

TRANSACTIONAL CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF BRITISH EXPATRIATES AND
SERVICE PROVIDERS IN DUBAI

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Abstract

As globalization has exponentially increased mobility, the United Arab Emirates has become a country that hosts nationalities from around the globe, with expatriates making up over 89% of the population. This study builds on the conceptual model presented by Stauss and Mang that explored the intercultural provider performance gap through investigating how British expatriates experience cross-cultural transactions with service providers in Dubai. This study took place in 2016 and it involved 15 individual interviews and a facilitated focus group with six of those participants. I analyzed the gathered information through thematic analysis and I further evaluated it against secondary information to help to create a clear understanding of how expatriates experience transactional cross-cultural interactions in Dubai. Key findings of the study included that the service provider gap identified by Stauss and Mang is consistent with transactional interactions in Dubai. Findings further indicate that British expatriates tend to be aware of their behavior within the scope of an interaction and they experience empathy for the situation of service providers; however, their customer expectations of service have not changed and there is a demonstrated unwillingness to change. Accordingly, I propose a transactional experience model to provide a framework for understanding between expatriates and service providers.

Key words: Acculturation, Cross-Cultural Customer Service, Social Hierarchy, United Arab Emirates

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Dedication

To my global family and friends,
you always believed in me.
Thank you for sticking with me on this
challenging journey.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a country in which cross-cultural interactions are common occurrences. The local Emirati population in the UAE is roughly 11%, and over 160 countries make up the other 89% (Snoj, 2015). Underpinning the current cultural climate, Bedouin cultural values have historically influenced the culture of the UAE, and hierarchy and hospitality are evident in both business and social settings (Bristol-Rhys, 2009). The very visible religious underpinnings of Islam from both locals and a large percentage of the foreign workforce add intricacy to this equation. Further complexity has been more prevalent in recent history as globalization has contributed to a wide adoption of Western cultural influences that are evident through the availability of retail products, accepted social behaviors, and how individuals dress. It is within this rich mosaic that an outsider may start to begin to understand how people interact and experience interactions within the UAE.

Cultural interactions take place every day. Individuals who operate within an organizational structure such as the workplace participate in formal interactions (Neal, 2010; Pate & Scullion, 2009). Individuals navigating their day-to-day lives outside the formal structure of a workplace may participate in social, natural, or unscripted interactions. These interactions are more homogeneous, and research has indicated that various cultures tend to stick together (Sam & Berry, 2010).

This dissertation focuses on a third type of interaction, which some view as a forced transactional type of interaction. These interactions occur when individuals must engage with an unknown individual to rectify a problem, such as a repair in a household. However, within the norms of operating culture in Dubai, the service provider is generally from another culture (Bhuiyan, Amyx, & Shamma, 2014).

I initiated this study due to my personal experience and an extensive review of the available literature. This research interest began with a desire to explore cross-cultural relationships, and it evolved into specifying the relationships between expatriates and service providers in Dubai. As stories of negative service experiences seemed to be the norm, individuals demonstrated strong emotions when speaking about these encounters. It seemed that a topic that elicited that much emotion needed further study. I decided to conduct a qualitative study as the appropriate mechanism to investigate these experiences and to look at the customer service interactions and how British expatriates (as a representation of the expatriate population) actually experience the cultural complexities. Additionally, it was important to understand how the British expatriates understand their actions within the social hierarchy of Dubai and, if they are aware of that hierarchy, how they reconcile that with their behavior.

As I indicated above, the population for this study is British expatriates. To keep this study focused, it was important to put a tight framework around the population under study, as there are over 161 expatriate nationalities present in the UAE. One of the issues of study populations within the academic context is that cultural studies are “largely Anglo-American-centric” (Fougère & Moulettes, 2011, p. 6). However, any individual who is from somewhere other than the population in question may not fully understand the cultural nuances and can only draw conclusions based on the available data he or she perceives through his or her own lens, which may complicate cultural research.

As the expatriates with the longest history and among the largest Western population in the region, the British were the obvious choice as the specific group for this study. Furthermore, I am from a commonwealth country, and my familiarity with the culture aided in creating open dialogue between the participants and me. This allowed me to explore cross-cultural interactions

on one side of the culture equation, creating a basis for comparison for further research. However, as I noted above, I may have missed subtle nuances.

Conceptual Anchors

One important concept throughout this study is culture. The study of culture has many definitions and applications. However, for the purposes of this study, culture is a system of values, norms, and beliefs that “is learned, not innate. It derives from one’s social environment rather than one’s genes” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 6). Therefore, if culture is something one learns, then it is also something that can adapt to changing conditions due to external influences, making Dubai, an exceptionally diverse city, an intriguing cultural study. Dubai is a place where individuals arrive with their own experiences and may perhaps change some of their behaviors as they reside longer within the region; these behavioral changes may apply to specific aspects or be holistic changes. Therefore, creating the stipulation that participants must have lived in the UAE for at least one year ensured a basic level of acculturation or change, as participants may have adopted various aspects of their lives more fully than others to the culture or to how things work in Dubai.

To help to conceptualize how expatriates experience transactional situations further, a systems lens helps to provide a framework for thinking about and taking into account all the behaviors, inputs, and outputs. As culture can act as an adaptive system, the components, structures, mechanics, and environments that make up that system help to create a holistic understanding (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2008; Meadows & Wright, 2008). The system is not a closed one, with many variables that constantly change.

The final piece on which this dissertation builds is a model of Stauss and Mang (1999). Their intercultural expectation service model bridges the gaps in research between customer satisfaction, attribution, and the role of cultural distance (Figure 1).

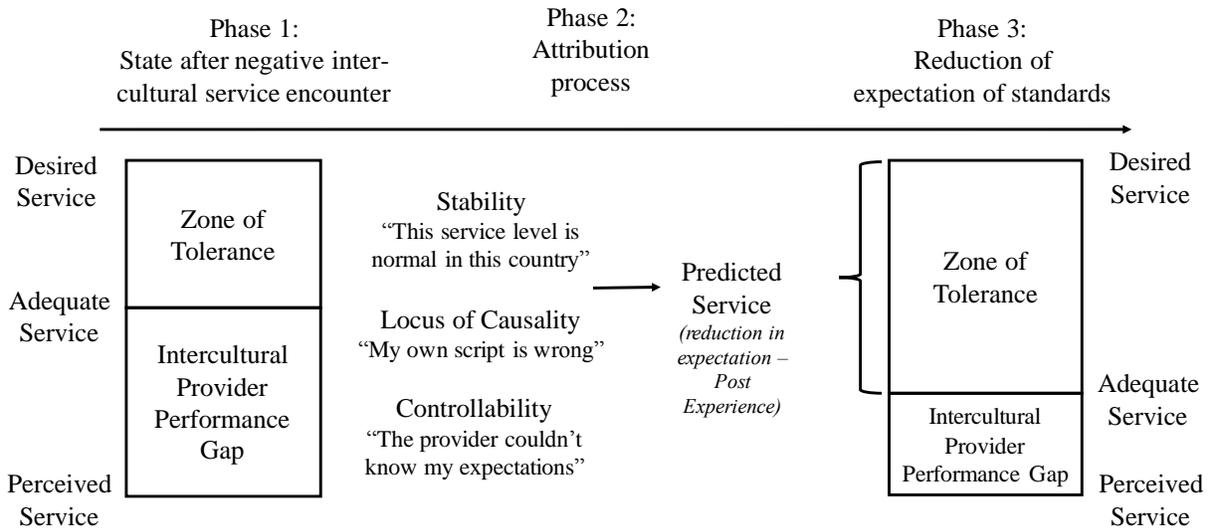


Figure 1. The reduction of the intercultural provider performance gap. Adapted from “‘Culture shocks’ in inter-cultural service encounters?,” by B. Stauss and P. Mang, 1999, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 13, p. 341.

The basic premise of the model is that when cultures interact, there is a reduction in expectations of levels of customer service based on an attribution process that the customer undertakes within a cross-cultural setting in which the service provider is from the country in which the interaction is taking place and the customer is from another country. This interaction is a system in which inputs from previous experiences drive down the acceptable level of customer service.

Therefore, this model leaves a number of questions. Does this research apply in cross-cultural situations in which both actors within the interaction are from different countries

(Stephenson, Russell, & Edgar, 2010)? And primarily, how do British expatriates experience the transaction?

Methodology

I engaged 15 participants to provide their insights initially during individual interviews. After an initial data analysis exercise, I invited all the participants to a focus group to participate in further discussion and to provide any other insights into the gathered material; however, only six participants could attend. I analyzed the qualitative data for this study utilizing thematic analysis, which provided the foundational themes for discussion and conclusions.

To support the gathered data, I gathered secondary data through a literature review comprised of three distinct sections. Section 1 explores the basis of this study, cross-cultural customer service. Section 2 examines the container in which the encounters take place, namely Dubai; and Section 3 addresses the primary study group of British expatriates and how they situate themselves and operate within the system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between British expatriates and service providers in Dubai in forced or transactional service opportunities. This was an important distinction, as most of the available literature focuses on cross-cultural interactions within the formal limitations of an organization in the Middle East (Atiyyah, 1996; Cerimagic, 2011; Greaves, 2012; Hills & Atkins, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010).

The focus of this study is specifically on expatriate perceptions of cross-cultural customer engagement. The focus of this study is not on the service provider and his or her experiences due to the difficulty of engagement with appropriate participants due to factors such as the

language barrier and my nationality and sex. Further research will be necessary in the future to address both other populations of expatriates and the points of view of service providers.

During this study, participants engaged in exploratory reflection on both positive and negative interactions, and they discussed their own reactions to and behaviors in the situations they described. I selected this population for the study because of the access issues and the basic level of trust associated with my similar cultural background (building rapport) and similar social hierarchical position, which encouraged an implicit level of trust. Within this context, there may be a natural bias on my part. However, I took steps to mitigate any potential bias, including instituting a review of the recordings for leading questions or emotional responses and keeping a research journal to note any potential areas of bias. Therefore, selecting British expatriates to participate was purposeful as a representation of Western expatriates, but I acknowledge that their responses may be different from those of other Western expatriates.

Significance of the Study

There is little literature specifically addressing service provider/customer, or transactional, cross-cultural relationships in the UAE from the point of view of the expatriate customer. Researchers have examined topics including the changing philosophy of employees working as expatriates within international organizations (Pate & Scullion 2009), expatriate identities or working Whiteness (Leonard, 2012), Arab-expatriate working relations (Neal, 2010), and topics such as expatriate development for cross-cultural adjustment (Y. Zhang, 2013). These themes examine parts of the expatriate experience, but not the whole.

Other researchers such as Cheok, Hede, and Watne (2013) attempted to rationalize cross-cultural service interactions. They indicated that “Cultural friction departs from, and extends, the notion of ‘cultural distance’, as it recognizes asymmetry in social-economic conditions and

considers the goals and the influence of control and power between the interacting parties” (p. 539). The context of this interaction is within the tourism and hospitality space, so this could also function as a forced or transactional interaction. It is an important concept that aligns with Stauss and Mang’s (1999) research. However, Strauss and Mang examined the interaction between a local operator in Malaysia and international tourists. In a review of cross-cultural consumer services research, J. Zhang, Beatty, and Walsh (2008) found notable gaps, as most of the research predominately took place in North America or Asia, as opposed to regions such as the Middle East.

This study explores the behavior of the transactional cross-cultural equation from the point of view of British expatriates in the Middle East. It is not a definitive work on transactional cross-cultural relations, but the result of an effort to help to understand the relations within the context of Dubai at this moment. As I interviewed British expatriates and allowed them space to develop their own narratives of interaction, the information contained herein may help to inform other cross-cultural interactions within organizations further, including specific training that may be helpful for expatriates looking to relocate to Dubai.

Research Question and Objectives

The basis of this qualitative study is a single question: what is the experience of Dubai British expatriates in cross-cultural, face-to-face, transactional service interactions? As a qualitative study, the question had to remain broad and easy for study participants to understand. It also had to allow comparison to the conceptual model. Supporting the question, the objectives of the research were:

- (1) to determine the factors affecting the British expatriate customer experience in Dubai;

- (2) to establish the perceived shortfalls of the service providers from the British expatriate point of view;
- (3) to determine whether the intercultural service gap as identified by Stauss and Mang (1999) also occurs in the relationships between different cultures, when neither is from the host country.

These objectives aided in ensuring that the data analysis of the research led to meaningful conclusions for the study.

A Brief History of the UAE

Unlike its neighbor to the northeast (Saudi Arabia), the UAE has allowed individuals to populate the country with limited impositions of dress or religion. It is important to understand the development of the culture in this 46-year-old country, as partial acculturation to local cultural norms is prevalent within the various cultures in Dubai.

The Middle East is a unique part of the world; it serves as the transit point to and from Europe, Africa, and Asia. It was not until after the UAE became a nation in 1971 and started to exploit its oil and gas reserves that the country leaders recognized the need for external expertise to help to build a modern nation from what was traditionally a simple, tribal-based trade center for the region (Rugh, 2007). Since then, the population of expatriates has blossomed to approximately 89% of the overall population (Snoj, 2015).

The UAE was traditionally a tribal society with little influence from other cultures; it had arranged marriages (often only within the same tribe) and limited travel depending on how each of the Bedouin Tribes relocated. “Economies and trade were based on date farming, fishing and pearl diving” (Bristol-Rhys, 2009, p. 108). The main external influence in the region was from the British for the 200 years before they withdrew in 1971, and the seven Trucial States became

the United Arab Emirates (Heard-Bey, 1982; Kazim, 2000). British officers and travelers described Dubai's population as homogeneous, and the British influence did little to help to build infrastructure such as schools and roads. Lorimer (1986) supplied the earliest account of Dubai's tribal population as totaling 1,500 inhabitants (p. 765). Therefore, UAE society was quite insular, with a Bedouin/Muslim narrative that did not see a lot of influence from the outside.

Cross-cultural interactions are a now daily occurrence in the UAE. With over 160 cultures in the UAE (Emirates Airlines, 2016) and the ever-growing ease of international travel, the global population of Dubai is encountering various cultures and their unique norms as soon as people step out of their own residences.

This working population consists of four main groups (with sample populations from largest to smallest), namely (a) Asians from the Indian subcontinent – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc.; (b) South East Asians – Philippines, China, South Korea, etc.; (c) other Arabs – Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, etc.; and (d) Westerners – United Kingdom (UK), Australia, United States, South Africa, Germany, etc. (Snoj, 2015). Within the hierarchical social context of these groups, there are distinct classes or rankings, which the types of jobs each group receives further typifies. For example, Westerners feature prominently in management positions, whereas individuals from Asia are more likely to receive jobs as laborers (Stephenson et al., 2010).

Each of these groups brings its own cultural norms when it arrives in the UAE, and these norms subsequently have an impact on operating norms and daily interactions within the city. Interestingly, it is the smallest of the populations (Western) that has had the biggest impact on culture in the UAE (Hills & Atkins, 2013). Hills and Atkins (2013) attributed this impact to natural acculturation due partially to globalization and the influence of social media.

Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meetings between cultures. “Closely linked to acculturation is adaptation, which ... refer(s) to individual psychological well-being and how individuals manage socioculturally. Adaptation is thus considered a consequence of acculturation” (Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 472). Therefore, acculturation is a result of pressures on the system of Dubai that manifest themselves in the form of interactional behavior by individuals, where an individual may mimic another if that individual perceives the behavior as correct. This norming effect is just one factor that impacts how individuals interact within the system known as Dubai

Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter has touched on the research topic and started to describe the objectives and overall purpose of the research. There are many reasons that expatriates relocate to Dubai, and with that life change, there are stressors that naturally occur, and therefore varying degrees of acculturation occur as expatriates integrate into the culture of Dubai. This study sheds further light on how expatriates experience cross-cultural interactions within the formal state of service interactions.

As I described in the study significance, the literature review consists of topics including cross-cultural service transactions, the Dubai effect, and situating British expatriates. In Chapter 3, I detail the methodology, including information on participants, interview questions, data analysis, and procedures. Chapter 4 consists of data analysis, findings, and discussion, followed by conclusions in Chapter 5, as well as references and the supporting appendix documentation.

Key Terms and Concepts

Table 1 defines the key terms and concepts for this study:

Table 1

Key Terms and Concepts

Term	Definition
Acculturation	Explains the process of cultural change and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures
CCT	Customer culture theory – the study of consumption choices and behaviors from a social and cultural point of view, as opposed to an economic or psychological viewpoint
Culture	The ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society.
Complementary differentiation	Behaviors between groups are vastly different and they do not adopt similar behavior.
Expatriate (Expat)	A person temporarily or permanently residing in a country other than that of his or her citizenship
<i>Majlis</i>	An Arabic gathering place, in which various types of special gatherings among common interest groups such as councils take place
Schema of interpretation	A cognitive framework or concept that helps to organize and interpret information
Schismogenesis	Describing certain concrete ritual behaviors that are either inhibited or stimulated, i.e., symmetrical or complementary
Symmetrical differentiation	When two parties who may have different behaviors norm or adopt the same patterns when dealing with each other.
<i>Wasta</i>	An Arabic word that loosely translates into nepotism or “who you know”
<i>Zakat</i>	A tax for individuals who meet the criteria for wealth. It consists of a percentage of the excess and the government generally utilizes it for philanthropic donations

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

To promote understanding of the complexities of cross-cultural interactions in a service provider/expatriate context, I have divided the literature review into three topic areas. Section 1, Cross-Cultural Customer Service, is about the foundational conceptual model. This section discusses the literature around expectations of service, culture and customer service, and customer service in developed vs. developing countries. Section 2, The Dubai Effect, examines the concepts of culture and the environment in which these cross-cultural interactions take place. It begins with an exploration of Arab and Islamic culture in the region, followed by Western influences and media culture. This section also includes general theories around acculturation, cultural learning, cultural psychology, and cultural stereotyping. Section 3, Situating the British Expatriate, examines the individual within the system. This section discusses theories such as schemas of interpretation and how individuals create frames to help to make sense of the world. This section also includes a brief overview of why individuals become expatriates, British culture, and schismogenesis, as well as themes of trust, power, and equality.

To begin this literature review, I undertook an initial examination of previous doctoral research specifically targeting articles and papers about cross-cultural interactions, Arab culture, cultural dimensions, and acculturation. Following this, a search of academic data bases for key words such as *culture*, *cross cultural customer service*, *cultural psychology*, and *personal beliefs* provided foundational articles that in turn helped to refocus the themes and to suggest other works to create further understanding.

Within each section of this literature review, I provide a content overview for the available literature integrated with an analysis and discussion concerning any apparent gaps or contradictions. I have made every effort to ensure that I have used primary source articles;

however, in some cases summary articles help with an overview of context from other sources and secondary sources provide further context. Examining the available literature for this topic from the identified areas has helped me to frame the study data collection approach and it has supported the analysis and conclusions.

Section 1: Cross-Cultural Customer Service

From an anthropological point of view, the evolving relationship between customers and service providers has involved a trade of some sort—such as payment for an activity. Currently, these transactions are still evolving, with service providers providing high-tech payment vehicles, such as mobile card payment machines, and educated customers demanding differentiated services to meet their unique requirements. Customer culture theory (CCT) is the study of how people make choices of what they are going to purchase and how they look at those choices and behaviors from a social and cultural point of view. Arnould and Thompson (2005), in a review of 20 years of CCT, provided a more robust definition:

it refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings.... Thus, consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets. (p. 868)

This context of cross-cultural customer service provides a container in which to examine the system in which customers, or expatriates in this scenario, are operating.

The linkage between customer culture and culture itself is that they form part of the micronarrative of society. A micronarrative is a way of telling a small story through communication; for example, a news article can act as a micronarrative. Geertz (1983) indicated

that CCT conceptualizes culture as the very fabric of experience, meaning, and action. The interesting theme here is that as companies or service providers are trying to sell a lifestyle, consumers are changing their buying habits. For example, consumers want to obtain items that will elevate their social circumstances. Therefore, the consumer marketplace also drives an individual's sense of identity through desire. It is within the interactions between cultures that either exceed or do not meet expectations that cultural behaviors are apparent.

Culture and Customer Service

In a review of cross-cultural customer service, J. Zhang et al. (2008) provided a clear framework to explain how culture impacts the customer service experience (see Figure 2). There are three parts to a service transaction. The first is expectations of what the service is going to be. The second is the service itself, and the third is the reaction to service and service recovery. Figure 2 indicates that culture has an impact on each point in the customer service interaction, which I address in Part 3 of this literature review, examining how individuals situate themselves in cross-cultural interactions.

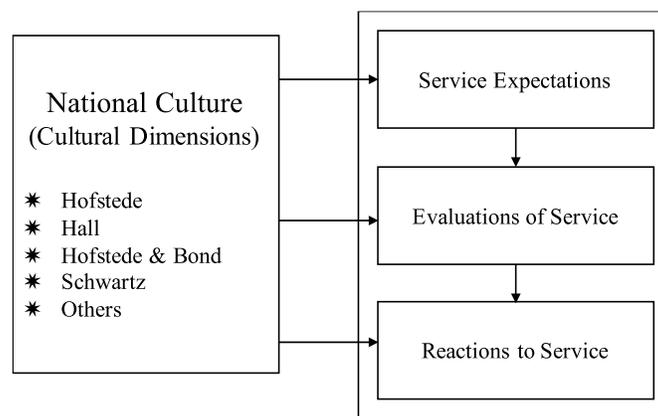


Figure 2. A framework of the role of culture in customers' service expectations. Adapted from "Review and Future Directions of Cross-Cultural Consumer Services Research," by J. Zhang, S. E. Beatty, and G. Walsh, 2008, *Journal of Business Research*, 61(3), p. 212.

This literature review also provides some insight as to the gaps in cross-cultural service research. Most notable is the prevalence of research utilizing American subjects as one side of the cultural equation. Additionally, industries that have received wide study include hotels, hospitals, retail, and banking; there is very little research into other types of service encounters such as a repair person engaged to fix something in a home.

Zeroing in first on service expectations, Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993) provided a detailed model to explain the service expectations of individuals. There are two types of service within the model that fall at either end of a continuum: desired and acceptable service, with a zone of tolerance in the middle. Within the zone of tolerance, Zeithaml et al. found a wide variety of variance between individuals. Several psychosocial factors, including personal needs or well-being and previous experience, drive desired service within this model. Within the acceptable or adequate level of service are factors that impact the overall satisfaction of the customer:

1. transitory service intensifiers,
2. perceived service alternatives,
3. customer self-perceived service roles,
4. predicted service, and
5. situational service. (Zeithaml et al., 1993, p. 8)

Adding cultural dimensions to this research provokes further thought about how people are communicating within these customer service situations.

