Examining the Impact of Employee National Identity on Organizational Culture and Values Adoption within a Multinational Corporation

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Abstract

This study investigates how national identity impacts upon the understanding and adoption of organizational cultural mechanisms including stated desired values and behaviours within a multinational company. It seeks to understand the cultural portrayals of employees within this company representing nine nationalities across four distinct geographic regions in relation to their organization’s Shared Purpose, Shared Commitments, and Shared Behaviours.

The study was conducted via qualitative means to probe and understand employee thoughts and perceptions surrounding their company’s cultural program, and determine what, if any, national cultural nuances exist in relation to their understanding, resonance, internalization, and enactment of these stated behaviours.

Several key findings emerged, which were clustered in three dominant themes: Change Management and Communication of Values; Role of Leadership; and National Cultural Considerations. These findings provide a basis of recommendations to organizations seeking to enact or influence cultural programs within their organizations, particularly those companies with heterogeneous employee populations.
Chapter 1: Introduction and Background
1.1 Introduction

This dissertation was undertaken to examine the concept of organizational culture and prescribed organizational values as they are perceived and interpreted by employees from different nationalities within a large multinational organization. The exploration examined the themes of culture, both organizational and national; the concept of values and values based management; and how these topics influence employee engagement and interpretation when it comes to the desired culture and behaviours within their own organization. Recommendations were established as a guide for organizations wishing to implement or maintain cultural change programs in their organization, including suggestions on how to overcome potential challenges when it comes to employees from different national backgrounds.

1.2 Background

Organizational culture can be described as the customs, behaviours, norms, assumptions and values enacted within a company. It is what drives employees to act according to the underlying behavioural guidelines that are present in an institution. It is the unspoken set of rules, the traditions and beliefs, the stories and narrative, the lifestyle that is common to all members of the organization (Schein, 1985; Nord, 1972; Hofstede, 1980; Kotter and Heskett, 1992). The influence and impact of organizational culture is far-reaching, and goes beyond the ‘touchy-feely’ associations one might conjure when faced with the often inspirational statements of values and purpose many companies decree. In fact, the impact of organizational culture and the role of ‘values’ in the operations and success of organizations has become well documented, and as a result has become more topical in recent years. Organizations with strong cultures are recognized as benefiting from increased financial performance, better employee satisfaction, and greater longevity. (Calori and Sarnin, 1991;
Gordon and DiTomaso, 1992; Kotter and Heskett, 1992; Chatman and Jehn, 1994; Denison and Mishra, 1995, cited in Recardo, 2011; Beitler, 2006; Kotter and Heskett, 2011, cited in Essawi and Tilchin, 2012; Kefla, 2012). Consequently, companies are investing in change management processes to develop and execute cultural management programs, designed to define and influence the desired organizational behaviours and enhance employee commitment to a shared vision or purpose.

With more companies operating across borders in increasingly global environments, unique challenges can arise in order to translate and adopt standardized organizational cultural norms across geographies and national cultures. Given that national cultural variances exist and are widely researched and documented (Hofstede, 1980; Hall and Hall, 1995; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011; Dartey-Baah, 2013), it can be assumed that employees in various regions will prescribe to and display different underlying national cultural influences. Although the risk of generalization can occur when examining groups of people from a societal or national cultural perspective, overarching patterns do exist, ranging from comfort level with change; views on hierarchy; views on gender; or whether they adopt an individualistic or collective outlook (Hofstede, 1980).

In the context of large multinational organizations, in which employees from a variety of national backgrounds and cultures are expected to adopt and display prescribed corporate values or behaviours, a possible scenario is that employees in different geographies may perceive organizational values differently, resulting in varying degrees of acceptance, resonance, or adoption. This could mean that employees in certain regions do not feel as connected to the company’s purpose as others, and the organization could be missing out on possible engagement opportunities with these employees.
This research explores the thoughts and perceptions of employees in a large multinational company surrounding organizational culture and prescribed values within their institution, internally labelled within the company as the _Shared Purpose_, _Shared Commitments_, and _Shared Behaviours_, which can be seen in Appendix 3. Participants from nine nationalities who live and work in four distinct geographic locales were interviewed in order to understand how national identity variations across regions may impact upon the adoption and enactment of the shared purpose, commitments, and behaviours. For the purposes of this study, the term _company values_ or simply _values_ may be used interchangeably when referring to the shared purpose, commitments, and behaviours within this organization.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Rationale for Study

This area is of particular interest to the researcher, who has spent over ten years employed by the organization in which the research took place. Having worked with colleagues and teams across geographic regions, and having transferred from the North American business to live and work in Ireland, she has had experience with the cross-cultural nuances and challenges within a multinational corporate environment.

Values and behavioural guidelines within an organization both represent the organizational culture within the business, but also provide underlying guidelines aimed to shape and influence the behaviour of employees (Deloitte, 2013). The research conducts a cross-cultural study of employees to gauge employee sentiment in relation to their company’s internally stated values. In order to examine the perceived importance and values congruence with these factors, the research was conducted with employees located in Ireland, Germany, Shanghai, and the United States, with the aim to explore employee awareness of these values. The specific research questions and aims are outlined in the subsequent section.
1.3.2 Research Question and Objectives

The central research question for this study was whether employees of differing nationalities displayed differences in their perceptions and sentiments regarding the shared values within their multinational institution, and how this impacted their engagement and resonance with the overall desired culture.

Examination and exploration of this question naturally led to supporting sub-questions which were also aimed to be addressed through the course of the research. Related questions supporting the investigation included:

- To what extent are employees aware of their company values
- To what extent do employees feel personally connected to these values
- What role does nationality play in their feelings surrounding the values
- Do values play a role in job satisfaction

The aim of the research is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of organizational culture, and more specifically how the role of national culture impacts upon the perception of and effectiveness of company culture and values. Furthermore, the research aims to unearth findings and subsequent recommendations surrounding the effective creation and rollout of shared company values programs within multinational environments.

1.4 Approach

This study began with an extensive review of relevant literature, including writings on national culture, organizational culture, values, job satisfaction, and change management. Primary research in the form an inductive approach was then conducted and carried out via qualitative methods within the multinational company in which the researcher is employed. This multinational had recently refreshed its organizational cultural program, having newly
introduced updated cultural statements and guidelines throughout the global organization, entitled the ‘Shared Purpose’, ‘Shared Commitments’ and ‘Shared Behaviours’. Employees from different cultural background and regions were probed on their interpretations and feelings on these topics. The researcher conducted a focus group and four one-to-one interviews in which the research questions were explored with employees from several nationalities across four geographic locales. The findings were analysed and three key themes emerged. These were: 1) Change Management and Communication of Values, 2) Role of Leadership and 3) National Cultural Considerations.

1.5 Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is broken out into several chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will outline the literature review carried out. Subsections within this chapter include Organizational Culture; Values and Values Based Management; Cross-Cultural Management; and Change Management. The role of values in the shaping of organizational culture and employee behavioural norms is explored, as is the impact of employee national culture. Change management is researched, specifically in the context of cultural adjustment or creation, and how companies both successfully and unsuccessfully undertake such programs. The literature review is approached with the specific theme of national culture in mind, and how this links to the other related areas of organizational culture and change management.

Chapter 3 outlines the Research Methodologies employed, and discusses the author‘s research philosophy and choice to employ qualitative methods for this study. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and findings, and explores the three dominant themes unearthed in the study. Next, Chapter 5 examines the conclusions and recommendations stemming from this research, while Chapter 6 outlines the researcher‘s self reflective regarding undertaking this dissertation and MBA program.
1.6 Scope and Limitations

This research is limited to the findings obtained via a qualitative method; the researcher acknowledges that additional findings could be learned by employing a mixed-method approach and including quantitative analysis via surveys or similar data collection. However, the researcher adopts an Interpretivism philosophy, and asserts the insights gained through the qualitative approach are relevant, and contribute to the knowledge in this area.

Furthermore, a non-probability sampling technique was employed in which the researcher reached out to participants who were known to be of various national backgrounds, in order to maximize cross-cultural input. Although some criticism of this approach exists in that the sample could be prone to researcher bias, given the time constraints for the research and the aim to maximize insights from different nationalities, the Researcher maintains that it is relevant and acceptable for the purposes of this study.

1.7 Contributions

The aim of this study is to contribute to the knowledge and literature relating to organizational culture, and in particular the roll-out or maintenance of cultural change programs. The continual thread throughout this dissertation is the implications of nationality when it comes to the interpretation and enactment of behaviours and values prescribed by the organization.

The primary recipients of this research will be the management and human resources staff of the multinational which provided the sample of employees targeted in the research. Additionally, management in other organizations, particularly those employing staff from a wide range of cultural and national backgrounds, or those operating in different global regions will be recipients of this research. The researcher's dissertation supervisor Paul
Taaffe is also a recipient, as is Dublin Business School and Liverpool John Moores University.
Chapter 2

Literature Review
2.1 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as "the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems or external adaptation and internal integration" (Schein, 1985), while Nord (1972) describes it as "the grand total of all the objects, ideas, knowledge, ways of doing things, habits, values, and attitudes which each generation in a society passes on to the next is what the anthropologist refers to as the culture of a group". Dutch behavioural scientist, Geert Hofstede defined culture as "the collective mental programming of a people in an environment". His later definition was "that culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another". Kotter and Heskett (1992) of the Harvard Business School define organizational culture "as an interdependent set of values and ways of behaving that are common to a community and tend to perpetuate them, sometimes over a long period of time". Robbins (1989) describes it as "a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other Organizations. This is a set of characteristics that the organization values." The common thread amongst these definitions is the concept of "shared" approaches, meanings or norms amongst members of an organization.

Historically, interest in organizational culture can be traced back to early works by Durkheim through Elton Mayo, and the Human Relations Movement. In much of the literature the terms Organizational Culture and Corporate Culture are used interchangeably, though some criticism exists of this approach, and a distinction between the two has emerged. This distinction defines organizational culture as the collective values, beliefs and practices of employees, a product of factors such as history, size of organization, strategy, management style, national cultures and other factors. Corporate Culture however refers to culture deliberately created by management to meet strategic ends (Needle 2004; Barry et all 2000).
For the purposes of this study, the author will use the term ‘organizational culture’ though at times the observations do relate to prescribed cultural programs.

Scheffknecht (2011) outlines three distinct theoretical definitions of organization culture research: Differentiation, Integration, and Fragmentation. Schein (1985), Schultz and Hatch (1996), and Collins and Porras (2002) subscribe to the Integration perspective, which views culture as being characterized by consistency, consensus, and clarity through the values of high level employees. Differentiation, represented by Bartunek and Moch, and Van Maanen’s (in Frost et al 1991), characterises organizations as being ‘composed of overlapping, nested subcultures that coexist in relationships of intergroup harmony, conflict, or indifference” (Martin 2002, cited in Scheffknecht 2011). The Fragmentation perspective is supported by authors including Robertson and Swan (2003) who are of the opinion that ambiguity (multiple meanings, paradox, irony, and inescapable contradictions) is the defining characteristic of cultures in organizations. It can be argued that most organizations strive to observe the integration perspective in that consensus and consistency of values is often aimed towards. However, a possible scenario is that multinationals are more likely to exhibit differentiation tendencies, in that groups of employees representing different geographies or nationality clustering could result in the co-existence of these overlapping subcultures.

