little to occupy themselves outside work, leading to a proliferation of rumours and you could begin to define the aura of the place as one of fear and unease. And yet, and yet that's not really what it's like. From a personal point of view it's an enjoyable job of work most of the time with periods of frustration, disgust, anger and comedy thrown in."

Jonah, a member of the study group, commented, "There are two organizations [military and corporate] that sit together quite well structurally but culturally are miles apart. ... There is a strong schizophrenia running through the organization. ... There are strong negative cultures that are difficult for the teacher to change. ... There is a dissonance. The occupational culture is different to the management culture. . ... Teachers perceive threats because they don't know what an officer's agenda is. Like the officer who came in [to the classroom] sat in the corner and said nothing."

Alistair questioned, "Is the culture of the organization dictated by its purpose? There is an institutional mission statement: to teach trainees, in a disciplined environment, the language they need to undertake further academic and technical training. Looking at the stories I have collected the teacher belief is that the mission of the school is to keep kids off the street. There are elements of social control and containment. This perception is reinforced by the fact that money has been spent on 'show' and not on training. It is a prodigious case of going through the motions." He argued, "Culture impinges on the organizational culture – Arabians will always avoid *face* conflict ... The occupational culture is that the teacher should be able to discuss evaluation, feedback and 'learn' from an evaluation. The organizational culture is to avoid discussion – dialogue avoidance. Systems are in place to reinforce them. Supervisors act as a buffer. All to avoid loss of *face*. But it also means supervisors don't have to answer hard questions."

At the same time, as another study group member pointed out, teachers' domestic concerns influence their attitudes to and behaviour in the organizational culture. "Many [expatriate] teachers are preoccupied with trivia because of the institutional nature of life in Company accommodation. In S--- [Company unaccompanied accommodation] the biggest furor was when they switched from proper mashed potato to packet mashed potato. More comments about this than anything else." Another added, "The same thing in A--- [similar accommodation]. They switched from real chips to packet chips. They said they would switch back when better potatoes became available in the market. They never did. There was a second wave of

protest." Jim J related the story of C--- "He complained vociferously about the lack of yoghurt. 'I'll tell you why I'm annoyed. They're messing about with my salary.' They sat at the end of the table complaining like that pair out of the Muppets." "Someone once refused to go to work and demanded a ticket home because there were no cornflakes at breakfast."

On the other hand, as Jonah pointed out, many of the staff had shared the experience of the Gulf War. Teachers had taken up duties as wardens and first aiders. Some had been trained in chemical decontamination. All were issued with NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) suits and anti-biological warfare autojects. Initially there was a real fear of chemical attack. As well as rattling my windows and doors, Scuds had killed and injured many people, including one hundred and thirty US servicemen [location deleted]. Teachers had a shared set of experiences, an irreverence, a camaraderie. As Martin said, "The camaraderie of the trenches".

However, the organization is not simply characterized by a confusion of cultures. As Alistair observed, the power structure is "on the face of it formal and bureaucratic. Another model struggles within it – of teachers cooperating – collegial. Then there is the political model. All exist in a cultural model. Everyone is swimming in a cultural soup. But ultimately the survival and management model is micropolitical: the use of shifting alliances and individual initiatives to survive and yet to achieve goals. Everyone has his own agenda. The goal of one officer is self-aggrandizement. Another to have as quiet a time as possible. One or two to help – in a woolly sense. Survival [examples given] is recognizing there are many agendas."

A discussion in the study group concluded, "Power is the connection - the sinews that run through culture and organization: and despite the contradictions and tensions is nowhere more evident than in the military." As Martin, a classroom teacher, wrote, "For me the 'culture' of the school involves the relationship between the power of the individuals (teachers, students, officers etc.) and their relationship with powerful institutions (military, company, etc)".

Overt demonstrations of power are rare. This seemed to be the consensus. However, on one occasion, he [the CO] "went out his way to prove how powerful he was. He signed the papers and then threw them across the room," reported Dermot. Another time "he made a point of saying he would sign anything, no problem, he wasn't worried about doing so, but instead of signing the bloody things he threw them all over the floor and had his [subordinate] pick them up, whereupon he then signed them." On another occasion, "he decided to refer to this [an incident] as a breach of security and insisted that all members of the section be assembled and then he proceeded to rip M---'s ass off in public. He wasn't happy with just nobbling him in his own office - he thought a public humiliation was better! We were the onlookers - there just to spectate." These accounts were corroborated by Austen and several others.

Power is usually enacted in informal ways, even by the military. Andrew noted, "Most decisions and orders are verbal. There is a reluctance to commit themselves [the military] in writing. Multiple signature authorities – four to take an examination. Letters initialled by subordinates before the official imprimatur is in place. Communication chains – which delay things but minimize individuals' exposure to responsibility." As Conor commented, the exercise of formal power is hedged, with "Everyone is looking for someone to blame". "They do not wish to risk losing face." Another commented, "They are happiest when they simply are passing on orders. There is no responsibility or risk." A view of military communication that Nasser considered to be typical.

As Mohammed, an Arab supervisor noted, "Communication is not a matter of issues being discussed but orders being cascaded." He recounts how supervisors were called together for a meeting. "We waited quarter of an hour; it was simply as demonstration of power. One of his section heads, a junior officer, was holding the meeting which consisted of his relaying decisions taken by the CO. The officer was unwilling and unable to discuss issues. He was in charge of a highly qualified and experienced group of supervisors. All he could do was convey the decisions and orders from above.

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The CO had followed a military chain of command - and also avoided risking face by meeting with supervisors himself. There was no discussion, no exchange of views. Discussion is subversion."

Andrew, a Western supervisor wrote, "... talking about officers - in any culture including the UK - many tend not to attempt to strengthen the organization but strengthen their position within the organization. The inevitable conflicting values and beliefs are there to be taken advantage of – it's called 'working your way up' I believe."

When asked how far he felt the 'organizational clash of cultures' made fertile ground for micropolitical intrigue, an experienced Western supervisor, Dermot, commented, "The metaphor I'd use is one of opening up avenues, paths to pursue micropolitical agendas. People will always have their own agendas. It makes them easier to pursue if you know how." Alistair commented, "It does create a lot of avenues. But a lot of the teachers do not have many avenues, they do not know officers, supervisors, DOS, [Arabian] teachers with wasta, and therefore feel and are to some extent powerless. The disenfranchised." When asked how people show they hold conflicting ideas and beliefs, he continued, "The way they sit in the foyer, in staffrooms. The way they react to notices that come out from the school administration. The way they talk in the staffroom about the school administration on both sides. The way they talk about the different sections in the school and the officers in charge of these sections. ... and different cultural groups have different views of the organization."

Nasser commented, "This clash of cultures is really fertile ground for micropolitical intrigue. For example, if an officer asks a supervisor to do something that is not within the school rules and regulation and the senior refuses, in the future, he will viewed by that officer as a bad supervisor. There will be always something behind that officer's action in the future." He continued, "It varies from one country to another. I believe, in the western countries, where organizations have their own agreed agendas, the role of the person in charge is to make sure that those agendas or goals are met. His role

will be very confined. On the other hand, where organizations don't have their own established and agreed upon agendas, cultures and goals, they will be affected by the personality of the man in charge. I believe a lot of the organizations in the Middle East or even the governments are positively or negatively affected by the type of the person in charge."

Peter C, a Western supervisor who used to work in the school, wrote, "Politics, pride and face take precedence over common sense and reality." Conor commented, "Our situation is inescapably flawed because of the misalignment of professional, national and military cultures. Given our situation the officer in charge becomes able to exploit these conflicting values and beliefs."

At the same time, as Alistair commented, "It is possible to use culture both for offence and defence. You know that sometimes the culture doesn't give them [the military] a choice. There are things that must be done or cannot be done for cultural reasons." A sentiment echoed by Andrew, "... it would be silly if we started with the assumption that there are not vast differences between our cultures. Over time we do learn and more importantly we use the culture we are living and working with to achieve our objectives. ... This is a painfully slow process - but all development is slow wherever it is hand-in-hand."

In staffrooms it was possible to observe how micropolitical groups came together to achieve or promote one or other agenda. Ahmed, an Arabian teacher, wrote, "Everyone is simultaneously guilty and innocent. Every group stabs the other in the back. They sit in clusters in the smoking room or the staff room and look at each other warily. As if any word could incriminate them." Read noted, "Officers have their own coteries and acolytes. Staff who hang round their offices are mistrusted by the rest."

In the study group, it was noted how right wing teachers frequented a staffroom termed the Eagle's Nest. Downstairs is the staffroom they term the knitting circle. The Arabians tend to congregate in another staffroom. Most

expatriates use the large staffroom which is divided up into competing groups. The barrack room lawyers in one corner. A small group of Shia staff in the another corner. Another group commonly referred to as the 'hard core TEFLers' tended to gather in the prep room. Although there are two buildings, staff will spend free time in the locale of their preference. And addiction transcends all cultures – the smoking room. This is the one location where staff from all cultures and groups meet, including military.

Dermot wrote, "Within the Company culture, there are the supervisors as a sub-group and among the teachers there are various sub-groups based on politics, hobbies and such like. The [school] is no different than any other organization. People have some reasonably 'permanent' allegiances but are, on occasions, happy to temporarily sign up to the aims of other groups if they see or believe there may be something in it for them."

In a discussion of 'otherization', Alistair wrote, "I think it's a difficult thing to describe since I don't think it's particularly well focused. It's diffuse and competing. However, one thing that I have noticed is that the various groups do seem to have images - stereotypes if you like - of each other that can be tapped into when telling stories, etc. The cynics – let's call them that even though some of them might dispute it - and even some less cynical seem to regard the military as stupid, capricious, and as out to get them. Thus stories which portray them in this light are given a good hearing. ... Stereotyping is a way both of understanding, and of classifying so that you don't have to think about it any more. In our place a lot of it has to do with reducing the amount you have to think about what you are doing, reducing cognitive dissonance if you like. It also means you don't have to regard people as individuals with their own wants, needs, personalities, etc."

William wrote, "Stereotyping is a handy way of defining others, or oneself. It requires little thought and is an excellent way of binding a group together either by defining itself or by creating an opposition it can oppose. Most people like to live in a 'stereotypical' situation because of the ease it gives

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them in social interaction - lazy/stupid students, work shy developers/lab teachers/computer teachers/etc, ad infinitum. Including the [military], the Company, the management, etc. Basically people define the boundaries of other cultures through stereotyping."

Jonah noted, "A tendency to group others together is a necessary part of creating a culture, but only part. The tendency to group together to achieve something is more micropolitical." Another supervisor noted, "I expect a micropolitical grouping overrides the various cultural agendas temporarily but may not outlast the achievement of its aims, or its defeat."

An example was when the majority of Arabian staff were involved in a legal dispute with the Company. "The staff who seemed to be most involved were a curious mixture of opinions. The [Arabian] ones who distanced themselves appeared to have several different agendas. The [expatriates] were, for the most part only vaguely aware or interested." When asked if this coming together amounted to one large cultural group, he replied, "I don't think so. The [Arabians] are a very mixed bag in themselves ranging from religious, tribal, geographical, world view, educational, job history, family influence, etc. differences. The coming together against the Company was part of a long simmering resentment against their treatment, or perceived treatment, by both the Company and the [military]. In that sense it was an opportunistic alliance of many." Nasser shared this view.

As one supervisor wrote, "The only micropolitical aims I'm really familiar with are my own. I had a micropolitical aim at one time in Development to get P----- replaced, for professional reasons (and here micropolitics and professional coincide). I tried to use my wasta with H----- to achieve this aim. To no avail as it happened, but I did brief J---- on my thoughts, and J---- got P----- replaced." Although he failed to use wasta in this case, as another supervisor noted, "Bargaining and negotiation are essential elements of micropolitics. But it is a different for an Arabian where it is more often

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described as a matter of *wasta*. It's not just cultural it is also a micropolitical weapon."

Robin, a supervisor, commented, "A micropolitical grouping must exist for some purpose, hence it must make efforts to complete its agenda. There must then be competition with other groups or organizations that have other agendas." He wrote, "Very often the trivial has a purpose in that it allows a person to make an issue of something small when there is nothing he feels he can achieve against the larger things that overshadow him - it may be all a matter of the individual's perception of what makes him important in his own and other people's eyes."

On the other hand, as another wrote, "Self-preservation is an issue for most ... Self-preservation is what makes some people very good at CYA practice." Some teachers will always 'comply'. Yet, even compliance may involve a degree of resistance. As Barton, a classroom teacher, remarked, "They [the teachers] are making it up as they go along. They all have their personal agendas. Everyone is into 'contract compliance'. In effect, staff are working to rule."

The next section includes extracts from field notes taken during the period by the researcher as *observant participant*.

## 4.7 Part two: 'Spiralling out of control'

**"What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bounded by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?"**

While it is acknowledged that a thematic arrangement of the following extracts would have offered a more organized account, the author contends the selected extracts and associated commentary, reflecting the day-to-day tumult, enable readers to gain a sense of the unfolding story. Again, separating the

presentation of data and the process of analysis is problematic. As a fellow researcher commented, "The data flows around and inside me. In order to make sense of the data I interpret it. This I do just to function at work." Indeed, this is the essence of *observant participation*.

Observations were made in meetings and informal gatherings, in staffrooms and in offices during the course of the researcher's regular work as Director of Studies. Thoughts, impressions, feelings noted at the time are included as data. Quotations from 'on the hoof' interviews conducted where they immediately follow or are integral with the action are included in this section. Data has also been gleaned from a number of documents: cultural, corporate, military. In addition, at different times, two cartoons were posted anonymously on the staff notice board. Both are eloquent statements of staff reactions to events and as such are included. All names and locations are fictionalized.

The description of the school in Chapter One gives a general overview of the physical layout of the two buildings and the working conditions. As was pointed out earlier, at this time staff were overwhelmed by a large increase in the student body and class sizes had doubled. There was little free time and often 'relief lessons' were cancelled to cover teacher sickness.

## 4.6.1 Month One

(6-1) This is the new Commanding Officer's first day in the school. Immediately a number of organizational changes are announced. All the officers are reassigned to different sections and the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are renamed 'Royal Supervisors' and given the specific duty of monitoring senior staff. A series of instructions are issued including teachers and cadets are not permitted to leave classrooms during five-minute lesson breaks. Classroom doors, if they do not have windows in them, are to be left "half-open". Teachers are no longer permitted to park their cars near the school. Teachers are also advised they will be held responsible if sleeping cadets are not sent to the Cadet Discipline Office [cadet tiredness is a constant

problem]. Understandably there are rumblings in the staffrooms; even staff who never leave the classroom in short breaks are irritated with the rule. Later that day the CO advised me, "I expect teachers to obey the rules." A teacher comments, "Does he think we are machines?" It is evident the new Commanding officer is firmly asserting *control*. He has demonstrated he has the power and authority to implement radical, and perhaps more importantly, visible change. Everyone in the school is affected by the changes. He has indicated he expects staff to behave in certain ways, for example, by obeying his instructions. As his *expectations* are perceived by teachers as unreasonable, he has immediately generated *resentment*.

(9-1) An officer under instruction from the CO issues a warning to me, reference Keith W, because he has been reported for having a cadet asleep in his class: "This shows a very bad attitude from the teacher." The CO expects teachers to have a good attitude. Staff *resent* the seemingly innocuous new instruction that the Teaching Section should be able to give additional marks for good behaviour. It strikes many as an opportunity for *wasta* and impinges on teacher notions of fairness and justice.

(13-1) A warning issued to MH, accusing him of having a cadet asleep despite it being explained to the officer that the student returned to the barracks at 02:00 that morning. "He was exhausted. He needed sleep not punishment." Subsequently, I was called in to see the CO who advises him it is a supervisor's contractual responsibility to make sure that teachers adhere to the rules. He *expects* supervisors "to do their jobs". Again, the CO's *expectations* result in *resentment*. Teachers are *reluctant* to obey the rules as they perceive them to be unreasonable.

(15-1) Rules for classrooms, in English and Arabic and signed by the CO, are posted on classroom walls. Supervisors think this will help teachers avoid confrontation with cadets. As one supervisor says, it is important that teachers are seen to be equally seen as victims of the 'rules'. On the other hand, the CO tells me in my capacity as DOS, "Discipline in the classroom is the sole responsibility of the teacher." He also instructs staff to immediately introduce

seating plans for cadets – more control. It is noted the emphasis is moving from *expectations* to *orders*.

(21-1) The CO advises me that Daniel H is unsatisfactory. His cadets were not paying attention. "If the teacher has a reason to sit, the student has a reason to sleep." More resentment.

(22-1): Sitting in one of the staffrooms, comments noted include: "There is always a touch of the three bears' porridge. Tim, Andy and Paul are too lenient. Oliver and Matthew are too strict." This is a reference by one teacher to the various military complaints about how different teachers teach. One expatriate looks up, "The focus of my life is three and a half thousand miles away. I don't care what happens." Another, discussing the new rules, says, "The cadets realise that the officers are as much a threat to the teachers as to themselves. If anything we are considered 'neutral'. We can't be part of the system because of our obvious lack of information." Staff are beginning to come together around forms of *resistance* to the stream of orders. For some this means taking the attitude "I don't care", for others, it is a case of "we aren't part of the system."

(24-1) Today the CO instructs supervisors to change two class teachers, setting off a chain of events involving six classes and eight teachers. The first reference by a teacher to the CO as an 'organizational arsonist' is noted. Towards the end of the month there is more evidence that teachers are suspicious of the CO's motives. There is no trust on either side.

## 4.6.2 Month Two

(1-2) A letter is issued by CO, copy to me, ordering one of the supervisors to move to the Cadet Discipline office strictly contrary to his job description. More organizational changes are announced. Conor, a supervisor, commented, "The School is being restructured to facilitate centralized control."

(3-2) CO orders a class of multiple failures to be back-coursed thereby 'concealing' their failure. The incidents on Monday and Wednesday reinforce staff perceptions that the organization is being manipulated to further the purposes of the CO.

(9-2) Comment by Gamal, an Arab expatriate, "If there is no trust, you misinterpret everything you say. They [the military] don't trust us."

(15-2) In a reference to what is going on in classrooms, the deputy CO says to me, "We have ways of knowing what is happening." I definitely feel this is a form of *threat*.

(16-2) Mark C's emergency medical leave to UK is not approved by the CO. This is a 'non-decision' situation. The paperwork is merely passed around and not returned, neither approved nor disapproved.
This month there have been a series of incidents in the school illustrating the ways in which cultural perceptions, misconceptions and stereotyping lead to fractured working relationships.

## 4.6.3 Month Three

(3-3) "People have different interpretations of what this place is like and I'm not sure they converge", a teacher comments.

(13-3) The CO tells me he intends to go unannounced into classrooms to conduct teacher evaluations despite having no teaching or training qualifications. An interesting situation has arisen here: under the guise of helping cadets, the CO has seriously undermined training standards. Staff are certain to object but are threatened with the possibility of being evaluated by the CO in person.

(14-3) 'The girls' changing room' is a reference to a staffroom also known as 'the knitting circle'. Another staffroom is noted as 'the Eagle's Nest'; the occupants have a reputation for being right wing. Another is Arabian but is only used by Sunni staff. The Shias sit with the expatriates in the large

staffroom. Certain teachers, like Christopher, are able to move from one staff room to another, often gathering / gleaning rumours / gossip and then passing it on. They are roving troubadours entertaining staff with their songs. They are often the myth creators. There are many *groups* in the school; however, you need to have considerable insider knowledge to able to discern the characteristics and politics of each.