The next part of the service equation is the actual encounter between the customer and the service provider in a cross-cultural context. Stauss and Mang (1999) provided some clarity through their study of inter-cultural service encounters. However, within the context of their

study, the definition of a service provider is in domestic terms, and the customer is a foreigner. For example, if the interaction happened in Japan, the service provider was Japanese and the customer was from a Western country. However, some of the conclusions can apply to any cross-cultural service context. Stauss and Mang indicated that the cause “for the inter-cultural *provider* performance gap, can be a physical environment gap, a personnel gap, a system gap or a co-customer gap” (p. 332). These gaps are:

- Physical gap—expectation of the customer with respect to the presentation of the provider’s workspace.
- Personal gap—expectation of the customer when the provider does not show appropriate levels of competence, empathy, politeness, or assistance (including verbal and non-verbal communication).
- System gap—perceived faults in the system of the provider, including achievement-orientation or time-orientation
 - Strauss and Mang cited theories including Hofstede and Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimensions, Hall’s (1976) high/low context cultures, and Riddle’s (1986) orientations to time, achievement, activities, and relationships.
- Co-customer gap—when expats encounter other customers who behave in a manner different to that of their home country.

Furthermore, Stauss and Mang defined the customer performance gap as a situation where “the inter-cultural deviations of the customer’s role behavior can manifest themselves in a (customer’s) physical environment gap, a personnel gap, a system gap, or a co-customer gap” (p. 334).

These gaps are slightly different from the provider gaps;

- Physical gap—customers have difficulties in tasks because they are unfamiliar with signs or the layout of the physical location.
- Personal gap—if the customer does not observe common manners or rules.
- System gap—if the customer is not familiar with “the way things work here” ... e.g., an unfamiliar queuing system.
- Co-customer gap—if the foreign customer behaves in a manner that is disturbing to the local customers.

Figure 3 presents the outcome of these gaps, where if a customer experiences a negative customer service encounter, his or her zone of tolerance dramatically increases. It is relevant that the basis of this study was airport interactions in Europe and Asia; therefore, if Strauss and Mang’s (1999) conclusions apply in a true cross-cultural environment, it will validate their findings.

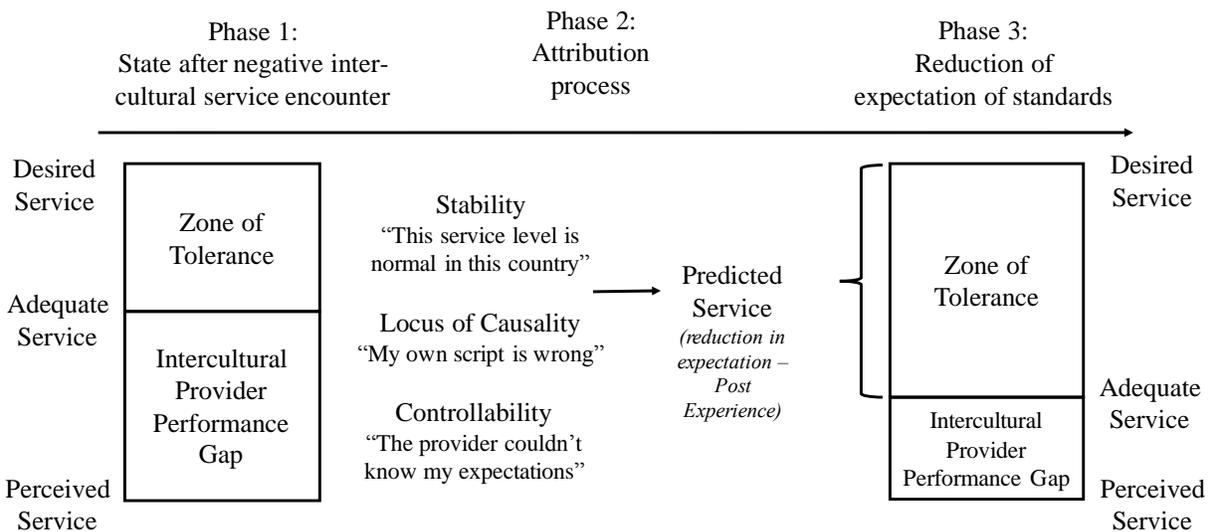


Figure 3. The reduction of the inter-cultural provider performance gap. Adapted from “‘Culture Shocks’ in Inter-Cultural Service Encounters?,” by B. Stauss and P. Mang, 1999, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 13, p. 341.

The key to this model is the attribution process, namely changes in the stability, locus of control, or controllability of the situation as experienced by the customer. Overall, there were two findings that are relevant to the literature on cross-cultural service interactions.

- (1) “When customers realize that there is a cultural distance between them and the service employee, we can expect them to make assumptions about the controllability of the situation” (Strauss & Mang, 1999, p. 341); and
- (2) Employees’ behavior “requires inter-cultural training, which provides experience and knowledge of other cultures” (Strauss & Mang, 1999, p. 342).

Both findings help to provide general context for this dissertation study and clarify the gap between customer expectation and adequate service in a cross-cultural context.

The final part of the customer experience is the reaction to the actual service. Wong (2004) defined the role of culture in the perception of service recovery. If a customer is happy with the service, there is generally little reaction, but cultural differences in customer complaint behavior deserve a mention.

In a service encounter, high power distance would increase the social position between the customer and service provider. This will in turn increase the service expectation of the customers, especially in the manner (e.g., courtesy, deference) in which the services are delivered. In the event of a service failure, the service gap is perceived to be wider and would require greater effort from the service provider to bridge the gap. Therefore, power distance is expected to exert a negative influence on the positive impact of service recovery actions. (p. 958)

The Middle East seems to have a higher power distance culture, where contextually it creates a further social hierarchy in which individuals working in customer service positions are not equal

to customers. However, in Western cultures the power distance is a lot lower, which means that subordinates see their superiors as approachable and their superiors' decisions as negotiable (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, using Wong's example, service recovery should be easier with Western expatriates than with Middle Eastern customers.

Wong (2004) further defined recovery strategies as typically consistent with three types of actions that can occur singly or in combination: (a) apologize (acknowledge the problem), (b) assist (fix the problem), and (c) compensate (pay for the costs of the problem). The cultural complications of service recovery lie within the complexity of communication, where if two people are communicating from different backgrounds, one may not understand the needs of the other.

This section has discussed the three parts of the customer service encounter through cross-cultural service encounters. Specifically, it has examined the conceptual model presented by Stauss and Mang (1999), which provides a systems view of the technical parts of the cultural service interaction and some of the unique characteristics of the components, structures, and mechanics. However, one critical piece to consider is the overall lack of information specific to the Middle East, and another is recent (2010-2016) research available within this particular area. Therefore, to build conclusions for this dissertation, I needed to piece together information from incongruent sources.

Developed vs. Developing Countries

One environmental factor to examine while looking at the composition of a cross-cultural service interaction is the literature associated with the standards for quality of service. There is a useful framework called SERVQUAL involving factors such as reliability, access, understanding of the customer, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, and

tangible considerations (Zeithaml et al., 1993). In their study of service quality differences between developed and developing countries, Malhotra, Ulgado, Agarwal, and Baalbaki (1994) utilized this SERVQUAL framework and indicated that

the service quality dimensions of reliability, access and understanding the customer are linked to conventional economic development aspects such as levels of affluence, technology, education, competition, and communications infrastructure. The responsiveness dimension is attributed to socio-cultural influences concerning the value of time. (p. 5)

Their comparative evaluation (Table 2) accounts for the expectations of customers and their perceptions of service quality. Malhotra et al. (1994) further defined the traits of a developing country, which generally has a lower level of educational acumen, has lower quality expectations due to general cost, has unreliable communication channels, places a lower value on the concept of time, has large power distance relationships (hierarchical), is more collectivist, and has overall needs that are more basic. Examining this from the perspective of the actors I have identified (British expatriates and service providers—generally from developing Asian countries), this framework provides further insight into how the actors interact within the system.

Table 2

Service Quality: A Comparative Evaluation

Service quality dimension	Environmental factors	Hypotheses	
		Developed countries	Developing countries

Service quality dimension	Environmental factors	Hypotheses	
		Developed countries	Developing countries
1. Reliability	Affluence Education Technology Value of time Customer expectation Competition	<i>H1</i> : Emphasize technology (hi-tech) <i>H2</i> : Emphasize “breakthrough” service <i>H3</i> : Pursuit of continuous improvement	<i>H1</i> : Emphasize personal (hi-touch) <i>H2</i> : Emphasize “merely good” service <i>H3</i> : Improvement is intermittent
2. Access	Communication infrastructure	<i>H4</i> : Non-personal contacts	<i>H4</i> : Personal contacts
3. Understanding the customer	Education	<i>H5</i> : Operate at a high level of relationship marketing <i>H6</i> : Know the customer <i>per se</i>	<i>H5</i> : Operate at a low level of relationship marketing <i>H6</i> : Know how the customer uses the service
4. Responsiveness	Value of time	<i>H7</i> : Timely response	<i>H7</i> : Substantive response
5. Competence	Power/Distance Individualism/ Collectivism	<i>H8</i> : Project competence in individual employees	<i>H8</i> : Project competence in the organization
6. Courtesy	Individualism/ Collectivism	<i>H9</i> : Respect individual privacy and rights	<i>H9</i> : Stress social norms
7. Communication	Individualism/ Collectivism Education	<i>H10</i> : Provide detailed information <i>H11</i> : Stress individual benefits	<i>H10</i> : Provide basic information <i>H11</i> : Stress acceptance by public
8. Credibility	Individualism/ Collectivism	<i>H12</i> : Stress company performance	<i>H12</i> : Stress company tradition
9. Security	Hierarchy of needs	<i>H13</i> : Stress emotional security	<i>H13</i> : Stress physical security and other lower needs
10. Tangibles	Emphasis on externalities Hierarchy of needs	<i>H14</i> : Stress core service and non-core service	<i>H14</i> : Stress core service (non-core less important)

Note. Adapted from “International Services Marketing: A Comparative Evaluation of the Dimensions of Service Quality between Developed and Developing Countries,” by N. K.

Malhotra, F. M. Ulgado, J. Agarwal, and I. B. Baalbaki, 1994, *International Marketing Review*, 11(2), p. 6.

One example from Table 2 is the communication service quality dimension. Within this dimension, Malhotra et al. (1993) have hypothesized that within developed countries communication would provide detailed information, whereas in developing countries the same communication would be very basic. This is due to the maturity and environmental factors of education and individualism vs. collectivism, as developed countries tend to be individualistic, and therefore need more detailed information to make informed decisions. This highlights the importance of communication within a service transaction for both parties, as each individual has different needs.

Although this view of developed vs. developing country expectations can be characteristic of a culture, in her study of service experience in cultures, Winsted (1997) stated that “rules and expectations related to service encounters are likely to vary considerably from culture to culture, since culture provides the framework for social interaction in a society” (p. 338). In the Dubai context, Hvidt (2009) explained that

Dubai basically “purchases” its workforce on the international market to suit current needs: construction workers and domestic servants from the Indian subcontinent; nurses, doctors, and teachers from Egypt, for example; and highly educated persons with qualifications in technical or economic fields from Europe and the United States. (p. 398)

This mix of cultures in the UAE provides massive challenges within the customer service space when considering both the cultural norms and service expectations. In a sense, it is both developed and developing based on the workforce that is available and the skills that are present for labor.

Abdul Muyeed (2012) provided further support to Malhotra et al.'s (1994) study by detailing the service quality in a developing country, namely Bangladesh, a country of 145 million people. This study cited factors such as good manners and hospitality as necessary components of customer service; it further indicated that management of grievances is an aspect of perceptions of poor service. These reliability factors are in contrast with the developed country hypothesis (Table 2), where there is more of an emphasis on technology and continuous improvement on the developing country side. These differences are important, as 50% of the Dubai population is from India and Pakistan and culturally, perceptions of customer service provide information to those within particular frames of reference, especially if these individuals are providing services in Dubai. However, it is difficult to label Dubai as a fully developed or developing country. The presence of technology and a modern architecture are at odds with the culture of the service population, who are from developing countries and whose cultures therefore impact the levels of service.

Summary

This foundational section of the literature review has discussed cross-cultural customer service taking into account cultural dimensions affecting the various parts of the customer experience throughout the cycle of contact from the point of view of the customer. It has also examined further literature on customer expectations in developed vs. developing countries, citing norms across cultures, but there might be inconsistencies if one applied this approach to a mixed culture, and there might also be possible impacts during customer service interactions in Dubai. This perspective may help to create a foundational understanding of how individuals experience the interaction.

Section 2: The Dubai Effect

Dubai is an international city with a short modern history, beginning its transformation from simple Bedouin living in 1971. As I previously mentioned, today expatriates account for 89% of the total population of the UAE (Snoj, 2015). However, it is interesting to note that it is difficult to attain accurate data regarding the make-up of the expatriate population. Available information consists mainly of demographics such as age, sex, education level, life expectancy, and marriage statistics (Dubai Statistics Center, n.d.). While researchers can only speculate on the reason for this, the statistics from this article come from various national embassies, and they do provide a somewhat accurate overview.

Initially, it is also helpful to utilize the definition of culture to frame this inquiry. Hofstede et al. (2010), a frequently cited source on culture, acknowledged that culture is a system of values, norms, and beliefs that “is learned, not innate. It derives from one’s social environment rather than one’s genes” (p. 6). Therefore, if culture is something that one learns, then it is also something that can adapt to changing conditions from external influences, making Dubai, an exceptionally diverse city, an intriguing cultural study.

From a systems point of view, Dubai as a location could seem like an open organism for culture, where cultures from around the world add their influence as they come and go. Dubai has a foundational culture of the local Emiratis with layers added from large contingencies from the Indian Subcontinent as well as from Western countries. As I touched on in the previous section, cross-cultural customer service is the foundational context of this study. To examine further how cultures interact, an initial examination of Arab culture follows, and then a discussion of Western influences and acculturation, cultural learning, cultural psychology, and

cultural stereotyping. This overlay provides further context to the intricacies of formal cross-cultural customer service transactions.

Arab Culture in Dubai

It is difficult to examine the unique cultural environment of Dubai without first understanding the culture of the people who have lived on the land. People have lived on the Arabian Peninsula for 130,000 years (Pennington, 2015); however, the rise of Islam in the area seems to have happened around 630 AD (Heard-Bey, 1982), which indicates that Islam has only been the predominant religion for around 1,400 years. Today it is difficult to separate where Islam begins and Bedouin traditions end as Islam is an integral part of everyday life (Ali & Al-Owaidan, 2008). To put this into context, it is helpful to understand Islam's guiding principles from a socio-economic lens: all wealth belongs to God, humans are the stewards of God's wealth, and God loves pious people most (Branine & Pollard, 2010). An example of these tenets in an action is the practice of the local Muslim population, who give a portion of their earnings to philanthropic ventures each year. The name of this Islamic principle is *Zakat* (Salehi, 2014). *Zakat* acts as a tax for individuals who meet the criteria for wealth and consists of a percentage of the excess; this practice is somewhat like the practice of almsgiving in the Christian religion. This is one example of a tradition that the population still practices today, as tradition is important and most hold it in high regard. It is important to understand that tradition dictates some of the cultural norms of the local Emirati population, to help to understand the behavioral context.

Within the context of this recent history, Bristol-Rhys (2009) discussed the various narratives (the Qawasim, the British are our friends, the freedom fighters, the Trucial States Council, and building the country) through which the UAE has gone. These narratives provide a

rich well of information for telling stories, and demonstrate how the Emirati culture embeds such stories.

Since 1971, the UAE has undergone more change and progress than in the years before combined. This rapid pace of change has forced acculturation to occur; however, fundamental cultural norms based on Bedouin values are evident. One example is the prevalence of hospitality; “Without it, people travelling in the desert away from their groups would die” (Crocetti & Benesh, 1996, p. 76). This cultural custom is ongoing, as Emiratis welcome guests into the *Majlis* and social conventions such as coffee and dates are the norm, as well as discussions about family prior to any business discussions taking place. A key part of the *Majlis* is the social structure of respect given to the families with *wasta* (or power) such as the Sheikh (Rugh, 2007). This social structure is important, as it is still a cultural norm today that expatriates working in the region are aware of and to which they adapt, as titles and hierarchy are indicators of the power distance in cross-cultural interactions.

Research such as that from the GLOBE Study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), which did not specifically cover the UAE, but which found commonalities from neighboring countries such as Qatar and Kuwait, has provided insights (cultural dimension scores for the Middle East) that apply generally in the UAE context and complement the literature on specific history and cultural norms. Figure 4 shows the anomalies of practice vs. values of the Middle East. These data suggest that culturally, the population highly values a humane orientation, collectivism, and performance; however, in each of these categories, there is a marked difference (negatively) within the practice. Additionally, future orientation and power distance are less valuable, but people practice them widely. The explanation for these differences lies in the tension between Western cultural values and Bedouin cultural values—

where the local population has adopted business practices that are common in the West (House et al., 2004). I address this ideology further later in the chapter, where I discuss acculturation and cultural learning.

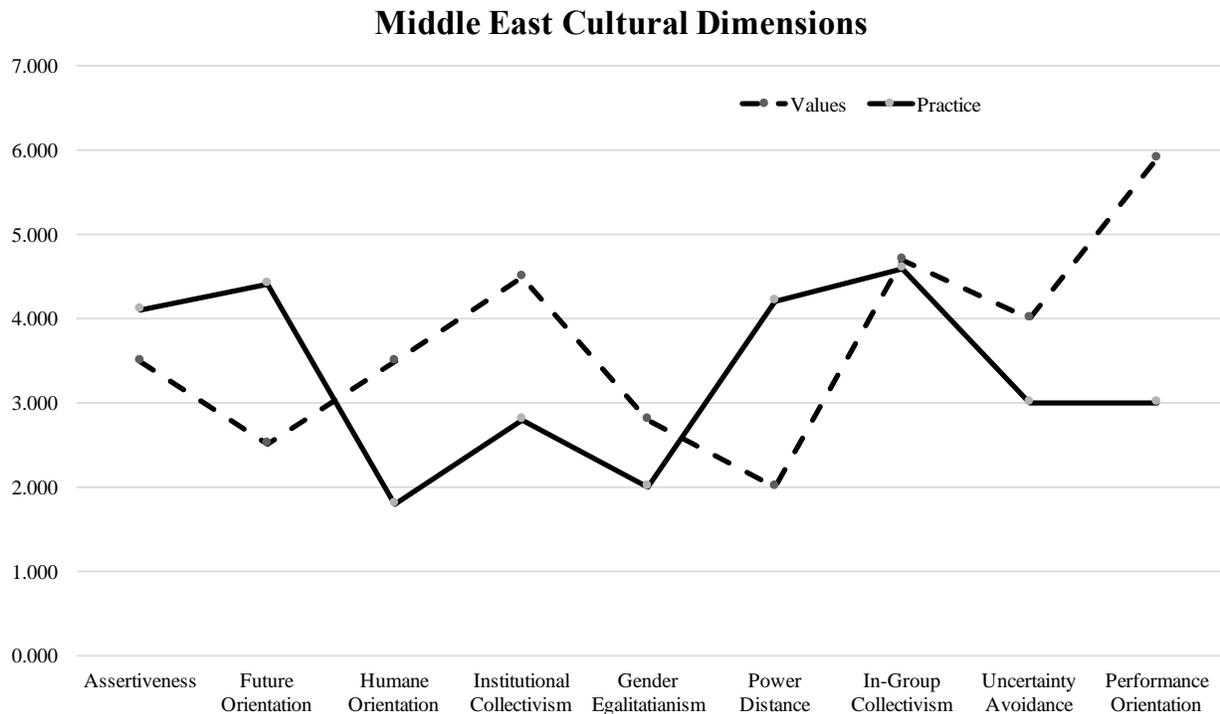


Figure 4. Middle East cultural dimensions. Adapted from Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies, by R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P. W. Dorfman, and V. Gupta (Eds.), 2004, London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Kabasakal, Dastmalchian, Karacay, and Bayraktar (2012) attempted to explain the UAE cultural preferences for collectivism, power distance, and values of future and performance orientation through “leadership prototypes [that] show a preference for honest, just and inspirational leadership that encourages loyalty” (p. 519). These leadership prototypes are consistent with the ingrained Bedouin values that the ways people make decisions in the region

typify (Rugh, 2007). These decision patterns have a definable impact due to the *wasta* that the local community exerts on business practices in the region, and as all expatriates are in the UAE as working residents, these cultural dimensions influence their behavior and decision-making process. This decision-making process is very hierarchical, and Western expatriates notably endorse this hierarchy (Al Mazrouei & Pech, 2014).

To understand cultural norms, it is further helpful to examine the traits of leadership within the region. Metcalfe and Mimouni (2011) identified four forms of leadership:

1. autocratic (top down);
2. sheikocratic (personal connections, nepotism);
3. tradition-guided (information and decisions centralized, less formal); and
4. spiritually enlightened (benevolent leader, trust, flexibility).

Within the scope of these leader types, the flavor of Bedouin tradition is still very much present, where the basis of the concept of wealth was how many camels a family owned, reputation depended on influencing skills, and gifts were not just for bartering or commerce, but could cement a reputation and a family as a central and ongoing concern to leaders (Ali, 2009; Greaves, 2012; Rugh, 2007). This context further illustrates some of the traditional norms that are common to the UAE and that contribute to the social hierarchy, as well as acceptable cross-cultural behaviors that foreigners operating or living in the region may adopt or to which they may acculturate.

One aspect to consider in a discussion of leadership is the necessary role that followers play in a relationship. The purpose of discussing this is that in conjunction with the cultural dimensions of the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), it provides more context to understand

how Arabic normative behaviors may influence expatriates. Based on this work, Ali (2009) created a typology for modern Arabs

identifying eight types of individuals: traditionalist, idealist, spectator, illusionist, transitional revivalist, manipulator, and existentialist. This typology evolves around political, social, and economic shifts taking place in the Arab society and is based on empirical studies conducted in the last twelve years in the Arab world. (p. 4)

- Traditionalist – require strong leadership to tell them what to do and believe that trouble arises when people do not adhere to Islamic teachings.
- Idealist – emotional, theoretical, politically immature, infatuated with words, enthusiastic, and lacking in practical judgement.
- Spectators – three types of spectators: alienated, morally defeated, and self-indulgent theoreticians. They enjoy routine and resist change.
- Illusionists – two types: dreamers and exaggerators. Lack any visionary solutions and have difficulty in facing reality.
- Transitionalists – those who have wealth and power yet show little compassion for others outside of this group, and a second subgroup of those who are caught living between the Arab and Islamic tradition and modernization
- Manipulators – three types: opportunists, schemers, and pragmatists. Masters of wheeling and dealing and motivated by achievement.
- Revivalists – serving the interests of community and return to the basic traditional principles of Islam.
- Existentialist – Flexible in their thinking and approach, they tolerate ambiguity and diversity (aligned with Western ideas of thinking). (Ali, 2009, pp. 6-12)

The caveat to these definitions is that there is no way of understanding how much of the population falls under each category. However, it is useful to help to conceptualize the behaviors expatriates encounter while in the UAE and therefore how some of these behaviors may transfer as norms to the expatriate population in the ways they handle transactional situations.