The concept of ‘Culture’ is becoming more prominent in business management, particularly with the increased globalized nature of commerce. More recently literature has shifted from focusing on outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction, attrition or absenteeism to a higher level of focus on organizational culture and behaviours. Authors have noted that companies with stronger ingrained cultures display strength in their ability to shape the behaviour of organizational members, and ultimately show increased likelihood of overall success in international business (Calori and Sarnin, 1974; Denison and Mishra, 1995; Gordon and DiTomaso, 1992; Kanungo and Mendonca, 1994; Koene, 1996; O’Reilly,
Chatman and Caldwell, 1991; Pathak, Rickards and Pestonjee, 1996; Sheridan, 1992; Wilderom and Van den Berg, 1998, cited in Nazir, 2005; Heskett, 2013, cited in Coleman, 2013). To put it simply, corporate culture shapes the way people act, and therefore strongly influences how things get done (Kefela, 2012). Organizational culture is formulated through the ongoing development and display of shared assumptions, cultural values, shared behaviours, and cultural symbols (Hellriege and Slocum, 2010; Schein, 2010, cited in Essawi, M, and Tilchin, O 2012), and in addition to improved corporate performance has also been shown to have a direct influence on employees’ satisfaction and commitment (Lok et al., 1999; Lund, 2003; Silverthorne, 2004 cited in Diskienė and Goštautas 2010).

Hofstede (1980) contends that management practices cannot be applied universally without considering cultural differences impacting individuals within an organization. This is of particular note in companies with a highly heterogeneous employee population. Indeed, operating in a multinational environment brings a wealth of business advantages including reduced dependence on the economic or political landscape in one given country, differentiated market position, economy of scale opportunities, and increased global brand awareness. However, in order to capitalize on these advantages, companies must not expend too much energy or effort in navigating or resolving cultural barriers. Therefore, establishing a common language and creating an organizational culture in and of itself is a way multinational companies can overcome barriers and more easily collaborate and operate around the world (Schheffknecht, 2011). Building a strong shared organizational culture not only eases the inner workings between globally dispersed employees, but research shows that the overall performance of a company is linked to its culture (Beitler, 2006; Kotter and Heskett, 2011, cited in Essawi and Tilchin, 2012); this is reflected in the various articles which discuss the link between cultural alignment and financial performance (Calori and
Further cementing these findings, a recent survey (Deloitte, 2013) found that 91% of respondents said that companies with a strong sense of culture also have strong financial success. Not only that, but correlations between employees identifying a strong culture in the organization also felt their company possessed a strong brand that differs and stands out from competition. Comparatively, respondents from companies without a strong culture report a lower likelihood to perform well financially or have a distinct brand. Notably, customers and employees at those companies were also significantly less satisfied. Kefela (2012) asserts that "organizational culture is possibly the most critical factor determining an organization's capacity, effectiveness, and longevity."

But what specifically builds culture within an organization? Arguably, shared values are a significant factor of an organization’s culture (O’Reilly and Chatman, 1996, cited in Kumar, 2012). Indeed, shared beliefs are often cited as an important contributor to overall organizational culture (Donaldson and Lorsch, 1983; Schein, 1985; Kotter and Heskett, 1992; Nadler and Tushman, 1997, cited in Van Den Steen, 2010b). In fact, ‘values’ and ‘assumptions’ are at times used interchangeably when defining ‘culture’. Harvard Business Review contributor Coleman (2013) outlines six common components observed in organizations which exhibit strong cultures, including the concept of values. These elements are recommended by Coleman to help build a differentiated culture which in turn helps build a lasting company, and are outlined as follows.

First, a great culture must have the foundation of vision, which is often represented by a mission statement or a stated vision. This provides the foundation for the corporate culture, reflects the company’s values which in turn influence behaviour, and gives the company a
sense of purpose. The importance of ‘purpose’ is reflected in recent research (Deloitte, 2013) which reveals that companies with a strong sense of purpose results in a stronger likelihood of both employee satisfaction and improved financial performance.

Second, a company must display strong core values, which Coleman describes as a set of guidelines on the behaviours and mindsets needed to achieve the company vision. Values across different organizations are often of similar themes, however, the substance is found in their authenticity rather than their originality. The concept of values is explored in more detail in section 2.2.

Third, practices must reflect the values in the organization. To put it simply, organizational team members must ‘practice what they preach’. Coleman cites Wegman’s, whose values include ‘caring’, ‘respect’, and committing that employees will find ‘a job [they’ll] love’. This is reflected in practice, as the company is ranked by Fortune as the fifth best company to work for (Fortune Magazine, cited on CNN, 2013).

Fourth, people are what embody and create culture. A clearly articulated vision and explicitly stated values are of little consequence if the people in the organization don’t ‘buy-in’ to the values and beliefs the company aspires to. Hunt (2013) asserts that applicants with a good cultural-fit with the organization are willing to accept a 7% lower salary, and departments with cultural alignment enjoyed 30% less turnover. People are naturally drawn to those they feel a connection with, and by recruiting the right ‘culture carriers’ the existing and intended culture can be fostered and reinforced (Coleman, 2013). Similarly, Chatman (1989) cites values as the starting point of the recruitment and selection process (cited in Nazir, 2005).

Fifth, narrative is called out as a powerful conduit to bring to life corporate culture. Using narrative to highlight an organization’s distinct history and story can act as a way to solidify
culture and bond members within the institution. Identifying those stories, then shaping and retelling them over time can be a powerful element of culture creation.

Last, location, or place is highlighted. Google has beanbag chairs, Pixar has an open atrium, and Michael Bloomberg and his team work in tightly packed cubicles that allow for open access to the boss, limiting privacy amongst team members. Indeed, local clustering (Porter, 1998) is common when high level of workforce skills are available in a small geographic area, similar to what might be seen in technology or IT skills in Silicon Valley in California. The clustering of skills and the constant pressure and comparison with peers drives innovation and can be a source of increased performance.

These examples highlight the integral role values play in the formation and continuation of organizational culture. Given the important role values play into the formation of culture, combined with the underlying influence to shape employee behaviours, the concept of Values and Values Based Management is explored next in more detail.

2.2 Values and Values Based Management

Values can be defined as the belief that an explicit mode of conduct is preferable compared to other modes or states of existence (Rokeach, 1973). Values deem whether things or deeds are good or bad, and function as a basic moral compass to members of society. Values also influence linguistic and communication mechanisms, and can guide both how people speak in addition to what they are saying (Dolan and Bao, 2012).

The concepts of organizational culture and values are intertwined due to their very nature, and some scholars have suggested that within the organizational landscape value congruence, or the compatibility between an individual‘s values and that of their company, can affect
employees’ attitudes and behaviours more significantly than that stand-alone effects of those employee or company values (Dolan, Garcia and Richley, 2006)

Companies that embrace shared and stated values practice values-based-management, which is an approach by which both leaders and employees are guided by the organization’s shared values and beliefs. Robbins and Coulter (2007) state four purposes of shared values. First, values serve as a guide to management actions and decisions. Next, values help to communicate expectations of employees, and to influence employee behaviour. Next, shared values help influence marketing efforts in that shared values form the basis for the company’s internal brand and guides what they believe is important. Last, shared values are a way to build team spirit and camaraderie within an organization in that they provide employees a basis to connect to the organization, take responsibility for their work, and feel a personal commitment to their company and to their jobs.

Criticism of corporate culture and the implementation of shared values or beliefs include the conflict between stated financial or business goals and articulated culture and values (Giblin and Amuso, 1997) and that overly homogeneous beliefs leads to less experimentation and information collection (Van der Steen, 2010b). Despite these criticisms, articulated values are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in the corporate world. The American Management Association’s 2002 survey on corporate values revealed that managers at a number of organizations have made a commitment to a set of core values to which they hold their employees accountable. Nearly 86% of respondents said the corporate values in their organization were explicitly written or stated. Furthermore, many organizations surveyed – 64% - link values to performance appraisals, underscoring the underlying intent to incentivise employees to align with company values (Robbins and Coulter, 2005).
The link between values and performance appraisals is consistent with Van den Steen’s (2010b) contention that the development of shared beliefs and values stems from two primary factors in an organization: first, when performance is linked to correct actions, managers are more likely to hire people similar to themselves and who display common beliefs and values. Second, employees observe and learn about cultural norms within the organization as a source of learning. The first observation regarding the impact of hiring practices on the creation and maintenance of a coherent culture is echoed in the Economist (2013) book review of Charles Ellis’ book *What It Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World’s Greatest Professional Firms*, in which Ellis contends that the best firms are ‗fanatical about recruiting new employees who are not just the most talented but also the best suited to a particular corporate culture.‘. Ellis points out that those firms often have up to 20 employees interview each candidate. In fact, the importance of hiring practices in the creation of culture and values emerged as a common theme in both the literature review as well as the research conducted for this paper.

Research conducted by Vaňova and Babel'ová (2012) on how corporate culture and awareness of declared values influences employee behaviour and performance in Slovakian companies revealed that awareness of company vision, mission and values positively affected job satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, organizations which openly inform employees of vision, mission and values were found to be more likely to achieve economic results. They also found that a majority of respondents identified management as not only a source of authority, but also as a behavioural model of the organization’s declared behaviours and values. Their findings present a distinction between the corporate culture and the culture of management; the latter driving the adopted or perceived culture in the organization, a sentiment aligned with Birknerová (2011, cited in Vaňova and Babel'ová, 2012). As such, their conclusion is that exemplar behaviour on the part of managers is crucial to shaping the
corporate culture, and subsequently the success of the organization, a conclusion consistent with Levin and Gottlieb (2009).

Given that values are a foundational component of culture, and national culture informs our values, it is therefore reasonable to assert that national culture plays a significant role in organizational culture. Organizational culture evolves over time, but is highly influenced by the founders and leaders within a company. Their vision and personal values are embedded into the behaviours, norms and values within the organization, and as such the basis of an organization’s culture is created through the filter of the national culture of the home country. This is significant in the context of globalization, and when companies are operating across borders. Although the organizational culture is influenced by the home country’s national view, employees across regions are expected to adopt and display the organizational cultural behaviours the company values. Of course, employees in other regions also contribute to the cultural fabric within the company, and over time a common language and approach emerges. This is particularly true if decision making and senior management is dispersed across different geographies.

However, when operating in a multi-national context, there is a risk that conflict, differing interpretation, or even linguistic challenges will emerge when it comes to the adoption and enactment of company values and behaviours. Rokeach (1979), characterized values as “the most distinctive property or defining characteristic of a social institution.” However, he posits that values within an organization can arguably be simply the sum of individuals’ values, or shared values. Given that corporate values are merely a reflection of individuals within the organization, and often that of those highest or most influential in the company, the values of organizations and their members may not always be in alignment. Kelly (2009) suggests that if we are to expect employees to do what we want them to do, which could include embracing and demonstrating shared company values or beliefs, we must first understand their own
individual values, attitudes or beliefs. It is therefore important to consider the implications of national culture when discussing organizational culture, particularly within multinational corporations. Next, cross-cultural issues are explored.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Management

"Cross-cultural management explains the behaviour of people in organizations around the world and shows people how to work in organizations with employees and client populations from many different cultures.” (Adler, 2008)

The previous sections focused on the culture and values within an organization. There is also the issue of national or local culture which of course shapes the employees' views and opinions within an organization. The issue of cross-cultural management has become more topical in recent years with increased globalization in the business world. With more companies operating across borders, managers are faced with increased complexity in dealing with people from different national and cultural backgrounds, both within their own organizations as well as stakeholders or partners abroad.