(17-3) The CO walks into Charles G's classroom, tip-toes behind a cadet who is awake and smacks him round the head. He then shakes another cadet by his collar and leaves the room without speaking to the teacher. On the same day a note is pinned to the bulletin board explaining one of the Arab staff is being repatriated; he is dying of cancer. A collection is organized for him. [Several thousand pounds were donated by teachers.] I remember thinking how generous people in the school are – they have always given freely.

(18-3) Supervisors, if they see an officer 'on the prowl', hurriedly warn staff. Hamish, one of the teachers, explains, with a large grin, his self-help early warning system. His classroom overlooks the building entrance. If he sees an officer approaching, he steps into the corridor and waves a red whiteboard marker. Once the danger is clear, he waves a green marker. It's a beginning to sound like St Trinian's. Staff are beginning to be 'disobedient'. They are finding ways around the rules. They are finding means to cope with the situation and enacting *resistance* to the orders and rules.

(24-3) "We're just bog brushes", comments a teacher in exasperation. There is an increasing feeling of alienation. Military staff are patrolling the corridors "like wolves" and staff feel they are being manipulated on the whim of the CO. Today the CO orders teachers to have full lesson plans (comprising several pages per lesson). A supervisor comments: "People won't do it and then he'll get even more paranoid. ... He wants everyone doing the same thing at the same time." The CO's orders to introduce detailed lesson plans are met with blank refusal; another act of *resistance*. I am left making a case for the extant lesson notes as a substitute. [In the end I negotiated a compromise which involved enhancing the Teacher Guides.]

The CO chastises an officer in the corridor in both English and Arabic. It was a visible demonstration of power. CO intended that it should be heard and understood by British staff. Every time the officer attempted to switch into Arabic, the CO continued in English. "Humiliation was a part of the power game," commented James. Meanwhile more individual warnings are being issued to teachers. Tony F comments, "It's open season on teachers. Haven't you seen the notice?" "He is boundary marking. Peeing on gateposts. He's left a trail of Notices and Orders," says James. Kevin comments, "You're whip lashing the cadets to keep them awake – waiting for someone to pounce." This is another reference to the CO and deputy CO patrolling the corridors. For both cadets and teachers the corridor has become the common hostile environment. Stress and sickness levels are rising. Many teachers take home their frustrations and culture them in the hot house environment of a Company dining room. *Resistance* is the topic of conversation. The process politicizes teachers and reinforces cynicism. Two quotes from today: Deputy CO to a supervisor, "We have people who will tell us what is going on." Officer to supervisor: "You aren't allowed to laugh in the school."

(27-3) The following exchange between teachers in the staff room is noted (see also Appendix C Extract Two):

Geoff: "We are just keeping them off the streets."

Frank: "People are curious about what his [CO] agenda is."

Harry: "We are like Mameluke slaves."

Mike: "He doesn't recognize anyone. All he wants is dancing teachers."

Mike: "We'll send so many cadets that they'll swamp the system."

Teachers are talking of the CO in terms of his micropolitical ambitions, ie about his 'agenda'. The relationship is being defined as master and slave. At the same time, one teacher is complaining about the unprofessional nature of his demands, ie he wants 'dancing teachers'. Clearly, at this juncture staff are contemplating resistance; one teacher is proposing to *subvert* 'the system'.

The CO tells another officer, as reported by an Arabian teacher who was present, "He is [foreign]. You cannot trust him." The Western expatriate

teacher evaluator is moved; now the CO has direct control over teacher evaluations.

A later discussion with expatriate teachers, Arab and Western, one says, "He [the CO] was walking up and down the corridor doing a corporal's job. He is trying to exercise more and more menace." Another teacher comments, disbelieving his own class pass rate, "He wants the figures to look good. It doesn't matter whether the students can speak a word of English." "He doesn't like us. He's got them all at it." An incident is quoted by an Arab member of staff where the teachers are referred to by an officer, in Arabic, as "Those dogs of teachers." In a general discussion between staff the feeling is that the CO encourages other officers to have no respect for teachers as trained professionals. Both Arab and Western teachers are coalescing into *resistance* based on the perceived unprofessional nature of the military management. There is a focus on compromised standards and a lack of respect for teachers.

(28-3) Teachers have been instructed to stand up all morning. This generates a general discussion in the staff room. One teacher produces a medical note stating that he could not stand for long periods. "We'll just go sick." Some announced that they were simply working to rule. "Why should we make the effort?" It is evident that the CO has becomes a symbol of oppression. Individual teachers are *coalescing into groups* 'opposed to the regime'. Teachers report that he is being constantly talked about over dinner in the compounds. *Subversion* is a topic of conversation. There has even been talk of submitting formal complaints, withdrawing labour, and going to the college commander. Both military and civilian staff have complained to me. The constant changing of the rules has generated the expression 'iron whim'. Teachers, no longer sure what the rules are, fear that they will be punished for not obeying the latest rule. There is an increasing tendency for teachers to be teaching from the classroom door so that they can keep an eye on who is walking down the corridor. A Western expatriate comments,"... the [Arabian] teachers are given a hard time because they are easier to identify and report."

Arab and Western staff, even some military, are voicing opposition to the management. Staff are contemplating what measures can be taken to *subvert* the CO and his decisions. Although there is talk of formal complaints and withdrawing labour, most are not prepared for open confrontation.

Not everyone is sympathetic. Conor says, "The teachers have been bought off. They take all this crap because they have already peddled their professional integrity. They are mercenaries. We're working for an international arms dealer and the military."

### 4.6.4 Month Four

(3-4) Sebastian comments, "We are in a state of psychological siege." There is general agreement. One of the supervisors reports there is a proposal that there should be a board in the school foyer with "Man of the Month and Man of the Year." "We aren't a bloody supermarket." "I think G. and myself can organize something that will rubbish the whole idea."

(9-4) Simon, a classroom teacher, calls by, "The Colonel asked me to step out of the classroom. He asked me if I was qualified. I said I was. He asked me what my qualifications were. I said that I'd got a degree, a PGCE, a TEFL cert and a Masters. He then asked me if I knew the first thing about teaching. I must have looked at him blankly. I think I must have said something about creating a conducive learning atmosphere in the classroom. He said, "No. They haven't taught you the first thing about teaching, have they? You don't know, do you? I'm a Training Specialist. I've studied in the States. Switch on the lights. You must switch on the lights." I was dumbfounded. He wanted the classroom lights switched on." This story is to figure prominently in the mythology of the school. The officer sees himself as a 'professional' training specialist. The teacher thinks the exchange exemplifies the huge gulf between teachers as professionals and the military. Later, the CO tells me, "Teachers are untidy. They need haircuts."

(10-4) At a supervisor meeting it is noted that scheduling is driven by ensuring teachers are not given two consecutive weak classes – even if they volunteer.

A supervisor remarks, "Bad marks = bad teacher; bad teacher = bad evaluation; bad evaluation confirms bad teacher = bad marks. The allocation of teachers is now being driven by 'protectionism'." Herein is an administrative coping strategy: supervisors, by manipulating the timetable, subvert the system to 'protect' teachers, ironically, thereby compromising their own professionalism. At the meeting, an Arabian supervisor recounted how his own remarks had been reported back to CO, "You'd better be careful what you say." There are informers.

(17-4) Patrick is seconds late for class because he has been collecting an OHP from another room. OHPs have to be shared. He sees the CO and turns round to go the long way round the building to his classroom to avoid being seen. The supervisor tells him, "I'll keep him [the CO] talking."

(19-4) A directive is received that all materials will be 100% technical with immediate effect. 'Complete nonsense' and 'impossible' is the general reaction. While avoiding direct confrontation, the teachers in course development have no intention of making the course 100% technical. They prepare strategies to subvert the order.

Commenting on a newly announced Company scheme to collect money from staff and donate it, in the Company's name to a local charity, John D comments, "The Brits don't trust the charities and the Arabians don't trust the Company." There is a cultural mismatch. Again, the sad observation that the program is devoid of trust at all levels. [Nasser pointed out that many Arabians give large amounts to charity but would not wish to give them to the company. The issue here is not charity but lack of trust.]

(22-4) Chris W comments, "It [the school] is a police state. It's like Colditz but I don't know if I'm a warder or a prisoner." The next day (23-4) a warning is issued to one of the most conscientious Arabian teachers (who had previously been awarded a commendation). He is criticized for 'teaching too fast': "You have to be a responsible teacher. ... I write this warning to you not to be repeated again." He is thoroughly bemused.

(24-4) Contractor supervisors are called to a meeting with the CO and Officer in charge of the teaching section. CO lays down the rules as he sees them. Teachers are to be obeyed by cadets. Teachers will obey his instructions. They will be dismissed if they do not. CO warns, "I can find plenty of teachers." Direct *threats* are being issued. Later, the CO informs DOS: "Meetings with contractor managers during the working day are not permitted." An Arabian supervisor, who had worked with him previously, commented, "He did that before. He thinks everyone is plotting against him." The situation is *spiralling out of control*. CO is aware of the micropolitical resistance of teachers and supervisors. Against this, he is pitting his institutional authority and power, for example by refusing me, as DOS, permission to meet with the staff. The expression 'spiralling out of control' seems to sum up the perceptions of many staff.

(25-4) Another flurry of warnings, a new notice is issued by the CO, "Cadets must sit up, be alert and learn." CO sets up a committee to change the course to one which is "100% technical". Contractor curriculum specialists are excluded from the curriculum committee, presumably to ensure there is no resistance to the proposal.

The CO responds to a class progress report where the teacher has indicated his students may fail first time and that they were likely have to re-sit, "He (the teacher) is an enemy of the cadets. There is no place for such teachers in the School. We will find a way of getting rid of these bad apples." CO waves a notebook he always carries round the school. The notebook in itself is a source of menace. He writes everything down. Another order is issued by the CO, "The supervisor's role is to be in the corridors and around the classes. ... They must do their jobs or I will bring some people who can do the job right." More threats, both to teachers and to supervisors.

(26-4) Another order is issued, "Cadets no longer to be sent to the Discipline Office." The rule has changed again. Someone comments, "More iron whim."

(29-4) In a meeting with supervisors, one observes, "Teachers are standing in the doors of classrooms ...It's more important than teaching. You're able to keep an eye on who is walking down the corridor." Teachers continue to find ways of subverting the regime. More instructions from the CO, "Make sure that the teachers are following the lesson plan" and "Teachers are late for class." (Lateness equates to deliberate disobedience.) Later that morning an officer says to the DOS "We have to deal with each other as human beings. You have to remind Mr G---- and especially the new teachers. ... I will defend you but help me. I will not wait until he gives me a warning. Please take it in a positive way." I note it is evident that even some of the officers are 'running scared'. However, the control of the CO over the officers is not total and some are adopting an informal resistance.

(30-4): DOS finds a soldier from the Discipline Office going round the classes on the instructions of the CO taking the names of teachers who have cadets 'sleeping'. Pressure is building up; there is more and more resentment. Arabian staff are especially annoyed that a *jundi* (soldier) has been sent to spy on them. A teacher caused great hilarity by demonstrating how the CO did a 'side shuffle'. "He's now doing a side shuffle. He walks past the door then returns." It appears that staff are subverting the CO through humour.

### 4.6.5 Month Five

(1-5) Brian, "It's alright. I've just covered my arse. (laughs) He [the supervisor] will get demoted". This is a humorous reference to the recent pronouncement that supervisors will be demoted if a teacher fails to obey instructions. Threats have become so ludicrous that teachers are laughing at them. At least, some teachers are laughing. Steve announced, "I told some of the new teachers that they were not allowed to meet in the corridor in groups of three or more. They didn't react. I had to tell them it was a joke." Humour is subverting coercive threats. However, not everyone is laughing.

(2-5) The CO announces he has obtained a small number of 'preparation' desks for teachers. CO threatens the supervisors: "Why isn't anyone using the preparation room? I will keep everyone here if they are not used." In fact,

when he made the remark staff were teaching in no a/c and temperatures of over 40 degrees centigrade. There were no 'free' lessons available during a morning. In the five minute break, Howard comments, "Look at Jeff and Tom. Getting fired means losing friends, home, education, pension - the bloody lot." Keith waves his hands in the air, "It's just like the cargo cult." At the same time, as Liam says, "You've got to stay on the right side of the cadets. They are in the same boat."

(5-5) Following his visit to military HQ, an officer tells a supervisor with some satisfaction, "I really dropped the colonel in it. I told them that the syllabus document was a pack of lies." A climate of confrontation between the officers is developing. It has reached the point where one officer is parking his car behind another and blocking him in. The following day the other vehicle was blocked in. All this is in full view of the staff and the students. The organization is becoming dysfunctional.

Derek receives a warning which accuses him of behaving like a 'lotus-eater'. The warning is posted on the notice board. Instantly the teacher is elevated to staff hero. Hassan, the tea boy, is advised to stop making 'lotus sandwiches' (to the amusement of staff). The tea boy always has had a role as folk hero in the school. He is master of his staffroom. The staffroom has developed its own rituals and language, not least in terms of the menu offered. Hassan's sandwiches include the 'sexy-sexy, hot-hot, cruise missile' otherwise known as a tuna with extra chili. He serenades departing staff, beating a drum roll on an empty cardboard box, and presents them with a garland of tea-bags. Increasingly, humour as a micropolitical strategy is undermining and subverting the formal organizational power structure. The CO is becoming a figure of fun. He is being laughed at – in the best tradition of the political cartoon. This is *subversion* in action. Perhaps his previous prohibition on laughing is vindicated?

(6-5): Conor says it is like a medieval court. There is a poet who praises the guest of honour. The relatives of courtiers are employed as to carry papers or serve coffee. It's not just military, in some ways, they [military? Arabians?]

really look after people. I recall a deaf and dumb cleaner who was sent to one of the best hospitals in search of a cure, at the expense of a prince. A labourer with a heart condition, who should have been terminated, was quietly given the job of delivering official letters. An expatriate teacher with a serious medical condition, whom the Company wished to terminate, was unofficially reassigned to a physically less demanding post. The officer in charge at that time commented, "We look after our own." In contrast, in the staffroom, later in the day, Ibrahim says, "This man [the CO] has no appreciation, no respect. A school can never be run like that." Simon adds, "There is a complete lack of trust. You come to that conclusion." Conor comments, "The place is full of threats." 'How many times has that been said?' is scribbled in my notebook.

(9-5) Harvey, a Western expatriate classroom teacher, is suspended and sent home following an incident. He is accused of striking a student. Without doubt he lost his temper. He writes to me, "I have found the teaching situation to be very stressful. ... the recent investigation has been an ordeal. Even if I am found 'not guilty' I feel I would be under intolerable pressure from the authorities in the school." He asks if he can be released as soon as possible. Meanwhile, following the investigation by the military, the Company is told he is dismissed. The doctor has been treating him for stress. I note, 'Should we have sent him home yesterday?' On an earlier occasion he was told to take a couple of days off. In many ways, this was the lowest point. I was directly involved in the situation. I had to tell him he was dismissed. I saw the look in his eyes: he was exhausted. Nights of stress and not sleeping. As well as sympathy and concern, I felt a sense of failure. We had let him down.

(10-5) A comment is made in the study group: "The level of menace has increased. He doesn't like us. ... the way he struts around the corridors looking, looking for ways to demonstrate his authority. ... He's demanding that teachers perform tasks that they can't do, as civilians, which destroys the rapprochement with their students. You're teaching with eyes in the back of your head. ... There's a widespread *resentment*. A feeling of intimidation."

(12-5) Talking about Harvey and things in general, Peter comments, "There is a climate of fear." We haven't had anyone sacked for years.

Later that morning a 'Gary Larson' cartoon appears on the Notice Board.
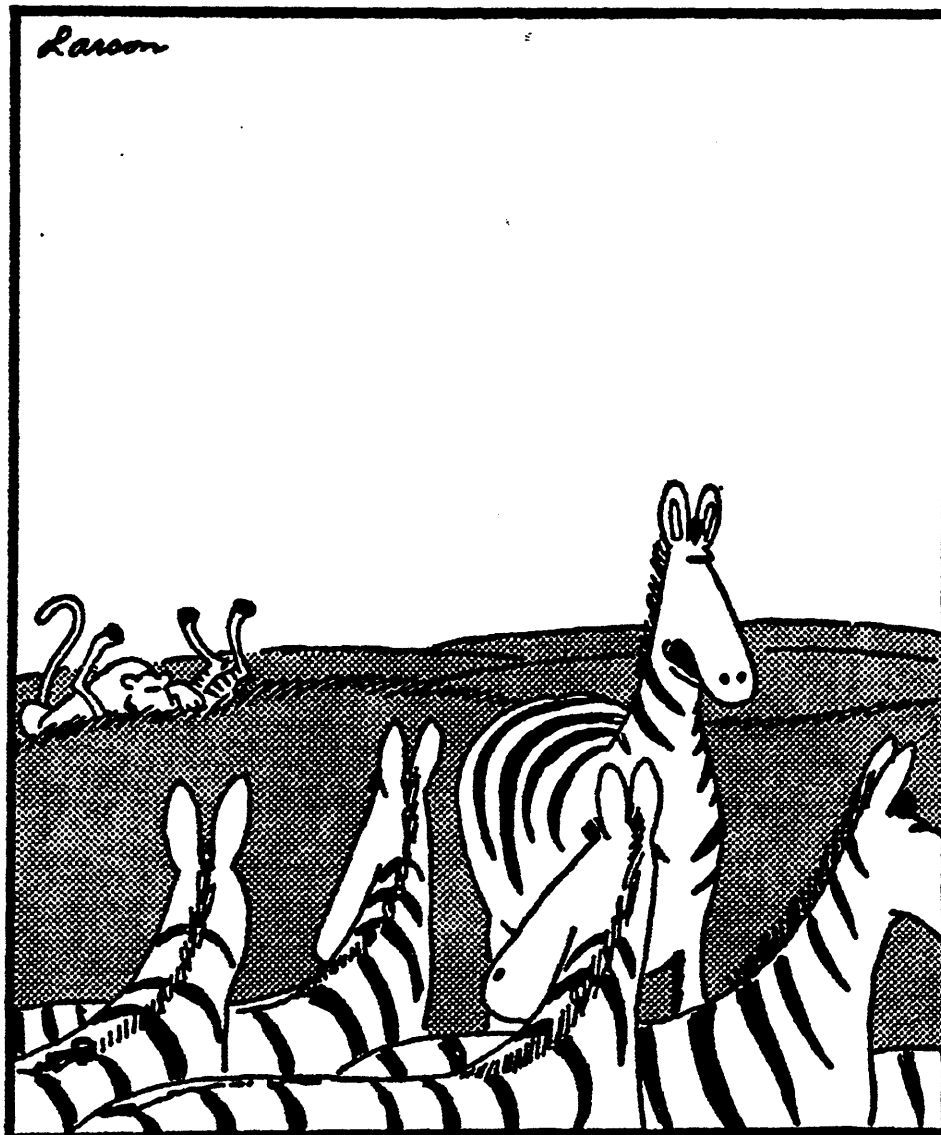


"Let's move it, folks. ... Nothing to see here. ... It's all over. ... Move it along, folks. ... Let's go. ... Let's go. ..."

*Figure 4.1   Larson cartoon of lion and zebras.*

Even in the darkest hour, humour has subverted the threats. Teachers have been able to laugh, albeit black humour. There is a feeling of the irrepressibility of the human spirit. That one gesture of posting the cartoon on

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the notice board has brought the staff together again. There is a camaraderie of the trenches.