Two final subjects add further richness to the understanding of the UAE and its cultural norms: one is that of Emiratization and the other is women's role in the UAE. Emiratization is a program that started in the 1990s to address the issue of underemployment of local citizens, due to the plethora of specialized or talented expatriates (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2014). The literature on this topic indicates that this program has not been as successful as anticipated: although training programs are in place and vast numbers of Emiratis gain positions based on nationality, they do not have the same level of competition as external candidates for the advertised positions, and furthermore, the government provides generous living subsidies to the point that it discourages them from working (Toledo, 2013). Emiratization is a topic with further depth and not a focus point for this study, but it is necessary to mention it due to the impact it has on expatriates who work and interact with these people on a daily basis. Emiratization also provides a glimpse of the standards of equity within the region. This view of equality is an issue that expatriates may unconsciously absorb.

The other cultural complexity is that of women in the UAE. The role of women in Bedouin culture is quite strong (Rugh, 2007): originally, mothers were the family decision makers and the men provided goods for the family. However, as local women have begun to join the workforce in the Middle East, they are still somewhat restricted to gender-specific roles in organizations (Hutchings, Michailova, & Harrison, 2013). Additionally, "most female Emirati

college students today are first generation college attendees who have relatively uneducated mothers who married in their early teenage years and immediately began bearing children” (Madsen & Cook, 2010). Although these vignettes paint a somewhat bleak picture for women in the UAE, the government is making efforts to be progressive and to support women’s issues. One example of this occurred in February 2016, when the government announced the appointment of five more women to the cabinet, bringing the total representation to 27.5% (Dajani, 2016); this is just one indicator that culture is changing in the UAE.

This brief overview of Arab culture highlights some of the working norms of the local population of the country; and due to their social status, the local Emirati population greatly influences cross-cultural interactions within the UAE. However, a great tension exists between Bedouin/Islamic traditions and Western cultural influences.

Western Influences

Although the literature on Arab/Bedouin cultural values and norms gives one side of the story, it would be remiss not to discuss the influence of Western Culture. As Hvidt (2009) pointed out, “most current knowledge about the country originates from media coverage, especially from news magazines and business literature” (p. 397). Further research into the regional cultural mix provides insight mostly into the literature citing the acculturation and adoption of expatriates to the region (Al Mazrouei & Pech, 2014; Bashir, 2012; Cerimagic, 2011; Osland & Osland, 2005), globalization and the UAE (Christie, 2010), or cross-cultural organizational or leadership (Ling Lim, 2012; Sikdar & Mitra, 2012).

One specific article by Hills and Atkins (2013) began to address the cultural convergence of Western attitudes and beliefs in the UAE. This study is fundamental to understanding the complexities in a country where “there is minimal pressure to conform to the local culture and

commercial globalization is given free reign” (p. 193). Hills and Atkins posited that part of the issue is due to the transient nature of the country and also the rapid adoption of Western idealism, which is partially due to media and the glamorization of what it means to live in the luxury world of Dubai as per the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004).

In the field of psychology, the phenomenon of the globalization of brands is not a new topic. Torelli and Cheng (2011) stated that “Exposure to iconic brands or products can also induce culturally appropriate behaviors. When knowledge about a culture is activated, people are more likely to act in a culturally consistent manner” (p. 254). In the case of Dubai, the shopping malls are full of Western brands, the streets are full of high-end vehicles, and the marketing along Sheikh Zayad road, a 12-lane highway that runs through the heart of Dubai, has a clutter of international luxury messages (for example, the longest Volkswagen billboard in the world: see Figure 5). Therefore, as the population continues to get more exposure to Western culture through media, it will have further influence on cultural norms within the region on a sliding scale.



Figure 5. Volkswagen billboard SZR. Source: Twitter - Communicate Online, June 2013.

Cultural anthropologists would further question the evolution of these as the new artifacts or micronarratives that tell the new story of Dubai.

Narratives that involve processes of explanation and representation of social relations and moral values [form] part of a wide array of cultural practices in which the ethnic group as a collective agent is engaged in other fields of social activity. In this sense, narrative activity can be seen as one of the many symbolic practices in which social groups engage to carry out struggles for legitimation and recognition in order to accumulate symbolic capital and, ultimately, greater social power. (de Fina, 2008, p. 423)

One such example of this within the Dubai social landscape is the popularity of nightclubs. These venues feature prominently in advertisements and represent a social practice that has become the norm in the city, which is completely in contrast with the traditional culture of the region.

DiMaggio (1997) attempted to explain this through his view of “culture as working through the interaction of shared cognitive structures and supra-individual cultural phenomena (material culture, media messages, or conversation, for example) that activate those structures to varying degrees” (p. 264), where the focus is on how people use culture. As people have daily exposure to the micronarratives in the media (to the available brands) they no longer seem separate or foreign, but become cognitively part of the story. Individuals adopt and adapt to these new norms of functioning, including new verbiage in conversation or ways of dressing, such as the prevalence of younger Arab men sporting trucker hats as opposed to traditional head dresses. This example of an emerging norm fulfills cultural obligations, but may be more in line with trends of globalization. Globalization is what has brought so many expatriates into the region by providing ease of access and desirable working conditions.

Acculturation

One of the primary building blocks to understanding how cultures adapt is the theory of acculturation. The term acculturation appears throughout the psychological literature, with the earliest reference in the *American Journal of Psychology* from 1898, reviewing McGee's four-stage approach to *Piratical Acculturation* (AFC, 1898, p. 154). In this work, the phases are imitation, mating, civilization, and enlightenment. Although rudimentary, the basic principles have stayed the same: always trying to answer the complexities of how culture comes together, adapts, and changes. Sam and Berry (2010) provided a clearer definition of postmodern acculturation, and Figure 6 illustrates it:

Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures. Closely linked to acculturation is adaptation, which ... refer(s) to individual psychological well-being and how individuals manage socioculturally.... Adaptation is thus considered a consequence of acculturation. (p. 472)

This definition has evolved most notably from both Kramer's (1992, 1997, 2012) theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation and Gudykunst and Kim's (2003) work to redefine acculturation for a more modern audience, in which they viewed acculturation in terms of high adaptability. In addition, they emphasized the deculturation and acculturation process as an adaptation mechanism.

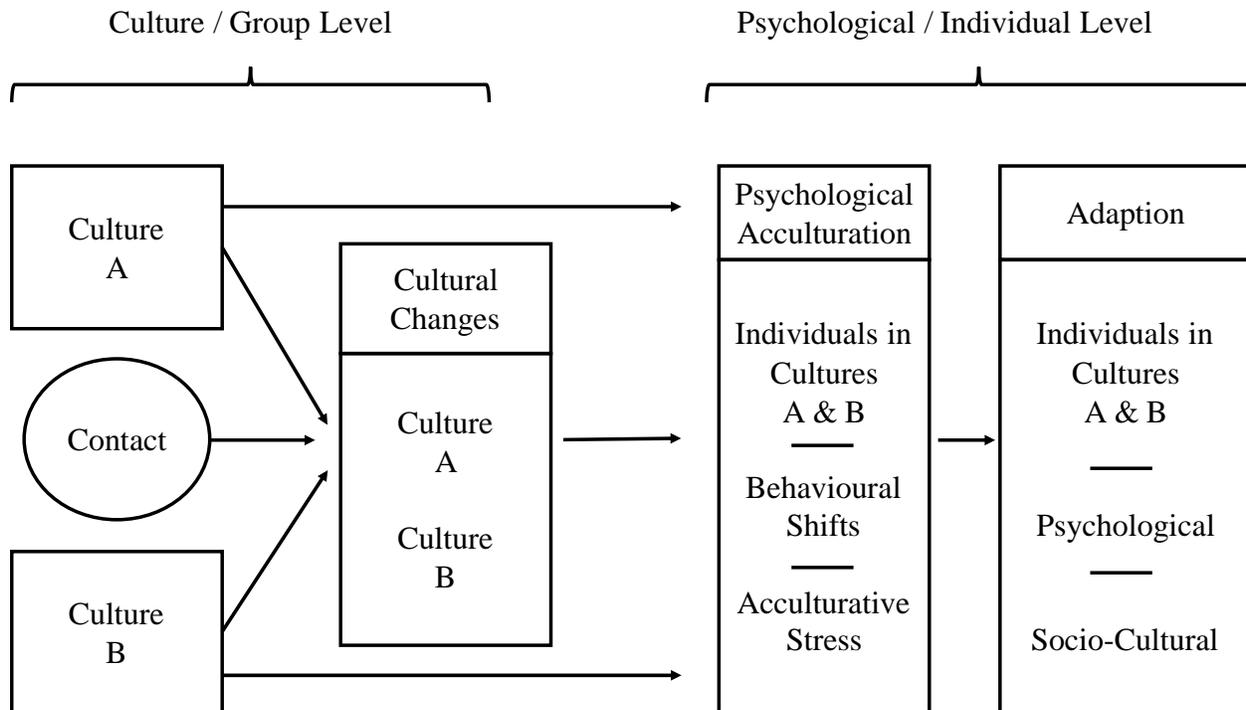


Figure 6. The framework for conceptualizing and studying acculturation. Adapted from “Acculturation When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet,” by D. L. Sam and J. W. Berry, 2010, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5, p. 474.

Gudykunst and Kim’s (2003) approach somewhat aligns with the work of Berry (1998), in that they view deculturation as cultural stress that occurs naturally as part of the process. Sam and Berry’s (2010) approach to acculturation, as depicted in Figure 6, applies to the Dubai context and can help researchers to understand how individuals from two cultures connect and change (due to cultural stress), and then adapt. Where two individuals from seemingly different cultures connect and behavioral shifts begin to occur as a result of cultural stress, a level of cultural adaption or acculturation occurs. This process can further impact operating norms such as how individuals interact within a service transaction situation.

The study of acculturation within the context of the UAE is still relatively new. Studies on topics such as acculturation and healthcare (Ghubash, Hamdi, & Bebbington, 1994; Shah et al., 2015) are readily available, but they focus on singular and specific subsets of the population such as healthcare professionals. However, one article by Atiyyah (1996) began to examine expatriate acculturation in Arab Gulf countries using a theoretical lens. Atiyyah concluded that expatriates should acculturate further, but that they lacked the functional data to generate concrete conclusions and somewhat missed the point of acculturation, a result of two cultures interacting.

This interaction can function as cultural intelligence on the part of one or both of the actors, as

Cultural intelligence is the ability to engage in a set of behaviors that uses skills (i.e. language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g. tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts. (Peterson, 2011, p. 89)

Cultural Learning

When examining cultural changes within a society, an initial question presents; how do individuals learn to adapt to the new culture? Social psychologists originally addressed this inquiry by examining how individuals learn or adapt through learning (Argyle, 1969; Argyle, Salter, Nicholson, Williams, & Burgess, 1970). One of the difficulties arising from cultural learning is individual competencies in dealing with everyday occurrences. For example, an individual who has relocated to a new country may not have the skills to navigate the new operating norms. “To overcome these difficulties, individuals need to learn or acquire the culture-specific behavioral skills (such as the language) that are necessary to negotiate this new cultural milieu” (Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 475).

However, Tomasello, Kruger, and Ratner (1993) suggested that

Cultural learning ... depends on how the learner understands the individual from whom she is learning, for example, as an intentional agent who both pursues goals and attends to things relevant to those goals. Cultural learning ... enables individuals to learn through one another in powerful enough ways to support the cumulative cultural evolution of human artifacts and practices over historical time (the so-called “ratchet effect”). These learning patterns enable us to change our culture. (p. 499)

However, the literature in this instance does not address the need for the individual both to be open to cultural learning and to be competent in learning. Subsequent research studies in cultural psychology have attempted to address this approach.

The cultural learning approach by Tomasello et al. (1993) defined three distinct types: imitative learning, instructed learning, and collaborative learning (Figure 7). This simple framework is complementary to the theories of acculturation and it can help to promote understanding of how people actually absorb other or new behaviors. The most difficult of these learning approaches is collaborative learning, as both participants must contribute evenly to the learning process. By contrast, the other two learning styles represent a more traditional approach to learning.

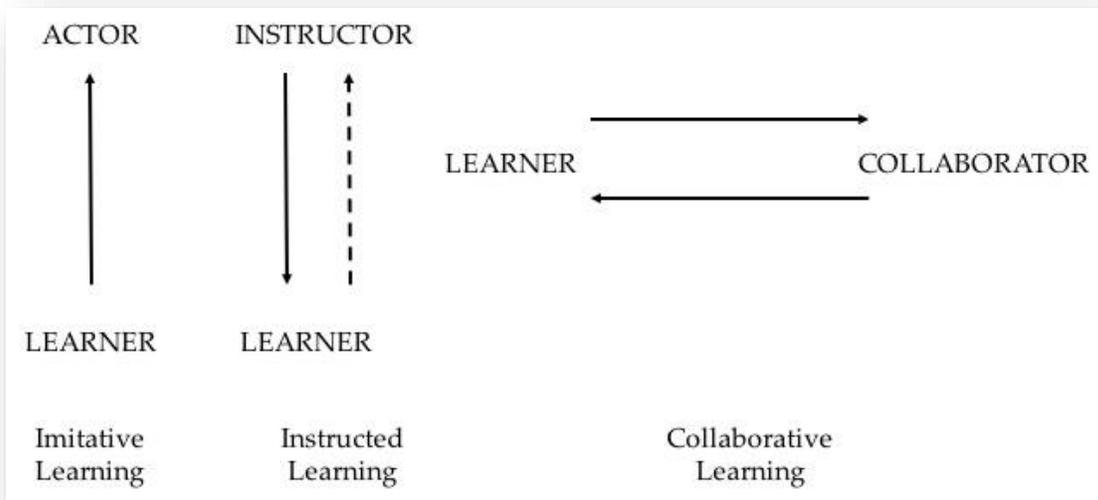


Figure 7. Three learning situations. Adapted from “Cultural Learning,” by M. Tomasello, A. C. Kruger, and H. H. Ratner, 1993, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16, 495-511.

This learning process is important to the cross-cultural customer service scenario because of the basic differences between the service provider and the customer. Since the relationship is somewhat rudimentary, a form of imitative learning may occur as service providers, who may be uneducated due to their country of origin, benefit from imitating their peers or their customers. One could argue that both sides, service provider and expatriate, need to participate in the learning process. However, this scenario would depend on the competency levels of the individuals involved.

Masgoret and Ward (2006) argued that

The cultural learning approach is more applied than theoretical in its emphasis on social skills and social interaction. As an applied area, the starting point is to identify cross-cultural differences in communication (both verbal and nonverbal), rules, conventions,

norms, and practices that contribute to intercultural misunderstandings. It then sets out to suggest ways in which confusing and dissatisfying encounters can be minimized. (p. 475)

From a theoretical point of view, the root cause of most cross-cultural conflict is the complexities of communication. However, as a framework supporting acculturation, Tomasello et al. (1993) provided a straightforward case for functional application.

Cultural Psychology and Cultural Stereotyping

One field of study that bridges acculturation and perceptions of self is cultural psychology. Cultural psychology examines how an individual engages within a shared culture. Richard Shweder (1991) defined it as “the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, and transform the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion” (p. 72). This work built on the initial ideas of social constructivists (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Geertz, 1975; Smircich, 1983), who highlighted the meanings that individuals place on actions, events, and phenomena. However, Sternberg (2014) stated that “cognitive development can only be fully understood if one looks beyond one’s own cultural boundaries and preconceptions” (p. 212). The complexities of cultural psychology challenge us to consider a multifaceted approach to culture from an internal point of view. As people consider who they are, they undergo influence on both a conscious and cognitive (unconscious) level of the world around them (Merikle, Joordens, & Stolz, 1995). Many factors, such as British individuals coming to understand their heritage, culture, local customs, and who they are as people, shape identity. For example, if an individual grew up in an affluent area in central London, he or she would be influenced differently than an individual who grew up in a rural town in England in which most people were workers in a mine: “Human behavior is linked with the sociocultural context in which it occurs” (Reis, Collins, &

Berscheid, 2000, p. 844). Consequently, Shweder's (1991) argument aligns with my view that culture and mind mutually construct each other and it is impossible to separate them; and within the context of this study, this provides some insight into how the participants view both themselves and the individuals with whom they are interacting during a service transaction.

Markus and Kitayama (2001) further commented on the role of an individual's behavior and stated that "Emotions connect individuals to their social world and thus are the key to social integration and regulation because they are the basis of the reinforcement and reproduction of behavior" (p. 94). This would help to explain the projection of self with others. If an individual had a good experience while projecting a different self to his or her true self with a group and received positive reactions, then that individual would therefore feel good about the behavior and would try to replicate it. Therefore, an expatriate in a foreign nation may feel obligated to behave in a particular manner because it gains attention or makes him or her feel good about his or her actions—even if it is a projection of the self, as opposed to the true self.

In concert with self and person, projection of self is the concept of personal beliefs in cultural stereotyping. "In stereotyping, projection may result in a positive correlation between a person's beliefs about the characteristics of a social group and the person's ratings of the cultural stereotype" (Krueger, 1996, p. 537). Furthermore,

With continuing racial bias in society, people may be intent on avoiding overt derogatory statements about the out-group. The in-group in the instance of this study might be identified as the Western expatriate population. This argument is consistent with dissociation theory. (p. 546)

Dissociation is a psychological term indicating an individual's detachment from surroundings or experience. Jung (1991) described dissociation as a normal operation of the consciousness. In a

cross-cultural context, individuals may be intent to separate themselves from any known bias that they may hold through either consciously or unconsciously trying to distance themselves from prejudice. Western expatriates may be interested in appearing unbiased against service providers from another country.

Zou et al. (2009) supported this conclusion, stating that “culture affects people through their perceptions of what is consensually believed” (p. 579). “When communicating with in-group members, people continuously make reference to ideas in the cultural tradition to establish common ground, which gives rise to perceptions that one’s fellows share and endorse these ideas” (p. 580). This interaction with other group members speaks to the meso level of self-interpretation, and therefore reinforces behaviors that may seem appropriate for that group, but may not align with core beliefs. Therefore, British expatriates in the UAE may feel that they have common experiences with other (members of what they would consider to be in-group) Western expatriates.

As British expatriates acculturate to various degrees into life in Dubai, their process, both internal and external, of making sense of the world around them is one of cultural learning. The difficulty with the process in Dubai is that even the base culture, which drives governmental rules and decisions, is not the majority, and therefore, the number of other cultures and their norms create other impacts, both perceptive and cognitive. Individuals may gravitate to others from the same culture to disassociate from broader interaction if they are unable to navigate unfamiliar encounters.

Summary

In this section, I have explored the literature concerning geocultural influences in Dubai. Starting with a look at Arab culture and the Western influences, examining the phenomenal

changes from a simple economy in 1971 to the international juxtaposition today, I have highlighted a vast transformation in social culture, which can be at odds with traditional values that show up within cross-cultural interactions. It is important to understand these factors due to the adaption of expatriates to the social hierarchies and unique operating environment of businesses in the Middle East. Local norms, such as the use of a *Majlis* to conduct business, contribute to the ideation of social hierarchy that other cultures may adopt and utilize in other cultural interactions. However, to promote understanding of how this change in culture takes place, the next section explores internal or self-theories to provide further depth from the individual lens of the British expatriate.

Section 3: Situating British Expatriates

One important aspect of any inquiry into culture is the idea of self and how individuals perceive how they operate within a system; one can frame this perception from a micro, meso, or macro perspective (de Fina, 2008; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2010). The micro perspective is about how we define ourselves as individuals; our sense of identity contains both personal and cultural attributes, but it is subject to change due to major life events. The meso perspective is about how we integrate with our communities or organizations. Within this perspective, individuals need to balance who they are as individuals with who they are within the community, and the concept of fitting into or norming to the group is important. The final perspective is at a macro or global level, which relegates individuals to classifications on a global scale (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2010). These perspectives help individuals to create meaning or schemas of interpretation and therefore an understanding of how they fit within a system or culture at that level.

How individuals perceive themselves is exceptionally important in the context of cross-cultural relationships. Individuals create their own personas or frames about who they think they

want to project. Culture, personality, experience, expressions of self, and concrete vs. aggregate frames further inform these creations (Goffman, 1974). As people create their own frames, they may also create or attempt to present themselves to others in particular personas. This management or manipulation, depending on the situation and individuals involved, can be either positive or negative and therefore can create reactions with intended or unintended consequences. This section explores various themes about how British expatriates situate themselves, including cultural sensemaking, schemas of interpretation, and themes including power, trust, and equality.

Global Expatriates and British Culture

One macro definition that individuals may employ to help to acculturate is the simple definition of being an expatriate. Scholars have commonly acknowledged two relevant types of expatriates: the first type is the extensively studied company-assigned expatriate. The company has most likely transferred this type to an international posting; however, these types of transfers are becoming less common. The second type of expatriate is the self-initiated expatriate: “more recently, self-initiated expatriates have become an additional focus of research, i.e. those who ‘take advantage of the employment opportunities available in a global economy with a shortage of skilled workers’” (Tharenou, 2008, p. 183).

It is important to examine the literature about why an individual may choose to become an expatriate, because the definitions help to explain the frames that individuals have constructed for themselves (Goffman, 1974) and how they are making sense of their cultural encounters (Osland & Bird, 2000). Some of the reasons that an individual would choose to be an expatriate include:

- globalization—easier to travel and communicate;

- security—individuals running away from unstable countries;
- opportunity—getting ahead with a promotion or work experience.

The UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries “increasingly depend on self-initiated expatriates in both their public and their private sector workforce” (Schoepp & Forstenlechner, 2010, p. 310). As I previously mentioned, the local population makes up only 11% of the total population; this need for an expatriate workforce (both knowledge and labor) contributes to the unique cultural mix in Dubai and the complexities of cross-cultural interaction.

In his 2010 study, Butcher examined how expatriates identified themselves within the context of their environments.

Instead of seeing themselves solely as cosmopolitans or expatriates, they have multilayered identities, of which national identity is often an important component.... Many can be characterized as in the economic sphere (looking for better career opportunities), moderate cosmopolitans in the political sphere (homeland citizens with global concerns), and “wannabe” locals in the sociocultural sphere (desire to integrate).
(p. 35)

Further to how expatriates define themselves within the context of their locality, “mobility (*through globalization*) offers us new ways to perceive distance in time, space, society and culture” (McKay, 2006, p. 200). Therefore, how expatriates identified themselves 20 years ago in a pre-Internet era is drastically different than an expatriate’s sense of self today, as their communities have evolved and the meaning of and access to home has changed.

“An expatriate has to adjust to three specific aspects namely, general environment, interaction with host country nationals and work” (Black & Stephens, 1989, p. 532). These factors contribute to the longevity of expatriates in a location and therefore their own schema of

self and achievement in adjustment. According to Konanahalli, Oyedele, Coates, von Meding, and Spillane (2012), adjustment is also one of the most frequent factors researchers study when assessing the success of an international assignment.