There are in excess of 160 definitions of culture (Qamar et al., 2013) which is indicative of the omnipresent nature of culture and its impact in society and business. One of the earliest researchers was Taylor (1871) who described culture as a complex and holistic subject which encompasses all the habits and capabilities that a man acquires being a part of society, which include beliefs, knowledge, morals, art, customs, law and attitudes. Herskovits (1955, cited in Qamar et al., 2013) proposed a broader explanation of culture, which defined culture as those things which are not acquired by humans naturally from their environment.
Over time researchers have developed theories and frameworks to classify cultural dimensions and trends. One of the most widely recognized and quoted researchers is Hofstede, who formulated "Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions". According to Hofstede (1980), culture is defined as —the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another.” Hofstede’s extensive research in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s studied how values in the workplace are influenced by national culture. He discovered the values that differentiated countries from each other could be clustered together into four distinct buckets, which became known as the Hofstede dimensions of National Culture. These dimensions are Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, and Uncertainty Avoidance. In 1991 Long-Term Orientation was added as a fifth and final dimension. (The Hofstede Centre, available at http://geert-hofstede.com/index.php, accessed 10 April 2013). These dimensions are crucial to understanding human behaviour across different cultures and as such, the national cultural dimensions present within an employee base can significantly shape the organizational culture in the company. These dimensions are outlined as follows:

**Power Distance** reflects the degree in which members of a society feel comfortable with the hierarchical distribution of power. In societies with high power distance, members of society accept that power is distributed unevenly, and do not require justification for this. In cultures with low power distance, people strive to balance the level of power more equally among members of society, and insist on justification for inequalities in power.

Dartey-Baah (2013) points out that in an organizational context, managers in high power distance societies tend to focus on rigid rules, top-down instruction, and display a tendency to micro-manage with little room for interpretation on the part of employees. This results in a stifling effect in relation to creativity or innovation, and uneasiness with
open communication across different levels in the organization. In contrast, managers from low power distance societies prefer employee autonomy and empowerment allowing for less centralization and non-directive, hands-off monitoring systems.

**Individualism vs. Collectivism**

Individualism refers to a preference for a loosely-connected society in which people ‘look out for number one’ and their immediate families. Collectivism refers to a more tightly knit society in which members can expect relatives or a particular group to look after them, in exchange for loyalty. The Individualism vs. Collectivism views can be summed up with the extent to which people relate to ‘I’ vs. ‘we’.

**Masculinity vs. Femininity** refers to the masculine tendencies to prefer a society that values achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and extrinsic or material reward for success. In contrast, societies with a higher femininity exhibit a tendency towards a consensus based preference, with value placed on cooperation, modesty, caring for weaker members of society, and a focus on quality of life.

In the workplace, these differences can manifest themselves by the display of admiration for success, achievement, ambition, competition and willingness to take risks in cultures with a high masculinity score. These cultures may also exhibit less diversity in the upper echelons of management. This contrasts with the tendency to place more concern on the wellbeing of others, and therefore be less competitive in societies with higher femininity scores.

**Uncertainty Avoidance** refers to the level of comfort individuals feel when faced with ambiguity or uncertainty. In the workplace, people with low uncertainty avoidance appreciate flexibility and are more willing to take risks, which can foster innovation and
empowerment within the organization. In the context of organizational culture this tends to translate to a more adaptive, flexible culture, and one in which employees are more comfortable with continual change. In contrast, people from high uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be more risk-adverse and appreciate more formal and hierarchical decision making in the workplace. This manifests itself within the organization as an inclination to adopt more rigorous control measures, rules and regulations.

**Long Term vs. Short Term Orientation** reflects a culture’s level of tendency to search for virtue rather than truth. Dartey-Baah (2013) summarizes this dimension and points out that this is particularly relevant in East Asian countries as it reflects Confucianism: “Long-term orientation captures the following elements: adaptation of tradition to the modern context, high savings ratio driven by thrift, patience and perseverance towards slow results, and concern with respecting the demand of virtue. On the other hand, a short-term orientation contains the following aspects: respect for traditions, lower savings rate, quick results orientation, and concern with possessing the truth.”

Hofstede’s work has linked values, organizational culture, and national culture together, and enables a key theme for this research. For example, Americans rank more highly on the Individualism score than Irish, which could suggest American employees may be more comfortable with prescribed behaviours relating to “directness” and “debate” than their Irish counterparts. Another possible influencer is the masculinity vs. femininity dimension in that female employees from countries with higher masculinity may be less comfortable with values requiring assertiveness. The age of employees combined with the Long-Term Orientation dimension could also impact upon results.

Criticisms of Hofstede include that the research may have been culturally influenced in that most researchers were European or American, which may have resulted in the
unintentional colouring or biasing of the results as the research was interpreted through the lens of the researcher's Western perspectives. Secondly, cultures also have subcultures and groups, which may not be represented in the research results. Examples include the different regional and local subcultures that can be observed in the United States. Last, findings may have lost power over the years as cultures evolve over time (Dartey-Baah, 2013)

Although Hofstede is widely recognized as a leading authority on National Cultural differences, other researchers and authors have contributed to the literature in this area. Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist, differentiated communication styles between cultures, based on the concept of ‘context’. He defined context as ‘the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event’ (Hall and Hall, 1995). Cultures were then classified and scaled on a high-to low context scale. High context means that there are many ‘unwritten rules’ and low context indicates that more explanations are needed but the chance of misunderstanding is lower. Furthermore, Hall and Hall also consider Time (monochromic time vs. polychromic time) and Space (high territoriality vs. low territoriality) when talking about cultural differences (Missana 2011, cited in Scheffknecht, 2011). Other contributors to cultural research include Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011) who developed further cultural factors such as achieved versus ascribed status. Additionally, the GLOBE study (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) is a worldwide research program which concentrates on cultural differences both nationally as well as organizationally. Scheffknecht (2011) highlights the theoretical similarities and differences between these leading authorities on culture, which can be seen in Figure 1.
Given the far-reaching impact of national culture on successful business interactions, contemporary literature places emphasis on the importance of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), the ability to be effective across various cultural contexts—including national, ethnic, organizational, generational, ideological and more. This concept was introduced by Early and Ang (2003, cited in Ismail, Reza, and Mahdi, 2012) who defined cultural intelligence as "one's ability in the direction of successful adaptation with the new cultural environments which is usually different from one's cultural text". When formulating the values and behaviours employees across disparate geographical regions and cultural backgrounds are expected to exhibit, leaders in multinationals must be cognizant of these differences, and display Cultural Intelligence in order to be successful.

**Figure 1: Cultural theory comparison table Source: Scheffknecht, 2011**
The concept of Cultural Intelligence is echoed by Molinsky (2013), who advocates the importance of ‘global dexterity’, or the ability to adapt or shift behaviour in light of cultural differences. However, he points out the difficulty in doing so, as shifting or adjusting our own natural responses or behaviours which are ingrained and informed by our own cultural backgrounds can often feel unnatural and difficult. He presents the following suggestions in order to more easily overcome cultural differences in the workplace: first, accept that fully adapting to another culture is likely unrealistic, and instead try to adopt a ‘hybrid’ approach, in which the actor recognizes the other party’s norms and customs, but still displays his or her own natural approach. Second, seek out a cultural mentor who can give feedback on the culture(s) in question. Third, conduct an internal check to ensure any adjustments feel natural, as acting otherwise can result in perception of being disingenuous. Last, he suggests to adopt a self-forgiveness strategy, and to allow oneself to stumble if faced with new cultures. By signalling to others that one is trying to adapt to their cultural norms, though not yet mastered, colleagues are likely to understand and appreciate the efforts.

The concept of cultural intelligence is important when considering the operational implications of conducting business across different national cultures. In order to breed organizational success, one must consider the cultural implications of a given approach or behaviour. Cultural nuances can significantly impact upon employee motivation. For example, countries which value collectivism or in high-context cultures such as China, giving reward to an individual goes against the values and mindset of the people, and therefore holds little motivational value. In contrast, individual rewards are highly valued in an American organization (Qamar et al., 2013). This demonstrates the complexity when merging organizational values with individual’s values; an organization can recognize, support and hold employees in high regard, but if this is not implemented or
manifested in a meaningful way at the individual level through the lens of the employees‘ national values, conflict can emerge with implications to motivation and job satisfaction. These considerations must be made when attempting to implement, influence, or maintain organizational cultural changes or programs. Next, change management issues are explored.

2.4 Change Management

Change management is a widely researched and documented area, and could be the subject of a thesis unto itself. Suffice to say that although the topic cannot be explored in the breadth and depth it deserves within this paper, the subject is indeed important to consider when it comes to any change within an organization, including the creation and roll-out of cultural or values based programs. In fact, it can be argued that the change management approach is all-the-more relevant when influencing change at the cultural level due to the wide-spread human aspect it aims to impact. Managing human aspects of change is recognized as one of the most important pieces contributing to the success or failure of major changes (Pendlebury et al., 1998, cited in Andriopoulos, C. and Dawson, 2009, p. 287)

Consider the following. When Daimler Benz and Chrysler merged in 1999, their complementary products combined with the opportunity to leverage economies of scale in an ever-increasing global industry were cited as the basis of the merger (Vlasic and Stertz, 2000). And when Stanford University and University of California at San Francisco merged their hospitals, the aim and promise was „not only offer superior patient care but provide financial stability that would ensure the medical centres‘ survival in a brutally competitive healthcare industry“ (Feder, 2000). Unfortunately, Daimler-Benz failed to realize these objectives, and subsequently suffered dreadful financial
performance. The reason? Vlasic and Stertz (2001) attribute the challenges in combining Daimler-Benz’s ‘‘hierarchical bureaucratic’’ culture with Chrysler’s ‘‘free wheeling creative’’ culture as the fundamental issue contributing to their poor performance.

Similarly, Stanford-UCSF ultimately dismantled their hospital merger after losing $176 million in 28 months. Pyati (2000) blames the clashing cultures of the two hospitals as the driver of this failure and states ‘‘the two hospitals had radically different cultures, which made the merger impossible in the end’’. These examples highlight that although mergers and acquisitions can provide opportunities to increase assets, turn-around floundering businesses, diversify products, access a wider customer base, and a host of other benefits, the merging of companies inevitably requires the merging of cultures. Culture can clearly play a decisive role in the success or failure of mergers or even organizations as a whole, emphasizing the critical importance of change management when attempting to unite or change cultures within an organization.

Because culture evolves over time and is highly embedded within an organization, changing culture is not an easy task. A key challenge in change management is to mitigate the risk of resistance, an issue that arises in most change management situations. Owing to the fact that human beings naturally have varying degrees of tolerance to change, managers or organizations often face employee resistance when making changes. This can range from mild or moderate to even extreme resistance to change and as a result it is not uncommon for organizations to face conflict when implementing cultural or values based changes (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) cite several reasons people may resist change, including self-interest; misunderstanding or lack of trust; different assessments of the situation between employees and managers; or low tolerance to change. Andriopoulos, C. and Dawson, (2009) outline additional reasons for resistance to change may be influenced by one or more of the following factors:
change in job; threat to employment; psychological threats, new work arrangements and lowering of status. As such, companies wishing to change or influence organizational values must consider employees’ own intrinsic set of values which guide their own personal and individual behaviour; from a national culture point of view, variation exists between cultures in terms of willingness to change (Qamar et al., 2013). Time orientation in the context of change is an important national culture consideration, and there are three primary types of cultures in this regard. First, past oriented cultures place value on past events and history. These cultures view the present by relating to past customs, principles and texts, and as a result are more resistant to change. In contrast, present oriented cultures do not place emphasis on either future or past. They don’t tend to be resistant to change, but are observed as progressing slowly. Last there are future oriented cultures who can be considered progressive societies due to the emphasis they place on future planning or visions of future achievement (Treven 2003, cited in Qamar et al., 2013). The importance of this is to recognize the sources of resistance and how this will likely vary in different geographies in order to plan appropriately.