(13-5) CO informs me, "No cadet is permitted to enter the class even one second late after the bell. ... Do we have to start terminating contracts over this?" I fear he has tasted blood.

A teacher comments, "The unhappy marriage of incompetence and authority. It seems to be a characteristic of military organizations." Teachers tend to stereotype military culture. The military's lack of concern for individuals is contrasted with the teachers' perceived professionalism.

A military evaluation has been conducted on an Arabian teacher, Hamad: he is criticized for 'walking while teaching'. It becomes a source of great hilarity in the staff room as the teacher announces he has now worked out what he should do. According to the rules he can't sit, now he can't walk, therefore he should stand and rock from side to side. [He demonstrates.]

(14-5) My final note of the day: "the whole place is spiralling out of control". A memorandum is drafted, quoting more experienced staff, morale is "at its lowest in living memory"; there is "an air of intimidation"; "staff have been signed off with stress". Supervisors and teachers "feel constantly threatened". The letter contrasts the previous situation, "we have had a number of very good officers in charge", with the present. "I feel it is necessary to advise you that the situation has now deteriorated to the point that many fear irreparable damage is being done to the school and the training program."

(16-5) CO announces the official training manual will no longer be used. He advises he will write a new manual.

(19-5) I discuss the putative model, 'spirals of organizational dysfunction' with some teachers in the staffroom. Interestingly, the concepts prompted immediate recognition of a similar situation with regard to staff at a local school where the head appears to have non-accountable autonomy and authority, although as one teacher (Roger?) comments, "It's easier to abuse your position here."

(20-5) Teachers in the staffroom talked about coping and *subversion* strategies. "Shut the door and get on with your little bit." It's the teachers' own and only power domain. There is a proliferation of little acronyms like 'IDRM' – 'it doesn't really matter'. In fact, 'IDRM' has almost become a greeting. Catch phrases that always provoke mirth like, "*They* know what they are doing." Staffroom stories become ways of diminishing the 'enemy' and undermining and subverting authority figures. They are mimicked by heroes like the tea-boy. What appears to be coping strategies are, in effect, ways of *subverting* authority. Given the asymmetry of power, staff resort to other means of resisting.

At the same time, stress is an increasing factor in the school, "Part of the problem is tiredness. I'm totally knackered all the time." A staffroom straw poll indicates that the majority of staff considers keeping students off the streets is more important than any teaching or learning activity. Later that day I read, "the primary purpose of the school is the teaching and learning activity of the staff and students" (Beare et al 1989:197). I smiled.

(21-5) A 'modified' cartoon from the local paper, mocking TQM, appears on the notice board.
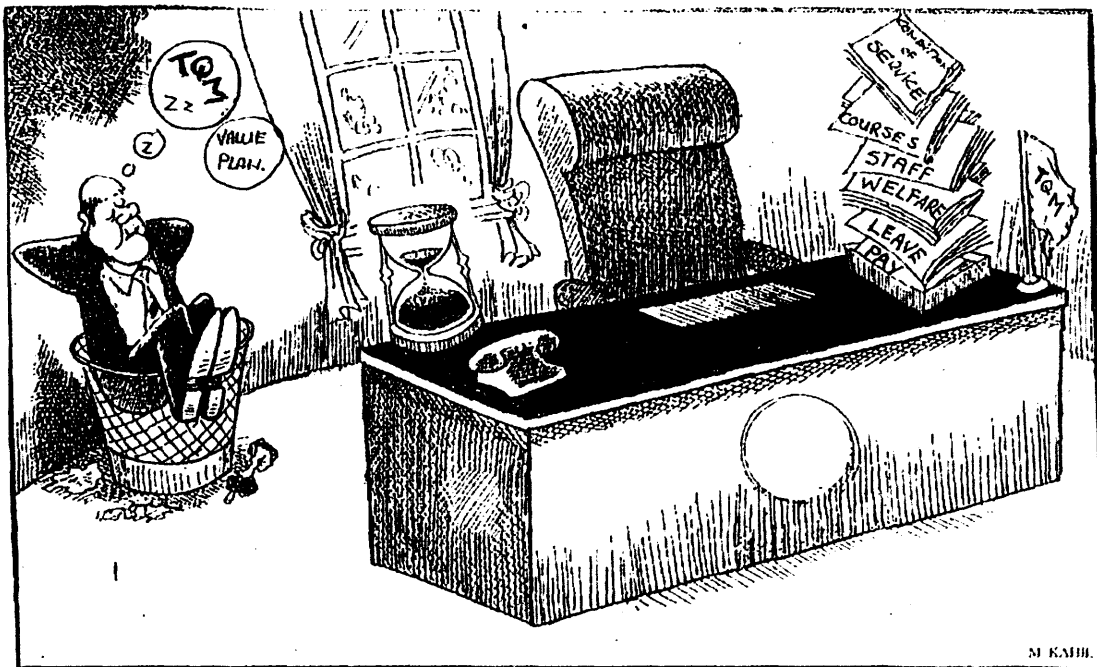
*Fig 4.2   The TQM cartoon*

(22-5) Once again, a cartoon has appeared which succinctly subverts the corporate culture change program. Staff have found a way of articulating their feelings, demonstrating the power of unvoiced popular feelings. They have coalesced into a coherent resistance group; Arabian and expatriate staff are laughing together.

(23-5) In a discussion with teachers, Les says, "The military have to demonstrate that they have power." Tony F laughs, "It's the Red Queen syndrome. Off with his head. Off with his head. What next?" Maxwell says, "Give him [the CO] time and he'll implode. Just pile on the pressure". John H refuses to attend a supervisor staff meeting. "What's the point? Quite clearly the supervisors have no authority. What difference will it make?" He goes home.

## 4.6.6  Month Six

(5-6) An Arab expatriate, Wahid, comments, "It's a matter of trust. Everything said is misconstrued, misinterpreted. He [the CO] doesn't trust any of us. ... He doesn't even trust his own." The situation is irretrievable.

(10-6) The CO is reassigned and a new CO arrives in the school. Those who have worked with the new officer are pleased with the appointment.

One of the Arabian supervisors, Sameer, says the previous CO's 'fatal error' was the designation of NCOs as 'Royal'. "Nobody can appoint someone as 'royal' except the King. He was going to get into trouble." The first thing the new CO changes: the Royal Supervisors become NCOs again.

It appears the resistance of staff ultimately played little part in the demise of the CO. On the face of it he was removed because he failed to take cognizance of the military and cultural rules governing titles and appointments. On the other hand, perhaps this was only the 'official' reason and, in reality, the micropolitical machinations of staff did achieve their goal.

## 4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the data has been presented and considered. In part one, 'cultural confusion, competition and conflict', the focus emerging from the interview and study group data and field notes has been essentially on the multifaceted cultural interaction of the five large cultures and how they comprise and influence the school's organizational cultures. The evidence clearly indicates staff do not have a clear picture of the various cultures and how they relate to each other. Furthermore, where cultures overlap and mix creating multiple third spaces, it is evident something new and different arises: a hybrid culture. Third spaces are dangerous arenas: the launch of the TQM initiative is an example of the cultural minefield which awaits the unwary. The analysis is considered further in the next chapter.

In part two, 'spiralling out of control', the focus emerging from the observant participant and documentary evidence has largely been micropolitical in nature. The field note extracts and commentary have been presented chronologically to maintain a sense of unfolding micropolitical drama. The data shows how the institutional authority exercises formal power to enact

what are perceived by staff to be non-legitimate demands. The asymmetrical power relationship means staff have to resort to non-confrontational means to resist. Consequently, staff pursue a number of micropolitical strategies. In response, it is seen that the commanding officer increases the level of oppression and coercion which, in turn, results in staff exploiting 'off-kilter' forms of resistance and subversion. This analysis is considered further in the next chapter.

# Chapter Five: Analysis, Synthesis and Discussion

This chapter subjects the data to scrutiny, attempting to make sense of the findings, comparing and contrasting them with the extant literature. Each of the three research questions is considered in turn. It is shown the data answers the research questions yet raises other issues and further challenges. The chapter concludes with a critique of the research methods used, and a discussion of the trustworthiness and ethics of the study.

The reader is cautioned that, as in most qualitative studies, analysis was an iterative process rather than a stage; the neatness of the final presentation is misleading. The writing gives little idea of the drafts and redrafts, pencil-tapping and frustrations, which characterised the process of trying to make sense of the data; a contradictory and complementary process of reduction and enrichment, requiring the researcher to establish the dynamic between raw data (if such a thing exists) and the picture as presented to the reader.

In terms of what cultures influence and define the organization, it is shown the findings support the identification of five large cultures. It is also demonstrated the situation is considerably more complex than the literature suggests. Indeed, an analysis of the data supports the view that organizations comprise multiple cultural third spaces (Bhabha 1994, 1996). While third spaces may be areas of shared values and beliefs, they are also sources of misunderstanding which, in turn, provide fertile ground for micropolitical activity (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). In contrast to the organizational charts showing neat hierarchical bureaucracies, it is proposed such third spaces comprise and define the school organizational culture.

In terms of the incidents and micropolitical processes which occurred, the data gleaned during the case study is analysed in the context of the extant literature on organizational micropolitics. Subsequently a model is derived which accounts for the micropolitical processes. The study demonstrates how the

organization was embarked on path leading to dysfunction as management exerted increasing bureaucratic power over a disenfranchised staff. It is shown the asymmetrical power relationship between management and staff resulted in teachers resorting to micropolitical means to resist.

References to field notes are indicated by day and month, eg '6-2' is 6th of the second month of the case study.

## 5.1 Cultures influencing and defining the school organization

This section addresses the research question: "What cultures influence and define the school organization?" The evidence clearly supports the notion that the organization comprises and is influenced by a number of large cultures (Holliday 1999). It is evident there is an Arab / Arabian culture which is readily distinguishable from Western culture. The teaching staff belong to a TESOL / teaching culture. There is a military culture, distinguished not least by uniform. There is also a corporate culture: all civilian teaching staff are employed by the same Company. In light of published literature, the evidence is examined to establish how organizational members distinguish between these large cultures and if they consider these large cultures to be discrete or interacting in some manner and how they influence the school organization.

### 5.1.1   Arabian and Western cultures

From the data, it is evident that Arabians and Westerns view themselves as distinct cultures. As Andrew commented, "it would be silly if we started with the assumption that there are not vast differences between our cultures". At the same time, Arabians in the school also perceive themselves to be culturally distinct to other Arabs, albeit sharing a Muslim heritage (Lewis 1998; Said 2001). Arabians do not view themselves as a homogeneous culture (Yamani 2004); tribal associations and customs remain important, for example, inter-tribal marriage is often proscribed. Nasser was also of the opinion that there were many differences between and within these cultures. However, from what he had seen, he thought most Western expatriates were completely unaware of the heterogeneous nature of Arabian society.

In general, the evidence supported Patai's (1973) observations with regard to concepts such as *wajh*, *wasta* and *qisma* as core features of Arabian culture.

*Wajh* is a complex construct implying honour, self-respect, face and shame. In interviews with Arabians, pride and honour were considered key characteristics of Arabian culture. However, aspects of wajh were considered to have negative connotations, for example, once a decision was made, regardless of merit, it was very difficult for an individual to change it. No one wants to risk losing *face* (15-1; 1-2) even if it involves 'wrong decisions' or 'cock-ups'. Interviews with Arab and Arabian staff emphasized the importance of *face*. Personal experience suggests Arabian teachers are particularly sensitive to status. One of the criticisms of the CO was he had no respect for staff (6-5). Status and respect are central to Arabian culture (Hofstede 1991; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997).

*Wasta* was also considered to be a significant aspect of Arabian culture. As one Arabian commented everything depends on your name (21-3). *Wasta*, at best, may be viewed as a socio-cultural glue, bonding individuals, families and tribes through a network of interconnecting obligations. Interview data suggested loyalty was a key aspect of *wasta*. Importantly, *wasta* does not involve the payment of bribes; wasta is concerned with status and honour. The evidence supports the notion that Arabian cultures are group-oriented and collectivist (Hofstede 1991; McAdams 1993, Cheng 1998; Dimmock and Walker 2002). Nonetheless, while *wasta* is generally viewed as unavoidable it is considered un-Islamic. This was recorded in interviews, Saleh and others, and confirmed by Nasser. Furthermore, Arabians, both military and civilian, expressed exasperation but felt obliged to help, even if they knew the help would be ineffectual (25-3). Interestingly, some expatriates understood the cultural nuances of *wasta* and attempted to use the process to advantage (8-2).

*Qisma* is evident in the data; both Arabian and Western teachers commented on the acceptance of fate as an aspect of Arabian and Islamic culture. However, the evidence does not support the contention that Arabian staff in the school lack achievement motivation or abdicate responsibility for

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improving their lot (Patai 1973; Al Nimir and Palmer 1982). The fatality and acceptance observed struck the researcher more as evidence of a stoic strength and religious conviction rarely found in the West (14-3). There is no evidence in the data to imply Arabian staff are not keen to improve their professional skills and knowledge, in fact, personal experience suggests the opposite.

There was evidence of negative perceptions of each other's cultures. While not necessarily including themselves in the sentiment, Arabian staff supported Patai's (1973) contention that Arabs have a negative impression of the West, stating many Arabians considered the West decadent and that feelings ranged from suspicion to hate. This rather contrasts with Al Olaiyan's (2000) more benign observations. Yet, as Nasser commented, there was considerable suspicion of what went on behind compound walls. At the same time, some Western teachers expressed a sense of social and cultural exclusion from Arabian life because they were compelled to live on compounds. Cultural and religious practices could also generate alienation (9-2).

There was a degree of resentment within the staff as a result of contractual differences but this appeared to have little impact on day-to-day relationships. There was little evidence of racial tension within the school staff although there was one instance of an Arabian feeling discriminated against by Westerners on the grounds of race (Ahmed's interview).

The evidence certainly supports the centrality of Islam (Al Akkas 1990; Gardner 2000). During Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim staff is especially noticeable. However, the distinction rarely impinges on staff relations (14-2) and, as recorded in the interview data, having Muslim Western teachers "fuzzies the line". There was evidence in interviews and in study group discussions that Westerners had some difficulty distinguishing Islamic, Arabian and military cultures. In summary, there was some evidence of culturism and cultural stereotyping on both sides (Holliday 2004; Shaheen 1997) but little to support such a dramatic scenario as offered by Huntington (1993, 1996).

## 5.1.2 TESOL culture

The evidence supports the notion that English Language teachers in the school perceive themselves belonging to a larger pedagogical culture. Australian, British and Canadian teachers share a common TESOL culture with Arabian and Arab colleagues (Holliday 1994). Teachers share a common language: not simply English but also a professional lexicon. On numerous occasions, Arabian staff stated they felt they had more in common with Western teachers than the Arabian military. Indeed, there were suggestions the military did not trust the Arabian teachers (9-2) or were a threat to them (13-5). While cultural congruencies and conflicts were acknowledged, in terms of professional TESOL culture, the differences were perceived to be few (interview Mohammed).

There is little in the data to support Holliday's (2004) contention the TESOL profession is pervaded by a culturist, native-speakerist ideology which finds non-native speakers in some way culturally deficient. It is true that teacher training and materials writing in the school were largely conducted by Western expatriates – both features of the "knowledgeable, organised, efficient Self who must train and change the uninitiated" non-native speaker Other, be they students or teachers (ibid: 113). However, perceptions of Western supervisors tended to be that *other*, ie Arab expatriate and Arabian, teachers were often better able to control classes and were generally more successful with less able students. There was no evidence to support the contention non-native teachers are best placed to teach English (Alptekin and Alptekin 1983; El-Sayed 1993; Medgyes 1994).

Similarly, there was no evidence to suggest a resentment of misguided expatriate experts (Holliday 1994; Tomlinson 1990). Evidence supported Dimmock and Walker (2002) that qualified personnel identify primarily with their profession. In reality, both expatriate and local teachers found themselves at odds with local pedagogical practices, for example, rote-learning (Cortazzi 1990; Cortazzi and Jin 1996; Lo Castro 1996). There was no evidence to support Barmada's (1995) fear that Arab teachers thought

themselves to be, in some way, unpaid soldiers of the west. On the other hand, both expatriate and *host nation* teachers found themselves at variance with local management, ie the military, over teaching and learning (Ozog 1989; Medgyes 1994; Nelson 1995; Jin and Cortazzi 1998). In one sense, all teachers in the school could be accused of adopting a 'we know best' approach at the expense of the local culture (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was little evidence in the data to support the contention that English was viewed by Arabian teachers as a cultural threat or colonial tool (Fairclough 1989; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992) or a source of corruption (Mazrui 2000; Casewit 1985; Shafi 1983). In reality, the imams in the school were very keen to attend voluntary English classes (personal experience). Although Arabian teachers acknowledged many in the country disapproved of the language, they suggested most recognized the necessity of learning English, especially in certain fields (Al Haq and Smadi 1996).

In terms of the training program, Arabian and Western teachers considered *wasta* detrimental to standards in the school. Although there was an instance of a teacher intervening to help a relative (10-1), he felt he was also acting positively to assist the expatriate teacher. In contrast, officers who were able to exercise *wasta* more effectively, were frequently criticized for manipulating the training program (interview data; 9-1; 13-3; 14-5) usually for the benefit of relatives. The consequences of not helping were considered severe (13-2). It appears the pedagogical culture was at odds with both Arabian and military cultures in its perception of what was involved in helping students. Theo's comment (13-5), "We do it for the cadets, like Mohammed Saeed, not the officers" has an added poignancy for me as he died from cancer the following year.

## 5.1.3  Military culture

The evidence appears to paint a picture of military culture as hierarchical and authoritarian (Morgan 1997; Beare et al 1989; Dixon 1976; Little 1970). The collective programming of the mind (Hofstede 1994) is characterised as

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"painting rocks" (interview Steve). The evidence suggests the Arabian military share much with other military cultures. Senior UK and US military officers have stated they felt, professionally, they had more in common with senior Arabian officers. Indeed, military organizations are particularly characterised by rules, ritual and language. It appears the hierarchical nature of such organizations results in it being more important for an officer to please his superior that to satisfy his subordinates. Personal experience suggests that even routine staffroom grumbles and groans and what would otherwise be termed healthy debate in a teaching culture, may be considered insubordination in a military context, and lead to severe censure (interview Mark W; 27-1). Yet, in Arabia, even military rule is vulnerable to appeals to a higher authority (17-4).

Teachers' perceptions of the military culture appear uniformly negative (13-5; study group). Arabian teachers perceive the military as being different and on a number of occasions were critical (interview Ahmed). For example, the military, mechanistic approach to syllabus content and design (Bennett 1995) both disenfranchised and alienated teachers (19-4). In turn, a Western expatriate officer proclaimed he would never understand teachers (interview Arthur). In the same way as the military tend to stereotype others (Dixon 1976), the evidence shows that the military is stereotyped by teaching staff.

Yet appearances are deceptive. While the data suggests the Arabian military has much in common with a larger military culture, a closer reading identifies significant differences. The interview with a UK officer, Patrick, who had worked closely with the Arabian military in both UK and Arabia highlighted some of these differences, for example, the decision-making process (see also Bryant 1998). Another ex-military expatriate commented on the completely different way of viewing relationships and implementing rules. The outward symbols and rituals are the same across militaries, but the interpretation and meanings vary (Glatter 2002).

The evidence indicates the military is influenced by the Arabian culture. Sometimes military culture is in the ascendancy, for example, the issuance and

acceptance of orders and, at other times, local cultural influences appear preeminent, for example, *wasta*. Notwithstanding, there were clear differences between military and civilian conventions; examples listed in the interview data included orders versus requests, commands versus persuasion and obedience versus respect. The evidence from a number of interviews suggests loyalty to the family and tribe remains paramount. At the same time, strong tribal affiliations were perceived as potentially problematic (20-2).