Aligning with the research about why individuals become expatriates is the cross-cultural adjustment model of Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) (Figure 8).

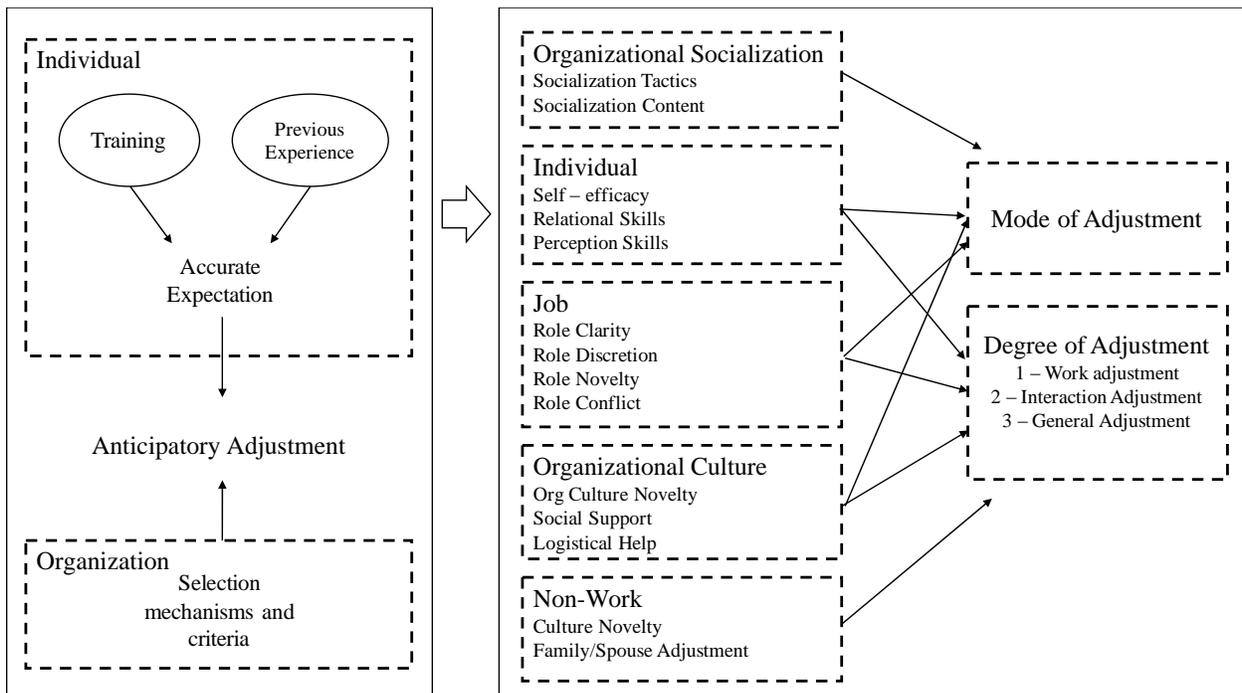


Figure 8. Framework for cross-cultural adjustment. Recreated from “Toward a Comprehensive Model of International Adjustment: An Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives,” by J. S. Black, M. Mendenhall, and G. Oddou, 1991, *Academy of Management Review*, 16(2), p. 303.

One should interpret this model from the left to right, culminating in the mode and degree of adjustment. As individuals attempt to adjust to a new norm, there several factors that create either a more positive or more negative experience. Some of the contributing factors in Figure 8 indicate that:

- accurate expectations reduce uncertainty, and consequently individuals with such expectations adjust faster due to the appropriateness of their behavior, interactions, etc. Therefore, factors of previous experience, comprehensive training, and alignment with organizational needs contribute to successfully relocating;
 - individuals who have better relational skills and cultural sensitivity and who can adjust in response to feedback have better experiences;
 - non-working and social factors play a role in how long an expatriate will stay abroad.
- (Black et al., 1991)

In the context of this study, the decisions of expatriates to work outside of their own country and how they adjust to their new situations will impact how they interact with other cultures.

As one half of the study population of this dissertation, it is further helpful to conceptualize the culture of the expatriates to understand their history and current sociological attitudes, which shape their perceptions. As an island nation made up of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England, the history of the UK is notable for various settlements starting over 3000 years BC with Neolithic man through to Celts, Romans, Vikings, and Saxons (among others). One milestone that symbolized the foundation of democracy in the history of the UK was the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, between King John and the rebel barons to protect certain rights and freedoms (Fraser, 2006).

Since the 1950s, Britain has experienced a period of accelerated social and cultural change. This has coincided with the disintegration of the British Empire, the expansion of the Commonwealth, and the immigration of people of numerous nationalities, languages and cultures, producing an ethnically diverse country with a plurality of identities and heritages. (Christopher, 2015, p. 1)

One important, but as yet unacknowledged factor that plays a large part in British culture is the concept of the British class structure (Stanworth & Giddens, 1974). Stanworth and Giddens (1974) posited that the British ruling class has never faced a true challenge like that of France or Germany because of a fragmented working class and, more recently, a growing middle class that aspires to emulate the elite class. This class structure is further apparent through the daily presence of the current monarchy and the subsequent celebrity of the younger royals. Therefore, as an indicator of cultural attitudes towards class, British expatriates may unconsciously bring the ideals of a society with ingrained social classes with them.

Further to the class structure, one can observe other values and norms through the British arts and sciences. From the cornerstone of British television (the BBC) through to quintessentially British cuisine (fish and chips or a British fry up breakfast), these cultural icons of the country help to drive the social environment of how people operate. However, factors such as immigration, language, geography, class, and education serve to separate people into disparate groups throughout the UK. Therefore, although people naturally enforce social norms such as not jumping a queue, people from different parts of the country can have exceptionally different ways of interacting with the world around them and perceptions of others. Within the context of this study, although participants came from different parts of the UK, they all came from the same class, which may contribute to some similar sensemaking.

Schema of Interpretation and Sensemaking

Foundational theorists for observing and understanding social behavior initially described the human experience “specifically around how reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 13). Erving Goffman (1974) further refined this vein of thinking in the publication

Frame Analysis. Goffman presented a method of studying how people define situations and how various alternatives to ordinary activities (e.g., dreams, tests, fictional dramas, and playfulness) develop through the creation of one's own frames of interpretation. Complementary to this work is the research into cognitive schema; this refers to how individuals understand or organize information, and they may further synthesize this information into categories (Lord, 1985). British expatriates, therefore, will construct their own frames of interpretation while living in Dubai based on their backgrounds and current social hierarchy situations. The acculturation process of adaption to a new culture and ways of doing things partially informs this frame of interpretation. Therefore, during a service transaction, acting according to this frame, for example, expatriates may become louder or slow the cadence of their dialogue to clarify their communication within the context of the interaction.

The biggest factor that makes individuals unique in their outlook on the world is the differentiation of experience and background. As individuals go through their own life experiences, they learn, and therefore make decisions based on that experience (March, 1978). These rational decisions also serve to modify individuals' frames of interpretation, therefore contributing to the modification of their behavior based on their new cognitive schemas of interpretation.

Furthermore, as individuals operate within their daily lives, they "arrange their experiences into meaningful units" (Kenyon, Birren, Ruth, Schroots, & Svensson, 2004, p. 78), thereby creating larger parts and episodes.

People produce narratives as an ordinary way of making sense of how certain events interact to produce a particular outcome. This narrative way of knowing by composing actions and events into a story is one of the cognitive operations people use to give

coherence and order to their experiences.... In this way the meaning of these elements is derived from the recognition of their part in a systemic whole, a life episode. (Kenyon et al., 2004, p. 78)

The experience of British expatriates within Dubai or in cross-cultural situations contributes to the way that they make meaning of their situations and create a whole narrative.

The concept of sensemaking builds on these social behaviorist theories. The idea of sensemaking goes back to the micro and meso approaches to self. As individuals continually evolve, they make sense of themselves relative to the world around them. This process could therefore be both conscious and unconscious (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990). For example, linking sensemaking and interpretation back to acculturation and cultural learning, an individual operating in a new environment may unconsciously absorb behavior from others and unconsciously start to mimic them. Conversely, if individuals are used to actions from their previous life and within the context of the new culture people frown upon that behavior (such as a Western male shaking hands with an Arabic female), it may take a while for them to re-evaluate their understanding of how they operate within the new community and therefore slightly to change their schema of interpretation.

Osland and Bird's (2000) cultural sensemaking model brings these theories together in a cross-cultural context (Figure 9).

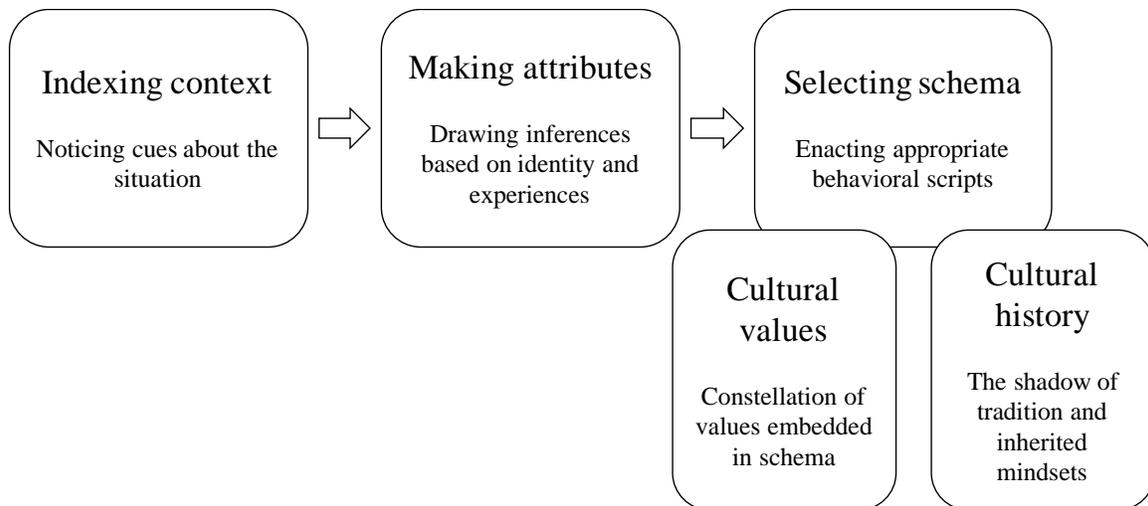


Figure 9. Cultural sensemaking model. Recreated from “Beyond Sophisticated Stereotyping: Cultural Sensemaking in Context,” by J. S. Osland and A. Bird, 2000, *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1), p. 70.

This model describes a sequence of events that individuals may encounter when trying to make sense of a cultural situation;

- Indexing Context – involves an individual considering past experience such as location and any stimuli, characteristics or cues that may be present in the situation.
- Making Attributes – These pieces of context are then matched to an individual’s schema and influenced by ideation of self.
- Selecting Schema – is about selecting the right way to behave in the situation.
 - Cultural Values – schema is influenced about what an individual values, such as how [he or she shares] information or speak[s] with others
 - Cultural History – schema may also be influenced by mindsets from previous generations or historical events. (Osland & Bird, 2000, p. 71)

It is important to understand schema of interpretation and sensemaking as they become even more critical to cross-cultural interactions, especially in situations outside of an organizational body that provides a framework for interaction.

Within any society, there are varying levels of relationships. Internal constructs of self and external pressures of structure have equal impacts on the constructs of class, power, trust, and equality. In the following section, I first explore the concept of schismogenesis and early thinking about cultural relationships before delving into the complexities of social hierarchies in the context of cross-cultural relations.

Schismogenesis

One of the earliest philosophers to tackle how cultures interact with each other was Gregory Bateson (1971). In an essay as part of his most cited work, *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*, Bateson determined that within the constructs of cultural contact (or coexistence) there are different types of interactional patterns. “He delineated two forms of schismogenesis: symmetrical – where the parties reacted with equivalent intensity to each other’s sallies (*amusing remarks*), and complementary – where increasingly active display was met with an increasingly passive response” (Wardle, 2001, p. 24).

Within the classification of symmetrical differentiation, the individuals have the same aspirations and behavior patterns, just different orientation to those patterns. However, in the complementary example, the aspirations and behavior patterns are fundamentally different, and they therefore encourage a selection of overt behavior from the other group (Bateson, 1971). This schismogenesis theory bridges from the theories around individual meaning making into the theories concerning the underpinnings of social interaction between individuals or organizations.

Corresponding to Bateson's (1971) theory, Erving Goffman's (1974) work concerning frames and individual interpretations of those frames also contributed to understanding how individuals would view themselves within the context of a social hierarchy based on their interpretation of the situation. As individuals participate in an interaction, they interact based on a frame that factors such as their history, familial cultural influences, previous experiences, and the operating environment influence. In the case of schismogenesis, these frames help to expound on the symmetrical versus complementary behavior patterns within cultural interactions. In the context of expatriate behavior in Dubai, these theories can help to provide clarity as to how two individuals from different cultures relate to each other (or view each other differently) within the circumstance of a transaction and help to provide perspective for the theories relating to power and equality.

Trust, Power, and Equality

Taking a step back from the interaction between two people or groups in the schismogenesis literature, another way to view interactions requires an examination of the social constructs of interpersonal relationships. First, the need for trust between individuals features heavily in social interaction.

Society runs on trust. We all need to trust that the random people we interact with will cooperate. Not trust completely, not trust blindly, but we are reasonably sure (whatever that means) that our trust is well-founded and they will be trustworthy in return (whatever that means). This is vital. If the number of parasites gets too large, if too many people steal or too many people don't pay their taxes, society no longer works. (Schneier, 2012, p. 2)

As people interact with each other, there is an element of trust; however, this seems to vary between cultures, as individual actions can build or destroy trust. Trust is a big part of the equation of how people interact and feel that they are safe within an interaction (Li, 2013). Individuals from countries with high violent crime rates, such as South Africa, would have a vastly different comfort levels with strangers than those who grew up in Canada and had rarely experienced violent crime. However, as people become comfortable with their new operating environment, they must acculturate and their level of trust may therefore change (for better or worse).

Another part of social interaction is the concept of social power. Kurt Lewin (1947) conducted foundational research into social power with his work on group dynamics; this work was foundational for the French and Raven power taxonomy (French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959).

Social power was defined as the potential for such influence, the ability of the agent or power figure to bring about such change, using resources available to him or her. These resources are represented in six bases of power: Informational, Reward, Coercion, Legitimate, Expertise, and Referent. (Raven, 2008, p. 1)

General definitions of each base are:

- informational—someone’s ability to control information;
- reward—someone can compensate another;
- coercion—someone can punish others for non-compliance;
- legitimate—someone has the formal right due to position;
- expertise—someone has a high level of skill or knowledge;
- referent—someone is perceived as attractive or worthy (Raven, 1992a).

The taxonomy model has evolved since its original state to incorporate more advanced concepts into each of the six bases (Elias, 2008). This evolution included the production of a power interaction model (Figure 10). The power interaction model begins with motivation on the left side; this driver influences all other action in the model that an individual can execute from the first step of deciding to utilize that power through to the thought process, influence attempts, and effects. In a cultural context, social power within a cross-cultural interaction could produce either very positive or negative results. These unintended consequences may have the greatest impact.

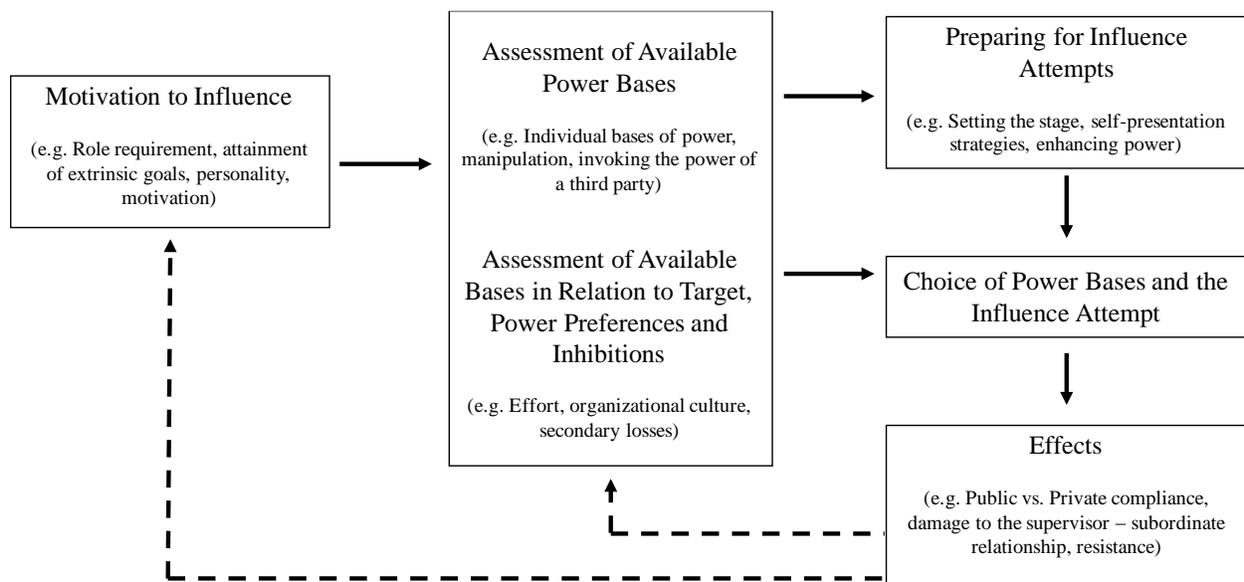


Figure 10. Power interaction model. Recreated from “The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments. A Presentation in Honor of John RP French on the Occasion of His Receiving the Kurt Lewin Award,” by B. H. Raven, 1992, retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED351648>; “The Bases of Power: Origins and Recent Developments,” by B. H. Raven, 1993, *Journal of Social Issues*, 49, 227-251.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2001) published further research into the idea of power within a cross-cultural sense. The results of their research indicated that power distance differs depending on more than just culture, but includes other systems. Essentially power distance is interpersonal power or influence between people (or the degree of inequality). As individuals achieve more or less power distance, their motivations may change either upwards or downward on the power distance scale depending on their situations.

Social constructs that are a result of bias and group interaction further validate the constructs of power distance. Hofstede and Hofstede (2001) further stated that “in practice, no society has ever obtained equality in the form of complete consistency among different areas of rank” (p. 81). Factors such as education, wealth, social mobility, laws (privileges), or even preferred physical characteristics that a society idolizes continue to alter the social hierarchy and balance of power.

Within the framework of the Arab Culture, Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) acknowledged the duality of expectations within the Middle East cluster. As “societal practices embody in-group orientation, masculinity, and tolerance of ambiguity and limited emphasis on planning; ... in contrast, ... this cluster desire(s) stronger rule orientation, planning, hierarchy of relationships, institutional collectivism, masculinity and [places a] low value on assertiveness” (p. 51). Therefore, concepts such as *wasta* (power/influence) are so important in the region, as individuals participate in the pyramid structure of social hierarchy. Individuals working in organizations who are relatives of people of significance, such as the royal family, have the most *wasta*, which further fuels inequality as they receive special accommodations (privileges). Therefore, within the region, sometimes other participants resent these power holders within the social hierarchy as it does not include them, such as when non-educated laborers from third

world countries receive different treatment than educated expatriates from a country such as the UK. Contrasting this interaction, British expatriates may subconsciously adopt this idea of *wasta* and apply it during their interactions with other cultures.

The idea of privilege plays an important role in the social hierarchy of Dubai. “Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do” (Johnson, 2010, p. 16). The practice of the Emiratization programs within the UAE is one example of the social hierarchy within the country; another example is the prevalence of White expatriates who receive management positions in organizations, whereas individuals from Asian countries may not achieve the same level (Al-Jenaibi, 2012).

Privilege is not unique to the UAE, and it exists on some level around the world. Johnson (2010) further detailed the densities of White privilege, sexual privilege, religious privilege, and nondisabled people privilege and how individuals may not even be aware that they participate within these structures. However, society induces individuals to accept these privileges as the norm and not the exception.

Understanding the propagation of the current social hierarchy is complex, but Harro’s (2010) *Cycle of Socialization* can partially explain it (see Figure 11). Within this cycle, individuals are born without any influence. In the first socialization phase, individuals learn from those around them, as per Hofstede and Hofstede (2001) – people learn culture.

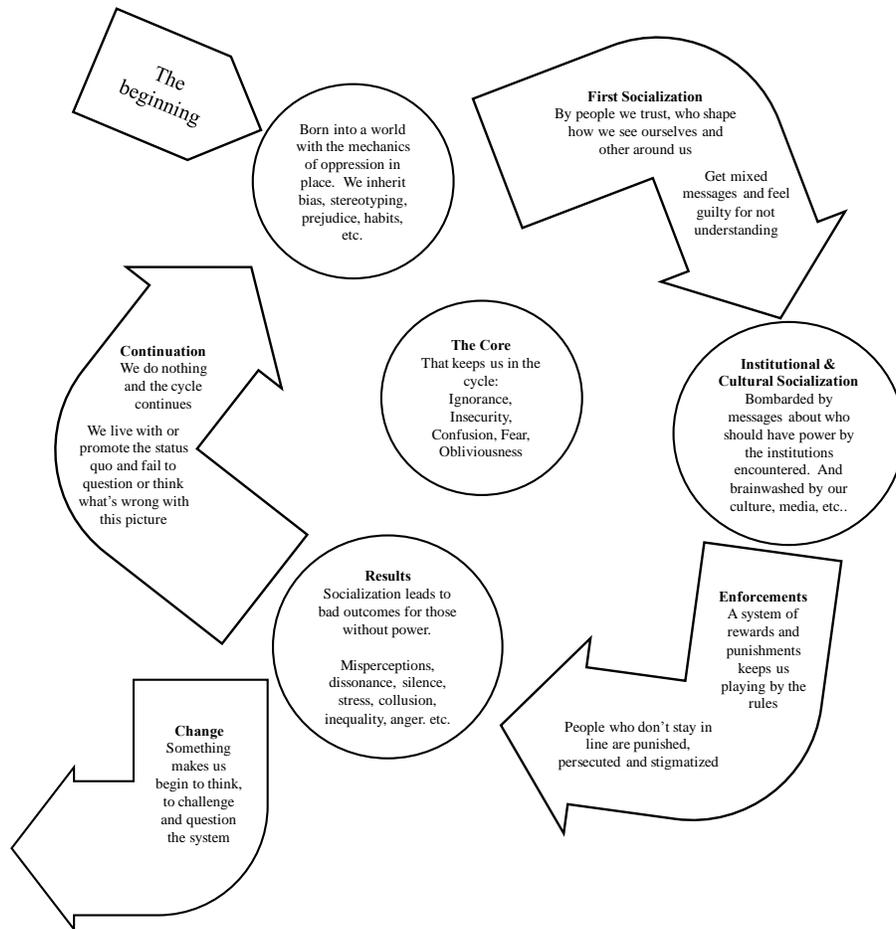


Figure 11. The cycle of socialization. Recreated from “The Cycle of Socialization,” by B. Harro, 2010, in Adams, et al. (Ed.), *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism, and Classism*, Vol. 2, p. 46. New York: Routledge.