Coch and French (1948, cited in Levin and Gottlieb 2009) first asserted that people more willingly commit to change with enthusiasm and are prepared to help enact it when they’ve been engaged and have had the opportunity to understand its rationale, have an opportunity to input, and are provided concrete ways to contribute to its design and implementation (Axelrod, 2000; Burke, 2002; Kotter, 1996 cited in Levin and Gottlieb 2009). As such, effective culture change efforts ‘need to tap into the wisdom and talents of all organizational members and move on two primary fronts concurrently—leadership-driven and grassroots-enabled’ (Levin and Gottlieb, 2009)
It is therefore difficult to influence change of organizational cultural values without a corresponding change of those values driving individuals’ behaviour; this is because organizational behaviour is shaped by the shared values of individuals (Hultman, 2001).

Implementing new or refreshed expected values or behaviours in an organization requires a change management approach just as any other business change would within the company. Successful value structures must be guided by the leader or leaders within an organization and leadership team members throughout the company must act as change agents (Schabracq, 2007; Cameron and Quinn 2011, cited in Essawi and Tilchin, 2012). Essawi and Tilchin go on to cite the importance of cascading accountability throughout the organization for implementation and internalization of values, starting with the top management, through middle management and ultimately to individual employees. Recardo (2011) posits that a common stumbling block faced by executives initiating cultural changes is the absence of tangibility when it comes to topic. Although the literature and research support the assertion that culture can be a strong enabler of financial strength, business people can often be left with either an overly academic or ‘touchy-feely’ outlook on the subject, and lack a clear and concrete framework or approach to initiate cultural change.

Recardo proposes a Culture Change Framework which aims to address this issue, and minimize the common points of failure in Culture Change processes. The approach first points out that every organization has an interdependent network of components consisting of Technology, Organization, and Process. A frequent issue organizations face is to focus first on these facets within the organization, and tinker with these specific components in order to influence culture change. Recardo asserts doing so will likely result in failure, or produce distinct cultural nuances in discrete areas of the business.
In order to modify culture throughout the business, it is suggested instead to recognize the strategic direction of the company as a key driver of culture, as connecting the desired culture with strategy and business objectives allows businesses to excel. Take for example the Mayo Clinic, renowned for bringing together specialists from a broad range of specialities in order to diagnose and treat complex diseases. In order to do this the Clinic must display exceptionally high levels of collaboration and teamwork, and must reinforce this culture through formal and informal means in turn matching the culture with the strategic aims (Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley, 2012). Indeed, the interconnectedness of strategy and culture is highlighted by Kefela (2012), who points out in simple terms that ‘if the corporate culture is incompatible with business strategy, objectives will not be met. Before changing the corporation’s strategic direction, top management should be prepared to reshape the organization culture to fit the new strategy‘. Kefela goes on to point out that companies have time and again pursued new strategies only to see their efforts subverted by culture, reverting back to the old strategy norms and historical cultural context embedded in the organization. This can happen when initiatives do not take into account the importance of organizational culture; to introduce a change the whole system must be considered as culture is the foundation which shapes the perceptions, beliefs and actions of those who must carry out the strategy. Therefore strategy and culture are intrinsically intertwined. If, however, they are not aligned, stand-alone strategic initiatives or stand-alone cultural change programs are destined to fail.

It is therefore appropriate that Recardo’s (2011) framework begins with identifying a handful of targeted attributes or ‘thrusts’ of the business strategy, for example, Customer Retention. Next, the framework calls for a gap analysis to be conducted to identify the
gaps between current and desired cultural characteristics, values, behaviours needed to be displayed by employees in order to achieve this strategic thrust.

Then, modifications to the architecture (Technology, Organization, Process) to enable the cultural adjustments required to meet the business strategy must be identified. This Culture Change Cycle can be seen in Figure 2.

![Culture Change Cycle Diagram](image)

**Figure 2: Culture Change Cycle Diagram. Source: Recardo, 2011**

Recardo uses a case study to illustrate the effectiveness of this approach, and asserts that by getting these fundamentals correct up-front the execution at the employee level is much easier and more effective. The implementation approach with employees is of course key to the success of any change in an organization, and communication strategy, execution,
measure and control metrics and others are called out as important areas to consider when implementing a framework such as this.

The researcher ascertains that this model could be improved by building in execution strategies to ensure successful implementation of their framework. Designing a foundational program with the right input and levers is important for long-term success, but is of little value if it is not executed appropriately without sufficient employee buy-in. In this regard, Levin and Gottlieb (2009) also present principles and practices suggested for consideration when realigning organizational culture which take into account and address the need to cascade and obtain buy-in at the employee level. Importantly, their practices document clear strategies for executing the task of cultural change which can act as a roadmap for successful cultural realignment efforts. These principles and practices are summarized below, and can also be seen in Figure 3. Notably, the importance of bottom-up strategies, or ‘Grassroots Efforts‘ highlights the importance of execution levers at the employee level. These suggestions are outlined in more detail as follows:

Figure 3: Culture Realignment Roadmap. Source: Levin and Gottlieb, 2009
Principle 1: Understand the Required Scope of Change. Understanding the magnitude of the changes required is a key component to success. Rather than trying to change all aspects of the culture, focus on specific cultural attributes that no longer provide benefit in the current business landscape, or those that will be useful to meet strategic goals. Drawing a distinction between the relevant and irrelevant aspects of culture is critically important.

Principle 2: Model, Teach, Embed. Levin and Gottlieb assert that leaders need to be the primary drivers of cultural change, and that this cannot be delegated in the organization. They need to model the desired behaviours, teach others how to perform and demonstrate these behaviours, and establish cultural norms that reinforce the desired values. When leaders’ actions and behaviours are congruent with the stated values, their actions validate the change.

Principle 3: Use Multiple Levers. Two critical categories are identified to effect change – ‘instrumental’ and ‘symbolic’ levers. The former focuses on modifying the work context, while the latter influences people’s thinking, perception, attitudes and meanings they assign to organizational decisions.

Principle 4: Create Broad Involvement of Key Organizational Constituencies: Cultural change isn’t driven by compliance, but rather commitment and internalization. Broad-based engagement practices facilitate the wider changes at the individual level needed to fundamentally alter the cultural fabric in a company.

Principle 5: Manage with Rigor and Discipline: managing cultural realignment must be prioritized and treated just as any other key strategic initiative would be within the business. This includes detailed planning, monitoring and control measures, and coordinated actions across the company. Just as any program or initiative, cultural change plans should include deliverables, milestones and timelines. Ensuring these measures are in place increases the
likelihood that the change management program remains on the Sr. Leadership’s radar along with other important business priorities.

**Principle 6: Integrate Into Daily Work Life:** The importance of ‘doing it’ rather than ‘talking about it’ is the basis of this principle. Simply labelling cultural realignment efforts and launching PR around it does little to integrate it into the daily work life of employees. Demonstrating tangible actions and day to day integration, linking and labelling back to the key messages contained within the cultural direction, is key to embedding the new culture in a real and sustainable way.

Next, Levin and Gottlieb’s eight Practices are outlined to support execution of cultural change programs.

First, **Establish Infrastructure and Oversight:** Establishing a project team and standard components of Program and Project management to develop and execute the plan is often a key component of success. The authors suggest creating a steering committee with representation from management across the organization to drive the change, and in some cases, establish a Program Management Office (PMO) to manage the day to day logistics of the program.

Second, **Define the Preferred Culture.** This practice recognizes that the first step to successful culture change management efforts must begin with agreement with key leadership members on what cultural norms must be realigned or created to reach business goals. This aligns with the foundational approach beginning at the strategic level that Recardo (2011) outlines.

Third, **Conducting a Culture Gap Audit,** also suggested by Recardo (2011), this step helps determine the magnitude of change required and the current gaps between current and
preferred culture. Furthermore it helps identify where the preferred culture is already in practice. Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley’s (2012) point out that acknowledging cultural assets which already exist and are valuable to the company can help the change feel less overwhelming and more collaborative. It is suggested to use a multi-channel approach to conduct the gap analysis including surveys, focus groups, observations and document analysis, in order to produce the most robust results for review. An example of gap analysis findings is a CEO who identified that a current cultural belief that good decisions are founded in comprehensive analysis contributed to a culture of authority and risk avoidance, indicators of Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. However, this was contradictory to the desired culture of agility and innovation and reflects a key gap in the current and desired cultural landscape in her organization.

Fourth, **Leadership Modelling** will validate and cement the preferred culture by setting the appropriate standards and behaviours leaders wish to see at all levels in the organization. Recognition by leaders that their behaviour is highly influential in the organization, and therefore their behavioural alignment and role modelling is critical to success. Leaders must discuss, define, and agree on the behaviours and practices needed to promote the daily actions required in the business to ensure success. Digging deeper into this practice, Levin and Gottlieb present an example in which leaders in a health care company were engaged to define the desired cultural characteristics then link each to concrete behaviours, actions and practices. These were then agreed and cascaded throughout the organization down to front line supervisors. The importance of dialogue and is reflected in the creation of practices that reflect a sense of shared accountability. The issue of accountability is vital for the success of cultural programs; without the environment to hold one another accountable to the preferred behaviours and actions, the desired organizational culture merely becomes a printed statement. Accountability must begin at the leadership level and leaders must be prepared to
make tough decisions to support the desired culture. This includes how to handle employees at all levels who do not demonstrate the preferred values and behaviours, including demotion into a less visible role, or exit from the company. This is the importance of the modelling of shared values in that employees whose actions do not align with the desired culture can be so fundamentally damaging to the realignment efforts that leaders must be prepared to exit those not ‘on-board’, and recognize and promote those that are.

Fifth, Manage Priority Culture Realignment Levers. Instrumental Levers help change the context and influence behaviour, while Symbolic Levers help change the meaning and in turn the attitudes and thinking. Instrumental levers available to help realign culture include the Organization Structure, which should be aligned to support the preferred culture. For example, a matrix structure could help facilitate increased collaboration while a hierarchical structure may hinder agility or innovation. The importance of HR practices is called out, and recruitment, orientation, performance management, rewards and recognition programs are cited as playing a key role in cultural formation. Other instrumental levers exist including planning, decision making and budgeting. Shifting these levers could mean adjusting decision making authority from the CEO level to leaders to support a collaborative culture; or establishing innovation operating units to help deploy pilots into production if the preferred culture placed emphasis on innovation.

Symbolic levers help convey messages to reinforce the preferred culture. This could include sharing and recognizing those demonstrating behaviours aligned with the cultural direction. Traditions and rituals are another lever that can be leveraged to reinforce the culture. For example companies may consider shifting compensation from a tenure based model to a service based model to influence a performance-for-pay culture that is aligned with the organizational strategy and cultural aims. Last, the design and decoration of workspaces and symbols including internal branding and marketing must be aligned with the preferred
culture. Coleman (2013) also calls out ‘Place’ as a conduit to culture, pointing out the colourful furnishings and relaxed bean-bag chair atmosphere in Google is a way to facilitate the interaction needed to foster innovation which is a key component of their organization’s culture.

Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley (2012) propose similar levers, though they label them formal and informal rather than Instrumental and Symbolic, examples of which can be found in Figure 4. An example is Google, who, similar to universities that pave pathways between campuses have pathways between buildings on the Google campus. However, Google would wait until the employees had worn informal pathways through the grass, then they would pave the most commonly used ones.