The evidence suggests it is especially difficult for expatriates to disentangle military culture from Arabian and Islamic cultures. Even Arabian officers conceded the distinction could be difficult. Members of the study group commented the three cultures in some senses intensify and yet obscure each other. Interestingly, when one expatriate teacher, Bradley, commented on the 'clash of cultures' he was referring to the military and teaching cultures rather than Arabian and Western (5-6). It appears the unexpected unpredictability of the military caused misunderstandings and confusion. There were occasions when officers proved remarkably caring (6-5). Under the auspices of the new commander, a strictly hierarchical approach was adopted. As a part of that *chain of command* supervisors were sometimes required to enforce what were deemed by staff as unreasonable demands. Responsibility for implementation was delegated without the concomitant authority (8-2) which remained with the military. Interestingly, a feature of Arabian culture which impinged on the military culture was the right of the lowliest student to take a grievance to the highest level (14-3; 17-4).

In summary, although differences between the military and the host culture can be difficult for an expatriate to understand, the military culture is 'real' and different. At the same time, within the school they co-exist, interacting and influencing each other.

### 5.1.4 Corporate culture

The data provides evidence of a strong corporate culture. The roll out of the culture change program laid out a clear corporate vision for all Company employees. The literature, incorporating the language of Total Quality

Management, issued by the Company reflected a larger corporate culture. These values and beliefs were encapsulated in the book written by the Chief Executive Officer of the Company (Evans and Price 1999). The language of the book shares much with the messianic zeal of other corporate cultures: exhortations to 'Live the Values', culture as the CEO's 'greatest weapon', 'cultural foot-draggers', 'crusades' and 'unbelievers'.

Arabian national culture, which focuses on Islam, honour, loyalty, family and tribe, *wajh* and *wasta*, does not sit comfortably with Western management crusades against corporate unbelievers. Given the unlikely marriage of the corporate vision with Arabian cultural values and beliefs, and the prevalent *majlis* management practice, it is not surprising that Arabian staff largely ignored the corporate message: national culture triumphed (Hofstede 1991, 1995; Mead 1994; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 1994; Adler 1997). The evidence suggests the naïve universalism (Hofstede 1994) of corporate culture fails where it does not address national cultural values (Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993; Mead 1994). Western corporate culture must take cognizance of the qualities and circumstances of local communities (Hughes 1990; Crossley and Broadfoot 1992). The evidence highlights this cultural mismatch (interview Sultan; 19-4; Appendix C Extract One).

The military viewed the Company with suspicion; here was a profit-driven foreign contractor. TQM was tarred with the same brush. Indeed, as one senior manager opined the whole program was about cash (interview Arthur). Furthermore, the disastrous roll out of the Corporate Change program (31-4) meant there was little credibility with either military or civilian staffs. There was little in TQM that appealed to the military, certainly not the empowerment of teachers. TQM had little relevance to a bedo-aucracy (Kassem and Habib 1989) where, rather like a medieval court (6-5), loyalty and nepotism were valued above efficiency (Al-Faleh 1987). Data supported the notion that Arabian corporate culture favoured familial loyalty, bound together by wasta and obligation, and considered non-familial employees as untrustworthy (25-3). TQM was viewed as a source of corporate favours and gifts ('gizzits' and

'freebies') rather than a means of improving corporate performance (interview Brian; 22-2).

The evidence shows Western teachers also considered the corporate culture as irrelevant. Clearly, it was not simply a matter of the corporate mindset failing to appeal to Arabian or military staff. Most staff appeared to view the program with suspicion rather than enthusiasm (Hallinger and Kantamara 2000). Even those who felt there was benefit conceded the language of the program was inaccessible to Arabians and jargon to Westerners. Its very incomprehensibility probably accounts for the lack of evidence that Arabian staff viewed TQM as a form of cultural imperialism (West-Burnham 2002). Furthermore, TQM raised expectations which could never be satisfied. It was obvious to teachers that they would not be empowered as the approach envisioned (West-Burnham 1992; Sallis 1996; Greenwood and Gaunt 1994). As will be shown, the approach was indeed naïve, especially when applied to an organization riven with micropolitical divisions and competition (Wilkinson and Witcher 1993).

Despite being employees, most teachers perceived membership of the corporate culture as optional. The situation was exacerbated by a general mistrust of the Company (5-3) and a feeling that the Company was largely ineffectual as, in the school, it had neither a budget (10-3) nor could it influence basic issues such as Health and Safety (6-5). Even where the Company invested money in improving the applicant selection process, the results were unimpressive (interview Brian).

Partially because the Company did not have the power to implement its threats, to 'change people or change people', except perhaps with regard to the DOS, its corporate culture change program had little influence within the organization. Supervisors were required to sell TQM to teachers who felt the program was more about manipulation and control (Smircich 1983) and a money culture rather than enrichment of their professional lives. Supervisors were compelled to enact a discredited corporate policy; jumping through hoops (19-5). Although a global program, similarities masked deep

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differences in the implementation of the corporate vision (Glatter 2002). Regular reports were demanded; for example, each teacher had to have a compulsory Professional Development Plan which reflected the five corporate values. This process further undermined the credibility of supervisors when mandatory PDPs, which were completed on time at great effort, were suddenly declared optional. Not surprisingly, when criticized for failing to *live the values*, supervisors were incensed (19-5). Even senior management quietly acknowledged discomfort in swallowing the loyalty pills (3-6). The staff attitude to TQM was powerfully articulated in the cartoon which appeared on the notice-board (21-5).

In summary, interacting with other cultures in the school, 'corporate culture', in the form of TQM (which may of itself be a legitimate and effective business model) generated misunderstandings, confusion and conflict. Ironically perhaps, TQM appears to have acted rather like a release valve for Western expatriate teachers, who could rail against it without risking military censure or dismissal. At the same time, as Nasser was able to confirm, Arabian staff, both military and civilian, remained somewhat bewildered and perplexed and appeared to have little interest in the corporate culture.

## 5.1.5 Organizational culture

The evidence clearly indicates organizational culture is not simply *how we do things around here* (Bower 1966). Bearing in mind Morgan's (1997) counsel to think structure, culture or politics is to find them, this study demonstrates these elements are inextricably interwoven.

Organizational structure impinges on both culture and politics. The school structure is formal and hierarchical: power resides with the principal, ie the commanding officer. There is centralized control and staff are expected to obey. The structure would appear to dictate both the organizational culture and politics. The evidence supports such observations as those who question are perceived troublemakers and accountability to officials is more important than to students or parents (Bush 2002). Indeed, evidence indicates junior officers were prepared to compromise regulations in order to please superiors

(interview Ibrahim). Decisions could not be questioned. Although there is little evidence in the data, the researcher suspects the decision-making process was likely to be ambiguous (March 1982; Cohen and March 1986). Regardless of the process, once a decision was taken, it was not possible to change it as this involved a loss of *face - wajh*. Culturally, there appeared to be no possibility of a monitoring and feedback loop. Systems were in place to avoid challenge and discussion. Supervisors were positioned as buffers to ensure there was no direct confrontation or loss of *face* (interview data). Furthermore, the evidence indicates teaching staff were excluded from the decision-making process. Staff responded to decisions rather than initiated them. However, notwithstanding the strict hierarchical structure, as one teacher commented, all was not always as it seemed.

Organizational culture is usually concerned with informal aspects (Bush 2002). Rather than structure, it focuses on how individual values, beliefs and norms coalesce into shared organizational meanings, reflected in myths, fairly tales, stories, rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic forms (Bolman and Deal 1991; White et al 1991; Alvesson 1993; Hansen and Kahnweiler 1993). A cultural model would seem to be most appropriate to case study as it focuses on the social and phenomenological uniqueness of a particular organizational community (Beare et al 1989). This view envisions a single, holistic organizational culture developing as values and beliefs meld. However, in this study, the evidence to support this contention is not there. Similarly there is no evidence in the data to support cultural models that portray the leader as culture-maker and sustainer, as organizational gardener shaping the cultural topiary (Bush 1995; Cheng 2002; Dimmock and Walker 2002). Rather, the evidence indicates, despite the appearance of unchallenged military autocracy, the commanding officer was strongly influenced by prevailing cultural norms and the larger national culture (Busher 2001; McMahon 2001: Turner 1990). Certainly there were rituals and ceremonies, myths and stories of heroes, like the tea boy, and villains. Tales were told by troubadours who wandered from staffroom to staffroom. But there was no evidence to support the notion of a single organizational culture. There were multiple organizational cultures.

The evidence indicates staff were very aware of the complex nature of both structure and culture. A study group member, Jonah, commented on the schizophrenic nature of the organization; the military and the corporate that were culturally miles apart, strong negative cultures, that there was a dissonance. Other interview data refers to distinct cultures with different values, "what should be done and how it should be done, rightly or wrongly" (interview Alistair). Although the commanding officer appeared to view the organizational culture as little more than a *chain of command*, as one supervisor commented, the school did not have one single homogeneous organizational culture; "it [the culture] is also experienced very differently depending on one's position within 'it'". Organizational dissonance of purpose, the conflict between mission statement and the teachers' belief the 'real' mission is "to keep kids off the streets", further complicates the organizational culture.

Given the stresses of the school at this time, there is little evidence of a collegial culture, although one study group member, Alistair, did comment about teachers struggling to cooperate collegially. While a collegial approach is attractive to many writers and teachers because it encourages a democratization of the teaching process (Wallace 1989; Campbell 1989; Evers et al 1992; Coleman 1994; Bush 2002) the evidence indicates teachers accepted the military was not going to devolve power. Collegiality, not unlike TQM, implies empowerment and the military management was not likely to concede even a degree of collegiality, real or contrived (Hargreaves 1994).The bureaucratic – professional interface was always likely to prove problematic (Bush and West-Burnham 1994). Furthermore, as Bush notes (2002), collegiality is a western concept.

Teacher deskilling through rigid control over the curriculum and teaching methodology resulted in staff resentment (Bush 2002). Evidence shows staff were unable to fathom the rationality of decisions (Bell 1989) and felt disenfranchised. One might expect the teacher response to a military, mechanistic approach to result in teacher apathy, carelessness, and lack of pride (Morgan 1997), for example, "The focus of my life is three and a half

thousand miles away. I don't care what happens" (22-1). At the same time, the evidence indicates a common reaction was for teachers to seek independence: to close the classroom door, and forge a private alliance with the class driven by professional pride, "We do it for the cadets, like Mohammed Saeed, not the officers" (13-5). In other ways, proliferation of rumours and the aura of fear and unease influenced the organizational culture (interview Peter). Frustration resulted in highly qualified and experienced teachers complaining like Muppets over the lack of yoghurt. At the same time, many of the staff had shared the experience of the Gulf War. For some the organizational culture was 'the camaraderie of the trenches' (interview Martin). The evidence points to a multiplicity of beliefs and values: there is no one organizational *how we do things around here*.

Two conclusions are offered:

In this case study, there is little evidence for a single organizational culture, rather there are multiple, competing and conflicting organizational cultures.

As school boundaries are semi-permeable (Busher 2001), organizational cultures exist within and interact with larger cultures. With apologies to John Donne, no organization is an island, entire of itself.

## 5.1.6 Multiple third spaces

Having considered the various large cultures which influence and comprise the organizational cultures, this section considers how these large cultures define the organization. Initially this process involves mapping cultures, identifying where they overlap, and building up a picture of the organizational *small culture*. Holliday's (1999) small culture approach effectively distinguishes between *large cultures*, namely Arabian, Western, TESOL, military and corporate, and the cultures of the individual organization. Small cultures are concerned with social processes as they emerge and the interpretation of group behaviour. Holliday also offers the concept of *middle cultures* which exist between as well as within related large cultures, for example, a multinational organization culture, as is the school.

As an Arab expatriate observed, these cultures *overlap and mix*; they do not represent discrete identities (interview data). In these *middle cultures* differences become difficult to distinguish. Although Westerners admitted to having difficulty separating Arabian and military cultures, Arabian officers also conceded it was difficult to distinguish cultures (interview data). The expatriate officer who had worked with the Arabian military in UK for almost twenty-eight years, on moving to Arabia, was very surprised to discover that people could be so different and have such different values.

The researcher's initial interpretation of these middle cultures focused on where they overlapped as areas of shared beliefs and values (Lanagan 2002). The overlap was a place people could come together. In terms of Holliday's (1999) culture of dealing, the overlap was a place of harmony. It was a *third culture* where people might experience two cultures (Kramsch 1993). The assumption being, if staff avoided contentious issues, specifically those including gender, food and drink, politics, religion and entertainment, which, as one teacher commented, doesn't leave much, staff would be able to use their shared beliefs and values as a resource and create a unitary positive organizational culture. Small cultural sacrifices, such as walking down the corridor hand-in-hand, were seen as an active part of the process of fostering the middle culture.

In hindsight, such an interpretation appears naïve. It failed to address the cultural realities of an organization described as divergent, confused, chaotic, fragmentary, conflictual – a "madhouse" (interview Nasser).

First, this interpretation failed to appreciate, even when sharing beliefs and values, these qualities may be viewed quite differently by the various cultures. In the school, cadet tiredness was perceived by the military as a disciplinary matter and by teachers as an unwarranted hindrance to learning. Learning priorities were subordinated to military regulation. In turn, teachers dismissed corporate concerns. Each culture attributed different importance and

meanings to the same ideas (Dimmock 2002); each culture ordered their reality differently (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993).

Secondly, *separation* is as much a feature of culture as *binding* Holliday (2005a). This interpretation had failed to take account an inevitable otherization and stereotyping; despite exhortations to be wary of feeding our chauvinistic imaginations with notions of cultural superiority (Pennycook 1994: Phillipson 1992; Fairclough 1989). However, Holliday's (2005a) 'Man Friday' scenario is of itself culture-bound; arguably, all cultures have a tendency to otherise and stereotype. An Arab newspaper (24 June 2005) reported, "Participants ... of the 5th National Forum for Dialogue ... have asked that the word "infidel" be substituted by "other" in all religious and media speeches in [deleted] when referring to non-Muslims." 'Otherization', in this instance, is perceived to be a positive step.

The evidence indicates various groups have images or stereotypes of each other, for example the cynics regard the military as stupid and capricious (interview Alistair). However, the interviewee noted stereotyping was a way of understanding and classifying – "reducing cognitive dissonance". He defined stereotyping as "a handy way of defining others ... It requires little thought and is an excellent way of binding a group together either by defining itself or creating an opposition it can oppose". The evidence is that people naturally coalesce into groups; the physical location of teachers in the various staffrooms was an indication. Although staffrooms appeared to be cultural comfort zones for staff interaction, as culture may be exclusive as well as inclusive, there remained a predictable tension. Staff were observed sitting with whom they shared common interests. However, some teachers were disbarred from membership of particular groups for one reason or other, ie imposed exclusion, while others chose not to be participants, ie self-selected exclusion. In other cases, groups overlapped and mixed.

Thirdly, where cultures overlap and mix, something new and different is created - and that something is not necessarily harmonious. To Holliday (2002) where two cultures meet, there arises a culture of dealing - a dangerous

arena – which inevitably involves each side in projecting their own preoccupations, agendas, images and insecurities on to the other. Bhabha (1994, 1996) refers to this *third space* as *the cultural in-between*. Although Bhabha's work is grounded in postcolonial studies, the notion of third spaces would appear to be especially pertinent to an understanding of organizational cultures. His concept of *hybridity*, which describes the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity, is relevant to the 'something new and different' created where large cultures collide, overlap and mix (Bhabha 1996). At the same time, regardless of contradictions and ambiguities, a *third space* can provide the spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion and initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation (Bhabha 1994). A third space may create new forms of cultural meaning and production and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity. Furthermore, as discussed in the following section, third spaces are particularly amenable to 'off-kilter' resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999).

While Bhabha located his third space between two large cultures, it is argued this principle may be extended to organizational cultures comprising multiple cultures and multiple third spaces. As no organization is an island, such third spaces are not necessarily constrained within institutional boundaries.

In the context of an organization, third spaces may be small and localised. In Hassan's staffroom, there had grown a culture of dealing, a third space, characterised by its own particular microculture. Outside this third space Hassan was just another catering company employee, within this space he was a folk hero. Only members of this staffroom culture knew the significance of 'sexy-sexy, hot-hot, cruise missile'. This was a third space within the many other organizational third spaces.

### 5.1.7 Fuzzy edges

Although the organization may comprise multiple third spaces, there is an acknowledged difficulty in precisely defining the boundaries of such spaces. The overlaps are not neat and the third spaces created are tumultuous,

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contested and contaminated. Third spaces of their essence blur existing boundaries (Bhabha 1996). An analysis of the data supports the identification of five cultures but organizational members were often confused with regard to cultural boundaries. Cultures overlap and mix so that it is difficult to identify which culture is the driving force in a particular situation or instance (interview data). Others commented on the difficulty of describing facets of the culture, calling it diffuse and competing. Another referred to the distrust between groups being diluted by having British Muslims on the staff: "it fuzzies the line" (interview data). Arguably, third spaces have *fuzzy edges*. Fuzzy edges make it hard to identify the third space boundaries.

Revisiting the unfortunate launch of the corporate change program (31-4) why did such a senior executive tell the story? Some staff suggested that he was racist and homophobic. Most staff were convinced he was simply culturally unaware and culturally insensitive. However, from discussions with others, he appears to be neither racist nor homophobic. He had lived in Arabia for many years. It transpires he was highly regarded by many of the Arab staff with whom he worked; they thought he had a good sense of humour – and he respected their customs and traditions. It is suggested he failed to appreciate the nature of third spaces. It appears he thought everyone in the meeting, despite the diverse cultural backgrounds, shared a common organizational third space (indeed, most dressed alike). In reality, he had unwittingly and unintentionally stepped over the fuzzy edges – with dramatic consequences. In a different third space he could have told this story, as he had done in the past, but in this gathering he was addressing multiple third spaces, the occupants of which did not appreciate the humour.

Third spaces are problematic and fuzzy edges make them dangerous. While Bhabha (1996) described such spaces as the contaminated yet connective tissue between large cultures, it is suggested from the evidence, this school organization displays many of the same features. As Fiske (1989) noted, culture is not a harmonious and stable pool of significations but more likely a process of social struggle. As one interviewee commented, crudely put, the pattern of the organization comprised a number of different cultures,

competing micropolitical groups and personal relationships that enabled
people to deal with the conflicts generated by these cultures and groups.

## 5.1.8   Summary

In summary, the evidence identifies five large cultures, namely Arabian,
Western, TESOL, military and corporate. As the data indicates, the school
cannot be viewed in isolation; these large cultures influence and comprise the
school's 'small' cultures. These overlapping and mixing large cultures create
third spaces within, and extending beyond, the organization. Furthermore,
third space boundaries are difficult to precisely identify and are characterised
by fuzzy edges. The connective, contaminated and contested nature of third
space cultures reflects the reality that, when large cultures overlap, a new and
different hybrid 'middle' culture arises (Bhabha 1994, 1996; Holliday 1999).

For example, in the context of the school organization, it is possible to map
Western culture on Arabian culture. The third space, where these cultures
come together, creates a new hybrid culture which is both Arabian and
Western yet, at the same time, is neither; as a child may inherent the
characteristics of his parents but is never a clone. The resultant organizational
small culture would comprise and be influenced by each of the three cultures.

