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Faculté des sciences sociales
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DOCTORAL THESIS

When Anti-Corruption Initiatives Meet the Culture of Wasta: *The Case of Public Sector Reforms in Jordan*

By
MOHAMMED AL-SALEH

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Research Supervisor:

Eric Champagne PhD

Associate Professor, University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies
120 University Room # 6081
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N1

Defense Committee:

Christian Rouillard PhD

Full Professor, University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies
120 University Room # 7027
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N1

Noomane Raboudi PhD

Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies
120 University Room # 7022
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N1

Frank Ohemeng PhD

Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies
120 University Room # 7024
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N1

Bessma Momani PhD (External)

Associate Professor, University of Waterloo
Department of Political Studies
200 University Ave W, Hagey Hall, Room # 315
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1

Mohammed Al-Saleh, Ottawa, Canada, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Jordan has strived to manage a large-scale anti-corruption initiative for the public sector since 2006. Despite the implementation of laws and bodies mandated to address corruption, public trust of government remains low and the country's position on international corruption rankings has not improved. This study seeks to investigate how the implementation of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative impacts the organizational culture of the country's public sector. It proposes that *wasta*, a unique Arab phenomenon that promotes the values of loyalty, represents the most significant barrier to penetrating what is essentially a normalized culture of corruption in the Government of Jordan. The organizational culture theory model was adopted as the theoretical framework because of its ability to account for differences in culture where promoted values do not necessarily correspond with employee actions. Because literature in this area is rare, a qualitative exploratory methodology was chosen. Based on data saturation, a total of 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted on-site in Jordan with mid-level managers identified using snowball sampling. The results prove the theoretical proposal to be accurate and show that *wasta* has evolved to the deepest level of organizational culture. The results are sub-divided into two major themes: culture and leadership. The results show that *wasta* is a deeply held and engrained part of organizational culture and that it is difficult for anti-corruption efforts to change this culture in the Jordanian public sector. The thesis also demonstrate how leadership can be both something negative or something positive in the fight against *wasta* depending on how it is used.. The findings carry implications for public administration, foreign policy, and society as a whole especially with regard to the development of more effective anti-corruption strategies in Jordan and abroad. The specific contribution to knowledge of this thesis is the examination of how organizational cultural reforms impact public-sector organizations in the

Middle Eastern context given the influence of wasta, which is not discussed in the literature but remains important for the field. Future research should consider the views of a wider variety of stakeholders, as well as the impact of wasta on organizational characteristics including performance and delivery of public services.

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وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

“My Lord, increase me in knowledge.” (Qur'an, Ta-Ha 20:114)

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

On April 27 2005, his Majesty Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein, the King of Jordan, attended and spoke at the Asia-Middle East Business Forum in Singapore. The King encouraged reforms to government and committed to strike at public sector corruption in his country: “There must be transparent, accountable institutions. We are serious about combating corruption, which is an enemy of public confidence and drains a nation’s resources” (2005, par. 8). These words came less than two months after Jordan signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and would come before the launch of the largest formal anti-corruption initiative ever attempted in the Arab world – Jordan’s anti-corruption strategy (Terrill, 2010).

Alongside the King’s intentions, the Government of Jordan has made a recognized and legitimate effort to address public sector corruption beginning with signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2005 (Kumar, 2006) and the creation of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative in 2006. This initiative consists of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62), the Anti-Corruption Commission, and to a lesser extent the National Anti-Corruption Strategy which represents a tangible roadmap for achieving future objectives (OECD, 2013). Jordan’s anti-corruption initiative faces the challenge of changing an organizational culture that welcomes corruption through a historically determined and socially valued tribal mentality. Changing organizational culture has been considered extraordinarily difficult (Gagliardi, 1986) and requiring specific characteristics like leadership and extended periods of time (Schein, 2010).