Figure 4: Formal and Informal Levers For Cultural Change. Source: Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley (2012), Harvard Business Review
Sixth, Promoting Grassroots Efforts balances a top-down approach, and mobilizes change agents throughout the organization. Because cultures—particularly those in multinational settings—are not singular but rather an amalgamation of sub-cultures, grassroots strategies can leverage these differences and incorporate them into the overall organizational culture, rather than trying to force a standardized approach across all locales. This allows customized interpretation and enactments of the behaviours and values. One strategy is to highlight teams that already exemplify the preferred culture in an effort to recognize, reinforce and solidify the desired culture. Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley (2012) cite a national retailer’s approach of enlisting internal ‘exemplars’—employees who were known for effectively motivating their teams. They were interviewed by leaders who isolated specific and crucial behaviours which in turn were shared through training with store managers and linked to specific behaviours or actions, such as greeting customers entering the stores. The managers who subsequently replicated the behaviours of ‘exemplars’ within their stores noted improved sales and fewer customer complaints. Enabling grass-roots efforts can also be achieved by sharing stories, cascading examples via team leaders or shared knowledge-bases such as an intranet, or by nominating ambassadors to work with other teams to help share desired behaviours. Indeed, storytelling is ‘a natural entry point to understanding and intervening in the culture(s) of an organization’ (Boyce, 1996). Storytelling is viewed by some as a managerial tool to influence behaviour, the basis of which is Aristotle’s claim that narrative is the art of persuasion (Dolan and Bao, 2012), leading to some criticism that it can be used as a form of manipulation (Barley and Kunda, 1992; David and Strange, 2006, cited in Dolan and Bao, 2012). However, stories and storytelling are also recognized as a powerful conduit to manage organizational culture as it embraces a communicative approach. For example a founder or CEO can share her personal life story to demonstrate her own values. Over time, culture must be transmitted to new generations of employees and leaders, and as
such storytelling serves as a cultural transmitter. In fact, Lyons and Kashima (2001, cited in Dolan and Bao, 2012) assert that culture is created and recreated through storytelling.

Seventh, **Integration Into Priority Strategic Initiatives** ensures the cultural initiative is given similar priority and attention to other strategic initiatives. Furthermore, managing existing strategic initiatives within the framework of the desired culture is critical to ensuring the culture is embedded in the day to day activities in the organization. Priorities should be bumped up against the desired culture to validate importance alignment with the organizational culture, and adjustments should be made as necessary. The cultural steering committee can play an important role in this area.

Eighth, **Assessing Progress**, as with any project or change management is another vital component to a culture change strategy. Continual assessment and evaluation against the initiative plan helps keep stakeholders informed and the effort on track. The authors suggest that eighteen months is a reasonable period to conduct a follow-up culture audit and measure results against the baseline data established during the gap analysis. The plan can then be adjusted and tweaked if needed. The results of the audit should be communicated, underscoring the importance of ongoing communication and participation throughout the organization. Katzenbach, Steffen, and Kronley (2012) point out that although measurement efforts are important, they can easily become cumbersome, time-consuming and consequently expensive. Therefore it’s suggested to select a handful of carefully designed and targeted behavioural measurements within existing scorecards and reporting measures, rather than implement extensive new systems.

These principles and practices highlight the importance of crafting a well-thought out and executed change management program when it comes to influencing cultural change. These
suggestions, along with Recardo’s framework are assessed during the qualitative research phase of the thesis, and findings commented on in Chapter 4.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology
3.1 Research Methodology

The key research question central to this study is:

_Does nationality impact upon employee perceptions and sentiments regarding shared values within a multinational institution, and how does this affect engagement and resonance with the overall desired culture?_

This research question was inspired by the researcher’s own experience working within a multinational organization in two different regions: Canada and Europe. She had been unprepared for the differences in cultural approach within the workplace when she first transferred to Ireland, and was also aware of different perceptions amongst staff members of different nationalities upon the rolling out of a new organizational culture model, named ‘Our Shared Purpose’. These experiences, combined with her interest in organizational culture, led the Researcher to formulate the research question and objectives.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the issues of organizational culture and subsequently the role values play in this topic, as well as the issue of national culture and its implications within institutions is widely researched. There is also significant literature on change management processes, and specific writings on the change management methods required to successfully implement or change organizational culture within a company. Although some linkages between these topics exist, the researcher does assert that the role of nationality could be further fleshed out in the literature when it comes to the topics of values-based organizational culture, and cultural change management programs.

This study involved conducting primary research, which was exploratory in nature, and was conducted under the influence of the phenomenological paradigm rather than the scientific method, which is discussed in more detail in this chapter.
In order to effectively explore and answer the key research question, the following additional topics are considered:

- What factors contribute to organizational culture?
- What role do values play in organizational culture?
- What role does Nationality play in organizational culture?
- How are values perceived differently by employees of different national cultures?
- What are the challenges in rolling out or changing organizational culture or values programs?

In order to answer these questions, the design of the methodology, known as the research methodology must first be considered and formulated. Saunders et al (2009) suggests a structure to support researchers, as outlined in Figure 5 below:

![The Research Structure. Source: Saunders et al, (2009)](image)

The first four stages outlining the motivation for the research, the formulation and clarification of the research topic, the research objectives, and the literature review are discussed in preceding sections. The remainder of Saund et al’s structure is explored next.
3.2 Research Philosophies

Fifth, the researcher is to identify the appropriate research philosophy. Saunders et all (2009) liken this process to an onion, in that each layer needs to be understood before continuing to the next layer, as noted in Figure 6.

![The Research Onion](image)

*Figure 6: The Research Onion. Source: Saunders et all, 2009, p. 108*

The author adopts an Interpretivism philosophy for the purposes of this research, as the focus is on the thoughts and feelings of employees as social actors during a specific snap-shot in time. As such the research is socially motivated, and focused very much on the feelings and attitudes of the participants. This viewpoint suggests that researcher recognizes the difference between humans as ‗social actors‘, and must acquire an empathetic perspective in order to enter their social world so to understand the world from their point of view (Saunders, et al, 2011).
3.3 Research Design

Sixth in Saunder et al’s framework is the development of the Research Design. There are two primary forms of analysis normally used in academic enquiry: qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods may include ethnographic studies, participant observation, discourse analysis and the analysis of aspects such as artefacts. Quantitative research involves surveys, study of available data, content analysis and requires sophisticated statistical analysis of data, often with the help of programs and systems such as SPSS. Quantitative research tends to display a positivistic, hypothetico-deductive, particularistic, objective outcome-orientated, and natural science view of the world. In contrast, qualitative approaches are viewed as being phenomenological, inductive, holistic, subjective, process-orientated and social anthropological in outlook (Cook and Reichardt 1979).

Qualitative research is sometimes considered as a ‘soft’ approach when compared to quantitative approach which is viewed as ‘hard’ and objective. The discussion as to which method is more suitable is the subject of much discussion and debate (Martin 2002). Though there are merits to both sides of the debates, what is critically important in the context of this study is to understand the qualities of these approaches in order to select a suitable and appropriate approach. It should be noted that researchers can chose either one approach known as a mono-approach, or a mixed-methodology in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied. A mixed-method can assist the researcher in finding a means to bridge the gap between the two methods.

As referenced in the philosophy section, the researcher chooses an Interpretivist view; given that the research seeks to understand what people within the organization are thinking and feeling in relation to values and cultures, the author decided to support this with a Qualitative Approach. The researcher recognizes that others may argue a Positivism philosophy and that
human feelings could be measured in a quantitative fashion and presented in the form of statistical data; some even argue that this format is more deserving of authority than a narrative view preferred by Interpretivists. However, the author argues that the in-depth interviews and interpretation of social phenomena is valuable when it comes to this subject matter, and is an appropriate way to unearth specific thoughts and feelings relating to values-based management and organizational culture through the lens of different nationalities. In fact, when the two methods are weighed against another in the context of this subject matter, Scheinder et al (2012) noted researchers looking at culture through the lens of how employees experience their organization is known as “E mic” and almost exclusively use qualitative methods in their research. Mintzberg (1979) noted that without the ‘creative leap’ made by qualitative research, the quantitative researchers would be left with no theory to test. He then continues to add: “we uncover all kinds of relationship in our hard data, but it is only through the use of this soft data that we are able to explain them” (Mintzberg, 1979 p. 587).

3.4 Ethical Issues and Procedures

The seventh step is the process is to negotiate access and address ethical issues. The author is a member of the organisation, so access to participants was gained through direct contact and manager approval. However, ethical standards were upheld as part of this research, and prior to embarking on the study, the researcher obtained permission from the Human Resources Director to proceed with interviewing employees, as well as name the company within the dissertation.

Ethical consideration can impact the results of the research - Silverman (2010) notes that good ethical practice can yield better research results - but it can also impact upon the research community as a whole as Eriksson and Kovalainen (2007) point out: „One of the fundamental parts of research is the issue of trust created in the research community. This
trust within the research community, that all research and all researchers are following ethical principles and guidelines is in principle based on the generally accepted notion of ethics...“

Ethical principles can be broken into four principal areas (Byrman and Bell 2011), including:

- Whether there is harm to the participants;
- Whether there is a lack of informed consent;
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy; and
- Whether deception is involved.

The research posed no harm to participants, and in order to ensure participants were informed and kept anonymous, a consent form was provided and signed by each of the respondents, as seen in Appendix 1. Transcripts and verbatims were subsequently anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Due to participants' ability to opt out of any of the questions asked of them, and/or withdraw their consent at any point during the research, privacy was not an issue, nor was deceptive means used.

3.5 Population and Sample

The Focus Group preceded the one to one interview portion of the research, in order to gauge opinions on impact of values on job satisfaction, and any possible nuances between employees from different cultural or national backgrounds, as well as to inform the questions and themes that the more in-depth interviews will allow for. For this portion of the research, participants were selected and grouped to maximize participation in the focus group. The researcher was cognizant of hierarchal levelling of invited participants, which if not considered could lead to inhibitions or lack of trust within the group. The Dublin office is highly heterogeneous, and the researcher targeted a mixture of nationalities and cultures in order to fulfil the cross-cultural perspective sought in the research, resulting in maximum variation sampling. This is non-probability sampling technique, more specifically purposive sampling in which the researcher selected participants. Although some criticism of this approach exists in that the sample could be prone to researcher bias, given the time
constraints for the research and the aim to maximize insights from different nationalities, the
Researcher asserts that this approach yielded the most relevant findings in the time allotted.

The Focus Group consisted of 7 employees working in the Dublin office. The one-on-one
interviews expanded upon this research, and allowed for further cross-cultural examination,
with four conducted in person and over the phone with employees located in Ireland,
Germany, The United States, and China.

3.6 Structure

The decision to conduct both a focus group and one-on-one interviews allowed the
Researcher to first test questions and theories within a group format, and obtain the thoughts
and opinions of employees across cultures in one setting in a short amount of time. These
findings were then parlayed into more detailed and focused one-to-one interviews.

Conducting one-to-one interviews in addition to the focus group also afforded the interviewer
the opportunity to delve into the subject and avoid ‘group-mentality’ that can sometimes
occur in focus groups. Both the focus group and the one-to-one interviews were conducted
via a semi-structured format, which allowed the Researcher to enter with a set of possible
questions or themes (Saunders et al. 2009). This format also afforded the Researcher with the
flexibility to adjust the interview by providing the possibility of additional follow-up
questions to clarify or probe points made in addition to the predetermined questions of the
interviewer. This allows the interviewee to be an active participant in the research, which
tends to hold their attention and can help create an atmosphere of two-way communication
and one that interviewees can enjoy. This gives the benefit to both the interviewer and
interviewee to thoroughly explore complex issues surrounding the research. However, it
should be noted that when conducting semi-structured interviews, interviewers should be
prepared to help redirect interviewees back to the topic at hand, as the fluid nature of this format does open the possibility of interviews going off topic.