In terms of this study, it is necessary to map all five large cultures on the
organization. The model (overleaf) illustrates the complex organizational
interconnections which result from mapping these cultures one on the other.
As these multiple third spaces comprise, define and influence the organization,
they also contribute to the micropolitical maelstrom. They afford
opportunities for oppression and resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999).

While the initial concept owes much to postcolonial theory, there is no
evidence in the literature of its application to organizational theory. However,
in terms of illustrating complex cross-cultural organizational interaction the
model appears to have much to offer.

Military

Arabian                                                          Western

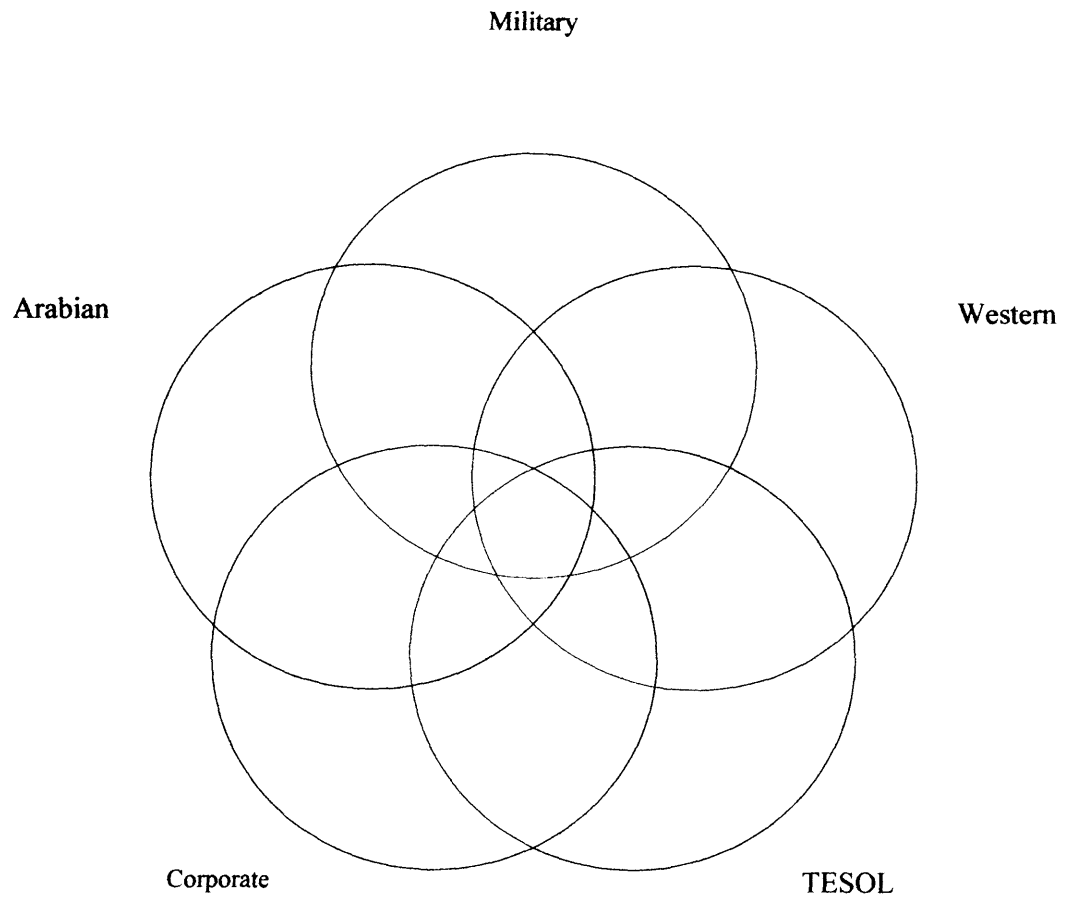Corporate                                          TESOL

*Fig 5.1 Model of multiple organizational third spaces*

It should be borne in mind this model does not reflect the internal complexities

of each culture, for example in the case of Arabian culture: Sunni / Shia or,

indeed, tribal distinctions.

## 5.2 Incidents and micropolitical processes

This section addresses the research question: "What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bound by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?" It considers the evidence of micropolitical activity within the school. It traces a series of linked themes, mainly taken from field notes, which relate specific incidents with organizational micropolitical processes.

To begin with a caveat: comments and analysis are necessarily hedged for, although the observant participant enjoys a certain privileged access, his interpretation and analysis is constrained by his cultural and institutional position. Furthermore, it is particularly difficult to decipher micropolitical motives often wreathed in guile, deceit or good intentions (Dean and Whyte 1979; Hoyle 1982; Dey 1993).

### 5.2.1 First impressions: the mediaeval court

In one sense, the evidence, such as organizational charts and military manuals, supports the supposition that the organizational power structure is formal, tight and direct (Dimmock and Walker 2002). The description of the school as a mediaeval court (6-5) aligns neatly with Hargreaves' (1995) description of the traditional school where the political structure is feudal – the monarch surrounded by barons. In such political structures it is likely that leaders feel little need to forge alliances (Cheng 2002; Blase and Blase 1994) or empower pedagogical vassals (Glover et al 1998; Bradley and Roaf 1995).

Despite the rigid hierarchy and the concentration of formal power in the hands of the commanding officer, the evidence indicates "power is usually enacted in informal ways, even by the military" (interview Andrew). Cultural factors, such as risk avoidance and loss of face (Patai 1973), militate against the confrontational exercise of power. Even when power was formally enacted through orders passed down the military chain of command, as the CO rarely met supervisors or teachers, opportunities to question or challenge decisions

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were minimized; this lessened the likelihood of direct confrontation. Interview comments included observations that the officers were happiest simply passing on orders as this involved no risk or responsibility. Even when minor decisions had to be taken, such as permission for a cadet to take a test, multiple signatures ensured a dilution of individual responsibility. As 'discussion is subversion', communication was not a matter of issues being discussed but orders being cascaded (interview Mohammed). Untypically the Commanding Officer on two recorded occasions overtly exercised power. One time he threw papers 'all over the floor' and had his subordinate pick them up. On a second occasion 'he proceeded to rip M---'s ass off in public' (interview Dermot).

## 5.2.2 Power and Machiavellian machinations

At the same time, 'appearances are misleading'. The evidence suggests this pedagogical court is less concerned with homage than Machiavellian machinations (Hoyle 1982) and, to a lesser extent, winners and losers: people building power and people losing power (Senge 1990). Given organizations are political structures (Bennett 2001) it is not surprising that power is a central theme in the data. As one interviewee commented, "power is the connection - the sinews that run through culture and organization" and power is central to all micropolitical activity (Bacharach and Lawler 1980; Ball 1987, 1990, 1991; Blase and Anderson 1995; Busher 2001; Bush 2002).

Although outwardly the school is a single site, bell-regulated and highly structured, the data indicates a tension between the military management and the teaching staff. This tension is exacerbated by the cultural complexity of the organization. As one supervisor commented, the situation is inescapably flawed because of the misalignment of professional, national [Western and Arabian] and military cultures. Beneath the formal ritual lies a most extraordinary internal diversity of styles, interest, perceptions of values, priorities, and modes of work (Harman 1989) encompassing a spectrum of groupings defined by ethnicity, religion, civilian/military, teaching/military and corporate; a multiplicity of third spaces. Conflicts, visible and invisible,

arising from such divergent interests, result in various kinds of power play (Morgan 1986).

There is an inevitability of conflict as the formal legitimacy of the military commander is challenged by alternative professional forms (Hoyle 1982). The evidence shows that staff resistance is enacted micropolitically. As a study group member, Alistair, commented, "ultimately the survival and management model is micropolitical". The picture is one of an educational organization as a political system where competing individuals, as political actors, and groups are involved in a tactical power struggle between who has the formal power and the disenfranchised (Bacharach 1988; Ball 1987). At the same time, while the school may be a political jungle, the evidence does not necessarily imply 'dirty' politics (Baldridge 1989) or a separate world of illegitimate, self-interested manipulation (Hoyle 1986). Rather, the school is characterised by "shifting alliances and individual initiatives to survive and yet to achieve [professional] goals" (interview data).

### 5.2.3 Micropolitical resistance

The case study records the growing resistance of staff to what they perceived as coercive pressure from the commanding officer; there arose a culture of resistance (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). While it is unsurprising such a resistance developed (Foucault 1980; Butz and Ripmeester 1999; Busher 2001), the micropolitical nature of the resistance reflected the *asymmetrical power relationship* with the military management and the consequences of defeat. Challenges are tangential (de Certeau 1984) and off-kilter (Butz and Ripmeester 1999) rather than directly oppositional. Teachers, cognizant of the institutional and contractual realities, resorted to micropolitical avenues not as a means of overthrowing the established order in order to set up a collegial democracy (Hoyle 1982) but rather as a means of personal and professional survival. The evidence records several references to 'survival' and 'self-preservation' – largely in the context of alienative compliance (Hales 1993). One interviewee, Dermot, noted "even compliance may involve a degree of resistance" (see also comments by Barton).

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Although within the organization there appeared to be no possibility of subalterns removing the source of formal power, staff engaged in an agonal struggle to reduce that power (Foucault 1980). The evidence indicates teachers did feel there was a realistic hope of creative and partial liberation from particular, local strategies of power recognized as especially constraining; for example, the posting of cartoons on notice boards, demonstrated both creativity and a degree of tentativeness characteristic of 'off-kilter' resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999).

The strategies teachers exercised varied from "contract compliance ... staff working to rule" to withdrawal from the organization, for example, retiring to the classroom (Lieberman and Miller 1984). In other instances, staff focused on the trivial as they felt they could achieve nothing against the larger things that overshadowed them (interview Dermot). Reminiscent of comments regarding culture as a weapon (Evans and Price 1999), staff recognized it was important to learn and to use culture "both for offence and defence". In the school it appeared that staff were prepared to use culture for micropolitical self-defence rather than it being a case of trouble looking for culture as an excuse to start a fight (Erickson 1987). For example, as Alistair noted, in the processes of bargaining and negotiation, which are essential elements of micropolitics, *wasta* was "not just cultural - it is also a micropolitical weapon." At the same time, as a supervisor, Mohammed, commented, the commanding officer was also able to exploit conflicting cultural values and beliefs. While power is influenced by culture (Hofstede 1991, 1994; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997; Dimmock and Walker 2002), arguably, power is a facet of culture.

Within the school, individuals pursued individual goals and sought ways of improving their chances of achieving them (Bennett 1995). Evidence includes comments such as "everyone has his own agenda". One study group member opined, the "only micropolitical aims I'm really familiar with are my own". Nonetheless, individuals are more likely to coalesce into groups to achieve micropolitical aims (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997). The evidence indicates the tendency to group together was often micropolitical rather than

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cultural. However, in normal circumstances, as a supervisor noted, while a micropolitical grouping may override various cultural agendas, it is not likely to survive beyond the achievement or defeat of its micropolitical aims. For example, the coming together of staff in litigation against the Company was described as an "opportunistic alliance of many".

## 5.2.4 Micropolitical groups

The school is characterised by a disparate range of microcultural and micropolitical groups: the 'fascists', the 'knitting circle', the 'hard core TEFLers', the barrack room lawyers, the smokers; groups based on politics or hobbies. The evidence supports the notion that different cultural groups held different views of the organization. Groups could be enduring or temporary (Bacharach and Lawler 1980; Bush 2002), for example, in some cases people had reasonably 'permanent' allegiances but, on occasions, were happy to temporarily sign up to the aims of other groups if they believed there might be "something in it for them" (interview Dermot). As noted by a supervisor, a micropolitical grouping must exist for some purpose, hence must make efforts to complete its agenda and, as a result, there must then be competition with other groups or organizations having other agendas (Hoyle 1982). The evidence includes accounts of how micropolitical groups came together to achieve or promote one or other agenda while "every group stabs the other in the back". They cluster in the staffrooms or the smoking room, eyeing each other warily, "as if any word could incriminate them". Furthermore, "officers have their own coteries and acolytes ... mistrusted by the rest".

While this may be termed a *balkanization* of the school (Bush 1995; Fullan and Hargreaves 1992), the evidence indicates these micropolitical groups are interconnected and memberships may be flexible. Although groups reflected a diversity of interests, there was increasingly a mutual set of experiences informing group actions. Suffering the same terms of subordination, staff had a shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of negation and justice (Scott 1990). Over the period of the case study, stories and anecdotes forged a growing 'culture of resistance'; adversity, oppression and conflict brought diverse groups together (Coser 1956). The evidence suggests this coalition of

resistance was particularly tenacious and there was no evidence of its being 'managed' by those who fell outside membership boundaries (Van Maanen and Barley 1984).

### 5.2.5 Summary

In summary, the evidence clearly indicates, throughout the various organizational third spaces, the school is embroiled in a multiplicity of micropolitical power struggles. Diverse groups coalesced in the face of increasing oppression. At the same time, teachers displayed a reluctance to overtly challenge institutional power and resorted to tangential and off-kilter modes of resistance.

The next section investigates the major themes (indicated in *bold italic*) identified in the case study. From the data emerges a picture of power, oppression and resistance enacted across a range of incidents.

### 5.3 Power, oppression and resistance

The first theme is one of *control* evidenced by the immediate restructuring of the organization following the arrival of the new commanding officer, for example, the abrupt moves of staff and the issue of new instructions (6-1). New posts were created, such as the 'Royal Supervisors'. Staff considered the changes motivated by political considerations relating to issues of control and power play (Morgan 1997). The reduction of parking spaces meant that certain subordinates could be rewarded while others excluded, not untypical tactics in the micropolitical arena (Hoyle 1982). The issuance of the letter to a civilian supervisor (1-2) reallocating him to the Discipline Section indicated that restructuring was to include civilian staff. While the decision appeared 'rational', in fact it was perceived by many as an attempt by the CO to establish his control over civilian staff regardless of contractual constraints. Furthermore, he was seen 'clipping the wings' of an Arabian senior who previously was perceived to have too much autonomy. Part of the first day's restructuring was to delete the five-minute lesson break and no longer permit teachers to park near the school (6-1). The decision was 'rational' in that the students and staff were more likely to be punctual as there was no longer time

to take a break and the untidy car park adjacent to the school became neat and empty. An alternative reading suggests the real reason for the decision was a demonstration of power. Certainly the affect of the restructuring was that within a day all staff and students knew that a new commanding officer had taken control.

Following his arrival, the new commander clearly signaled his *expectations*. This theme is derived from the number of occasions the officer indicated he had certain expectations of staff behaviours and conduct. Subordinates were expected to behave in a certain manner, namely obediently. The evidence shows his expectations of teacher role were at variance with teacher perceptions. Statements like "I believe in the chain of command" mask authoritarianism (Dixon 1976). The chain of command was the organizational process whereby the CO's expectations were enacted. Teachers were treated as inanimate cogs in the chain (Morgan 1997) and expected to obey the rules (6-1). The warning he required issued to a teacher for 'showing a bad attitude' was an indication of what he expected from staff (9-1). He expected teachers to have a *good* attitude, ie one that matched his perceptions, but teacher-labourers were not expected to participate in decisions (Bennett 1995). Similarly, the officer advised the DOS it was a supervisor's contractual responsibility to make sure that teachers adhered to the rules. As close supervision of teacher-labourers was essential, he expected school supervisors "to do their jobs" (13-1) in the chain of command. Indeed, the chain of command was to figure prominently in the new management of the school. Expectations extended to student behaviour, even to where they could sit.

The response of staff was one of *resentment*. The teachers' reaction was summed up by one who asked if the officer thought they were machines. His control and announced expectations implied a disempowerment of staff and a failure to recognize that teaching expertise is widespread. Furthermore, teachers perceived the cancellation of five-minute breaks as unreasonable and impractical. Those with cars now faced a long walk to the school, which in the summer would become a real imposition. The general feeling was that the new management had deliberately diminished their lowly status still further.

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Even when staff were permitted to award additional marks to students, it was perceived as a culturally poisoned chalice (9-1). The teachers felt powerless: "the disenfranchised" (interview Alistair). They particularly resented having to leave classroom doors half-open (6-1).

The theme of resentment is evident throughout the case study whenever rules were perceived as not legitimate, for example, the exhausted cadet who "needed sleep not punishment" (13-1). Collegial preferences (Wallace 1989; Campbell 1989; Evers et al 1992; Coleman 1994; Bush 1997) were little evidenced in the case study; perhaps because so early in the new officer's tenure, he had made clear there was no scope for such aspirations. Other incidents which caused resentment included the refusal to grant emergency medical leave (16-2). The paperwork was passed around various officers until it was too late to action the request; an example of the gatekeeper abusing his power by delaying tactics (Morgan 1997). Furthermore, teachers resented what they perceived to be the manipulation of training standards (3-2).

Staff resentment resulted in a *reluctance* to participate in or support the new organization. Reluctance to support the new regime was demonstrated in different ways. Some individuals opted out. One teacher simply declared that the focus of his life was thousands of miles away, "I don't care what happens" (22-1). Teachers were reluctant to obey rules which they perceived as unreasonable (13-1) although some recognized the rules afforded opportunities to forge closer alliances with students (15-1) as teachers and cadets could equally be seen as 'victims'. Some perceived themselves to be 'neutral' through their "obvious lack of information" (22-1). They considered themselves not to be a part of 'the system', in other words, they were attempting to opt out of the military culture in which they found themselves; such a stance subsequently proved untenable. Clearly staff were reluctant to commit to a system that placed power firmly in the hands of those perceived to be professionally uninformed and whimsical - "a touch of the three bears' porridge".

There were indications the school commander was increasingly aware of the reluctance of staff to obey his rules. His expectations were not being met. Being in a position of institutional power, he was able to *command* subordinates. Further actions were taken to consolidate the chain of command. The revised regulations with regard to maintenance work orders, print orders and photocopying requests were seen as a means of restructuring the school to facilitate this centralized control (1-2). Ultimately, this centralization of command resulted in the abandonment of the official training manual (16-5). The reason given for the decision, announced several weeks after the event, was that it would be more convenient and 'logical' to use one training manual in the college; a clear case of an unconvincing, retrospective legitimization (Brown 1988).

It was clear that the new commander considered teachers had to be monitored closely; he even announced his intention to do so personally (21-1; 13-3). The decision (28-3) to delete the DOS from the evaluation process was a further indication of the command of the school being consolidated. The commander had taken firm control over the process of monitoring teacher subordination. He considered the staff as not being sufficiently cooperative, ie obedient; for example, because the cadets were still tired in the school it was evident teachers were not doing their jobs (15-1). The teachers' reluctance was perceived as indiscipline. In turn, it was evident teachers were suspicious of the CO's motives. There appeared to be no trust on either side and as an Arab expatriate commented, with no trust everything is misinterpreted (9-2) and may lead to staff cynicism or resistance (Busher 2002).

As the staff were perceived to be untrustworthy, indisciplined and reluctant to meet the commander's expectations, it became necessary to take firm action: *orders* were required. Orders were the means of formalizing the CO's expectations. A cycle of rules and orders was set in motion (Gouldner 1954; Douglas 1970). They left no room for debate or discussion – and were consistent with the CO's perception of the organizational chain of command. Communication was not a matter of discussion but orders being cascaded (interview Mohammed). Having completed the reorganization of the school,

the commander had a structure in place which facilitated the flow of orders while removing himself from the possibility of confrontation with subordinates.