After this first socialization, Harro describes institutionalism, in which the social constructs of organizations such as religious institutions, educational institutions, and the general systems in which individuals reside reinforced social messages. In conjunction with this is the concept of reinforcement, as individuals receive rewards for the right behaviors. These behaviors further result in the current social structure and the cycle continues as long as people accept that this is the norm (p. 46). However, as this is not a dissertation on social justice, I include these

constructs of society, power, and social hierarchy to provide context and understanding of why expatriates interact in a certain way in a cross-cultural transactional setting.

Summary

This section on how individuals engage themselves with a shared culture has set the groundwork for understanding perceptions of self within a system. These topics build naturally on the theories I touched on in Section 2, including those of acculturation and cultural learning. Additionally, this section has explored the literature around the psychology and sociology research that concerns interpretation of self and individual sensemaking. Furthermore, it has discussed the constructs of social hierarchy through examining the literature on schismogenesis and frameworks. Additionally, the literature concerning how people construct social hierarchies and some of the complexities of power and privilege within cross-cultural relations has added further context to the intricate nature of cross-cultural interactions. This section concluded by touching on how and why individuals participate in social hierarchies and how a system underpins this cycle of socialization.

Chapter 2 Summary

This literature review has focused on three main sections that can act as parts of the system that makes up a cross-cultural customer service interaction. The first part of this literature review examined works on cross-cultural customer service (Geertz, 1983). The expectations around service within a cultural context are different from those of service in a home country (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Stauss and Mang (1999) indicated that the cause for the inter-cultural *provider or customer* performance gap, can be a physical environment, personnel, a system or a co-customer. Depending on the role within the service transaction, this can cause varying reactions. Supporting the discussion on the cross-cultural service gap, Malhotra et al.'s

(1994) model addressed the customer service standards in developed vs. developing countries. However, Hvidt (2009) explained that “Dubai basically ‘purchases’ its workforce and there isn’t just one culture as the dominant culture in Dubai, [so] these theories should be utilized with that perspective” (p. 403).

Section 2 addressed the geo-cultural influences of Dubai through examining both Arab culture, with its integration with Islam (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008; Heard-Bey, 1982; Pennington, 2015), and specific references to Middle East cultural dimensions (House et al., 2004; Kabasakal et al., 2012); these topics provided insight into collective behaviors of individuals from the region operating within organizations. An examination of Arab culture in the Middle East, such as the types of leaders and types of followers (Ali, 2009), provided further understanding of culture. The two final pieces of this section were brief introductions to the issues of Emiratization (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2014; Toledo, 2013) and women in the UAE (Hutchings et al., 2013; Rugh, 2007). These topics helped to put into context the national views on local engagement and women’s progression, which are both progressive. Of further importance is the Western influence on culture in Dubai. Hills and Atkins (2013) cited both globalization influences and the prevalence of Western media as influences on the multi-cultural lens of Dubai. To complete this section, acculturation and cultural learning (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Kramer, 1992, 1997, 2012; Sam & Berry, 2010) further framed how people adapt and learn culture.

Section 3 began by defining the micro, meso, and macro ways that individuals use to create frames of reference to help to define themselves and their place in the world (de Fina, 2008; Goffman, 1974; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2010). Following this, a review of the cultural psychology literature (Shweder, 1991; Sternberg, 2014) examined how an individual engages

within a shared culture. Supporting this, Markus and Kitayama (2001) provided further insight into individual behavior and projection of self. This section closed by examining the literature around schema of interpretation/sensemaking (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As individuals interact with the world, how then do they absorb and make sense of that information? Early works such as Bateson's (1971) thinking on schismogenesis provided understanding of the basis of interaction, and this section further touched on trust (Schneier, 2012), interpersonal power dynamics (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001), and privilege (Johnson, 2010). These culminated in Harro's (2010) proposal from examining the cycle of socialization, which detailed how ideas or normalized actions about social hierarchies continue to propagate.

One issue of note within the context of this literature review is the publication dates of the materials I reviewed. Relatively recent materials such as Zeithaml et al. (1993) and Stauss and Mang (1999) provide good context, but technology and customer expectations have evolved. In an article that highlighted changes in customer expectations, Solomon (2014) stated that although the essentials of customer service are clearly relevant, there are several relevant trends. Highlights from the article include increasing customer expectations around pace of service (fast is no longer fast enough), higher demands for accuracy due to technology, customer willingness to participate in solving the problem, 24/7 availability for response, and authenticity and empowerment. Therefore, the models in the literature are still highly relevant, although customer expectations have evolved.

Overall, the literature I have reviewed helps both to frame the inquiry for this dissertation and to demonstrate the gaps in current research, namely cross-cultural transactions between British expatriates and service providers in Dubai. In the following chapters, I discuss the methodology for the research and then analyze the findings before discussing the outcomes,

drawing conclusions, and suggesting further research. The following chapters describe the methodology I used for this study, and give an analysis and discussion of findings, conclusions, and implications.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 2 investigated cross-cultural customer service, the Dubai effect, and situating British expatriates. Building on the information within the literature, I undertook a qualitative approach to investigate how British expatriates experience their transactional exchanges with service providers in Dubai. Although the literature revealed that there is research involving expatriates in Dubai and their cultural interactions within organizations (Cheok et al., 2013; Neal, 2010; Pate & Scullion, 2009), this dissertation utilizes Stauss and Mang's (1999) model as a foundation for further exploring *how* expatriates in Dubai experience the transactional relationship during interactions with service providers.

A qualitative research approach was appropriate to support the exploratory nature of the inquiry and to allow participants to explore their experiences (Hoepfl, 1997; Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005). "Qualitative research aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds" (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p. 717). Utilizing a qualitative approach to this dissertation allows for a variety of responses and opinions to surface during the inquiry, creating a rich data pool for analysis.

I conducted this study utilizing both one-on-one interviews with 15 participants and a focus group. This dissertation approach was similar to the strategy of Konanahalli et al.'s (2012) study involving British expatriates in the Middle East working within the construction industry; they included eight face-to-face interviews and three focus groups in their methodology. An in-depth interview approach allowed for participants to be honest about their perceptions on an individual basis, whereas the focus group encouraged interaction between participants and

created a deeper level of dialogue as individuals voiced thoughts and others were able to elaborate or build on them (Konanahalli et al., 2012; A. Thomas, 2008). A focus group helps to connect the researcher to the participants through immersion in the research activity and therefore creates a deeper level of understanding of the perceptions and issues.

For this dissertation, I conducted an initial pilot study to validate the context of the research, the data collection approach, and the research process. After this process, I obtained a final Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Fielding Graduate University and I conducted the main study in Dubai during November and December of 2016. The response of the participants determined the specific number of interviews, and as patterns and similar answers began to emerge it became apparent that I had gathered enough data from the interviews to form conclusions for this study. After a professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews, I sent them back to the participants for comment/clarification and to add a few further questions that were necessary prior to data analysis.

After the initial data collection and analysis process was complete, I set up a focus group exercise to provide additional context for analysis and to explore the information I had gathered further. I then sent the session notes to participants for any additional clarifications, questions, or comments. Although I extended the focus group invitation to all participants, only six people could attend due to other commitments. This small group provided further information and participants grew more comfortable within the session to challenge and build on each other's points of view.

This methodology section provides a detailed overview of the research design methods, participant selection and interaction, and data collection procedures including transcription,

recording, and storage. In addition, it presents the data analysis process as well as other research conditions such as validity, study limitations, and ethics.

Methods

There were two main approaches to this study; the first approach was utilizing a qualitative lens to examine participant experiences through both one-on-one interviews and a focus group. The second was working with the data utilizing a mix of strategies influenced by the traditional qualitative approach. I undertook data analysis utilizing a narrative approach to create conceptual themes for the data, and using data visualization to aid interpretation further (Pettersen et al., 2004).

One important aspect of the individual interviews was the contextual frame in which these interviews took place. Early research into frames and interactions by Bateson (1971) and Goffman (1974) illuminated the importance of setting the frame or creating a common frame of understanding to communicate more effectively, as individuals from the same country may interpret an event in vastly different ways due to their individual circumstances. Therefore, the physical setting of the interviews in a common, comfortable location (such as a home environment) was important to elicit reflective responses from participants. Furthermore, when I arranged the individual interviews, I informed participants of the topic prior to the interview and gave a brief preliminary introduction to ensure clarity of the topic prior to beginning the interviews. These steps helped to provide a common frame for participants to provide meaningful answers to the questions (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Kendon, 1992).

After the individual interviews were over and I had produced the transcripts, I sent the materials to the participants via e-mail for comment as a vehicle for secondary feedback to elicit clarifications, to elicit comments, and to ask further questions (which were individual based on

the interview content). This secondary feedback mechanism allowed participants space for reflection and feedback free of any perceived difficulty of human face-to-face interaction (Kendon, Harris, & Key, 1975). Furthermore, within an interview or face-to-face transaction, individuals are rarely able to recall all the facts or to articulate themselves fully, as it is a time-pressured situation. The study participants are likely to process their participation in the interview after it is over, consciously or unconsciously. Since I sent the participants the transcripts and requested a review and additional thoughts over e-mail, the participants had the conceptual space to provide further feedback and comments to enrich the study data in an unpressured setting. The comments I received back from participants were generally in line with their interview answers and therefore they raised no major concerns.

I made every effort to invite all the participants to the focus group. However, as I previously mentioned, only six out of the 15 participants could be present for the activity.

People in small conversational groups, for example, can relate to one another's behavior in a way that is quite different from people in large gatherings ... thus *how* people arrange themselves in space is part of the way people select how they are going to relate to one another for the duration of the interactional event in which they will be involved.

(Kendon et al., 1975, p. 9)

Therefore, I conducted the focus group at a private, neutral location to ensure a level of confidentiality and comfort for participants to voice their thoughts in a learning space. At no time in the focus group process or after did participants indicate that they were uncomfortable with voicing their opinions or participating.

It was important to frame the activity for the participants. Prior to beginning the activity, I restated the purpose, and participants had the opportunity to introduce themselves to each other.

The group behavior during the focus group was typical of any group. Initially, individuals were introducing themselves and forging connections such as determining where people worked and what part of the UK they were from. This establishment of reference helped to relax the group and possibly gave them a frame of reference for others' comments. At the end of the session, several individuals exchanged contact information or connected via social media to stay in touch. As with the individual interviews, I sent the meeting notes to the focus group participants for any further comment, and as with the comments I received back from the individual interviews, there was nothing out of line with any feedback I received within the session, and three out of the six replied that they had no further comments.

An important point is the concern for researcher bias throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Bias is a difficult phenomenon for a researcher to overcome during a study (Chenail, 2011; Daly & Lumley, 2002; Toews et al., 2016). In the case of this study, I used several strategies to mitigate bias. During individual interviews and focus groups, I made every effort to maintain a neutral questioning approach as opposed to inflecting my voice to indicate an opinion. I checked this by reviewing and listening to the recordings prior to analyzing the data. Additionally, throughout the dissertation process, I kept a journal to acknowledge any potential conflict of interest or bias when examining and integrating information. This strategy helped me to acknowledge any potential bias and to address it accordingly. The following sections give further details of the process.

Participant Selection

Participant selection is one of the most invisible and least critiqued methods in qualitative circles. Researchers do not just collect and analyze neutral data; they decide who matters

as data. Each choice repositions inquiry, closing down some opportunities while creating others. (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling, 2012, p. 699)

It is important to acknowledge the participant choice within the context of this study, as participants self-selected through a general request on social media (LinkedIn and Facebook). Since the topic of cross-cultural service interactions may be sensitive to some individuals, it was important that anyone involved in the study did so as a voluntary participant through this process. This self-selection process is interesting, because it provided a frame of reference between the researcher and participants prior to the research that provided a base of trust before I asked any questions; this ensured that participants felt that I would not judge them for voicing their opinions. The conditions for participation were therefore based on the following criteria:

- British citizen;
- lived in the UK for at least 20 years;
- lived in Dubai for at least one year.

I completed the recruitment of participants on a first-come, first-served basis, and as individuals volunteered, I sent them the informed consent form (Appendix A) and arranged a date that was mutually acceptable for interview and the focus group. As I expected, participants who choose to participate were all educated and possessed a frame of understanding (Goffman, 1974) to grasp the subject matter. Therefore, they were comfortable describing both positive and negative situations during the individual interviews. In addition, they fully participated in the focus group.

Pilot Study

An important initial step in this study was to conduct a pilot study. “The principal benefit of conducting a pilot study is that it provides researchers with an opportunity to make

adjustments and revisions in the main study” (Kim, 2011, p. 191). This specific pilot involved individual interviews with two participants who met the participant criteria I detailed in the section above. This pilot not only helped to adjust the methodology, but also provided further clarity on the context of the study, including creating further awareness of potential bias.

A well-conducted pilot study can help investigators begin to address instrumentation and bias issues because they allow the researcher the opportunity to:

1. Administer the questions in the same way as in the main study
2. Ask the subjects for feedback to identify ambiguities and difficult questions
3. Record the time taken to complete the interview, decide whether it is reasonable, and better record participants’ time commitments in the IRB protocol
4. Discard all unnecessary, difficult or ambiguous questions
5. Assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses
6. Establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required
7. Check that all questions are answered
8. Re-word or re-scale any questions that are not answered as expected. (van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001, p. 293)

Overall, I learned three key lessons from the pilot study, which contributed to changes in my overall research approach. First, the location of the interviews impacted the information I gathered. I conducted one pilot interview at home and the other at work. The interviewee with the workplace interview location was much more careful in choosing words and also tended to change personas. The participant may have tried to answer the questions the way he or she thought he or she should answer them and not how he or she would otherwise have answered them (Markus & Kitayama, 2001). This insight ensured that the I conducted the rest of the

interviews in a home-type setting for the comfort of the subjects. The second lesson I learned led to some minor revisions to the interview guide. After providing context to the participants at the start of the individual interview, some of the questions did not make sense and interrupted the flow of the interview.

The third and final change to the approach was to use a transcriptionist for the recordings. The original intent was for me to process and transcribe the interviews, but the actual transcription process did not provide any further clarity than reviewing the interview transcript while listening to the tape and augmenting any notes I took during the interview. It also took too much time. Therefore, I found a transcriptionist for the main study, and I reviewed the transcribed files for completeness and checked them for errors (and bias) against the voice recordings.

One further step in the pilot process was an initial reflection exercise and the coding of data for analysis to help me to become familiar with the coding of software and to understand the gaps in the literature that I needed to address. The reflection exercise was valuable in providing an overall context and focus for the study. The process of coding also included the creation of a code book that further helped with the coding of the data for the main study. Overall the pilot study provided some valuable insights and learning to inform the main study.

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

As with any research involving humans, ethical considerations played an important role to ensure that I mitigated any harm throughout the process. In their field manual for applied research Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) summarized the three main tenets for ethical research: respect for persons; beneficence, to maximize benefits and minimize harm; and justice related to our moral treatment of others. This dissertation is only specifically related to respect

for persons, and I minimized harm as much as possible. To achieve this, I completed a review process with the Fielding Graduate University IRB. This process is federally mandated to ensure that all research takes place according to the highest scientific and ethical standards. I made an initial submission prior to conducting the pilot study, and I then made two subsequent submissions with changes as the study progressed. The IRB approved each submission on the first try, and it did not request any changes.

Prior to my interactions with participants, I sent them each a participant consent form as per the IRB application (Appendix A). The forms included information about the study and specified that participants could stop at any time if they were feeling uncomfortable or in any form of distress.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection of the individual interviews included voice recording, transcription, and storage, while for the focus group I took participant notes and transcribed flip charts from the session. Prior to the individual interviews, I sent participants both the context of the study and the consent form (Appendix A). During the individual interviews, questions followed the participant interview guide and as the interviews progressed, it was interesting to note the patterns that emerged to help to determine where people were having difficulties in answering specific questions. This allowed me to approach the interview from a different angle for the same information. In some cases, I put aside questions for later in the conversation so that the individual could think of an answer; this happened in a number of interviews with questions related to a positive cross-cultural service transaction.

The focus group session took place with six of the participants from the individual interviews. As participants were already familiar with the topic from their experience in the

individual interviews, I did not ask any clarifying questions about the topic during the session. As with the individual interviews, I sent out the focus group consent form (Appendix A) prior to the event and collected it at the event. The format for the focus group of this study included both a role play and a member check.

The member check can be a reflexive process for both the researcher and the participants. This can be clarified by focusing on one specific type of transformational validity, that is, catalytic validity, or the ability of the project to serve as a catalyst for its participants. For in order to achieve a high degree of catalytic validity, the research project must assist participants in knowing reality in order to better transform it. Thus, validity is not measured by a study's correspondence to an approximated objective or subjective reality, but rather by the impact of the research on the participant. Simply, if a research project has empowered the participants to action, then the participants were able to know reality enough to engage and change it. (Koelsch, 2013, p. 168)

The data I gathered from the focus group added further depth to the overall findings of the study.

Data Recording

I conducted each individual interview in a comfortable space (home-like setting) and after a final review and the signing of the consent form, I showed participants the digital voice recorder. Each participant confirmed that the voice recording was okay. In the case of the focus group, since it was difficult to record as individuals moved about the room and participated in their role play, I took meeting notes, and I also hand recorded materials that the participants produced.

Data Transcription and Storage

After the individual interviews were complete, I saved all data to the hard drive of my computer, which is password protected. A copy of the files was further available through a secure Dropbox file for the transcriptionist to access; and after the transcription process was complete, I deleted both the recording and the document from the online source after moving it to the password-protected hard drive file.

I found the transcriptionist for this study using the website upwork.com; I selected her based on reviews, feedback, and cost. The transcriptionist further signed a confidentiality agreement as per IRB requirements. After I received the transcribed data, I removed all identifiers from the documents, including any names or places of employment, and I subsequently aggregated the data to provide further anonymity. As per the Fielding Graduate University IRB, I took all efforts to ensure the secure handling and deletion of the data to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis Procedures

There are many approaches to the analysis of data. For the purposes of this study, I first employed a reflection practice and then a thematic analysis utilizing the framework of narrative analysis before coding the data in a more traditional manner and employing the use of data visualization in presenting the results.

Reflection and Narrative Analysis

Prior to the narrative analysis, I examined the data as a whole to create initial and high-level findings. After this high-level reflection, I separated the data into various questions, and early themes emerged through narrative analysis. This approach helped to frame and create further context for the responses; “the coding for a narrative analysis is typically of the narratives

as a whole, rather than of the different elements within them. The coding strategy revolves around reading the stories and classifying them into general patterns” (Schutt, 2011, p. 339). Therefore, I approached the data in this study from a broader viewpoint. Further coding was necessary from a more traditional lens to understand the data completely and to draw conclusions.

After I identified themes, I created a high-level, descriptive paragraph utilizing the data. Furthermore, I considered observational information from the interviews such as how the individuals positioned themselves through their body language, voice, and intonation when interpreting meaning. I completed additional analysis through the interpretation of patterns of participants’ stories, the words that they used, and descriptors of events.

Conversely, the data from the focus group activity provided in-depth insight into the topics that I had already covered in the individual interviews. Therefore, I directly incorporated the data from the focus group session into the topics from the initial data analysis, and they provided further clarity on conclusions.

Coding through Software

I then analyzed the data using Microsoft Excel software. I chose this software after an extensive search through the available software and after initially using MaxQDA in the pilot study to determine whether it was the right tool. An initial coding from the pilot study provided a framework that changed substantially during the final data analysis process. As I previously mentioned, one helpful tool within the pilot process was developing a codebook to reference while working with the interviews (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). During the main study, I further consolidated the coding list as categories emerged and themes became apparent and overlapped.

Validity and Limitations

It is important to have confidence in the outcomes of any research project. “Rigor, in qualitative terms, and reliability/validity, in quantitative terms, are ways to establish trust or confidence in the findings or results of a research study” (E. Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 151).

Although the data I gathered for this study was a small representation of the expatriate population of Dubai, the purpose of the study was to set a baseline. I acknowledge that this population is a small subset and that future research will be necessary. However, conditions to create rigor within the data collection include engaging participants individually initially, and ensuring that they are not aware of other participants in the study, even if they had some sort of relationship during the individual interviews. For the focus group, I invited individuals to attend with the knowledge that other participants would be present and that they would be voicing their opinions in a group setting. Furthermore, in conversations with other Western expatriates from various countries, similar stories to the information in the study are commonplace—however, with a further study, it would be possible to test the cultural lens further utilizing other groups of Westerners with a possibility of diverse findings. This is a first look at the cross-cultural behavior of expatriates in a service situation within the region; confidence in this study is foundational.

There are a few limitations to this research because it is such a broad topic that I had to define the populations. I recognize that this study only considers one side of the equation: using British expatriates does not take into account either other nationalities or the views of the service providers. To do this subject justice, further research will be necessary to understand the population of service providers and their specific behavior. One of the barriers to this is nationality, as most the service providers are Asian and come from the Indian subcontinent or the

Far East, and the level of trust necessary to elicit honest feedback and responses due to natural mistrust of other cultures would be a challenge to overcome for any Western researcher.

Another limitation to this study is the size of the study. A question that researchers often struggle with is the number of interviews to conduct for a qualitative research study. However, by including 15 participants in the study as well as a small subset of six participants in the focus group, I believe that this has provided enough depth of information for this qualitative approach.

Researcher bias is always a difficult phenomenon to overcome (Chenail, 2011; Daly & Lumley, 2002; Noble & Smith, 2015; Toews et al., 2016). I made every effort to maintain a neutral point of view in both the individual interviews and the focus group. In addition to relistening to the recorded interviews, I kept a research journal to note any areas of potential bias, and identifying both similarities and differences in the data was paramount to insuring reliability in the conclusions.

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, I have addressed the methodology of the dissertation, including the qualitative approach to the research, participant selection, ethics and consent, and data collection and analysis. As a qualitative study, the use of both individual interviews and a focus group was sufficient to inform study conclusions. The individual interviews revealed patterns of information that were consistent, and I completed further validation of these themes through the focus group, which provided the relevant insights to draw conclusions. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the data I gathered, and Chapter 5 draws final conclusions. References and appropriate appendices conclude the dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of British expatriates in Dubai in a cross-cultural transactional situation. During this study, participants exhibited a range of both self-awareness and cultural awareness with regards to other cultural norms; 15 participants provided enough information for a comprehensive analysis. In this chapter, I present and discuss the data analysis and findings of the research. I present full quotes from the participants (at least two quotes from each participant) to describe most of the data. I have anonymized quotes to ensure confidentiality. I have developed these findings through the analysis of data, as I described in the methodology chapter, utilizing the individual interviews and focus group material. The discussion of the data includes the incorporation of secondary sources as per the literature review.