**3.7 The interview set up and conduction**

All participants were emailed explaining the purpose of the study and asking them to take part in a focus group or interview. The interviews were then scheduled in each participant’s calendars and all interviews were conducted during the months of June and July 2013. The focus-group and one interview were conducted face-to-face in Dublin, Ireland, while three of the four one-to-one interviews were conducted over tele-conference. All of the interviews were recorded. The average length of the interviews was 33 minutes and a semi-structured format was used. Interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

**3.8 Data Collecting, Coding and Analysis**

As a result of the literature review, focus group, and interviews, a good deal of information was collected. This then had to be assimilated and codified in some manner in order to identify findings and draw conclusions in relation to the research objectives.

Qualitative Analysis can present unique challenges to the researcher in that it does not employ hard statistics or data measurement tools that would be utilised in quantitative research analysis. Rather, the researcher is required to identify themes and patterns in a presentable way in order to address the central research question. White (2000) advocates a three step process to consider during analysis:

1. Read through all results and identify themes and patterns as they emerge
2. Re-review information highlighting recurring themes and grouping topics. Assign each topic a code or colour to ensure ease of compilation on completion
3. After completing reading and grouping, examine emergent patterns and supporting evidence.

Malhotra (2007) also recommends a three step approach for use in qualitative analysis. This model was favoured by the author and used as a guiding framework to assist analysis and identify key findings. These steps are described in more detail below.

**Data Display:** Information is accumulated and presented in visual formats such as charts or diagrams in order to assist in identifying themes or patterns. This research gathered information through the use of a focus group and interviews. All discussions were recorded electronically. The information gathered during these meetings was also supported by notes taken by the researcher. Following the information gathering stage, all written notes were collated in a spreadsheet. Similar themes or discussion points were colour coded to allow for pattern coding to assist in later analysis and drawing of conclusions. After summarizing the written documentation in the table, the recordings were listened to and notes taken by the author. These notes were then assimilated into the existing table, using new or existing colour coding as needed. At this stage the stronger themes were emerging.

**Data Reduction:** this step requires the research to review the information gathered, and differentiate between meaningful data versus what can be minimized or dismissed as irrelevant to the research. During this stage, the colour-coded data was reviewed, and some interviews recordings listened to again. It was determined that original themes identified could be reduced to three key themes that had clearly emerged, which also had valuable supporting information in the form of the literature review. The three key themes that emerged were: 1) Change Management and Communication of Values 2) Role of Leadership and 3) National Cultural Considerations.
**Conclusion drawing and verification** involves the final consideration of all pertinent information, and assimilation of relevant conclusions. This stage also included a reflective period in which the researcher considered the findings garnered from the literature review, interviews and focus group. This allowed the author to hone in on the research question, and formulate conclusions in that context. Some literature was re-reviewed, and recordings listened to again in order to ensure accuracy and to effectively evaluate the findings in the context of the research objectives. These three steps allowed the author to ensure their findings presented a true reflection of the topic, and formed the basis for the overall conclusions and recommendations which are outlined in chapters to follow.
Chapter 4

Data Findings and Analysis
4.1 Findings and Patterns

Through the use of qualitative methods, research was conducted via a focus group and interviews in order to answer the research question ‘Do employees from different nationalities display differences in their perceptions and sentiments regarding the shared values within their multinational institution, and how does this impact their engagement and resonance with the overall desired culture?’.

Guided by the findings and themes outlined in Chapter 2, combined with the research aims and objectives, the researcher drew up a number of questions to explore the topic in detail with participants across various groups within the organization (See Appendix 2). These questions acted as a guide for the focus group and as the basis for more in-depth discussions during the interviews. It should be noted however that the research was conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow for greater fluidity and to fully explore perceptions emerging during the focus group or interview.

Information was gathered throughout the research process, and collated per the descriptions in Chapter 3. Though more high level themes emerged relating to the sub-questions posed in the research, three dominant themes emerged. These include 1) Change Management and Communication of Values; 2) Role of Leadership and 3) National Cultural Considerations. These themes are discussed in greater detail in sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3, respectively.

4.2 Research Questions

The research findings are organized first by noting observations relating to the supporting Research Questions outlined in Chapter 1 and 3, then the dominant themes of Change
Management and Communication of Values, Role of Leadership, and National Cultural Considerations are reflected in more detail in subsequent questions.

4.2.1 Awareness and Communication of Values

Overall, there was a strong sense of awareness of the organization’s Shared Commitments and Shared Behaviours. All participants had received some form of communication regarding the program and indicated they felt the cultural program and use of explicitly stated values was a positive force within the organization. The issue of hiring came up on more than one occasion, and some participants indicated that the behaviours and values are solidified within the organization through the hiring of like-minded individuals, and through the new-joiner orientation programs.

However, the change management mechanisms and communication elements utilized by different managers across employee groups in various teams or regions differed and as a result discrepancies were observed in regards to resonance and adoption across participants. A key trend emerged in which some participants had participated in specific programs to link the values to their day to day tasks or performance ratings, as suggested by Levin and Gottlieb (2009). These participants displayed a stronger awareness of and ability to articulate their thoughts surrounding the values, particularly in relation to how they linked the values to their day to day tasks. This provides a key learning in relation to this study and underscores the fact that participants made a distinction between the concept of relating to the values versus displaying the values. This is explored in more detail in subsequent sections.
4.2.2 Resonance with Values

Participants all indicated a sense of connection to the values, in that they could recognize the positive benefit and many indicated they could relate to them on a personal level. As one participant noted:

‘And they’re not really over complicated either. It’s kind of like ‘simplify’ or ‘be open and honest’, it’s kind of like life values, you know what you should be on a normal day, even if you don’t work for eBay. Easy to understand, easy to apply behaviours as in you could call them human behaviours….like they’re really easy to relate to.’

However, participants did highlight the fact that values could be interpreted differently or that some values were too broad or vague to fully relate to. For example, participants agreed that the Shared Behaviour _Do the right thing_ was something they could appreciate and would want to demonstrate. However, doing the right thing could be interpreted very differently by different people, whether due to their national culture or tendencies; their particular work objectives; or their personality. It was also pointed out that employees working on a specific initiative or in a particular department may be trying to do the right thing for one segment of customers will inevitably impact upon the other segment.

Furthermore, participants did exhibit a trend in their comments relating to sincerity and authenticity. They recognized that efforts were being made to _bring to life_ the values in the organization, and highlighted this may not always be the case in other organizations. The concept of sincerity was important in that employees felt that implementing values that are simply _put on the wall_ yet not adhered to in the day to day norms or behaviours of leadership and employees, would actually be more destructive than not having the values at all.
For the most part, participants indicated they felt the values were more than just an aspirational statement, rather they were demonstrated throughout the company. For example, one participant highlighted they felt the values were demonstrated 80% of the time within the organization, compared to 20% of the time in past companies he had worked for. Furthermore, the benefits of embodying the values and building a strong culture was recognized as reaching beyond the scope of staff member engagement, in that it impacted upon company reputation and recruitment practices. As one manager pointed out, "If we live up to these values internally, they’ll leak outside. We don’t have to have a big horray, hurrah and shout them out. People will see that. They’ll get the sense of our values. You get that a lot from, that it does work and it does exist. When you get people in for interviews who are referrals from other team members or staff, nine out of ten times I would say they refer to them (the values). And it’s not that they saw them in an ad or research an interviewee would do on the company...So people see it as the actual values people try to aspire to." This "emotional word-of-mouth" and passing cultural pride to members outside the institution is indicative of an overall resonance with the values and is aligned with the findings outlined in Chapter 2 (i.e. Coleman, 2013; Chatman 1989; Hunt 2013) in that cultural-fit and finding "cultural carriers" through the recruitment process further embeds the desired culture within the organization, as well as solidifies the cultural perception of the company outside the organization itself.

4.2.3 Role of Nationality

The influence of national culture was observed throughout the interviews. Participants easily identified with some values more than others and several distinct themes were unearthed in relation to nationality and subsequent impact upon employee perceptions. Non-American participants characterised both the existence of explicit values, and the language used to describe these values as Americanized. For instance, as one participant
noted ‘I mean it is an American based company, the lingo is it more American. But for multi cultural, they need to make it more like include the nationalities in it. Everyone working here can speak English but the lingo is more Americanized.’’ Some non-American participants pointed out that they have adopted ‘Americanized’ lingo as the result of these common behaviours that they would have not otherwise; an observation consistent with Dolan and Bao’s (2012) statements around the linguistic influences shared values can result in. Another participant noted that reporting to a manager of American descent helped their team embody to the values, since they were easier for the American manager to relate to. As she put it, ‘‘I can already see a difference from my team now than previous teams in the company because its’ the first time I’m actually working directly with Americans. And it makes a difference. Because they just are those things. Sometimes they just behave, they show that to you every day and you more easily understand how they want you to behave here. So you know what those things really mean. Before I had European supervisors or managers and it was more or less also just sentences to them. Compared to having Americans as your direct managers or supervisors... well I don’t know because if you don’t have Americans all over the place in Germany you’re going to have Germans. So if you have German supervisors they expect the same as you would because you’re all German. So I’m not sure it’s a disadvantage then’’. These comments highlight the fact that values are embedded more deeply based on role-modelling and demonstration by management and the importance of dialogue (Levin and Gottlieb, 2009; Vaňova and Babel’ová, 2012), as discussed more in section 4.3.2. Despite these observations, participants for the most part did not view the American foundation as a hindrance to understanding or displaying the values, as they perceived them as simple and universal enough to prescribe to. However, correlations between nationality and perception of values could be observed.
Examples of these national tendencies include German and Polish employees unanimously identified with the value of ‘Be open, honest, and direct’, and called out that in their nations conversations would be much more direct than what they would observe with their colleagues from other countries. As one German participant called out, in Germany it would not be unusual for someone to say ‘I don’t agree with that idea‘ or ‘I think it’s a bad idea’. However, when an employee from China were presented with that example, they were taken aback and quickly stated that it would be considered rude in China to be so direct, or to label an idea as bad. Interestingly, before presented with this example, the Chinese participant had indicated a comfort with the value ‘be open, honest, and direct’, which differed with the perception from other employees that colleagues in Asia may feel less comfortable with the direct aspect of the behaviour. The Chinese employee indicated that if faced with a similar situation as what the German employee described, that Chinese employees would say something along the lines of ‘That’s a good idea, but I have another suggestion’. In the mind of the Chinese employee directness is demonstrated by bringing up an alternative idea rather than agreeing with the first suggestion. However, in posing a follow-up question to a German participant regarding this example, it was suggested that in Germany the fact that the original suggestion was referred to as ‘a good idea‘ would overshadow the alternate proposal, and German employees may be caught off guard later to find out the Chinese employees hadn’t agreed with the initial recommendation.

Interestingly, a very similar case is called out in Earley and Mosakowski’s 2004 Harvard Business Review article on Cultural Intelligence. They give an example of an American manager who worked on project team that included two German engineers. The Germans condemned others’ ideas during brainstorming as stunted and immature. The American
concluded that the Germans were ignorant and rude. As the authors point out, ‘‘A modicum of cultural intelligence would have helped the American realize he was mistakenly equating the merit of an idea with the merit of the person presenting it and that the Germans were able to make a sharp distinction between the two. A manager with even subtler powers of discernment might have tried to determine how much of the two Germans' behaviour was arguably German and how much was explained by the fact that they were engineers.’’. This is indicative that values are filtered through the lens of our own personality and national cultural tendencies, and although employees may all be striving to internalize and demonstrate our values, when in a multinational setting the observable results of this can vary significantly, particularly from region to region.