Indeed, it was noted that the emphasis was moving from expectations to orders soon after his appointment (15-1). The evidence indicates he intended to order military conformity and regulation, the quintessence of perfection (Dixon 1976), on the disorderly teaching culture, to the point of requiring regulation haircuts (9-4). Increasingly, orders were issued diminishing the authority of teachers, supervisors and DOS, culminating in an attempt to ban meetings (24-4). Orders required staff meetings to be held outside working hours; it was not so much a question of how to conduct meetings as if they could be held at all (Busher and Saran 1995). Teaching staff were held accountable rather than empowered (notes taken Staff Meeting 17-3). Decisions were taken without reference to professional staff regardless of the consequences, for example, the military committee set up to change the course to "100% technical" (25-4).

It was noted that staff were beginning "to come together around forms of *resistance* to the stream of orders" (22-1). Whereas opting out may have once reflected a reluctance to be a part of 'the system', given the increasing number of orders, opting out had become a statement of resistance. The situation was polarizing: the enactment of power through orders was creating its ontological alter ego, namely resistance (Foucault 1980). Individuals and groups were coalescing around various forms of resistance, including staffroom talk, for example, the CO was referred to as an 'organizational arsonist' (24-1). The conversation recorded in the staffroom (27-3) clearly indicated the sense of alienation. Greenfield's (1993) whip fits neatly into the teacher perception of the Mameluke slave; he who suffers the strokes of the lash. Supervisors openly complained about having to follow impossible orders.

Talk of resistance was spread from staffroom to staffroom by the organizational troubadours (14-3). It was noted both Arabian and Western teachers were coalescing into resistance groups based on the perceived unprofessional nature of the military management which was hounding

teachers like wolves (24-3). There was a focus on compromised standards and a lack of respect for teachers (27-3) summarized in the heartfelt: "We're just bog brushes" (24-3). Furthermore, talk of resistance was cultured in Company dining rooms, politicizing teachers and reinforcing cynicism over the inability of the Company to affect events (25-3). However, it was not only talk of resistance bringing together disparate groups; a staff collection in aid of a dying teacher was generously supported (17-3).

While teachers talked of resistance, there was no evidence that they were prepared to oppose the institutional authority directly, *disobedience* was non-confrontational and off-kilter (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). Nonetheless, teachers did attempt to disobey unreasonable orders and rules. The story of Hamish, waving a red or green whiteboard marker, amusingly illustrates this. The tale was mythologized by organizational troubadours passing from group to group. "It's beginning to sound like St Trinian's" (18-3). Alienative compliance (Hales 1993) had become a form of resistance. Teachers developed a range of coping strategies such as teaching from the classroom doorway so they could see officers approaching (29-4; 6-5). Rather like Fairlawn (Blase and Anderson 1995) supervisors conspired with teachers, in this case to ensure they avoided prolonged exposure to weak classes as 'bad marks equals bad teacher' (10-4) and played hide and seek to avoid unwelcome attention from officers (17-4). The one instance of overt resistance, the refusal to complete detailed lesson plans, was resolved by DOS before it became an issue with the military (24-3).

Any hesitation to obey orders was perceived by the military hierarchy as disobedience. Even a Western expatriate ex-officer had stated he would have ruined a subordinate's career because he had had the temerity to raise an innocuous complaint (interview data). The CO considered lateness to be an example of deliberate disobedience (29-4). An Arab supervisor complained, even if he refused to do something outside the regulations, he would be held accountable by the military (interview Mohammed).

Perceiving the staff to be disobedient and plotting against him (24-4), the commander resorted to *coercion*. The full force of institutional authority was brought to bear: attempts were made to coerce staff into obeying orders and rules. The qualified Western teacher evaluator was removed (27-3) and the evaluation process, directly under the control of the commander, restructured as an instrument of coercion. The reason for the removal of the expatriate was reported to be because he, like other expatriates, could not be trusted. While evaluation of staff and student performance can be the key to school improvement (Busher and Saran 1995) it is also true that staff evaluation may be abused as a form of coercion and oppression.

Incidents such as the public humiliation of a junior officer (24-3) clearly demonstrated his power to coerce staff into obedience. Even officers who were considered reasonable had become a part of the process of coercion (29-4). The officer who advised DOS that he is no longer permitted to hold staff meetings was simply carrying out orders (12-5). Ironically, as one of the teachers commented, he too found himself "whip-lashing" his students – simply carrying out orders (25-3).

Coercion is enacted through *threats* rather than orders. Staff had to be made aware of the consequences of disobedience. Threats may be difficult to define, for example, when the commander smacks a cadet and leaves the room without speaking (17-3), is he threatening the teacher? Arguably, yes. One commented it was open season on teachers (25-3). The teachers felt under psychological siege (3-4). Certainly teachers perceived the officers as potential threats to both cadets and themselves (22-1). When the deputy CO stated to the DOS, "We have ways of knowing what is happening" (15-2), the latter construed this as a form of threat. An Arabian supervisor warned staff they had better be careful what they said (10-4). Staff overwhelmed by the deluge of notices, orders and warnings felt under constant threat - "waiting for someone to pounce" (25-3). Teachers became confused about how orders should be obeyed (23-4). Rules kept changing and with the changes came additional responsibilities (26-4). The school corridors had become a hostile environment as the commander and his deputy patrolled. Even soldiers were

required to spy on teachers (30-4). A staffroom discussion summed up much of the frustration, "more and more menace ... it doesn't matter if the cadets can speak a word of English ... he doesn't like us"; the total lack of respect for "those dogs of teachers" by the military (27-3).

Threats became explicit: the supervisors were told teachers would obey the CO's instructions or be dismissed, "I can find plenty of teachers" (24-4). On another occasion I was advised, as DOS, by the CO that one member of staff was "an enemy of the cadets" and he intended to remove such "bad apples". Similarly, supervisors were warned to do their jobs (in the chain of command) or be dismissed. Staff had recognized the increasingly threatening nature of the management but now they were being threatened with dismissal (24-4; 25-4; 13-5). At the same time, teachers felt they were in an impossible situation and professionally compromised (10-5). The commander's notebook became "a source of menace" (25-4). Teachers were threatened for not using the preparation desks despite temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius (2-5). As one teacher commented, "The place is full of threats" (6-5). Staff referred to the increasing level of menace and a feeling of intimidation (10-5) and a "climate of fear" (12-5). It was not surprising stress and sickness levels were rising (25-3) (Fineman 1993). Staff morale was at its nadir (2-5).

Staff had reached the point of *rebellion*. Their actions were hardly surprising; teachers' principled values and interests were in conflict with the formal organization (Busher 2001). The author distinguishes between *resistance* enacted through coping strategies and disobedience of unreasonable rules and orders and *rebellion* realised through subversive practices that manage to disrupt or partially subvert local conditions of domination or oppression referred to as "off-kilter resistance" (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). The process of rebellion involved the discussion and consideration of such subversive actions. This was no placard-waving challenge to the institutional authority but a tenuous and cautious micropolitical rebellion which reflected the realities of the asymmetrical power relationship between the military structure and the teachers.

In this context, the exchange on (27-3) is particularly germane. Teachers were discussing the commander in terms of his micropolitical ambitions; they wanted to know his agenda. The organizational relationship was defined as master and slave. At the same time, one teacher complained about the unprofessional nature of his demands, he (the CO) wants 'dancing teachers'. At this juncture staff were contemplating rebellion; one teacher is proposing to 'swamp the system'. Closing the classroom door, metaphorically, became an exercise of teacher power (20-5). Teachers were proposing to undermine the organization, not by directly opposing it, but by 'working to rule'. Having been instructed to stand all morning, one teacher produced a medical note to say he could not stand and another announced he was going sick (28-3). As Morgan (1997) noted, organizational rules give potential power to both controller and controlled.

The Company corporate change program impacted significantly on events in somewhat unforeseen ways (31-4). The TQM roll-out afforded staff the opportunity of legitimate rebellion which was enacted publicly through letters of complaint, petitions and vociferous condemnation. Staff were able to overtly rebel; as was noted at the time, the Company manager was "deluged with the frustrated ire of the teachers". The general sense of outrage united groups in the school and, conceivably, reinvigorated staff resistance, albeit off-kilter, to the regime in the school.

It is misleading to think all staff responded in the same vein. For some the repressive regime reinforced cynicism. Teachers had peddled their professional integrity (28-3). They were pedagogical mercenaries to a military stereotyped as a marriage of incompetence and authority (13-5). For others it was a clear case of alienative compliance; the cost of resistance was too high – it could mean "losing ... the bloody lot" (2-5). One refused to attend a supervisor's meeting, in effect dismissing it as pointless (23-5). For some teachers the pressures were becoming intolerable (9-5). Many teachers felt they were simply keeping kids off the streets (20-5). Nonetheless in the midst of this, others struggled to do their professional best - for students like Mohammed Saeed (13-5).

Given the risks of losing the bloody lot, staff *subversion* took more nuanced and creative ways in which to engage the institutional power structure (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). Subversion was directed at actively undermining the authority rather than mere disobedience of unreasonable orders.

Subversion fed on organizational stories and myths of heroes and villains (Deal and Kennedy 1982). Such embroidered tales, laced with acronyms like 'IDRM' and catch phrases such as "*They* know what they doing" and "iron whim", had a resonance with staff, bonding diverse organizational groups through a shared and powerful anecdotal history (Beare et al 1989). It was unsurprising that laughter was banned (25-3) as humour became a hallmark of subversion (Collinson 1988). Staff diminished the formal organizational power structure by making the 'enemy' figures of fun. Threats were dismissed: "It's the Red Queen syndrome" - with its *Alice in Wonderland* associations (23-5). Black humour abounded (22-4). Threats were so numerous and ludicrous that staff laughed at them (1-5).

The evidence shows the micropolitical strategy favoured by staff to subvert formal power was humour (Gabriel 1991). Previously, although talk of subversion had graced expatriate dining rooms (28-3) there had been little evidence in the school. However, increasingly staff across multiple third spaces united in common cause. The commander's ignorance of teaching was lampooned (30-4). To great amusement, his 'side shuffle' was mimicked in the staffroom. Seniors talk of rubbishing the 'Man of the Month' proposal (3-4). Teachers laughed out loud at any reference to "You must turn the lights on" (9-4), getting supervisors demoted (1-5), the "cargo cult" (2-5) or rocking teachers (13-5). However, not all teachers were laughing. Steve had to explain the instruction for staff not to meet in groups of three or more was a joke (1-5). And there were casualties (9-5).

Meanwhile there were indications that the organization was becoming dysfunctional. There were instances of subversion by military staff (5-5).

There were cases of public confrontation between officers. "The 'system' is breaking down."

Progressively more instances of humour arise in the field notes. The lotus-eating teacher became a symbol of staff resistance (5-5). Perhaps presciently, the researcher noted, "... in the best tradition of the political cartoon. This is subversion in action". Shortly afterwards the Gary Larson cartoon appeared on the notice board (12-5). The black humour seemed to symbolize the irrepressibility of the human spirit. This was an act of subversion. In a sense, it was a micropolitical gesture of defiance by the staff. The subsequent memorandum from DOS (14-5) recorded the state of the school and brought it to the attention of the Company.

The TQM program was dismissed with equal panache. A 'modified' cartoon from the local paper, mocking TQM, appeared on the notice board (21-5). Notes taken at the time recorded this demonstration of "the power of unvoiced popular feelings". Perhaps the staff had coalesced into a single coherent micropolitical group; Arabian and expatriate staff laughing together.

The commanding officer expected and required the organization to function as a well-oiled machine or, perhaps, an aircraft maintenance section (Morgan 1997). His military vision was at odds with the various cultures which comprised the school. No doubt, as leader he found the loose coupling common in schools both baffling and irritating (Weick 1989). Hoyle (1982) suggested the loosely coupled characteristic of schools yielded 'spaces' in which micropolitical activity could flourish. In this school the complex multiple third spaces and fuzzy edges meant staff were often confused with regard to what was required or how events should be interpreted: such spaces were minefields (Lanagan 2005).

The suggestion that the micropolitical activity in the school constituted normal human endeavour (Holliday 1994; Ball 1987) employing political means to achieve ethically desirable ends (Maclagan 1988) and engaging in genuine debate about the best outcomes for the school (Bush 1994) gives little hint of

the struggle for survival. At the same time, the evidence indicates the school was neither a political jungle (Baldridge 1989) nor an unconventional and chaotic soccer match (Weick 1989) but rather in the throes of a micropolitical process which had form and direction. This process is described below as *Spirals of Organizational Dysfunction*.

Another theme threads through the data: trust or rather the lack of it. Comments included: "no trust on either side" (24-1); "they [the military] don't trust us [the teachers]" (9-2); "You [military officer] can't trust him [expatriate]" (27-3); "devoid of trust at all levels" (19-4); "a complete lack of trust" (5-6) ; "he [the CO] doesn't even trust his own" (5-6). Trust is a key feature of McGregor's (1960) Theory Y approach; in contradistinction to Theory X managerial styles which seek to direct, coerce and control (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Trust is considered an essential element in the leader – teacher relationship (Blase and Blase 1994; Busher and Saran 1995; Hopkins 1996; Allix 2000; Busher 2001; Middlewood 2002). The evidence supports the proposition a lack of trust may generate resistance (Busher 2002). In the study, the absence of trust on either side certainly contributed to the atmosphere of suspicion, exacerbated misunderstandings and contributed to the downward spiral into organizational dysfunction (Bok 1978).

## 5.4 Spirals of Organizational Dysfunction

This section addresses the research question: "What kind of model can be constructed to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place?"

Case study data is 'strong on reality' but difficult to organize without jeopardizing its intrinsic subtlety and complexity (Adelman et al 1994). Consequently, this model cannot offer a nice metaphysical account. On the other hand, in broad terms it does appear to illustrate the trends observed in the school. Any one incident or cross-section of organizational interaction may lead the observer to believe he was in a political jungle or caught up in a chaotic micropolitical game; however, this would be misleading. Such an

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approach would merely offer a pixellated image. Standing back from the experiences of six months, adjusting researcher distance, a picture does emerge. The following model is an attempt to offer a means of conceptualizing and illustrating how the various organizational micropolitical forces interacted and developed.

Unlike Bennett's (2001) model which illustrates the interaction of culture, structure and power, the model offered below focuses on a longitudinal micropolitical process. It illustrates how coercive authority may result in a strong culture of resistance (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Large and small cultures are integral with the micropolitical action which takes place within and is a part of the various multiple organizational third spaces. In this study the organizational cultures are particularly complex and no claims are made with regard to generalization of the findings, fuzzy or otherwise (Bassey 2002).

Indeed, there is little evidence that organizational members were consciously aware of the processes and forces at work. It was only following reading and re-reading the data many times that the researcher felt he could make sense of events. Eventually, in the latter stages of research, a proto-model was shown to a number of staff; the lively discussion and strong agreement was encouraging (19-5); perhaps aspects of the research will resonate across other educational organizations in some small way (Richards 2003). Hence, this account is offered tentatively; others may read the data and reach very different conclusions.

*Spirals of Organizational Dysfunction* is a model which attempts to account for the incidents and micropolitical process that took place. While the model is not intended to suggest there were distinct and separate 'spirals', it is offered as a way of illustrating a micropolitical process which had form and direction. The spirals illustrate the fuzzy, stuttering process of polarization as one party becomes increasingly authoritarian and the other increasingly resistant.

In essence, the model illustrates how authority proceeds through ***control >***
***command > coercion*** enacted through ***expectations > orders > threats*** and, in
response, staff proceed through stages of ***resentment > resistance > rebellion***
enacted through ***reluctance > disobedience > subversion***. Ultimately, the
model leads to organizational dysfunction.



| CONTROL | | COMMAND | | COERCION |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | RELUCTANCE | | DISOBEDIENCE | | SUBVERSION |
| EXPECTATIONS | | ORDERS | | THREATS |
| RESENTMENT | | RESISTANCE | | REBELLION |

**Spirals of Organizational Dysfunction**
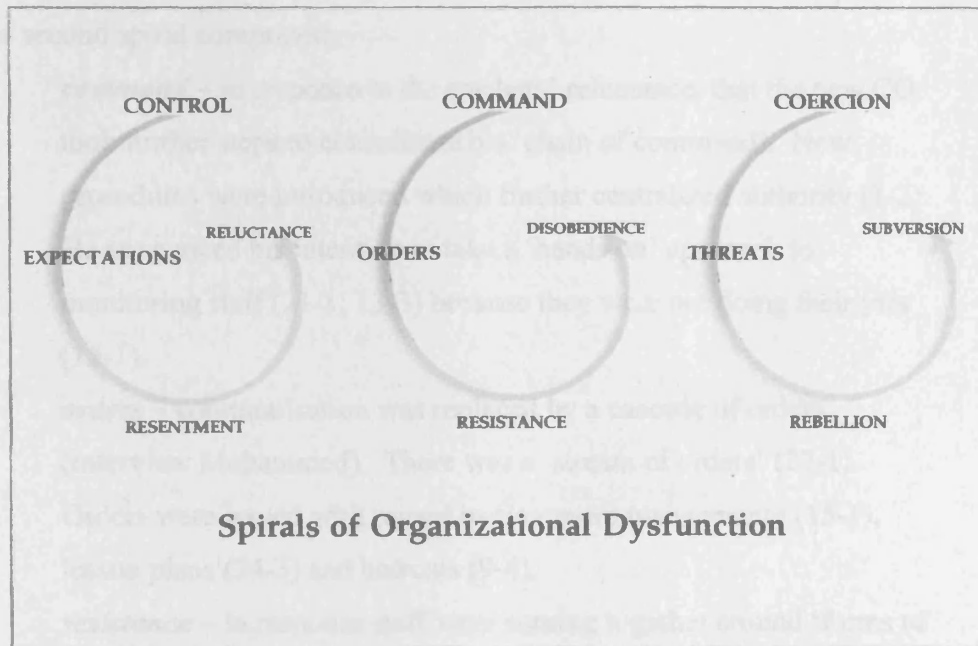
*Figure 5.2 Model of spirals of organizational dysfunction*

The first spiral comprises:

> ***control*** – which was exemplified by the new CO restructuring of the
> organization (6-1); the creation of 'Royal Supervisors'; the change in
> staff parking; the new training schedule. Each change signaled an
> aspect of control.

> ***expectations*** – the CO had clear expectations of staff and cadet
> behaviour, for example, he expected teachers to obey the rules (6-1)
> and 'show a good attitude' (9-1); supervisors were expected 'to do
> their jobs' (13-1).

> ***resentment*** – teachers resented the 'cancellation' of the five minute
> breaks and the long walk in the heat from the new car park to the

school. They particularly resented having to leave classroom doors ajar (6-1) and the perceived manipulation of training standards (3-2).

*reluctance* – some teachers demonstrated their reluctance to support the new regime by simply 'opting out'(22-1). Some stated their reluctance (13-1) while others expressed their reluctance to support the policies by taking a neutral stance (22-1).

The second spiral comprises:

*command* – in response to the teachers' reluctance, that the new CO took further steps to consolidate his 'chain of command'. New procedures were introduced which further centralized authority (1-2). He announced his intention to take a 'hands on' approach to monitoring staff (21-1; 13-3) because they were not doing their jobs (15-1).

*orders* – communication was replaced by a cascade of orders (interview Mohammed). There was a 'stream of orders' (22-1). Orders were issued with regard to classroom management (15-1), lesson plans (24-3) and haircuts (9-4).

*resistance* – in response staff were coming together around 'forms of resistance' (22-1). Talk of resistance spread from one staffroom to the next (14-3) and to dining halls (25-3).

*disobedience* – staff resistance was enacted through various acts of disobedience (18-3; 10-4). They disobeyed the order to complete detailed lesson plans (24-3). Instead of obeying orders, teachers adopted a range of coping strategies (29-4) such as standing in doorways.