This chapter focuses on the themes that emerged during the data analysis process. As per Table 3, three Level 1 themes emerged from the analysis: the mechanics of the transaction, understanding of the transaction, and emotions of the transaction. These broad categories break down into Level 2 themes or concepts, and I have matched them with key findings. Within the responses, themes include data on technology, skills, parts, training, and customer expectations such as communications, quality of service, and empowerment. These mechanics focus on the system inputs and outputs during the transaction. The second theme, understanding of transaction, focuses on how the British expatriate makes sense of transactions, information around perception of other, social hierarchy, cultural sensemaking, and behavioral awareness. The final theme of emotion arose from expressions of feeling on the part of the participants. These strong emotions provide a final layer of the transaction. The traditional question-and-answer format of the interviews provided a structure of inquiry for the data. However, the

follow-up questions and the focus group provided an opportunity for participants to provide further reflective answers.

Table 3

Data Analysis Themes

Research Question	L1 Themes	L2 Themes	Key Findings
What is the experience of Dubai British expatriates in cross-cultural face-to-face transactional service interactions?	Mechanics of the transaction	Technology Skills, Parts, Training Customer Expectations: - Communication - Quality of Service - Empowerment	- Technology as an enabler - Service providers not trained properly - Expectations need to be lower - Expats expect communication to be in English - Service providers are not able to make decisions
	Understanding of the transaction	Positive/Negative Experiences Feedback Perception of Other Social Hierarchy Behavioral Awareness	- Negative experiences outweigh positive ones - Empathy influences positive expectations - No driving need to change the parameters of the social hierarchy - Expatriates are generally aware of their behavior, some more so upon reflection
	Emotions of the transaction	Frustration Guilt Satisfaction	- Expatriates understand cultural differences - Expatriates acculturate to the way people do things e in Dubai - Reflection drives emotion

Study Foundations: Participants and Perceptions

I recruited the participants for this study via social media, and as per Table 4, they are of a similar age group (average age of 35 yrs.-49 yrs.) and balanced between men and women.

Most of the people I interviewed were married, with slightly fewer indicating that they had children. As I previously specified, individuals who are not Emirati locals and who reside in the UAE must either have sponsorship from their organization via a company-sponsored working visa or have a spouse visa; however, all participants in this study were on their own sponsored working visas.

Table 4

Data: Participant Demographics

Demographic	Male	Female	Totals
Gender	Male (8)	Female (7)	Male (8) Female (7)
Age	35 yrs.-49 yrs. (7) 50 yrs.-64 yrs. (1)	21 yrs.-34 yrs. (5) 35 yrs.-49 yrs. (2)	21 yrs.-34 yrs. (5) 35 yrs.-49 yrs. (9) 50 yrs.-64 yrs. (1)
Marital Status	Married/Partner (8)	Married/Partner (6) Single (1)	Married/Partner (14) Single (1)
Children	Children (6) No Children (2)	Children (1) No Children (6)	Children (7) No Children (8)
Currently Employed?	Yes (8)	Yes (7)	Yes (15)
Years in Dubai	3-5 (4) 6-10 (3) 11+ (1)	3-5 (3) 6-10 (4)	3-5 (7) 6-10 (7) 11+ (1)
Time in the UK Averages -> 1-3 visits per year; length of stay 1-2 weeks			

Note. I recruited all participants via social networks and all were voluntary, residing and working in Dubai for at least one year having lived in the UK for at least 20 years.

Furthermore, all participants of the study denoted that they had lived in Dubai over three years, with over half of the participants indicating that they had resided in Dubai for over six years.

These factors ensured that participants were established in Dubai and therefore had various experiences to draw from during the interviews and the subsequent focus group.

The demographics in Table 4 suggest that the participants are experienced adults (in age, maturity, education, and time abroad) who have enough of a background in the region to provide answers to this study based on more than a singular experience. Furthermore, all participants stated that they visited the UK at least once per year for at least one week, signifying that they stay in touch with their home country. Although many have acculturated to life in Dubai, they will still have a basic level of comparison in their home country.

One point of note is that all participants were Caucasian, and they were generally from a middle-class upbringing in the UK. This similarity could therefore contribute to a somewhat homogeneous point of view, as their cultural background is similar. As one participant (who had been in Dubai for 6+ years) stated when I asked about perceptions about Dubai prior to relocating here, “the expatriates that were here would be like myself. I just assumed that everyone that came to Dubai would be British.” In alignment with this comment, another participant stated that “I knew there weren’t as many Emiratis and there was an awful lot of expatriates. What those expatriates were? Not particularly. If I’m really honest I didn’t anticipate that the culture would be as different as it is.” Both comments indicate that participants were either biased towards what they knew (i.e., large numbers of British expatriates living abroad in locations in Spain or France) or did not consider the cultural complexities of living in Dubai.

Perceptions of Culture

Early in the participant interviews, I asked the individuals why they had moved to Dubai and their impressions of the culture in the city. One very interesting finding was that half of the participants indicated that they knew nothing about the region or culture before moving to Dubai. Comments such as “Dubai seemed like any other big city” or “I’ll figure it out” were balanced

with “Landing in Dubai was quite a shock, because it wasn’t all just British people and Arabs at that point. It became very evident that it was a much more diverse place.” However, the other half of the participants indicated that they had friends/family and had done research on the Internet or had previous experience/exposure to the Middle East. Statements such as

It’s just like everywhere else, you accept people for what they are. What I would say is moving to Dubai, you do find yourself having more—how do I politically correctly put it—but you’re a bit more racist in your head. You draw conclusions on different nationalities. That’s one of those things you live to accept when you’ve been here so long.

indicate an openness to the experience of culture in the Middle East, but also an honesty and bias awareness on the part of the British expatriate about social hierarchy differences that are commonplace. Other statements from participants such as “Well, I had no idea that the locals were as much of a minority as they actually are. But I did realize that the majority were going to be Indian subcontinent” and “We knew it was very, very diverse. We knew that the majority of people weren’t from there” denotes that some of the participants had a better informed level of cultural awareness.

Other perceptions of culture included surprise at how globalization has impacted the UAE: “I thought it would be more traditional than it is.” And “I knew it was an Islamic country but I had no idea about the ratio of UAE nationals to expatriates” or “No, we didn’t know what the nationality mix was but we looked more into religion more than culture.” These comments showed a deeper awareness of culture, but none of the participants gave any detail about cultural norms in Dubai or fully understood the dynamics of culture in Dubai prior to moving to the country.

Corresponding to perceptions of culture were perceptions of why individuals choose to come to Dubai (see Table 5). Overall, there was a consensus that British expatriates come to the region for the same reasons: job opportunities (career advancement, ability to make money, etc.) and travel /lifestyle (exciting place to live, opportunity to see the world, interact with new cultures, etc.). However, during the focus group, participants said that they thought people who were here as service providers from so-called third world economies such as India, Pakistan, and the Philippines would be in Dubai to take care of family and send money home, and they were less likely to have their families with them in the country. One participant said

He's here because even working under those conditions, he's still earning more money that he would be earning back in his home country and as little as I perceive that amount to be, he would still send most of it back home to his family and live on what's left.

This perception of service providers and their supposed reasons for working in Dubai requires further study to determine how accurate it is. However, all the participants in the focus group supported this idea and agreed about the motivation, generalizing that this may be a widely held view by Western expatriates.

Table 5

Demographic Data Continued

Question	Total
Knowing what you know now, would you still have moved to Dubai?	Yes (12) No (3)
Do you know how long you want to stay living here in Dubai?	None Defined (11) For the next two years (2) Until Retirement (2)
What industry do you work in?	Aviation (6) Tourism and Recreation (2) Retail/Marketing (2) IT (1) Construction (1) Education (1) Military (1) Finance (1)
Why did you move to Dubai?	Partner/Career (5) Recruited (2) Experience (2) Known from past (2) Career/Travel (4)

Overall, participants confirmed that culture was not a turn off from moving to Dubai, but an attractor that complemented job, lifestyle, and other opportunities afforded by living in the Middle East; furthermore, all participants indicated that it took them a while to adapt, but that they are currently comfortable living in the UAE.

L1: Mechanics of the Transaction

An initial part of exploring any system is the mechanics of that system. These mechanics are the parts that are easier for participants to identify as information that one can quantify simply. The initiation point for all transactions we discussed within the scope of the interviews was on the part of the expatriate, as these are forced transactions where the transaction would not occur if an incident did not take place.

To initiate the interaction, participants indicated that they used one of three approaches: by telephone, by Internet, or in person. One individual stated that

I booked it through an app, so I was very specific about the work that needed doing and the skills I needed for it to be completed, so when they showed up to fix something else, I was a bit surprised.

Another participant described both the initiation and the mechanics of the service:

So, a phone call to the company, the service provider. The person on the end of the phone is a British person. Easy to understand, speaking on the same page as you, knowledgeable in their industry and they reflect that in the conversation you were having with them. So, appointment was made and they send a Filipino or Indian or Bangladeshi workers to come and carry out the work. Work is done. No questions asked. At least one of the guys has fairly good English [so] that they can communicate with you, but most of the communication is done from the office. The office is the go-between. Any feedback that the service workers have, they feed back to the office; the office then phoned you with any follow-up work that needs to be done.

Within the scope of each of the described transactions, each participant indicated that the initial point of contact was an integrated computer application on a mobile phone and the second was a phone call. Although participants used a form of technology in each transaction they described, the outcome they described first was common throughout the interviews. During the face-to-face interviews, 10 participants initiated their transactions through telephone conversations, with only three participants indicating a face-to-face initiation and two indicating that they logged their needs through an online application. For example, one participant described his positive interaction with a call center:

We don't deal with those guys initially. All we do is we phone central servicing area and they're always really nice on the phone. They're always really good. I couldn't tell you what they were, whether they're Filipino, maybe Filipina, because they normally are, but I'm not going to swear to that. So, dealing with them on the phone was very helpful. If you've got a complaint, if there's a problem with the electrics or there's a problem with the plumbing, "Yes, we'll get somebody to you." They are, depending on the urgency of the thing; they're usually very good at turning up.

This transaction further highlights the responsiveness of the service provider and the ease of communication to facilitate the interaction.

None of the participants deemed other mechanical factors within the transaction such as payment, the address of the customer, and the dress of the service provider an issue. Only one individual spoke of payment when describing a negative experience because the service provider did not deem that it was at fault for the lapse of judgement and it had requested a specific amount up front before doubling the requested payment at the end. Generally, payment for services was not an issue, even when returning an item.

I asked each participant how they service providers addressed them, and throughout all of the interactions participants described, the British expatriates all indicated that the service providers used Ma'am or Sir to address the expatriate and that this was an expected norm in Dubai. Some participants commented that some service providers called them "ma'am/sir" at the same time. Although they said this in a joking manner, it was also a widely accepted form of address. Furthermore, there were no negative comments about the clothing or presentation of the service providers. The participants described everything from a basic uniform of a casual,

company-branded shirt and trousers, through to the national dress of the individual's origin country and indicated that it too was normal and accepted.

Another mechanical point of the transaction was the concept of time from both the expatriate's and the service provider's point of view; this topic elicited stronger responses from the participants. Many of the expatriates indicated that the service providers generally showed up late for appointments, but they had come to accept this practice, so they took that into consideration when booking an appointment; however, over half of the participants indicated frustration at the way service providers dealt with time. One expatriate described his own experience with service providers and timeliness:

The guy says "I can be there between 4 and 6 to deliver your furniture" so you do all your work early, you get out, and we had no car then, so it's like three trains, planes, and automobiles to get home. And you get home and you have to walk from the nearest bus station and you get back in the stinking heat and you sit there in a house with no furniture and the guy doesn't show up. Then you phone them and they say "sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry ... we are on our way, we are on our way" (repeated). And you just got that repeated to you until its 9:00 at night by which point they go "I don't think we can come today." And that must have happened to me for three days. The biggest issue for me was that they would say what you wanted to hear, so when you would phone and say "Look, I just want to know if you are not coming," I can cope with that but I need to know when you are coming and I also don't want to sit here because I have to go all the way back to the hotel, which is another two-hour journey back, so I need to know when you are coming. And if you don't think you can fit it in – tell me now. And they would say "No, we are definitely coming." So, you get the impression that they are just saying what you

want to hear. But they won't tell you till the last min. In fact, they won't even tell you, you have to sort of chase it to find out they're not coming.

This vignette illustrates the differences in the concepts of time and cultural norms between a British expatriate and some service providers. A simple mechanical task ended up causing an emotional impact due to the failure to fulfill the needs of each of the participants within the transaction. However, participants stated that some specific service providers from a branded company did show up on time. The norm in this study, however, was not timeliness on the part of the service provider.

Customer Expectations

Although expectations are not necessarily mechanical, expectations in the case of this study are an input to the customer service experience system. The themes that emerged within the data included communication, quality of service, and empowerment. Expectations as a topic, generally relate to a past incident or experience. Therefore, they are an input into the system or transaction that is taking place.

Overall, customer expectations of levels of service seem to be quite different from the finished product among the study participants.

The main issue I have is that when you move here your expectations of customer service and your expectations of what's acceptable is quite different to the reality. Sometimes it can be quite frustrating and sometimes it just comes down to things like call delays, but very often its language barriers as well.

Issues such as timeliness of appointments, communication, and quality of the service are expectations that both the expatriate and service provider may have to adjust. One participant said:

Lower your expectations. As I said earlier, it's slightly more likely the service is going to be inconsistent or unreliable than it is to be good. If you start with lowering your expectations, there's a high chance that you'd be pleasantly surprised by what happens.

This reflection indicates that there are service providers that deliver exceptional or good customer service in the UAE.

One of the questions that these customer service expectations raise is what is Dubai—is it a developed or developing country? Service in developed countries is vastly different than that in developing countries. One expatriate indicated:

The common thread here is expectation. Spending the first 34 years of my life in the UK lead me to become accustomed to a very well-developed service model built around efficiency and convenience, which I have come to expect as normal. The service model on offer in the UAE therefore falls below my expectations, leading me to become frequently disappointed and frustrated with what I perceive as incompetence and backward thinking. I could probably improve my experiences by adjusting my expectations, but since I am only living here temporarily, I see very little point in doing so.

This expatriate is starting to frame some of the issues with customer expectations. The first is the frame under which he is operating, as he is coming from a first world nation and the service provider may be coming from a country that many still consider as developing, without the same levels of education or language (or in his words incompetence and backward thinking). Another participant showed more empathy for comparisons of expectations to the UK:

I would say they're equally as disparate in the UK as they are here. You can get some really good guys and there are some proper cowboys in the UK as well, and I've had

them and I've had to sack 'em. So, I wouldn't say it's any different here. But the difference between the UK and here is in the UK, they know what they're doing and they're trying to diddle you. In this country, you'll get dreadful standards but it's because they don't know what they're doing. Well, I don't believe it's their fault, I think it's that they come over with their visas, and they're given jobs that they simply don't get trained for or don't know how to do. It's just like another laborer, so you might get a guy coming in trying to fix your electrics and doesn't have the faintest idea what he's doing and shouldn't be getting anywhere near it. I've seen one guy electrocute himself.

This quote indicates an understanding that the service provider may not be at fault and may have entered the country as a laborer and not a technical expert, contributing to the system of customer service not being efficient or aligned with individuals' expectations.

Communication

A key component of any interaction between individuals is the ease of communication. One example a participant provided illustrated the need for a common communication medium.

So, if I ask for another drink and she's just like, 'Yes, ma'am,' and she hasn't understood me, I know I'm not getting that drink. But instead of just telling me that she doesn't understand me, she'll just smile and nod and walk away. That's probably the most frustrating actually.

This communication pattern is both verbal and nonverbal, because the expatriate noticed the fact that she would not receive what she asked for and she is therefore disappointed at the service.

Another participant when asked what the common language of communication was in the UAE responded "Well, it should be English. It's English normally." The same participant also said:

all I speak is English and these guys, it's their third, possibly their third, or maybe their fourth language, because they speak three lots of different kinds of Punjabi and the other Indian language they speak and maybe Arabic as well.

One point to note within the context of communication is that the official language in the UAE is Arabic, the most spoken language is Urdu (due to the population of individuals from the subcontinent), and most non-government organizations operate in English. Therefore, the framing of communication from the British expatriate standpoint that everyone should speak English is a great generalization and stems back to her frame of reference. Another example from a participant indicates his experience when communicating with a service provider at his home:

It's pretty good actually (the service). It's fairly good. He seems to be able to communicate well. I don't get the impression you do sometimes that they seem like they can understand you but actually in reality, they've got no clue what you're talking about. This guy seems to actually understand it. When I explained what the problem is, he goes and actually checks when I say if I think it's the capacitor or something I'll say that. He'll check the capacitors. So he must understand. I don't know if it's just technical jargon that he recognizes so capacitor, capacitors, so he knows what we're talking about. But in general, I think he's pretty good. He seemed to have a fairly good command of English.

Quality of Service

Another key component to customer expectations is the actual delivery of service. A common answer within the negative interactions was that the service provider would not be able

to complete the job and had to return through numerous appointments. A participant also shared the expectation that the service provider would not have the right equipment:

Because the job was such a big job and I didn't think they would have the right tools, even though the problem was described to them on the phone, I didn't think they would have the tools or the replacement parts to do the job with them when they came.

Another participant specified that

My experience here is that service is inconsistent, so this positive experience that I just described was an anomaly. It was rare. There are instances where we've had things stolen, we have entrusted people, and we've equally had experience where communication has been bad.

Both participants in these examples indicated a trend of negative interactions within their customer experience.

Empowerment

Another factor that affects customer expectations and therefore the overall customer experience is the ability of the individual who is providing the service to fix the problem or to provide an alternative solution. From the expatriate point of view, this empowerment is not always the case.

Well, much more often it would because they're empowered. The people who effective are there to fill your queries or listen to your problems, in the UK are empowered to fix the problem themselves. Here, it seemed very much, apart from this place, a lot of other places that you were there to hear the problem, you then go and tell that to somebody else who then goes and tells it to somebody else who goes.... The trouble is with the Chinese whispers or the Chinese wall gets put up, by the time somebody actually turns out to fix

the problem, you've told them you've run out of bath towels and they turn up to fix the air conditioning unit. The guys, that's not the problem, but this place is different.

Many of the participants pointed out that the service providers in Dubai were unable to solve their issues because the participants thought that the contractor was either lacking the cognitive reasoning to do so, or "had no authority and was so worried that if he did anything wrong at all that he would lose his job."

L2: Understanding of the Transaction

In the previous section, the transaction mechanics touched on the overlap of both the experience of self and the perception of other through the experiences the participants related. Within this section, I further explore the experience of the transaction from the expatriate point of view. The focus areas of customer expectations and emotional response helps to frame and promote understanding of how the expatriates see themselves functioning within the system as well as how participants behave within the context of the interaction.

When I asked if they generally had more positive or negative interactions, the participants answered with almost an even split, with eight indicating they had more negative experiences and seven indicating that they had more positive experiences. One participant summed up her negative interaction through an example:

More negative than positive. You just start to expect that a service interaction will go wrong. You end up surprised if it is fixed the first time. I booked an electrician to install a light fitting last week. I booked it through an app, so I was very specific about the work that needed doing and the skills I needed for it to be completed. On the day, four guys turned up and said they were here to fix my washing machine—nothing to do with the light fitting job I had actually requested. I explained I just needed a light fitting, they all

stood staring at the light trying to work out what to do. A couple of hours later and lot of phone calls they had fitted the light (badly). I had to call the office and get another electrician to turn up and fix the light fitting, and I'm still waiting for it to be fixed to an acceptable standard. It's currently half hanging out of the ceiling. This is just typical of a service provider interaction in Dubai. You can be so specific with what you need – but it's lost in translation somewhere.

Another participant pointed out another positive point of view:

I have more positive experiences with service providers than negative ones now, because I think I have learned a little more about what they expect and the realistic limit to what my expectations should be. It makes life a bit easier. It's only taken ten years.

Another participant pointed out that

I would say my approach with service providers has always been to see them as people doing a job. I've worked in the service industry before, so I can empathize with their position but more so because of the context of Dubai.

It is interesting to note that participants who seem to have more empathy or awareness around cross-cultural interactions have more positive experiences. In the first example, the participant indicated that this is a lesson she learned through experience and time; however, she still changed or revised her customer expectations. So, in this case, she expected the customer service to be poor. In the second example, the empathy stemmed from performing the same type of job and therefore had a relational point of view. Participants who indicated that they generally had more negative encounters also made statements such as "I don't think it has anything to do with the way I approach the situation," which indicates a position of deflecting any wrongdoing away from themselves within the context of the interaction.

One further point on perception of culture within the context of positive and negative customer service encounters is that the participants remembered and could identify the culture or region of the individuals with whom they had the encounter (Table 6). As the question asked them to recall a positive and negative experience, they may have remembered details such as the nationality of the individual with whom they were interacting because they associated them with a strong emotion.

Table 6

Demographic Info on Positive and Negative Service Encounters

(Identified) Culture	Positive	Negative
Subcontinent	6	9
South East Asian	6	2
Arab/Other Gulf Cooperation Council	2	3
African	1	1

Perception of Other

Within the context of an interaction, the perception of the other person is a key element. “The trouble is we’re such a diverse population here. You’ve got no way of knowing when you first meet some what their background is, what they perceive as normal behavior.” Judgment based on appearance was a common theme throughout the participant interviews. However, without speaking to an individual to ascertain his or her background, it is exceptionally difficult to work out how to interact with him or her. Another participant described her negative experience in a situation in which she felt that she was in the right. Her response to the question about “how do you think he felt?” was:

I don't know, because he didn't show any emotion at all. I think he just felt frustrated because in his opinion he was telling me the right thing.... And we were at a stalemate and neither of us were willing to change.

This forced perspective made the participant think about the emotions and motivations of the other person, something that participants said they rarely do. "I am definitely more aware of my behavior in day to day situations. This interview hasn't affected my behavior or changed it. It unfortunately is always on reflection!"

Social Hierarchy

Social hierarchy is a sensitive topic, but one that it is necessary to explore. Socially, regardless of the groups involved, there will always be an imbalance between actors in an exchange. All 15 participants in the study, when I asked them if people from various cultures receive equal treatment in Dubai, answered, "No, people aren't treated equally." Hofstede and Hofstede (2001) stated that "in practice, no society has ever obtained equality in the form of complete consistency among different areas of rank" (p. 81). To illustrate how the British expatriates view this social hierarchy, one individual said:

I think there's a hierarchy here within the UAE and within Dubai starting obviously with the Emirati locals first and then the Western expatriates, leading down to those lowly service providers at the bottom of the tree, the guys pumping gas or building contractors, the laborers. I just think it's the way it is and it's the way it is everywhere. It's the way it is in the UK. There is a natural order of things I assume, and I think the other thing as well, we haven't looked at what is the makeup of an expatriate. Expatriates come from broadly similar backgrounds. They're not different, they're recruited to come here because of their specialty skills and what they can provide for the UAE, so therefore you

do end up with quite a tight group of people, all professional. You know, there is an old-fashioned English sort of class culture here. You're landed upper class. You have your middle management, educated middle class, and then you have your workers, and it's the same everywhere. There's nothing different. And people tend to mix and organize within their socioeconomic groups and groupings. And you'll find that because of the work here is particularly similar. Most people come from that same grouping. So you'd end up with the large, middle-class, Western expatriate communities, and then you'll end up with the workers being provided from other countries with a sort of a lower income, lower social scale. And it's pretty obvious here. It's pretty obvious and it works quite well, I think.