These examples emphasize the importance, as noted in Chapter 2, of demonstrating cultural intelligence (Ismail, Reza, and Mahdi, 2012; Molinsky, 2013) and underscores the relevance of cultural interpretation as it relates to company values. Further highlighting this point, another participant, an Irish manager who manages staff across a variety of European cultures, recognized these nuances and spoke about the implications of managing people from different nationalities in the context of the Shared Commitments and Behaviours. The example he presented was with the Shared Behaviour ‘‘Be open, honest and direct’’, and how this manifested itself differently amongst teammates from different countries. For instance, he pointed out that it was more challenging to draw out feedback and input from some employee nationalities than compared with their peers from other cultural backgrounds. When probed on if this would impact the managerial perception of those employees in terms of their ability to demonstrate that behaviour or if it would be a disadvantage to them, he stated ‘‘I don’t think it’s more difficult for them to display (the values) if you understand the mechanisms they need to fulfil those…If we do skip-level meetings, the most difficult skip-level meeting
that I will have is with the French team. And it’s not difficulty as in the questions or the approach, it’s more about getting the correct setting and tone to get the answers to the questions. Where other cultures we don’t see that. We don’t have an issue. There seems to be a hierarchical issue with French teams, not just here but I’ve seen it in other organizations as well where they will be more vocal with their direct manager, but anyone higher than that they’re not as vocal with. You don’t get that openness. So you need to be conscious of that, and it’s a lot of hard work.’’

These comments directly relate to the literature noted in Chapter 2, specifically around the notion of Cultural Intelligence (Ismail, Reza, and Mahdi, 2012) in that this manager is aware of the cultural differences amongst employee constituencies and is able to make a distinction on both approach and expected results. Furthermore, this manager’s observation regarding the French team’s reluctance to be more open with senior management aligns directly with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, as seen in Figure 6 below. When comparing Ireland to France, The French score for Power Distance is more than twice as high as the Irish, indicating a much more formal view to hierarchy amongst the French than in Ireland.
The Hofstede Centre’s definition when comparing France and Ireland in relation to Power Distance is as follows, and is aligned with this manager’s observations:

‘‘At 28 Ireland sits in the lower rankings of PDI – i.e. a society that believes that inequalities amongst people should be minimized. Within Irish organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are always accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct and participative. With a score of 68, France scores high on the scale of the PDI. It is therefore a society in which inequalities are accepted. Hierarchy is needed if not existential; the superiors may have privileges and are often inaccessible. The power is highly centralized in France, as well as Paris centralizes administrations, transports etc. In management, the attitude towards managers is more formal, the information flow is hierarchical. The way information is controlled is even associated with power, therefore unequally distributed.’’


These cultural considerations and the role management can play are discussed in more detail in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.
4.2.4 Impact on Job Satisfaction

Participants did recognize the potential for shared values to influence improved job satisfaction if the values were understood and demonstrated, but also pointed out the potential for negative impact if they were not adhered to within the organization. For example, it was identified that employees could wear the values as a „badge of honour“ of sorts, and be proud of the culture within their company. This was referenced as a mechanism to improved job satisfaction as it boosted engagement and the sense of purpose they felt in relation to their organization and job. These sentiments are echoed by Deloitte’s (2013) survey findings referenced in Chapter 2, and the positive benefits of creating a shared purpose.

Overall, participants did demonstrate a pattern of comments that indicated they felt the values were observed amongst leadership and employees, thus creating a stronger organizational culture that they could relate to and in turn drive job satisfaction. However, linking the behaviours directly both to day-to-day tasks and corresponding performance and reward or recognition programs was not consistently observed. When asked about the relationship between shared values and job satisfaction, one employee noted:

“I think they have positive impact on employees. But, with more clarification on the commitments and behaviours it could have even more positive an impact. You know, if otherwise they could potentially cause a negative impact on internal employees because the employees may have a different understanding of the behaviours or commitments. And when it comes to daily work, maybe their understanding is the other way around, and they would feel that, ok, so, this is the shared value and this how I do real work. If it’s not how it’s supposed to be, so if that happens that would impact very negative on the internal employee. So personally, I think if I really look at the values they are supposed to
have positive impact on our daily work, but it requires more work, more explanation to make it really work that way. Otherwise it wouldn’t have any impact on our work at all if we don’t really care or understand them well. Then they’re just there. So I think it does have a positive impact, but not a very big impact’

This highlights an opportunity within the organization to more consistently link values to daily responsibilities and in turn rewards and recognition programs, which could further assist employees to internalize the desired behaviours and values, as suggested by Levin and Gottlieb (2009). This observation is linked to the distinction between understanding values versus actually demonstrating or displaying them, and is explored in further detail in section 4.3.1.

4.3 Key Themes

In addition to the findings noted above, several dominant themes emerged, which are explained in more detail in the following subsections.

4.3.1 Change Management and Communication of Values

Linking desired values or behaviours to tangible activities that employees engage in is crucial to their internalization and enactment of said values. It was observed that participants who were part of departments or teams that had implemented change management processes that included linking day to day tasks with values and performance management demonstrated a greater level of connection and appreciation of the values themselves. Although employees on teams that had been initially introduced to the values with little follow-up communication all expressed awareness of and understanding of the values, those on teams who had linked values to their day to day tasks demonstrated a deeper understanding, greater ability to articulate their thoughts on
the values, and a stronger connection overall to the program, a finding consistent with suggestions by authors in Chapter 2.

For example, some participants worked in departments that conducted workshops relating to the values following the launch. They broke into groups, and spent time brainstorming what each Shared Commitment and Shared Behaviour meant to them, and how that could apply to their day to day tasks. They then reconvened and shared their findings. The result was a greater overall connection to the values, and a stronger underlying understanding and relationship between the ‘every day‘ and the ‘inspirational‘. One participant in a department such as this pointed out that the value ‘Create experiences our customers love‘ was initially difficult for her department to relate to, since they were dealing with external government officials and law enforcement rather than directly with the customers of the organization. After conducting the departmental workshops the team identified ways their work contributed to customer experiences, and were able to better relate to that particular shared commitment. Similarly, another participant indicated that his department managers had made an effort to link and label certain activities with Shared Commitments and Behaviours. For example regular customer visits were re-branded as ‘Be the customer‘ – a Shared Behaviour. This helped the employees connect their tasks and contributions to the greater aspirations and expected behaviours of the organization and in turn resulted in a greater resonance with the values themselves.

In contrast, participants who had not participated in such exercises generally ‘drew a blank‘ when probed on how they demonstrate the values or how the values were shared with them. For example some pointed out that the Shared Commitments and Behaviours were printed on their badges, but had difficulty linking behaviours with their day to day duties and therefore struggled to articulate how the values impacted up on their daily work. These findings are consistent with Levin and Gottlieb’s (2009) sixth principle when
embarking on cultural realignment as they recommend integrating efforts into daily work life and highlights the importance of ‘doing it’ rather than simply ‘talking about it’.

### 4.3.2 Role of Leadership

The importance of leadership embodying the values was noted throughout the interviews. Participants had for the most part participated in the CEO’s road show which initially was used as a vehicle to unveil the new Shared Purpose and share his own vision and connection to the company. After that, varying experiences were observed from team to team and region to region in terms of how the Shared Purpose was further rolled out or solidified within teams. In relation to the role of leadership, the authenticity demonstrated by the CEO and founder in relation to the Shared Purpose was recognized and appreciated, and staff members whose managers had made direct efforts to both embody the values as well as link them to day to day performance exhibited greater understanding and connection with the values. This underscores the importance of leadership ‘living and breathing’ values as noted throughout the literature review.

Furthermore, the importance of manager cultural savvy was noted. Participants did recognize that the way in which they may interpret or display particular Shared Commitments or Behaviours could vary, and was directly influenced by their own national identity. It was highlighted that as long as managers recognized this and didn’t hold employees accountable to disparate national interpretations of values, and rather acknowledged the way employees from a given culture may display these values differently, there would not be a negative impact. However, if managers forced their own national cultural identities upon others, it could be a source of de-motivation. That said, the opportunity to learn from other cultural influences or management was also seen as a positive opportunity in the organization. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.3.
4.3.3 National Cultural Considerations

As noted in previous sections throughout Chapter 4, the consideration of national culture is essential to successfully rolling out and maintaining cultural programs in a multinational context. First, understanding the various interpretations and embodiment of values that will likely be observed amongst employee groups of different nationalities is critically important. If managers force their own interpretations or expectations of values to staff members of different cultural backgrounds, the cultural program itself can cease to be appealing and instead become de-motivating.

However, employees do appreciate management role-modelling of values, and can identify benefits of learning from managers, particularly managers from the home country of the company, about how to display values. This creates a unique and delicate balance for managers in that they must be cognizant and respectful of different national perceptions, but also have an opportunity to shape how employees interpret and embody the values, a sentiment echoed by Molinsky (2013), who recommends cross-cultural managers recognize the other party's norms and customs, but still display his or her own natural approach. This research supports this view, in that mutual learning and understanding can be derived from this approach.

Language and interpretation is another key finding, and companies must be careful to craft value statements that can be easily interpreted and universally understood. Although not part of the Shared Purpose, participants in this study on more than one occasion brought up their dislike of their department's mission statement that includes the sentence „We exist to serve“. European employees felt particularly negative about this statement, and felt it harkened back to the servant culture within Europe. This overshadowed the intention of creating a culture that exists to provide exemplary service to its customers,
and instead created churn and a low level resentment amongst employees. This emphasizes the point that choosing language that is universally accepted across a heterogeneous group of employees is an important managerial consideration when crafting mission statements, values, or desired behaviours. This represents a key finding and recommendation. Next, conclusions are outlined.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations
The topic of organizational culture is clearly significant in business management as it shapes and forms the way things get done in an organization. Culture, whether intentionally influenced or crafted, or unintentionally and organically developed over time, has the power to influence financial results, competitive advantage, employee engagement, and the longevity of a company. A consistently recognized component of culture is values, or values-based management, which contributes to and guides employees' behaviour. Given the tangible and non-tangible benefits a strong and positive corporate culture can yield, managers are increasingly focused on defining and shaping the desired culture in their organizations.

This culture-shaping endeavour can be difficult in the best of times, but can be made more complex within organizations whose populous contains a wide range of nationalities or regional cultures. The literature concerning change management processes when influencing culture in organizations is distinctly lacking in its references to national identity considerations. This research aimed to understand these national cultural nuances, and confirmed that there are important considerations to be made when in relation to different national constituencies within an organization. Numerous consistent and dominant themes emerged through the examination of this topic, and yielded several results and subsequent recommendations.

First, change management processes that emphasize and enact activities to link desired values or behaviours to day-to-day tasks of employees act as a key driver for employee engagement and embodiment of these values. This is recommended in some literature, but not all. The researcher asserts that this finding is particularly important for team members from other national societies, as linguistic factors can impact their understanding or resonance with stated values.
Second, managers must acknowledge cultural differences when it comes to the interpretation and enactment of values. The concepts of right and wrong, being open or direct, or how to be customer-oriented for example can mean different things to employees from different nationalities. This further emphasises the first point made above, in that both managers and employees can benefit from open dialogue regarding what the values mean to them personally, in order to find a common understanding. This is particularly important if these values are part of the company’s performance management or rewards programs. If managers from disparate national backgrounds than their staff enforce the culture through the lens of their own national identity, without considering the cultural interpretation of their employees, the values can become a demotivating factor in the workplace rather than a motivating one. This relates to literature concerning cultural savvy or ‘cultural IQ’ on the part of management; however the literature lacks in linking this cultural dexterity and cultural programs within organizations, and is a key take-away in terms of considerations companies and managers must make when enacting values-based programs for employees from differing national backgrounds.