The third spiral comprises:

*coercion* – in response to staff 'disobedience' (24-4) the CO attempted to coerce staff into following orders. The CO's direct control over the teacher evaluation process turned evaluations into instruments of coercion (27-3).

*threats* – although there were direct threats made, for example, DOS was advised by the CO that he would dismiss teachers who did not

obey his instructions (24-4), many field notes reflected the perception of threat by staff (25-3; 10-4; 24-4; 25-4).

*rebellion* – staff responded by talking about rebelling against 'the system' from within (27-3; 28-3). Teachers also rebelled against the company (31-4).

*subversion* – teachers adopted many strategies to undermine the status and power of the CO. Often this involved humour (22-4; 1-5; 2-5; 13-5; 23-5). It is suggested that the two cartoons, anonymously posted on staff notice boards, exemplify staff subversion of both military and corporate power and status (12-5; 21-5).

While it is not suggested that the model accounts for all events and processes that took place. In fact, although Nasser considers the model valuable and insightful, he pointed out a number of inconsistencies, for example, some teachers attempted to obey the rules and chose not to subvert institutional authority. Arguably, these teachers were thus coerced into alienative compliance (2-5) which it is suggested is an alternative response to institutional threat.

Furthermore, spirals are not neat and discrete. It is not possible to define the precise point when staff perceived the change from *command* to *coercion* or when *orders* turned to *threats*. Spirals have fuzzy edges and they overlap, for example, from the beginning to the end of the study *orders* were being issued. After all, this is a military culture. Nonetheless, the model is offered as a means of conceptualizing the overall micropolitical process.

## 5.5 Summary

The complex nature of the cultures and third spaces which comprised and influenced the organization contributed to and facilitated the informal power plays which were enacted within the formal organizational structure. Demonstrably cultures, structure and power were intrinsically linked.

In the study, the school staff became locked in these overlapping spirals of oppression and resistance. Given the asymmetrical power relationship, teachers increasingly resorted to off-kilter, micropolitical means to resist

formal institutional power. Resistance often took nuanced and creative forms such as stories, myths and humour.

The model of oppression and resistance which has emerged owes much to the length of the study and the insidership of the researcher. Observant participation offered a privileged, albeit partial, insight into the micropolitics of this educational organization.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion

The researcher set out to investigate the interaction of cultures and micropolitics of a military English language school in the Middle East. The research questions, honed and revised in the light of the emerging evidence, focused the general aims of the case study.

## 6.1 The research questions

In response to the question 'What cultures influence and define the school organization?' a number of multifaceted, 'large' cultures have been identified: Arabian and Western, TESOL, military and corporate. Each of which it has been shown influence, comprise and define the 'small' school organizational culture. The evidence shows the organizational culture is not simply an interaction of these cultures. As these cultures come together, overlap, interact and conflict, other new and divergent third spaces arise within which develop complex hybrid cultures, as discussed above (Chapter two) and as illustrated in the model of 'multiple organizational third spaces'. Such spaces are problematic in that they are bounded with fuzzy edges. Ultimately, it is suggested the school is not characterised by one organizational culture but by multiple third spaces and cultures. Multiple organizational third spaces facilitate micropolitical activity.

In order to answer the question 'What incidents and micropolitical processes occurred in the school during the period bounded by the arrival and departure of a new military commander?', the study identifies a number of incidents and investigates the mélange of micropolitical activity which occurred during the study. Notwithstanding the complex organizational cultures, initially the school appeared to be not dissimilar to other educational organizations: there was a spectrum of micropolitical groups encompassing a diverse range of interests. When the new commander arrived, he further centralized authority and imposed strict controls over staff. Increasing management repression resulted in the staff, feeling alienated and disenfranchised, coalescing into groups to resist. An almost Newtonian cycle of oppression and resistance

developed. The asymmetrical power relationship meant teachers had to resort to non-confrontational and off-kilter micropolitical means, including stories, myths and humour, to oppose orders which were perceived to be unreasonable. Adopting a micropolitical perspective, the study has not dodged the uncomfortable issues and has been prepared to look at institutional and personal failure. In doing so, it does attempt to address the uncomfortable social questions of the use and abuse of power.

In response to 'What kind of model can be constructed to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place?', the model of 'spirals of organizational dysfunction' is offered to account for the incidents and micropolitical processes that took place. The model reflects the patterns which emerged over the study. The evidence indicates the micropolitical process was not a simple one of opposition and resistance. Tactics changed and developed as teachers responded to management actions: control was resented, command was resisted and, ultimately coercion was subverted.

## 6.2    Significance of the study

Issues have been raised which contribute to a discussion of culture and context which "should be uppermost in the minds of international researchers seeking to explain why educational systems and institutions have developed in such diverse ways" (Bell and Bush 2002: 8). Dimmock and Walker (2002: 82) summarize a number of potential benefits of a cross-cultural comparative approach to educational leadership for scholars and practitioners alike, arguing this perspective not only benefits our understanding of schools in other countries but also "through adopting a cultural and cross-cultural 'lens', we can come to know more about our own systems of schooling, leadership and management".

In summary, culture is diverse, dynamic, and difficult to describe but 'real'. Cultures influence organizations and organizations, in themselves, create cultures. Both culture and organization are concerned with power. The situation in this study is singularly complex but may yield insights into other

educational organizations. The challenge has been to explore beneath the superficial, to look behind the façade. From the outside, the power structure of this school appears to be formal, neat and rigid. Staff are fixed within the organizational wiring diagram like butterflies to a pin board. The reality of the school has proved to be quite different. The study shows how the manipulation of power is cultural and organizational, formal and informal, explicit and implicit, overt and covert, that is to say, central to any understanding of how a social system functions.

In terms of its significance, the study has also introduced and applied the anthropological and post-colonial concept of third spaces (Bhabha 1996) to organizational culture thus offering a new and fresh insight into how organizational cultures function. At the same time, the concept of third spaces has been developed to include the notion of multiple third spaces and that such spaces are characterised by fuzzy edges. A model of 'multiple organizational third spaces' is offered as a means of conceptualizing the interaction of large cultures. Furthermore, the relationship between third spaces and resistance groups has been explored (Butz and Ripmeester 1999) and applied to organizational cultures. The metaphor has been used to account for the complex cultural mélange which comprises the school.

The study has also introduced the model of 'spirals of organizational dysfunction' as a means of illustrating and understanding the micropolitical processes of how institutional power may proceed through control > command > coercion and staff, in turn, may proceed through stages of resentment > resistance > rebellion. The model incorporates elements of the discussion of power and micropolitics in Chapter two, whilst extending and developing the themes of oppression and resistance, and demonstrating how staff in an asymmetrical power relationship will resort to off-kilter micropolitical strategies, for example humour, to subvert formal authority.

## 6.3 Research methodology

In addition, this study innovates the notion of *observant participation* (see chapter three). Rather than the expression *insider research*, the term *insidership* has been introduced to indicate the degree of researcher access to and acceptance by the various organizational microcultural and micropolitical groups. Furthermore, as much as one is exhorted to stand outside events as a detached observer, the observant participant acknowledges impartial detachment is not feasible, or necessarily desirable. In compensation, the researcher offered as many versions of organizational reality as possible. Much of the data and analysis was discussed with a study group thereby enriching the corpus. At the same time, recognizing access and trustworthiness are compromised by his own institutional status, ethnicity, religion and biography, the author introduced to the research project a *specialist informant*, an Arab colleague, who was often able to offer a very different perspective on events. Other research innovations included the use of *synchronous online text-based interviewing* and the notions of *researcher distance* and *pixellation* as facets of analysis and synthesis.

## 6.4 Limitations of the study

To a certain extent the limitations of the research are self-evident. Despite the best efforts of the author, ultimately the lone researcher in his cultural prison is able to offer a limited interpretation of events and processes. Nonetheless, there are occasions when only lone researcher is able to offer an intensely personal perspective, such as my vivid recollection of the day one of the teachers returned with his son's death certificate (14-3) and my deep sense of personal failure with regard to Harvey (9-5). On the other hand, access to the various groups in the school was limited; micropolitics is sensitive and inherently difficult to research (Hoyle 1982). The trustworthiness of the study, to an extent, lies with the reader who must judge if a worthwhile and convincing story has been told (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Richardson 2000; Bassey 2002).

The author did have access to many of the key players and decision-makers and could offer a relatively informed perspective on many of the decisions and

events which took place. As observant participant, the author recognized the risks inherent in the duality of roles; hence the extent of primary data quoted in chapter four. The reader has been allowed considerable access to the data in order to facilitate other interpretations.

Ethical considerations such as the identification of informants and possible repercussions, identification of the contractor which could have commercial implications, breaches of confidence and assurances given to informants and, not least, personal risk, made much of the data unusable. Moreover, fictionalization, albeit for ethical reasons, inevitably compromised the integrity of the data to a degree.

## 6.5 Directions of future research

With regard to recommendations and future research, the concept and nature of multiple 'fuzzy-edged' third spaces and hybrid cultures may be explored further in terms of other educational organizations especially in relation to educational leadership and micropolitical interaction. As the literature indicates (Dimmock and Walker 2002), there is a lack of research into the field of cross-cultural educational management. While it is not claimed the model 'spirals of organizational dysfunction' is generalisable, it may be possible to draw inferences which suggest tendencies or possible avenues of analysis in other circumstances. At the same time, further investigation of the process, implications and ethics of 'insidership' research, in particular 'observant participation', may prove fruitful. Certainly, despite the challenges and personal risk, future research into the micropolitical processes of oppression and resistance in a school may well contribute to a better understanding of how such organizations function.

## 6.6 Concluding remarks

In many ways, the research has raised more questions than it has answered. Yet, research which seeks to capture and represent the cultural and ideological perspectives of the individual people involved, as well as the socio-political and cultural frameworks in which they are situated, will not offer an objective reality, rather the intersubjectivity of the participants in the situation (Busher

1999). As Geertz writes, "Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. ... There are no conclusions to be reported; there is merely discussion to be sustained" (1993: 29). It is suggested this study sustains the discussion. On the other hand, given a purpose of research is to try to discover something that was not known before and then communicate that finding to others (Bassey 2002), the study has perhaps achieved something, albeit intangible.

Furthermore, in a post 9/11 world, it is suggested that research which contributes to a better understanding of the interaction of Arabian and Western cultures, particularly with regard to educational organizations - where little research has been conducted - will contribute positively to a world which appears increasingly divided along cultural and sectarian lines.

On a personal note, this study coincided with the most difficult and challenging period of my professional life. When I embarked on the initial ethnographic field work I had little notion of where the study or the events which were being recorded would lead. In fact, despite the frustrations, the research journey has led to a greater understanding of the nature of educational organizations and their cultures and micropolitics. On a practical level, the research shed light on the particular complexities of the school's organizational cultures thereby enabling the author to participate more effectively within the organization. At the same time, it has given me an appreciation of the indomitable spirit and resourcefulness of the staff. As a personal journey, it has been enlightening, stimulating and rewarding.

Appendix A    Dramatis Personae – Interview Schedule

| Name | Position Responsibilities | Primary Interview | Culture / Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abdul-Aziz | Commanding Officer | No interview | Arabian military |
| Abdullah | Supervisor Scheduling and Records | Face-to-face interview | Arabian civilian |
| Abdul-Wahab | Commanding Officer (new) | Face-to-face interview | Arabian military |
| Ahmed | Teacher | AOTI | Arabian civilian (ex-military) |
| Alistair | Supervisor Curriculum Development | SOTI Study Group | Western civilian |
| Andrew | Supervisor Teaching Section | SOTI | Western civilian |
| Arthur | General Manager* | Face-to-face interview | Western civilian (ex-military) |
| Austen | Examiner | Face-to-face Interview | Western Muslim civilian |
| Barton | Teacher | Face-to-face interview | Western civilian |
| Benfield | Deputy General Manager* | No interview | Western civilian (ex-military) |
| Brian | Training manager | Face-to-face interview | Western civilian (ex-military) |
| Christopher | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Conor | Supervisor Teaching Section | SOTI | Western civilian |
| Dermot | Supervisor Testing Section | SOTI | Western civilian |
| Hamad | Teacher | Face-to-face interview | Arabian civilian |
| Hamish | Teacher | Face-to-face interview | Western civilian |
| Homayed | Deputy CO | No interview | Arabian military |
| Ibrahim | Teacher | AOTI | Arabian civilian |
| Jack | Examiner | AOTI | Western civilian |
| James | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Jonah | Teacher | Study Group | Western Muslim civilian |
| Lester | Teacher* | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Mark | Deputy Training Manager | Face-to-face interview | Western Muslim civilian (ex-military) |
| Martin | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |

| Matthew | Writer | AOTI | Western Muslim civilian |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maxwell | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Mohammed | Supervisor Teaching Section | Face-to-face interview | Arab civilian (ex-military) |
| Nasser | Supervisor Teaching Section | SOTI Study Group | Arab civilian |
| Patrick | Senior Military Advisor* | Face-to-face interview | Western military |
| Peter C | ELT Manager* | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Rashid | Teacher | Face-to-face interview | Arabian civilian |
| Robin | ELT Manager* | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Saeed | Senior Manager* | AOTI | Arabian civilian |
| Saleh | Teacher | AOTI | Arabian civilian |
| Salem | Deputy CO (new) | Face-to-face interview | Arabian military |
| Sameer | Supervisor Teaching Section | Face-to-face interview | Arabian civilian (ex-military) |
| Steve | Teacher | Face-to-face interview | Western civilian (ex-military) |
| Theo | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |
| Tony | Teacher | AOTI | Western civilian |
| William | Teacher | AOTI Study Group | Western civilian |

Notes

1. This table includes the names of the main contributors to the study.

2. Interviews were rarely limited to one type, eg Synchronous Online Interviews (SOTI) were preceded by Asynchronous Online Interviews (AOTI). In other cases, AOTIs were supplemented by follow-up face-to-face interviews with regard to particular points.

3. Face-to-face, open-ended 'field' interviews listed above were noted but were not recorded using a tape recorder. There were numerous other 'on-the-hoof' field interviews.

4. An asterisk indicates the person does not work in the school but is employed on the same training contract in another location.

5. There are a number of other staff who contributed to the study in some way, for example, may have been quoted or referred to in field notes but who are not included in the above table. They are identified by name in the text.

Appendix B   Organizational relationships of key contributors to author
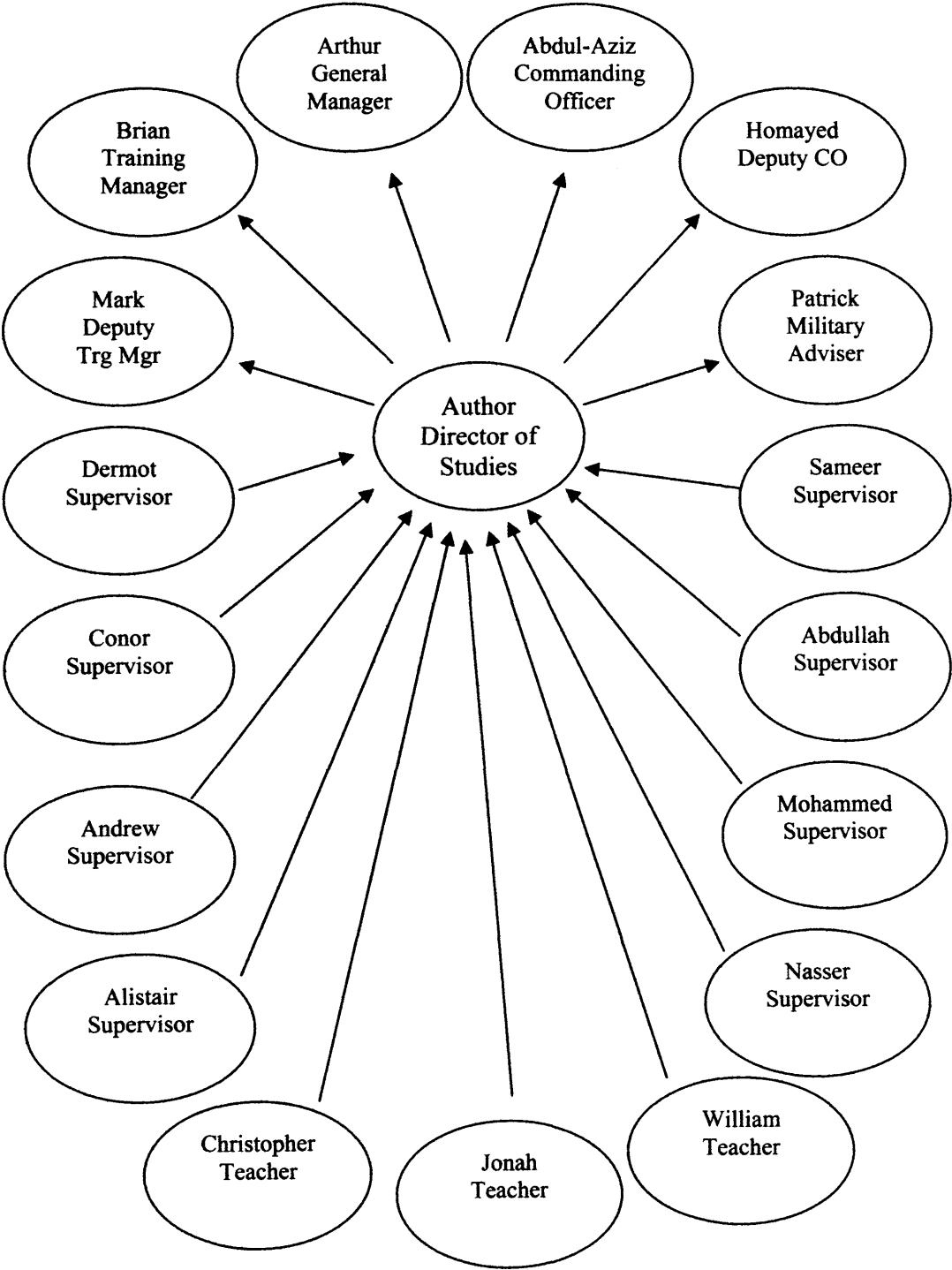
Appendix C    Field Notes Extracts

Extract one:

FN [date]:

\*\*\* arrange buses for afternoon study – changed times 15:40 – 17:20.
\*\*\* evaluation – advise Matthew - OHP u/s.
[I use asterisks to indicate urgency of task – 'the day job']

Sit in the staffroom. Only W..... and G.... [two of the Arab teachers] there:
Discussion of 'wasta'. There is an obligation to help. It is not limited to
[Arabia]. Often you have to say yes but pass the problem on to someone else
who will say no [W]. You have gained status by saying yes and avoided the
embarrassment of saying no [G].

Talked about how culture influences organizations. There are two
organizational cultures. Culture A is Western, impersonal, and task oriented
[it's the company model – aligned objectives!]. Culture B is Arabian which is
family and loyalty oriented. It's not limited to [Arabia] – same in Egypt.
There is an obvious mismatch. Both W and G agree Arabs value family
obligation above everything else. The model is two circles comprising an
inner and an outer circle: the inner circle is family / tribe. [sketch on piece of
paper] Often bound with wasta. W... "you employ your cousin to sit in the
corner of the shop and collect the money – and keep an eye on the others".
The outer circle comprises the workers. Hired help. Those who cannot be
trusted. The model values trust and loyalty over achievement. Objectives are
focused on maintaining the integrity of the inner circle rather than aligned in
pursuit of a particular task. G.... "Egyptians are always second class here"

In the school there is a management conundrum: Teachers have family
obligations – teachers who live in .... or .... fly backwards and forward at
weekends. There is an immediate problem: staff needing to be with family at
certain times. How can they be allocated to the Thursday roster? Arabian
staff can't be treated differently to expats – or can they? W and G seem quite
content if we are treated differently – as long as it is 'fair'. A domestic
problem for an expat will result in absence from Arabia for seven to ten days.
An Arabian teacher will tend to have to take 'emergency' leave more
frequently but for shorter periods of time. [I think back to H... – death of
child resulted on one day away from work.] It is culturally impossible to
reconcile this attitude to the death of a child with a Western attitude to the
death of a son.