This point of view of the social hierarchy from the perspective of the participants arose in part "because in this place, they don't have enough people" and otherwise "because this society is traditionally very hierarchical. They need it to be that way and the locals themselves will always have to be at the top. I think it's been like that forever and I don't imagine that changing."

Because generally, you come here in a management role. The expatriates are brought here in management roles so they come from degree level at least because you can't really come here. I think you almost, you have to have a degree, don't you, to be able to get a job here anyway as an expatriate. And so, there is a natural level of competence.

Interestingly enough, in each of the quotes above, the participants I interviewed refer to expatriates as highly educated and recruited for their specialization, and therefore inferring that they only use the term expatriates for those in management positions. However, this does not include over 50% of the population of the UAE who come into the country as labor or service providers.

I've thought about that a fair bit. I mean, it's no secret that the Middle East has used labor from certain parts of the world for many, many, many years to effectively help them build their cities for very, very low wages. And really not a lot seems to have changed in the last few hundred years. I think it's just very much a modern-day version of what was happening a long time ago. There's a group of people from certain cultural backgrounds that are willing to work very long hours for very little money because it might just be a little bit more money than they're used to back home.

Another participant stated:

I think there's a very, very clear divide between where people come from and how you get treated. I think the color of your skin plays a major part of it. I think the Indians, Pakistanis, and so forth, I think, unfortunately, it's because there is such a huge number of subcontinental workers across here and the poor guys are treated so badly, but they're all very ill-educated and so forth, the laborers in general. And the expectation is that these guys have got no power, they've got no worth, unfortunately, and people just treat them badly because of that.... But over time, it's very apparent that these guys really just didn't know what they're doing. I think in some ways it was laborers coming off a boat. One gets handed a brush while one gets handed a spoon. And that's their careers. They come off and they really don't have any true skill set. And so the wastage and so forth from being a project manager anyway, just to see how many times things had to be redone just because it was poorly done to start with and lack of experience I suppose in doing it right. I mean, there was so many bits and pieces, the way stones were laid or the way they did one thing or other that had to be redone.

This perception includes the understanding that the individuals in question may not have the education or ability to do their assigned jobs because of their perceived situations. However, it shows an enormous amount of empathy for the individuals in question by the British expatriates I interviewed and who participated in the focus groups.

Overall there is a consensus with participants about a social hierarchy. In general, participants exhibited empathy for those from the less educated countries. However, one participant pointed out

There's a food chain and it's quite an obvious food chain. And unfortunately, one of the worst examples is the way you get the nationalities that are lower down the food chain, how they treat those nationalities that are below them, that's the worst.

Cultural Sensemaking

Another theme that emerged from the research is the cultural psychology phenomenon of sensemaking, addressing how an individual engages within a shared culture. "Here you find it very easy to fall into that trap of talking about 'them' when you are talking about a cultural group."

One theme throughout this sensemaking is the discussion of culture in relation to job type or ability type as is already clear from the Social Hierarchy section. For example, one of the participants stated his point of view about what types of cultures get certain jobs:

Are they here deliberately because of what's seen as their cultural abilities? Pigeonholed when they first get their visas and they get send to jobs here? Because for me, from my point of view, service related, and I'm talking hotel, food, and the like unless you're obviously going to an Indian restaurant [they] tend to be Filipinos. Building work/laboring tends to be subcontinent like India, Pakistani, Bangladeshi. Why that is, I

don't know. Because we were really impressed at this restaurant once, this Indian guy took our order and we all rattled off, all our orders, starters, all our drinks, all our main courses. It was very pleasant and he remembered it all without writing any of it down, went away and brought it all back all correct. I've never experienced that with a Filipino.

Most of the participants shared this biased opinion and, reflecting back to the comments on social hierarchy, it rings true. However, another participant who shared his direct experience at the workplace illustrated the same point:

Institutional racism. It's a very convenient term for it and it's something that I've actually seen it happen. I've employed a guy to do the same job as the two of the guys who were already working there. He automatically got paid 5,000 dirhams a month more just because of his passport.

The other point of view from participants concerned cognitive reasoning skills and how schools actually teach individuals:

there is a massive difference between Western education and Middle Eastern and Asian education in the fact that Middle Eastern and Asian education effectively taught parrot-fashion. Here is a problem, number one, here is solution to problem number one. Here is problem number two, here is solution number two. Because they weren't taught effectively critical problem solving skills at an early age at school, if only slight changes to the problem occurred in [a] theoretical context, they could not draw a parallel between the fact that in actual fact you could use a very similar solution to problem number one. You just need to change it slightly, think laterally a little bit and in actual fact, you'll find that a large part of that solution will work again. But it's just that ability to think logically and apply a solution. They learned parrot-fashion. If they did not come across

that exact problem again, therefore they didn't have a solution and they couldn't work it out.

Behavioral Awareness

One of the final interview questions focused on behavioral awareness when interacting with other cultures. The responses from participants fell into two general types: the first was defensive and the second was reflective. The defensive responses included British pride as a point of explanation for behavior or behavior as a survival tactic.

I think when they (British expatriates) first come over they are a bit more reluctant to complain, but after they have been here a while they are the first ones to speak up when something is wrong. That's what it is, a survival tactic.

Also, there is a level of indifference:

If you were like at a brunch or restaurant, it's quite common to see expatriates getting frustrated with the service. And even in the office, I've seen people on the phone trying to sort out like their electricity or some kind of service provider and they are getting quite animated and annoyed, they don't seem to change their tune just because I'm walking past. They're still pretty annoyed.

The reflective responses to the question considered expatriates as a whole and did not excuse behavior, but did offer an explanation. "Expatriate lives are more often than not full of luxuries from living in Dubai and for a lot of people, it's hard to realize that you are in a little bubble in Dubai." Another participant said:

some people in Dubai are corrupted more than others, as it offers a lifestyle they would maybe not have back in their home countries. It has the unfortunate consequence of expanding peoples' egos and as a result, arrogance tends to kick in.

Another participant pointed out that there are other factors involved in an interaction: “I think many British Expatriates are aware of their behavior in face-to-face situations because the consequences of situations going the wrong way or getting out of control due to perhaps miscommunication or cultural differences are very high.” In this case, the consequences referred to by the individual were ending up in jail or out of the country for excessively bad behavior. And a final comment from a participant addressing the need for cultural tolerance.

I don’t think that British Expatriates are any more or less aware of their behavior than any other Western (i.e., non-Muslim) expat. I don’t think it’s as much to do with nationality as it is to do with that individual person’s ability to empathize, be patient and be aware that the other person may have a different understanding of any given situation.

Advice

To understand the bigger picture of how individuals understand the transaction, the question I asked each participant was, what advice would you give to other expatriates when dealing with service providers? I also asked, what advice would you give to service providers when dealing with expatriates? Each line in Table 7 represents an answer from each participant:

Table 7

Advice to Expatriates and Service Providers

Advice to Expatriates	Advice to Service Providers
Try to understand the situation, put yourself in the person’s shoes.	Listen to what I have to say instead of interrupting me.
Putting it in simple language.	Tell the truth. And if there is an issue, problem or delay just tell me.
Never ever expect something to be fixed the first time.	Don’t be afraid to admit that you don’t understand somebody.

Advice to Expatriates	Advice to Service Providers
Get recommendations from friends.	Honesty. If they give you a time, stick to a time to come.
Just be open minded and not to think that just because someone doesn't have the same mannerisms or is on the same page as yourself doesn't mean they have any ill intent or anything.	I think, build empathy. Understand the limitations of their service.
Chill.	Just do the job properly. Listen to what somebody is saying to you, understand what the issue is and fix the issue.
Swap feedback about service providers on social media and lower your expectations.	Get a map. Empower your staff a bit more.
Speak to the manager. You may still not get the outcome, but you would probably save yourself a fair amount of back and forward in the process.	Listen to me. Let the customer finish, do not listen to respond, listen to understand. If they are a ma'am, just call them ma'am. Don't call them ma'am/sir.
Read the book: Don't They Know It's Friday? (cross-cultural sensitivity)	I'm really reluctant to say that they should treat different nationalities with a different skill set...
That really, you need to be patient and you need to understand the backgrounds that they're quite possibly from.	Ensure they know what they're doing and to be honest.
Probably to stay calm, don't expect much, and also try to remember that they've been told to do what they should do and it's hard for them to step outside of that.	That our expectation of customer service is different to what they've been told as good customer service.
Be really clear what are your expectations, what are your desires, what are you exactly there for, what help do you need.	Just to be honest and like I said if you don't understand something, make it clear that I didn't understand.
Just humanize people. You've got to connect with people on one level.	To listen first and foremost.
Patience.	Talk more. There's not enough communication.
<p>1 – Patience, speak slowly & loudly.</p> <p>2 – Do not believe that when they say they will deliver they will – follow up a lot!</p> <p>3 – Turn into [a] scary person and then it gets done.</p>	Be realistic in your promises, make sure you can fulfill them. If you can't manage the expectations of your client tell them early so they can make other plans.

The advice to expatriates side demonstrates a keen awareness of culture within the context of transactional relationships. There is a definite sentiment to empathy for the situation of others as well as advice situated in having patience and clarity in communication (including listening and speaking), honesty and being straightforward, and cultural understanding or cultural awareness. The interesting perspective of all this advice, especially that to service providers, is that its anchor is in the expatriate's point of view and in ensuring that the expatriate, as the customer in these examples, receives satisfaction.

L3: Emotions of the Transaction

Humans are emotional beings; emotions can drive decisions and set the tone for interactions with other individuals. Therefore, a process or transaction it is not necessarily a repetitive action, but a service that changes depending on the individuals within the interaction.

During the interviews and focus group activity, the study participants did not use exceptionally expressive language to describe positive interactions. Responses included words such as impressed, really good, satisfied, and trust. Another interesting fact is that positive interactions were harder to think of than negative ones for most of the study participants. This may be because when a customer receives the expected or positive result from a customer service encounter, it does not elicit a strong memory. For example, one participant described feelings about calling for help when he could have done something himself, and not the actual good service that he received.

The only thing I felt a little bit uncomfortable about was just the fact that it was probably something I could've done myself but really didn't want to. Had it not been the fact that I was living here with maintenance work and labor that is so readily available and at such a cheap price, I probably would've done it myself.

Therefore, in this example, it was still a negative emotion that the participant clearly remembered, even though it was a positive service outcome.

Another participant described her experience over time:

When I first arrived, I was very frustrated with everything that was going on because it's just like running through Jell-O, getting anything done. But I think once you understand that, you change your expectation levels, then actually it's fine.

All the participants used the word frustrated during their interviews. Another participant described his emotional experience trying to get a washing machine fixed:

I've gone through several emotions by this point. I've started out optimistic because when they first turned up he seemed to know what he was doing. That rapidly turned to bemusement when the guy left waving a part that he hadn't identified and haven't even tested, but claiming that was the problem. That then turned to frustration when they failed to keep two appointments to come back and investigate further. But at the sight of these three guys struggling to load the washing machine into the back of a very small car, and actually I just thought that was hilarious. I started to see the funny side by that point.

In both examples there was an element of frustration, and the trigger for this frustration was an experience not going as intended.

The actual emotional response to a service situation that is negative varies. The consensus from all participants was that it does not help to shout at someone.

Because they want to try and please you and probably because they're getting worried, I mean that's the way they're at. Well, I'll be getting worried if somebody is shouting at me as well. And there's no point shouting at somebody who doesn't know what they're

doing. You won't achieve anything whether that's in the UK or whether it's here—I've shouted down the phone in the UK more than I've shouted here.

However, aggressive behavior on the part of a service provider can elicit an aggressive response on the part of the expatriate, as illustrated in this response;

We were very transparent from the beginning with everything. Once he started to get aggressive with my wife, it became very uncomfortable because he owed us X amount of money and he was holding that. It then became like this huge stressful incident. He was making all kinds of aggressive threats to my wife, so I spoke to him directly to his face in quite an aggressive tone and give him an ultimatum. And the ultimatum was that I would go to the police. Everything that he has done would be shared with the Dubai Economic Department and he would be named and shamed online. And once that ultimatum came, the issue was very quickly resolved.

In this negative situation as described by the expatriate, the emotional response was both stress and aggression. Many factors contribute to this, including the presence of trust within the interaction and position within the social hierarchy. Within the interviews, most participants described less stressful situations for their negative interactions than the one above. The negative interactions they described were generally service providers providing repair services or one of the telecom/utility providers.

In general, all the interactions the participants described indicated that they felt that they were in positions of power within the interaction. Another participant illustrated this position of power:

I think it was the dismissiveness and making me feel like I wasn't important as a customer. And it was OK for someone to wait for 30 mins just to be told that, whilst she

was perfectly within her rights within her job to say no. I think it was just the absolute lack of any compassion or any empathy, the fact that someone had been waiting for a long time and due to their internal processes was unable to help.

Discussion of Findings

The expatriates have partially aided or hindered the transactional or mechanical part of cross-cultural interactions by the ways they have adjusted to their new norms, as Black et al. (1991) described them in their framework for cross-cultural adjustment. The first factor in this model is adjustment of expectations. As expatriates begin to acculturate (Sam & Berry, 2010) they begin to undergo change (cultural and psychological) due to the interactions. One participant somewhat illustrated this by stating “It has only taken me 10 years,” an acknowledgement of the acculturation process.

The second factor in the model was that individuals who have better relational skills and cultural sensitivity can make adjustments and have better experiences. I have discussed this element above in the context of the ability of the expatriate to have empathy for other individuals within the interaction. The third and final factor in this model concerns the role of nonworking and social considerations in how long an expatriate stays abroad (Black et al., 1991). The majority of participants indicated that they have no plans to leave within two years, indicating retirement as a milestone, and only two participants intended to leave within the next two years.

One of the interesting points about the mechanical part of the transaction is that participants did not have any difficulty in indicating where they thought the service providers had originated. Table 6 lists the nationalities of the various service providers participants discussed in the individual interviews. The GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) suggested that these cultures have disparate perceived and demonstrated power/distance and

uncertainty/avoidance markers. The terminology in this case would be saving face. Face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman 1974, p. 5).

In their reduction of the inter-cultural provider performance gap model, Stauss and Mang (1999) illustrated the downward trend of customer service expectations after a negative service encounter. The participants in Stauss and Mang’s study described this gap through their comments, including “lower your expectations.” One of the reasons for this may be that the expatriates recognize or attribute the gap in customer service standards to factors such as communication, empowerment, and basic quality of service issues. Stauss and Mang further posited that “When customers realize that there is a cultural distance between them and the service employee, we can expect them to make assumptions about the controllability of the situation” (p. 341) and that employees’ behavior “requires inter-cultural training, which provides experience and knowledge of other cultures” (p. 342). Both findings help to provide general context for this dissertation study and clarify the gap between customer expectation of adequate service and service received in the cross-cultural context of Dubai.

In the Dubai context, Hvidt (2009) explained that Dubai basically “purchases” its workforce on the international market to suit current needs: construction workers and domestic servants from the Indian subcontinent; nurses, doctors, and teachers from Egypt, for example; and highly educated persons with qualifications in technical or economic fields from Europe and the United States. (p. 398)

This mix of cultures in the UAE provides massive challenges within the customer service space when considering both the cultural norms and service expectations. In a sense, it is both

developed and developing, based on the workforce that is available and the skills that are present for labor.

In 1971, Bateson described his theory of schismogenesis to explain the constructs of cultural contact (or coexistence). The interactional patterns were symmetrical (equal) or complementary (active/passive). Within the context of the hierarchy that residents of the UAE acknowledge, a generally complementary existence is prevalent between various cultures. However, hierarchical examples exist in areas such as organizational culture, where a local may be reporting to a Western Expatriate.

Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) acknowledged the duality of expectations within the Middle East cluster. As

societal practices embody in-group orientation, masculinity, and tolerance of ambiguity and limited emphasis on planning ... in contrast ... this cluster desire(s) stronger rule orientation, planning, hierarchy of relationships, institutional collectivism, [and] masculinity and [places a] low value on assertiveness. (p. 51)

A quote from one of the participants sums this up:

The way that business was forty years ago was with the senior tribes making decisions in the *Majlis* and that approach still actually takes place today. So although on the outside we might have international businesses, international corporations working here, decisions are still made within the *Majlis* and within tribal situations, so if you have that at the very top then anything underneath that is not going to follow in a democratized collaborative approach. So if you have that culture of hierarchy at the top, it files down to the bottom

In concert with self and personal projection of self is the concept of personal beliefs in cultural stereotyping. “In stereotyping, projection may result in a positive correlation between a person’s beliefs about the characteristics of a social group and the person’s ratings of the cultural stereotype” (Krueger, 1996, p. 537). Furthermore,

With continuing racial bias in society, people may be intent on avoiding overt derogatory statements about the out-group (The in-group in the instance of this study might be identified as the Western expatriate population). This argument is consistent with dissociation theory. (p. 546)

Dissociation is a psychological term indicating an individual’s detachment from surroundings or experience. Jung (1991) described dissociation as a normal operation of the consciousness. In a cross-cultural context, individuals may be intent on separating themselves from any known bias through either consciously or unconsciously trying to distance themselves from prejudice. As Western expatriates, they may be interested in appearing not to hold biases against service providers who are from other countries.

Zou et al. (2009) supported this conclusion, stating that “culture affects people through their perceptions of what is consensually believed” (p. 579). “When communicating with in-group members, people continuously make reference to ideas in the cultural tradition to establish common ground, which gives rise to perceptions that one’s fellows share and endorse these ideas” (p. 580). This interaction with other group members speaks to the meso level of self-interpretation and therefore reinforces behaviors that may seem appropriate for that group, but may not align with core beliefs. Therefore, British expatriates in the UAE may feel that they have common experiences with other (what they would consider to be in-group) Western expatriates.

The comparative evaluation model by Malhotra et al. (1994) clearly illustrates some of the issues that feature in the advice they give. However, they also point out the environmental factors that prohibit or are blockers to improving from a developing country point of view. These include affluence, education, technology, value of time, customer expectation, and competition.

Foundational theorists for observing and understanding social behavior initially described the human experience “specifically around how reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 13). The expatriates who were involved in this study have a somewhat similar profile, from growing up in the same country to living abroad in the UAE for over three years. They have constructed their own reality based on their schemas of interpretation; as one participant stated, “I think people in general are shaped by their experiences and become more aware as their exposure increases.”

Schneier (2012) discussed the concept of trust as playing an important part in any interaction. Trust is a big part of the equation of how people interact and feel that they are safe within an interaction (Li, 2013). Emotions emerge and people remember them more clearly when they are powerful, and participants more readily described negative interactions than positive ones because of the negative emotions and therefore the lack of trust involved. Markus and Kitayama (2001) further commented on the role of an individual’s behavior and stated that “Emotions connect individuals to their social world and thus are the key to social integration and regulation because they are the basis of the reinforcement and reproduction of behavior” (p. 94).

Further to the emotional response, the idea of social power helps to frame how individuals interact.

Social power was defined as the potential for such influence, the ability of the agent or power figure to bring about such change, using resources available to him or her. These resources are represented in six bases of power: Informational, Reward, Coercion, Legitimate, Expertise, and Referent. (Raven, 2008, p. 1)

If something or someone threatens an individual's power base, as in the example above, the expatriate will react to correct it.

Chapter 4 Summary

Mechanically, the transaction between expatriates and service providers should act or evolve like a simple process flow with issue on one side, initiation, transaction, and through to a conclusion. However, with the introduction of people into this system, cultural inclination skews the mechanics. Factors such as how the participants initiated the interaction did not depend on how the interaction unfolded. In three interviews, participants had difficulty in remembering a positive cross-cultural transactional experience; however, all participants easily identified negative interactions they had experienced. Themes that are apparent throughout this section include empathy for service providers, frustration at timeliness, and the lowering of expectations where participants presume that an interaction with a service provider is more likely going to be negative than positive.

An understanding of the transaction during cross-cultural interaction as described through customer expectations and emotional responses helps to start the process of examining it holistically through parts. Individuals understand or organize information, and it is possible to synthesize this information (or cognitive schema) further into categories (Lord, 1985). British expatriates, therefore, construct their own frame of interpretation while living in Dubai based on their backgrounds and current social hierarchy situations. During a service transaction, they will

then act according to this frame. Erving Goffman's (1974) work concerning frames and individual interpretations of those frames also contributes to understanding how individuals view themselves within the context of a social hierarchy based on their interpretation of the situation. As individuals participate in an interaction, they interact based on a frame that factors such as their history, familial cultural influences, previous experiences/expectations, and operating environment influence.

Although study participants will try to build common ground and empathize with service providers, they do so with a nod to social hierarchy:

I was talking to him just as like a normal human being, I suppose and somebody that I was happy working in my house and doing stuff. He's not the same level as me. The poor guy probably gets paid massively less, but was there a level of respect there? Yes, because he knew what he was doing and he was fairly professional about the job.

Further to the acknowledgment of social hierarchy, there is also no discussion of social change or evolution. All the participants accepted that this is the way people do things in the UAE, and a few indicated that they did not see the need to change.

The advice and level of behavioral awareness both center around the ease and comfort of the British expatriate point of view. From their perspective, issues like telling the truth and listening to the customer do not take into consideration the service providers' cultural inclinations. For example, an Asian service provider may be more concerned about saving face or working in a micromanagement-type arrangement that prevents him or her from providing the expected service levels. One of the participants summed up this self-centered approach;

I think there is a certain sense of entitlement if you are an expatriate in Dubai. And I think that people tend to forget how it was at home the longer they are here. Because you

wouldn't behave like that in your own countries, so why would you behave like that here? It's like my sense of entitlement with the gardener. I would have dismissed him because I thought, "It was a bit cheeky to knock on the door" forgetting the fact that it's 44°C outside and he's working outside all day. Just in that moment it goes to show that you are capable of that.

Throughout this chapter, I have presented data in the form of quotations from the participants and further linked back to secondary sources of research. There are five key findings from the data:

1. Expatriates are aware of their behavior when they are frustrated—as demonstrated throughout the chapter, a sense of entitlement is present and public places are as acceptable as home to discuss and exhibit emotional behavior over service frustrations.
2. There is an unwillingness to change their behaviors—One of the important aspects to living in Dubai is that everyone besides Emirati locals is on a sponsored visa of some kind. Therefore, everyone is here at the behest of an employer, and if workers cause an issue, their employers can remove them from the country. This creates a mindset that things are temporary within the expatriate population.
3. Most have empathy for the situation of service providers—As the comments throughout this chapter demonstrate, the British expatriates have empathy for the service providers and have identified that the service providers may lack the skills and experience they need to perform the requested work. However, this does not stop the participants from voicing their frustration.