This segues nicely into the third result which highlights the importance of manager embodiment and role-modelling of desired values. Employees learn and enact what they see their managers doing, and if management doesn’t understand or embody the values it is less likely their employees will. The concept of sincerity is important to employees and knowing that values are taken to heart and displayed by management rather than just posted on the wall or within an employee manual is an essential component in successful cultural programs. Furthermore, employees who may struggle to fully understand the desired behaviours, whether due to personality or national identity reasons, are helped by
observing management and are able to better understand the meanings of stated values or behaviours through their manager’s actions.

Overall, themes within the literature concerning national cultural dimensions, values-based management, and many of the change-management processes outlined in the frameworks noted in Chapter 2 were observed during this study. However, further focus on national nuances when it comes to implementing values based programs is suggested by the author in order to mitigate potential resistance or embodiment challenges when dealing with a heterogeneous employee base. This presents an opportunity for further research in order to develop enhanced frameworks that include a national culture component to support culture creation. This could help companies, particularly multinationals, more successfully develop and maintain cultural programs within their institutions.
Chapter 6

Self Reflective
6.1 Background

Undertaking this program was a significant decision for me, and not one I took lightly. I entered my career at a young age, beginning in customer service and sales roles in contact centres part-time as a teenager. At age 18, I was training groups of new hires, and at 19 took my first leadership role as a Team Supervisor in a call centre for an internet service provider. I enjoyed my job and the challenges it presented, and with ongoing development opportunities available to me I shelved my plans to go to college, and forged ahead with my career. At age 23 I applied for a Team Supervisor role with eBay, and was hired into the large multinational eCommerce organization as a Trust and Safety supervisor within their North American Customer Support Organization.

Working for eBay has afforded me a multitude of opportunities, and since joining the company ten years ago I moved into more senior people leadership positions; accepted an international relocation from Canada to Ireland; and moved out of customer support operations management into a business management role. Nevertheless, over the years I had become more aware of my own limitations, in particular those due to not having obtained formal training or a degree. This became more apparent when I moved out of Customer Service Management, where I had received specific training and Contact Centre Management courses over the years, into a more business oriented role. I was faced with new challenges, and the lack of formal business education impacted my effectiveness in some tasks, and my confidence.

It was at this time I began to more seriously consider pursuing formal education with a business degree. However, having had several years of management experience and the many years of working in high-performance business environments, beginning at the ground level in bachelor's level business course with young students wasn’t overly
appealing to me, and I put off the process of formal education. In speaking about this with others, it was brought to my attention that I may be able to qualify for a Masters Degree as a Mature Student. This wasn’t something I had been aware of, having always believed a primary degree was a pre-requisite for any master’s program. I researched the options, and found that DBS offered an Executive MBA program which considered applicants based on work experience in lieu of a primary degree, and decided to apply for the program.

This wasn’t an easy decision for me; I knew that balancing a full-time job at eBay and undertaking an MBA would be challenging. I was also uncertain of my own abilities, given I had not been in an academic environment before. Although I was confident that my work experience was equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree, I was unsure that I would be able to enter a master's level with ease, or take on the academic requirements, given my unfamiliarity with these tasks. In year one, I admittedly put a lot of pressure on myself, and recall being particularly uneasy when it came time to submit my first assignments. However, the feedback and support from the lecturers was outstanding, as was the support and additional seminars offered in the DBS library on assignment-writing and referencing. Furthermore, I felt the small class size lent itself to increased interaction amongst my peers and with our lecturers, which enhanced the experience for me personally. I had found my groove, and knew within the first semester I had made the right choice.

6.2 Summary of Added Value

6.2.1 Increased confidence

Recently I was asked by a close friend what I had gained from this MBA program. This individual was key in helping me decide to pursue the programme. He’s an academic
through and through, having completed his PhD then continuing with both research and lecturing at Harvard. He’s on the admissions board to Princeton and Carnegie Melon Universities, and understood both the gravity of the decision for me as well as what I would be taking on. He helped me gain the confidence to apply for this course as a mature student, discussing with me what I could expect, and assisting by writing a letter of recommendation for me. When he asked this question, my reply came immediately: This course has been instrumental in building confidence in myself and my abilities.

This has manifested itself in several ways. First, when I entered the course, I had a strong dislike for public speaking, and could experience severe anxiety when presenting in front of groups. This was hindering me and my career, and I had turned down opportunities to present which would have given me excellent exposure to senior management. This frustrated me, as I was aware that my fear of presenting was resulting in missed opportunities, and it was an area I knew I had to address. The first class presentations we made in the course were difficult for me; the nerves I regularly experienced were present, which usually resulted in difficulty breathing and even speaking. Prior to presenting in front of class I researched some breathing exercises, and tried to employ these techniques whilst presenting. My peers and lecturers were supportive and helpful, and even observing some of them speak helped me identify approaches that appeared successful to others. Through the simple exercise of practicing these techniques and presenting projects within the MBA classes in a safe environment and in front of a small group, I naturally built confidence in this area.

Although I’m still not completely comfortable with presenting, I’ve improved, and have recently been called upon to present to Sr. Management. Two years ago I would have avoided the task, and possibly even declined the opportunity. Instead, I was able to
present information to our senior leaders, and get through it with reasonable confidence and ease.

Second, I have observed in myself a heightened awareness and use of appropriate business language. The exposure to literature and theory across the various facets of business through this course has heightened my overall knowledge, and as a result I feel more comfortable with the terminology and language to describe and converse in the business world with greater knowledge and ease. I've observed this in several ways, including gaining a better understanding of my organization's annual earnings and financials through the knowledge gained in the Finance Module; obtaining clearer and better language to communicate and execute upon projects through the lessons in the Project Management module; or gaining a more holistic view of the business and how my department and organization fits into and contributes to the overall strategy at the corporate level – learnings I gained from the Strategy and Effective Leadership modules.

6.2.2 Impact on day to day role

In addition to the heightened confidence and improved business approaches, the course has helped me in tangible ways to more effectively execute on day to day tasks within my current role. First and foremost, the Project Management module was of significant value to me, and has proven the most useful in terms of practical application within my role. Although my position isn't formally labelled as a Project Manager, many of the tasks and initiatives I am responsible for require Project Management skills, and call for extensive planning, stakeholder management and execution.

With no formal training in this area, I had at times felt overwhelmed and under-qualified to lead some of the initiatives I was tasked with, and can recall times prior to the course feeling as though I was in over my head leading some of the projects assigned to me.
Throughout the course of this module I was able to better understand the formal process of project management, and link many of the duties I was executing back to the frameworks and processes we were learning. Although intuitively I was doing some of this already, simply having a more formalized framework to help manage the projects I was involved with proved instrumental in improving both my confidence and my effectiveness. Most tangibly, this has improved my ability to document and execute projects, identify and document failures or lessons learned, and better identify critical paths and dependencies within project streams.

6.2.3 Time management

The basis of improved time-management skills is two-fold. First, the exercise of balancing a full workload with coursework in and of itself forced improved time management skills, simply to keep on top of work and school responsibilities. I found myself creating and maintaining more detailed task lists and timelines for myself, not just for large assignments or projects, but also to integrate the smaller achievements or milestones I needed to achieve. More important, I’ve been able to take learnings from the Operations and Project Management courses to better plan and prioritize tasks for myself and my functional group. I’ve learned to be more aware of dependencies, and better integrate these within my own scheduling and prioritizations in order to better execute upon my tasks. When managing more complex tasks, or forming timelines for competing tasks, I’ve learned to map this out with Gantt charts and build in dependency considerations.

6.3 Plans to apply the learning

The primary areas I plan to apply the learning within my role is within Project Management. As discussed in section 6.2.2, this area of the course is most aligned with
my current role, and has armed me with both the confidence and skills to more easily and effectively manage the project related tasks. This is invaluable to me within my current role and organization.

Next, undertaking this course has enhanced my business knowledge to the extent that I've been able to assist my father in his own business. I've assisted with creating a five-year business plan; enhancing his marketing efforts; refreshing his website and branding; and expanding his product offerings. As a result he's seen an increase of business by three-fold in the last year.

Last, the learnings I've gained through this course has given me the basis of knowledge to feel confident enough to pursue my own business ventures. I have several business ideas that I plan to scope following the completion of this course and dissertation, and I feel confident I have the underlying business knowledge to pursue these ventures should I choose.

Overall this course has been integral to building my business knowledge and confidence, and I thank the school, lecturers and staff for their support and assistance throughout the course of the program.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS
MBA Thesis, Kira Brooks

I, ________________________________, agree to be interviewed for an MBA thesis project which is being researched by Kira Brooks of Dublin Business School.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project and the anonymity of my participation; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more electronically recorded interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be published in an academic journal or book.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

__________________________  Date ________________________
Signature of Interviewee

__________________________  Date ________________________
Signature of Interviewer (Kira Brooks)

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. To what extent do you think it’s important for companies to have stated values?
2. Do you think values play an important part in shaping an organization’s culture?
3. What else contributes to an organization’s culture?
4. Do you think eBay as an organization, and its employees generally display our shared commitments and behaviours?
5. To what extent do you think, in eBay, it’s important to display our shared commitment and behaviours in order to succeed here?
Appendix 2: Interview Questions (Cont.)

6. Thinking about our shared commitments and behaviours through the lens of your own nationality or national culture, are there any of our values that resonate more for you than others? Are there any that within your own national culture, are harder to display or relate to?

7. Thinking outside your own national culture, do you think employees from all national cultures can relate to and display the shared commitments and behaviours equally? Do you think some employees from any particular nationality may have an easier or harder time with any of them?

8. What has eBay done to share the new values with you?

9. Has the company done a good job integrating these new values into the organizational culture or day to day norms? Could they do anything different?

10. How do you think our values impact upon job satisfaction?

Appendix 3: Shared Purpose, Commitments, Behaviours

Appendix 3.1 Shared Purpose:

Throughout history, commerce has been a powerful force in our lives. Bartering, trading, buying and selling — every transaction between people sparks possibility. Through commerce, we create value that helps each of us pursue a better life and forge human connections that enrich our shared experience.

But commerce hasn’t always lived up to its potential. Traditionally, it has created distinct winners and losers. Some are in the game but unable to win. Some are unable to play at all. Some of us have abundant access to the world’s goods; others have limited choice.

Today, digital technology is changing those rules and enabling us to push the boundaries of commerce— fueling more connected commerce. This creates the potential to unlock more opportunity, for more people. Connected commerce is open, diverse, and inclusive—providing everyone opportunity to participate and create value. With more access and choice, we each can pursue a better life.

Connected commerce is both local and global, online and offline. Big and small players can succeed with each other, not in spite of each other, creating competition that’s less — “winner takes all” and more — ALL OF US – individuals, businesses, and communities—then share in more opportunity together. That’s the power of connected commerce.
Appendix 3.2: Shared Commitments and Behaviours:

Our Shared Commitments:

Create experiences our customers love.
Innovate constantly, compete fiercely.
Execute well, every day.
Enable talented people to thrive.
Drive success: NPS, eNPS and EPS.

Our Shared Behaviors:

Be the customer.
Simplify. Clarify.
Debate, decide and deliver.
Be open, honest and direct.
Do the right thing.