Raises another cultural issue / difference: the attitude to death. 'The greatest
respect you can pay someone is to bury that person before the next sunset.' "It
is our culture as well as our religion", G..... There is an impressive stoic
acceptance of death, buoyed by the certainty of the afterlife. Graves are only
marked by an uncut or polished stone. Even [rulers] do not have memorials.

Extract two:

FN [date]

Bloody hot day. No a/c. Sitting in the staffroom on threadbare chairs that are falling apart. The tea boy brings over a cup. How do they stay so cheerful? Just look across at the notice board.
** must tidy up the notices – and chuck the old stuff away.

I can see Geoff's shirt is soaked through with sweat. His classroom is on the south side of the building and is a lot hotter than most. One of our more cynical brethren – don't blame him today. As there is a/c in my office (and in the officers' offices) I feel a little uncomfortable.

*** call the chief engineer to find out if they have the parts yet.
If nothing else I should be able to tell people what is happening.

Note: the a/c has broken down several times in the last fortnight.

There are four Western expatriate classroom teachers sitting round. All are in their late forties or early fifties. They are seriously hacked off.
Geoff: "We are just keeping them off the streets." I don't think anyone disagrees with this. Discussion moves onto the CO.
Frank: "People are curious about what his (OC) agenda is."
Harry: "We are Mameluke slaves."
Mike: "He doesn't recognize anyone. All he wants is dancing teachers."
[peculiar expression? Dervishes or marionettes? Should have asked him.]
Geoff: "The relationship of the teachers and the students is wrong."
Mike: "We'll send so many cadets that they'll swamp the system."
I immediately think of Greenfield (check ref) and the whip.

Conversation continues – impossibility of keeping the cadets awake. What do you do?
Geoff: "I feel sorry for them. They're knackered."
Consensus is definitely they are not bad lads.
Geoff: "Last night someone got them up in the middle of the night."
Note: it is usual to get up at 3:30.

Conversation turns on the lack of a/c – again.

Note: there is an increase in the number of students being sent to the Discipline Office. However, I'm not sure if it is a case of teachers protecting themselves by sending out students or deliberately subverting the system. Knowing Mike, I suspect in his case it is the latter.

Appendix D    AOTI Interview Guide

1. Establish the purpose and assure anonymity and confidentiality, establish the ground rules. The assurance of confidentiality in this study must be reciprocal.

2. Obtain some personal date like length of time in the school and the teaching background of the interviewee.

3. Ask some general questions about the school and the invite comments on the present working atmosphere in the school. What is it like working in the school? How would you describe the school culture?

4. Invite a general assessment of the atmosphere in the school during the period being reviewed. Is it /was it different then? Ask what they thought was the cause.

5. Invite them to tell a story that they had heard that illustrated this. There are the usual problems of hearsay but the 'myths' and stories have a value in themselves. I also think that interviewees are likely to feel comfortable telling a story that they have heard.

6. Ask if they had a personal incident or a particular recollection that illustrated this.

7. Invite comment on incidents that I have noted or incidents or stories that have been told to me by other interviewees.

8. Ask how they would describe the process that was taking place. Personal note: This is a crucial and difficult area. I have to be careful not to lead interviewees here.

9. Discuss the place of culture in the school. What cultures influence the school?

10. Consider the interaction between culture and politics.


Questions customized and asked in a series of emails on the premise that they are likely to be less leading if interviewees don't know where they are going at the beginning.

## Appendix E    AOTI Interview Sample Transcripts

### Extract One: Christopher

I haven't got much time to reply but I will say that one of the most
enjoyable aspects of the school despite all the bitching and
backbiting is the feeling of camaraderie and in my own personal
experience, a sense of belonging. I actually feel that I am a part
of the school and have contributed something to the place! Do I sound
as if I am blowing my own trumpet?

There are also times when I bump into old students who thank me
personally for getting them through tests. I was quite touched when I
went to J.... recently and met an old student from ten years ago who
thanked me for all my efforts. He made a point of saying that he
had always wanted to thank me personally but had never had the chance.
So my dear, there are moments of glory for us all, even if they are
few and far between.

As for the atmosphere, yes, it has been a little nasty but I was still
able to come home in the afternoon, eat my lunch, then have a nice kip
followed by a pleasant swim without worrying too much about pouting
[officers] who are prima donnas in disguise. Theo take note! The
problem with some teachers at the [school] is that they take their
school problems home with them and living on compounds where people
'feed' on each other doesn't help!

### Extract Three: Martin

To me, it doesn't really matter which 'culture' (Islamic, Western,
military or industrial) is at play in our educational setting, in that
they all attempt to manipulate what happens in the classroom.

What interests me is not really how all of the above 'cultures'
attempt to manipulate what happens in our classrooms - I am more
interested in how individuals and groups contest the discourses
imposed on them and how aware they are of the techniques used on them
and by them in this process.

The discourses we have in the [school], it appears to me, are largely
imposed by the military surroundings we find ourselves in. The
military and the [deleted reference to the establishment] and together
they form an unholy triumvirate to which we all pay allegiance. We as
[the company] are simply facilitators, I think.

Obviously it is in their combined interest to control what is learned
in the classroom, but I think I said that it is very difficult to mask
this control in a 'totalitarian' setting. What is more interesting to
me is how individuals respond to this control.

I think Friere said that all learning is 'political' in the sense that
the students are in a 'dependent' relationship with the discourses
which are on offer in the classroom. Personally I think that this is
simplistic - I did some discourse analysis work in [the oil company]
(I had to promise the workers there that the tapes I made (in secret)
would be confidential and would be a matter between me and my
university. A lot of the men I was teaching were ex-[deleted]
employees who felt hard-done-by and resented being sent back into
the classroom by their new employer. To cut a very long story short, I
allowed some members of a very trusted class to bring in some texts of
their own choosing  (strictly against [deleted] rules) and to
introduce them to the class and discuss them.

## Extract Four: James

One of the aspects of my research that concerns me is the intrusive nature
> of my own position in the organization. I appreciate that if I interview
> people they will remain aware of what I do in terms of the school, but I
> contend that the use of e-mail offers an organizationally 'neutral' medium
> to discuss issues.

*** THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION, IN THIS CASE EMAIL, CONFERS NO ADDITIONAL
ADVANTAGES IN AND OF ITSELF. I STILL HAVE TO GO TO WORK ON SATURDAY, WHERE
YOU WILL BE MY BOSS! AND ALTHOUGH YOU MIGHT TRY VERY HARD TO
COMPARTMENTALISE YOUR DEALINGS WITH ME, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT YOUR
OVERALL IMPRESSON OF ME WILL BE FORMED BY THE TOTALITY OF OUR
ENCOUNTERS, BE THEY IN YOUR OFFICE AT WORK, OR THROUGH AN EXCHANGE OF
EMAILS IN OUR FREE TIME.
I READ A LONG TIME AGO THAT BOSSES FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN PEOPLE'S LIVES,
ALMOST AS MUCH AS SPOUSES DO. I THINK THAT IS TRUE. THERE'S JUST NO
GETTING AWAY FROM IT. ***


## Extract Five: Ahmed

As you know there are a number of cultures  that affect what
happens in the [school] e.g. the military, the Islamic, the
Arabic, the [Arabian] and the western.  These cultures do not
represent discrete identities. However, they usually overlap
and mix so that it is difficult to identify which culture is
the driving force in a particular situation or instance.

One clear example of [Arabian] and may be Arabic culture and
how it affects what goes on in the [school] is the concept of
"help" held  by both the officers, the [Arabian] teachers, and
the cadets. It becomes very clear when cadets fail a number of
times. Some parents come to the officers and repeatedly ask the
officer to help their sons by giving them more marks to pass
the test. In the exam itself the students conceive giving the
answers to the other cadets as some sort of help. Recently,
though explicitly mentioned to the new teachers in the briefing
room that both the oral and the "copybook" should display
normal distribution, the copybook marks I received from most of
the new [Arabian] teachers were all full marks.

The second feature of [Arabian] culture is that of "face".
Those who are in charge, pretend that they know what is
happening in the SEL and they tend to convenience themselves of
that. This usually results in wrong decisions in spite of our
advice to them. They are not usually willing to go back in
their decisions if they make mistakes.

In stark contrast to [Arabian] culture is the Islamic culture
in respect of the two features mentioned above. Prophet
Mohammed (p.b.u.h) in a lot of his sayings highlight the
importance of fairness among people. "If Fatimah the daughter
of Mohammed, stole anything, Mohammed would chop her hand off".

In respect of the second feature of the [Arabian] culture, the
concept of "face", Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h) says, " Knowledge
is lost if the man is either arrogant, or is afraid of losing
his face".  He also says, "Whoever says, "I don't know, he
knows". This is basically encourages us to admit our ignorance
of something as the first step to learn it.

First let me ask for your informed consent with regard to using this interview as a part of my Ed D studies. You are assured anonymity and confidentiality. Is this acceptable?

I should also explain the purpose of this interview. I wish to use this method to investigate the cultures and power structures in the school.

I know that you have had experience conducting F2F interviews and you are familiar with the literature so your comments will be especially valuable. You have used email before but have you used MS Messenger or any other form of online chat?

In terms of my own research, I'm interested in culture and micropolitics within organizations and how they affect management. In particular, I'm looking at the school. For the record would you define your role in the school?

There are a number of different 'cultures' in the school.
Which 'cultures' would you identify?
[Prompt if necessary: military, host, western, TESOL, organizational]
How would you describe the interaction of these cultures?
Have you got an example of that? [Prompt for additional examples]

How would you describe the organization of the school?
Is it really like that? [probing and follow-up questions]

How do you think these cultures affect the management of the school?
How many cultural 'groups' would you identify in the school?
[check question – define a group] Usually groups contain sub-groups.
Within the school, could you identify some of the smaller groupings?
In what way do these groups interact with each other?

It seems that sometimes these groups forge alliances for a common purpose and at other times compete. What do you think?
Have you got an example of this?

One of the staff said "You have a clash of cultures – and that's not to do with eating with your right hand and sitting on the floor." What do you think he was referring to? [Be prepared to digress on this]

Would you say the organization was characterised by 'competing cultures'?
How far is this 'clash of cultures' fertile ground for micropolitical intrigue?
Would you say that having various competing groups makes the organization more susceptible to people with their own agendas?

Staff have complained that are always new rules and regulations.

Do you think this is symptomatic of any one culture, or just this particular organizational culture?
Why do you think so?

How much do you think the management is influenced by the personality of the person in charge?
Do you think this is more likely because of the interaction of cultures here?

I'd like to ask a few questions about [the CO]. How would you describe his management style?
Do you think his approach is more influenced by culture or politics? Why? Could you give examples?
Have you personally been involved in any of these incidents?
How much is myth and how much is fact do you think?
Why would you say that?
Introduce micropolitics – everyone has his own agenda?
How is power manipulated in the school?
Is there a relationship between power and culture? Power and structure?
Lead to discussion of authority and resistance.

Somebody said our situation was only possible because of the particular misalignment of professional, national and military cultures. Would you agree? Why? How would you define the interaction of these cultures? Are other forces at work? Examples.

Thanks. I think we have covered most of the substantive issues I wanted to raise. Are there any additional points you would like to make?

Summarise the main points of the interview. Ask if there are any additional comments or thoughts.

In terms of a research method what do you consider to be the main advantages of a synchronous online text-based interview (SOTI), ie what we are doing now?

Someone commented to me that online interviews would be 'a good idea' as nowadays so many of us 'think in front of the computer'. What is your experience? And, of course, what would you say are the main disadvantages?

A fellow student commented, "You can't just ask questions. There has to be a dialogue." How far would you say this interview has been a dialogue?

Do you have any final comments on 'soti' as a research method?
Would you say that sotis are particularly suited to ethnographic research?

Please scroll through what you have typed. Is there anything you would like to add or comment on?

Have you enjoyed the interview?

Appendix G    SOTI Scrap Board Sample

When making notes on the scrap board it is possible to switch back to the Messenger window to check if the interviewee is still responding.

Although the conversation is 'synchronous' the responses may not be immediately sequential, eg Question 8 followed by Answer 7 then Question 9 followed by Answer 8. SOTI turn-taking conventions make it quite distinct from both the F2F interview and the survey. Interruptions are quite acceptable as are comments on earlier turns.

It is evident during the interview that the interviewee is happy typing at the same time as the interviewer, ie he is quite at ease trampling the conversational rules of oral turn-taking. Online conversations are not as sequential as F2F conversations.

If there is a long pause in typing it may be necessary to prompt, eg "still there?" Punctuation marks can be adequate as a probe.

Another advantage of using the Scrap Board is that you can set the spell check to pick up typos which is not possible in Messenger.

'Nebulous' - At this point I see that typing seems to have stopped. Although there is no response I will continue. No, I can see IP is now typing again. I surmise that he is thinking about his response. I'll make a note to probe or to pick up the point again later. I've cut and pasted (and highlighted) the part onto the scrap board for later reference:

> "I'm not sure that official wiring diagrams can easily reflect the position. It, the role, has a certain nebulous quality about it for a variety of reasons that are partly historical and partly to do with the way the role is played out in practice."

Of course, the other possibility is that he has gone off to make a cup of tea! No. In fact, IP has chosen to revisit this topic and amplify his earlier comments.

I've just noted the first mention of cynicism! I'll pick this up later: "a sense of cynicism".

I must ask this later: "How far would you say that micropolitical groups have distinct cultures?" In fact, I think I have mistimed this. I've made a mistake by asking this one too soon while another exchange was going on. The question has been ignored by the interviewee. Not to worry. It is possible to copy the item to the Scrap Board and ask it later.

The following questions / points from the Interview Guide were not made as the items were covered during the flow of the conversation: [listed below].

## Appendix H  SOTI Interview Sample Transcript

IR says:

Going back to one of the points we were talking about. How would you describe the organizational culture of the school?

IE says:

As I was saying, I think it's a difficult thing to describe since I don't think it's particularly well focused. It's diffuse and competing. However, one thing that I have noticed is that the various groups do seem to have images - stereotypes if you like - of each other that can be tapped into when telling stories, etc. Do you want me to pursue this further?

IR says:

Yes - it's interesting to see how different groups characterise each other.

IE says:

The cynics - let's call them that even though some of them might dispute it - and even some less cynical seem to regard the military as stupid, capricious, and as out to get them. Thus stories which portray them in this light are given a good hearing.

IR says:

Similarly I've noticed that the officers can happily refer to 'the teachers' as a distinct culture (or is it a group?) regardless of origin.

IE says:

The cynics do also tend to tell stories about 'the professionals' or the 'hard core TEFLers' as daft and likely to make things worse, thus stories about attempted changes that in fact worsened things for the teachers are also told.

IR says:

Is it easier to get a handle on people by stereotypifying them? You don't have to go into any personalities.

IE says:

Yes, I have heard the officers reported as saying that they think a lot of teachers are lazy and untrustworthy for example.

IR says:

And from my experience this is 'cross-cultural'.

IE says:

Stereotyping is a way both of understanding, and of classifying so that you don't have to think about it any more. In our place a lot of it has to do with reducing the amount you have to think about what you are doing, reducing cognitive dissonance if you like. It also, as you nearly say, means you don't have to regard people as individuals with their own wants, needs, personalities, etc.

IR says:

Is stereotyping simply the first step along the road of bias and bigotry? And in some cases racism? For example. "Teachers are ..." or "Officers are ..." or "Senior Teachers are ..."

IE says:

One of the Buddhist books I have read talks about 'groupism', the tendency for people to both see others as representatives of groups and to join groups themselves. Groupism in his understanding is a way of not dealing with people as people, not having compassion.

IR says:

When M---- E---- wanted to see "A-----" <name of the interviewee> the other day, he was definitely out to deal with a troublesome teacher. Later he said to me "Oh yes, I know him." The situation changed. You weren't simply in the category / stereotype "teacher".

IE says:

Yes, interesting, isn't it? They were very non-plussed. I try to deal with them as individuals as you do I think, and they do definitely respond, but they were genuinely put out. Their normal understandings of teacher were challenged.

IR says:

Indeed. But you raise two interesting points and I'm not sure how they fit together.

IR says:

First there is 'culture' and small cultures. Secondly there are groups. The latter tend to be associated with micropolitics. So where is the line between culture and micropolitics?

IE says:

Cultures have, following the stereotype idea, identifiable characteristics, they behave like that, they are like that. The tendency to group others together is a necessary part of creating a culture, but only part.

IR says:

I think that the difference may be that there is a degree of choice in the micropolitical arena. You don't choose your culture. Micropolitical groups may involve members of different cultures coming together for a specific purpose - or out of convenience.

IR says:

When Western expats watch Muslim teachers go to pray they are a 'different culture'. When they leave early, they are all teachers - the same culture.

IE says:

The tendency to group together to achieve something is more micropolitical. Thus the cynics do not have any agenda, they are a cultural grouping. On the other hand, the professionals do sometimes meet together in twos or threes informally and they do have a kind of agenda. Interesting?

IE says:

There's another stereotype. The [Arabian] teachers leave early.

IR says:

Surely belonging to a 'cynical group' is a micropolitical distinction rather than a culture. Their agenda is to do as little as possible in return for the maximum benefit.

IE says:

I think one reason I describe it as a culture is because of shared norms, shared stories, shared stereotypes of others. Do micropolitical groupings have shared norms?

Appendix I    The strengths and limitations of AOTI and SOTI

| AOTI strengths | AOTI limitations |
| --- | --- |
| Time to reflect on the questions | Lacks spontaneity |
| Able to respond at leisure / equality | Difficult to probe / follow up |
| Less threatening / intimidating than F2F | Can only ask one or two questions at a time |
| Invites a more considered response | Overload / the swamped inbox |
| Lengthy, detailed response possible | Requires degree of computer literacy |
| Removes 'intimidation' of F2F | Lack of visual cues |
| Suitable for an 'academic' exchange | Sampling: only access those with email |
| Keeps an accurate record of exchange | Misunderstandings can arise |
| Possible to embed replies in original text | May lose the thread over a period of time |
| Time and place are not a constraint | Equipment / ISP breakdowns |

| SOTI strengths | SOTI limitations |
| --- | --- |
| Spontaneous 'realtime' communication | More time consuming than face to face |
| Able to add questions | May not be suited to 'emotional' topics |
| Able to revise and rephrase questions | Lack of visual cues |
| Respondent may re-read and add comments | Limited to computer literate |
| Easy to edit, cut and paste in interview | Limited by typing speed |
| Able to probe, clarify and follow-up | Lengthy turns not feasible |
| Persistent textual record | Equipment / ISP breakdowns |
| Able to keep researcher notes in interview | |
| Able to consider and reread before sending | |
| Able to explore 'earlier lines of thought' | |
| Tends to diminish power relations | |
| Removes 'intimidation' of F2F | |
| Appears to be interesting and stimulating | |
| MS Messenger readily available | |

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