4. Most have revised their customer expectations through their experiences—By revised expectations, the trend from the data is to lower expectations and to hope that the service encounter will be a positive experience, as opposed to a negative one.
5. High awareness of social hierarchy in Dubai—All the participants I interviewed indicated an awareness of a hierarchy in Dubai and they also specified a power difference between expatriates and service providers based on this hierarchy. This finding could be due to the similar cultural hierarchy approach in the UK.

However, it was also apparent within the data that participants tended to react differently over time in Dubai to service encounters and therefore had a changing approach:

I think I probably would've gotten angrier earlier and I think over time, I've mellowed to some extent. I'll still come in, swearing and calling all the names under the sun, but usually, I will try and give them a little bit more time to fix something or rectify it anyway. Before, I'll just go completely ape on them, whereas I think before I would've expected better service to start with.

Other findings contributed to the experience of the transactions between expatriates and service providers. The first was the importance of communication in the context of the transaction. Without the ability to understand each other and listen to the problem, participants frequently felt frustrated and indicated that this could be their fault as much as that of the service providers. Another finding was the lack of cultural intelligence that the British expatriates demonstrated, as did the service providers. The difficulty with the concept of cultural intelligence is that may require a level of education that is out of reach for service providers, as organizations may not understand the organizational benefits of cultural training for service providers. Other factors may also include the personal competence level of the service provider,

who may come from a background of very little education, and therefore understanding these concepts might be somewhat difficult.

Chapter 5 presents conclusions for consideration, followed by references and appendices.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter discusses conclusions, focusing on the experience of the expatriate within the context of a cross-cultural service transaction. It presents a study summary, followed by a model for consideration, implications, recommendations for future research, and a final reflection.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the transactional relationship between British expatriates and service providers in Dubai. The objectives supporting this were to:

- (1) Determine the factors affecting the British expatriate customer experience in Dubai.
- (2) Establish the perceived shortfalls of the service providers from the British expatriate point of view.
- (3) Determine whether the intercultural service gap (identified by Stauss & Mang, 1999) also occurs in the relationships between different cultures, neither from the host country.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, I undertook individual interviews and a focus group to obtain information. There were 15 interviewees, and as the interviews progressed, participants' comments began to sound similar and patterns of information started to emerge. I sent these interviews for transcription and then sent them back to the participants for feedback before performing an initial data analysis to prepare the material for a focus group. Only six participants could attend the focus group in Dubai, and those who attended participated in a reflective exercise and further discussed some of the themes that emerged from the interviews. After collecting the focus group feedback from participants, I performed a narrative analysis to identify the main themes before doing a more extensive coding using Microsoft Excel.

The main findings of how British expatriates experience cross-cultural interactions with service providers are that:

1. Expatriates are aware of their behavior when they become frustrated.
2. There is an unwillingness to change their behaviors.
3. Most have empathy for the situation of service providers.
4. Most have revised (lowered) their customer expectations
5. There is a high awareness of social hierarchy in Dubai.

These findings are consistent with previous studies of expatriates in a cross-cultural context; however, I considered the actual transaction as well as the experience of self and perception of other. I reviewed the results of this study using a transactional experience model. This model identified other external dynamics affecting the experiences of the participants.

Although this study has been a brief look at how British expatriates experience cross-cultural service transactions in Dubai, there are many issues that I have consciously not addressed due to the nature of a dissertation. I identify these issues in both the implications section and the recommendations for future research section following the conclusions.

Transactional Experience Model

The goal of this study was to generate knowledge and understanding from an expatriate point of view of expatriates' experiences of interacting with service providers. Factors that impact the service experience include communication, quality, and empowerment of the service provider to make decisions. However, as the data demonstrated, there are gaps that researchers must address before they can develop a holistic picture of the other side of the equation, namely, the point of view of service providers.

I have created the following model as an anchor for discussion of transactional service situations between expatriates and service providers from an expatriate point of view using the data generated by this study (Figure 12).

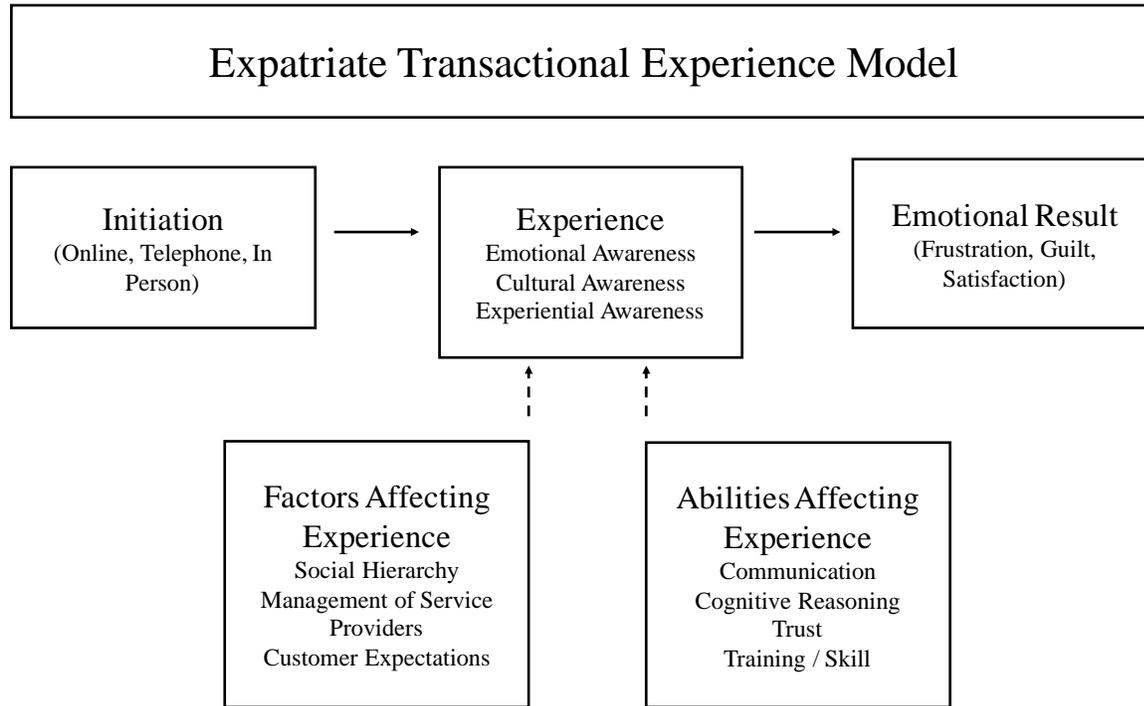


Figure 12. Expatriate transactional experience model.

Initiation. The model begins in the left upper corner, with the initiation of the transaction. During this study, it was interesting to note that most of the interactions began by telephone. The two cases that initiated via online application had issues where one needed clarification in person and the other required a phone call in addition to the online form. The other two face-to-face transactions were more straightforward and required a different level of communication. The expectation was that registering a request via electronic means would yield a clear result due to the expectation that communication over a telephone would be difficult.

Experience. The next step in the model is the experience of the expatriate. The experience is partially the result of awareness on the part of the expatriate. The study data suggested that expatriates who exhibited empathy had more positive experiences; however, proving this would require further quantitative data.

- Emotional awareness—refers to the ability to manage one’s emotional responses to the transactional situation. The basis of this emotional experience is a sliding scale depending on the interaction factors and the emotional awareness of the expatriate within the interaction.
- Cultural awareness—refers to the ability to understand the culture of the person with whom one is dealing during the transaction. Is the expatriate familiar with the culture and can the expatriate interact accordingly with its norms and values?
- Experiential awareness—refers to the ability to utilize past experiences within the current transaction or to create cognitive associations that positively impact the outcome of the interaction.

There are two dynamics that further affect the transactional experience of the expatriate. The first covers social hierarchy, management of service providers, and customer expectations. Other factors around the service provider within the system can influence each of these dynamics, and they may not be the fault of the service provider. For example, the management of the service provider and the service providers’ ability to make decisions at the time of an interaction without having to go to a higher authority may have an effect. The service provider in this situation is unable to act because he or she does not have the power to do so.

The second refers to abilities such as communication, cognitive reasoning, trust, and training/skills. These are skills and abilities that the service provider can develop through

training and education means; however, this further depends on the monetary position of the service provider or the management organization's willingness to invest in its employees. For example, communication (listed first because of its importance) can develop further in terms of language skills and in how to communicate in understandable ways.

These dynamics, although the participants identified them during the interviews, do not feature exclusively in the dissertation key findings because they are all factors that affect the expat and lead to the findings.

Emotional result. The final step in the model is based on emotion due to the lack or excess of emotion when study participants described their interactions. Frustration was the most common term when participants were speaking about transactional service interactions. They used the term satisfied widely when they were happy with the service they received, and several participants spoke of guilt when utilizing a service provider for a job that they were able to do themselves, OR participants used guilt as a reflective term when they had acted badly in service situations.

Implications

This study has provided insight into the transactional experiences of British expatriates in Dubai. However, while the sample size somewhat limits the generality of its conclusions until further research takes place, there are reasonable implications for both scholarship and research that arise from the conclusions.

This study contributes to the research on cross-cultural transactional experience through first building on the Stauss and Mang's (1999) model and providing further understanding of *how* British expatriates experience that transaction. Since this study is the first of its kind in an

area that generally involves study in polycultural contexts, the intent is to encourage further avenues of exploration utilizing the model I have proposed for further comparison.

Further to the scholarly implications, there are several practice implications: as globalization trends continue, expatriates need to recognize and accept their role within transactional cross-cultural situations. Additionally, this study may serve to make service provider management aware of some of the transactional issues such as training and communications. The transactional experience model may be of use to service providers and expatriates, who may employ it as a basis for discussion to ensure each actor is aware of his or her role within the situation as well as ensuring service quality and creating a better experience for everyone involved.

Changes in laws in Dubai regarding the treatment and hiring of service providers are continually improving life for those individuals. This model may hopefully lead to discussions on further training and skills for those service providers, which will naturally move them up the social hierarchy, so that others may view them as experts as opposed to uneducated labor.

Finally, as expatriates continue to acculturate, a level of emotional intelligence and therefore cultural intelligence may serve them well in service interactions, interactions in their organizations, and interactions in their social lives. The complexities of Dubai life will continue to evolve, and as the system evolves, coping mechanisms through understanding will ensure expatriates have a better quality of life.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the research process, participants and individuals who were external to the process asked several questions about various other avenues of questioning that might be

appropriate to the topic. It was important to ensure that the topic focused on a very specific subset of the population to create general initial findings.

The recommendations for future research fall into quantitative and qualitative methodologies, but a mixed-methods approach could also be appropriate:

1. Qualitative Study
 - a. utilizing other nationalities within Dubai to test against this study;
 - b. defining a service provider population and comparing the findings to this study;
 - c. comparing the experiences of various cultures within the service provider populations, including various types of work;
 - d. comparison of other expatriate groups such as other Commonwealth countries or even other social hierarchies within the same nationality as the service providers;
 - e. observation of cross-cultural transactional interactions in practice.
2. Quantitative Research
 - a. Expatriate or service provider-based research to create a rich base of data for comparison to the required quantitative study.

Final Reflection

This study began as an effort to put a framework around interactions that are an everyday occurrence in Dubai. The emerging results were not surprising, but an acknowledgement that we all live and thrive in a system. The thought-provoking part of this is how we challenge ourselves on how we choose to participate in that system, as changes that occur impact all participants in both positive and negative ways.

The most surprising finding of this study was how much empathy fellow expatriates had for the situation of service providers in Dubai. Although these same participants did not

necessarily exhibit a strong sense of cultural intelligence, the acknowledgement of the situation of another culture within Dubai is a positive indication that under the right conditions, changes are possible. This study has also been about creating understanding of what may need to improve over time to ensure a better quality of interaction between both service providers and customers. Acknowledging this through better training and education on the service provider side and better emotional intelligence on the part of the customer may positively impact both the transaction and quality of life, removing emotions such as frustration for both parties and clarifying intentions.

Throughout the research process, the biggest impact on me as a researcher has been the self-awareness that comes from evaluating a subject. The acknowledgement of past behavior and the intent to interact differently in the future have required reflective thought and change. The current ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum frequently publishes poetry about the land and his people. It is fitting to close this dissertation with one of his poems that reflects the nature of the UAE.

Happiest Nation

Our people are happy and in their prime,
Since the days of Zayed till the end of time.

Blessed with honor and dignity they thrive,
Admonished by none, they lead a joyous revive.

While some struggle with obstacles and strain,
Our people are sheltered from agony and pain.

Their children wrapped in peace, they do not fear,
For their wishes and desires, they need not shed a tear.

They live in justice, their dreams fulfilled,
Not chasing illusions, their visions instilled.

Led by Khalifa, compassionate and fair,
Wishes are realized, demands met with care.

Upon hearing what was said, we rejoiced with joy,
That our people are the happiest, be it man or boy.

Fulfilling our duty is a passion we prize,
And every day, an opportunity does rise.

From friends and foes alike, a true confession,
The fruits of our labor leave a lasting impression.

May our land remain prosperous forever more,
While people live happiest embraced in its core.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
<https://sheikhmohammed.ae/en-us/Poetry>

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Participant Consent Forms

Individual Interview Consent Form

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hilary Curry, doctoral student in the School of Organizational Development and Change at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This study is part of Hilary's dissertation and is supervised by Dr. Barbara Mink. This research involves exploring the interaction of British expatriates during face-to-face service transactions with other cultures.

The study involves one-on-one interviews on your own experiences reflecting on behavior through interactions with other cultures in Dubai. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. Tape recordings and transcriptions will be listened to and read by only the researcher, dissertation chair and committee, and a professional transcriptionist, who has signed the attached professional assistance confidentiality agreement. The recordings will be kept in a locked file when not in use. The audiotapes and transcriptions will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is complete.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms and other identifying information will be kept separate from the data. All materials will be kept at the researcher's personal residence and locked in a file cabinet when not in use. Any records that would identify you as a participant in this study, such as this informed consent form, will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is completed.

All data will be stripped of personal information in the case that any quotes that might be included in the final research report. The results of this research will be used in Hilary's coursework and dissertation, and possibly published in subsequent journals or books. There are some benefits and minimal risks you may encounter as a participant in this study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your interviews, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed. No compensation will be provided for participation. You will be offered an opportunity to view the results and give your feedback and reactions. The researcher will contact you when the results are available. This meeting is entirely optional and will last approximately one hour. You will also have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview and to provide any further clarifying comments or feedback to the researcher.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please ask the researcher before signing this form. You may also contact the supervising faculty if you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study. The supervising faculty has provided contact information at the bottom of this form. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Fielding Graduate University IRB by e-mail at irb@fielding.edu or by telephone at 805-898-4034.

The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains the right to access the signed informed consent forms and other study documents.

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agree to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Fielding Researcher: Hilary Curry
Fielding Supervising Faculty: Dr. Barbara Mink

Focus Group Consent Form

You have been asked to participate further in a research study conducted by Hilary Curry, doctoral student in the School of Organizational Development and Change at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This study is part of Hilary's dissertation and is supervised by Dr. Barbara Mink. This research involves exploring the interaction of British expatriates during face-to-face service transactions with other cultures.

This second part of the study involves a focus group activity with all of the study's participants. During the focus group, initial findings will be presented to the group and the group will undertake a validation exercise and express its opinions on the findings. The focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours and as with the individual interviews, the focus group will be recorded by and transcribed. Tape recordings and transcriptions will be listened to and read by only the researcher, dissertation chair and committee, and a professional transcriptionist, who has signed the attached professional assistance confidentiality agreement. The recordings will be kept in a locked file when not in use. The audiotapes and transcriptions will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is complete. You will also have the opportunity to review the transcript of the focus group and to provide any further clarifying comments or feedback to the researcher.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms and other identifying information will be kept separate from the data. All materials will be kept at the researcher's personal residence and locked in a file cabinet when not in use. Any records that would identify you as a participant in this study, such as this informed consent form, will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is completed.

Data will be grouped and quotes stripped of personal information that might be included in the final research report. The results of this research will be used in Hilary's coursework and dissertation, and possibly published in subsequent journals or books. There are some benefits and minimal risks you may encounter as a participant in this study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your interview/focus group, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed. No compensation will be provided for participation. You will be offered an opportunity to view the results and give your feedback and reactions. The researcher will contact you when the results are available.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please ask the researcher before signing this form. You may also contact the supervising faculty if you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study. The supervising faculty has provided contact information at the bottom of this form. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Fielding Graduate University IRB by e-mail at irb@fielding.edu or by telephone at 805-898-4034.

The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains the right to access the signed informed consent forms and other study documents.

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agree to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files.

Name: _____

Date: _____7th December 2016_____

Signature: _____

Fielding Researcher: Hilary Curry
Fielding Supervising Faculty: Dr. Barbara Mink

Appendix B: Individual Interview Guide

Introduction by the interviewer:

Thank you for coming today; I am grateful for your participation in this study. This study is about exploring your experiences with service providers in Dubai. Service providers could be anyone from someone who is coming into your home to fix something such as a repair person to interactions that you may have at a shopping mall with a service provider.

Please fill out the following and I will be recording this session and making notes.

Name

Age (21-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65+)

Sex (Male/Female)

Marital Status (Married, Single, Partner)

Currently Employed (Yes/No)

Do you have children (Yes/No)

Years living in Dubai (1-2, 3-5, 6-10, 11+)

Frequency you visit your home country each year

What is the average length of visit (less than a week, 1-2 weeks, 3 weeks+)

1. Let's start with some context ... Can you tell me about why you (and your family) chose to move to Dubai?

2. Before moving to Dubai, what did you know about the culture?

Prompts as required:

- Did you have connections here you spoke with?
- Did people at home give you advice?
- Did you research it online?
- What was your perception of the culture and/or nationality mix?

3. Can you describe (from initiation to conclusion) a positive cross-cultural face-to-face service situation?

Prompts as required:

- How did this interaction come about? Did you initiate it?
- What was your expectation of the encounter?
- What was the nationality of the person you had the interaction with? Would it have been a different situation with someone from another culture? Why?
- What is your expectation of service providers and timeliness?
- How did the service provider address you? Was that what you expected? What is the norm in Dubai for forms of address?
- During this interaction, do you think you would have been treated differently if you were a man/woman?
- Were there any points where you felt uncomfortable during this interaction?

- How do you think the service provider earned your trust?
- Do you think you would react to that situation in the same way if you were in your home country? Why?
- Do you feel that your circle of friends has had similar experiences? Is this the norm?

3a) Can you describe a positive cross-cultural face-to-face service interaction that you have witnessed or heard of between another expat and service provider?

4. Can you describe (from initiation to conclusion) a negative experience that you may have had in a cross-cultural face-to-face service situation?

Prompts as required:

- How did this interaction come about? Did you initiate it?
- What was your expectation of the encounter?
- What was the nationality of the person you had the interaction with? Would it have been a different situation with someone from another culture? Why?
- What is your expectation of service providers and timeliness?
- How did the service provider address you? Was that what you expected? What is the norm in Dubai for forms of address?
- During this interaction, do you think you would have been treated differently if you were a man/woman?
- Were there any points where you felt uncomfortable during this interaction
- How do you think the service provider earned your trust?
- Do you think you would react to that situation in the same way if you were in your home country? Why?
- Do you feel that your circle of friends has had similar experiences? Is this the norm?

4a) Can you describe a negative cross-cultural face-to-face service interaction that you have witnessed or heard of between another expat and service provider?

4b) Do you think expatriates try and manage how they are perceived by other expatriates? By service providers?

5) Do you think expatriates try and manage how they are perceived by other expatriates? By service providers? How? Reflecting on both your positive and negative experiences, what advice would you give other expatriates when in a cross-cultural service situation?

Prompts as required:

- Have you changed your approach to cross-cultural interactions from the time you arrived in Dubai until now? (Address people differently, different sense of personal space, different personal habits like how you drive, when you do errands, etc....).
- Is this impacted by your other experience abroad?

6. What advice would you give service providers (from another culture) when working with you? What advice would you give expatriates?

7. Do you feel that people from various cultures are treated equally in Dubai? Why do you think this is?

Prompts as required:

- Do you feel that one culture has influence on how other cultures are treated?
- Do you think the media plays any role? In what form? Do you see this changing over time?
- Is there a male/female imbalance?

8. Knowing what you know now about living and working in Dubai, would you have still moved here?

9. How long do you think you are planning on staying?

10. Do you think about the consequences of what you say and do more at work or outside of the workplace

Follow-up e-mail questions:

11. Would you say you generally have more positive or negative experiences with service providers? Do you think that has anything to do with the way you approach service situations? Why?

12. Do you think British expatriates are generally aware of their behavior? Why?

13. Has this interview made you more aware of your behavior?

14. Do you have any further reflections?

Appendix C: Focus Group Plan

Venue: Meeting room in the Marriott Hotel, Marina, Dubai

Time: 7 pm till 9 pm

Conditions: Flip Charts, Markers, Post-Its

Introduction from the interviewer:

Hi Everyone, thank you for attending this focus group today, The purpose of this is to have a look at some of the findings from your individual interviews and add some more context and explore a few themes in more depth.

As with your individual interviews, this focus group will be transcribed. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to excuse yourself from the study.

Activity #1 – Cultural Context

Pair up participants and invite the interviewees to decenter a little and to consider the same incident or situation from the perspective of the service provider. Provide each person with a role to play and a few points that he or she needs to get across in the interaction. Provide paper for participants to make notes about how they would feel and approach it and host a group discussion asking the following questions:

Role of the Expat:

What was the hardest part of your role?

What was the easiest part of the role play?

Did you have any communication issues between your pair?

Do you feel that emotion played any part of this role play?

How do you think the other role felt as you introduced parts of your role?

Thinking back to your individual interviews, does this change your perception of cross-cultural interactions?

Why do you think expatriates relocate to live in Dubai?

Role of the Service Provider:

What was the hardest part of your role?

What was the easiest part of the role play?

Did you have any communication issues between your pair?

Do you feel that emotion played any part of this role play?

How do you think the other role felt as you introduced parts of your role?

Thinking back to your individual interviews, does this change your perception of cross-cultural interactions?

Why do you think service providers relocate to live in Dubai?

Group discussion about findings.

Activity #2 – Member Check

The study participants will be introduced to themes that have emerged from the research through flipcharts around the room. The themes will be directly pulled from the research questions and therefore the information presented will be familiar to the participants. Individuals will begin by walking around the room and adding comments/questions/thoughts to the papers with post-its. Then, as a group, the facilitator will lead a discussion of each chart with the group. The intent of this exercise is to delve a bit deeper into the themes and to discover any new thoughts and information, but also to seek to ensure that participants are engaged in the topic.

Themes for discussion:

- The Transaction
- The Experience of Self
- The Perception of Other
- Feedback

Group discussion about each chart.