At this point, it is worth to mention that Jordan's anti-corruption efforts have been the subject of international praise as innovative and unique in the Arab world (Terrill, 2010). A 2011 report issued by the United Nations recognizes the country's effort to create public sector workplaces grounded in good governance and integrity: "Through the Anti-Corruption Commission, Jordan has been engaged in the promotion and strengthening of preventive measures aiming at the prevention and combating of corruption more efficiently and more affectively" (p. 1). Jordan's score on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is also among the most competitive in the Arab World, averaging at 4.7 since the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Transparency International, 2013). Despite these efforts and accomplishments, corruption remains a significant problem in Jordan and has recently become the subject of protests and demonstrations across major cities, including Amman, Irbid and Zarqa, among others.

Terrill (2010) actually affirms that Jordan is currently leading the Middle East region in governmental anti-corruption policymaking, having established a comprehensive Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in 2006 and Anti-Corruption Commission in 2008. The Anti-Corruption Commission is an independent governmental agency whose jurisdiction extends to the whole of the Jordanian Government (OECD, 2013). At least this is the case in theory, although some argue that the Anti-Corruption Commission's policy influence are lacking in practice. Its mandate is to work both as an investigative body to oversee reports of supposed public sector corruption and as an intermediary between complainants and the public prosecutor. To date, it has been successful in investigating hundreds of allegations of corruption with several dozen referred to the courts each year (*Ibid.*). In 2012, the commission developed its second five-year strategic plan that established new priorities for raising awareness on the importance of fighting

corruption throughout governmental departments and ministries. Among other new developments, the 2012-2017 plan calls for increasing whistleblower protection through the creation of a dedicated witness protection unit as well as authorization for the commission to work in closer collaboration with international partners (Government of Jordan, 2013b). The actual efficiency of the whistleblower protection will be made clear as the program is put into practice over time (*Ibid.*).

That being said, Data compiled by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2013) also shows that the large-scale anti-corruption initiative launched by King Abdullah II has had little impact on improving the country's score since its adoption in 2006. Official documents from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) from 2012, compiled as part of the desk review for this study, confirm that one of the indicators of the success of Jordan's anti-corruption initiative was "Improved ranking for Jordan in terms of anti-corruption index" (p. 7). However, Jordan's CPI rank has remained at an average of 4.8 since the early 2000s and seems unaffected by the introduction of anti-corruption measures; further, its score has worsened over the last year (Transparency International, 2013). Corruption in the Jordanian public sector is also evidenced by the Arab Spring movement which has seen dozens of protests throughout the country beginning in 2011 (Helfont and Helfont, 2012; Ryan, 2011) that led to several dismissals and appointments of new Prime Ministers (Maras, 2013).

In spite of all these anti-corruption initiatives, Jordanians have increasingly begun taking their distrust of government to the streets in protests against what they perceive are high rates of corruption throughout government (Ogujiuba, 2013; Valbjom, 2013). Various organizations and youth groups have emerged throughout the country in light of the Arab Spring, motivated by the combined factors of unemployment, rising fuel prices, and perceptions of public sector

corruption (Smith, 2013). The result is a logical disconnect that is readily apparent: despite legitimate efforts to address corruption beginning in the early 2000s, the Jordanian public at large remains unconvinced that progress is being made in this regard. Jordan's CPI score, though good in comparison with its neighbors, has actually worsened significantly since the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) was introduced (Transparency International, 2013). Between 2008 and 2013, Jordan's score on the Transparency International CPI decreased by 0.6 points (*Ibid.*).

Despite the good intentions and efforts, it seems that the Anti-Corruption Commission has been unsuccessful in creating a public sector organizational culture that values integrity, honesty, good governance, and transparency. The introduction of the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission has largely been a top-down approach. Following the creation of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in 2006, departments and ministries were given a new piece of legislation to follow. The Anti-Corruption Commission was given an oversight and enforcement role to act as the government's corruption watchdog (OECD, 2013).

Given this disconnect, it is apparent that from a public administration perspective the policy being created by public sector leaders is not effectively being translated into practice. In other words, the policies espoused by political leaders are not necessarily taking form in the organizational culture of public sector employees. This study intends to discover the constraints of Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption initiative when confronted to the existing culture and leadership of governmental departments and ministries. Scholars have, in the past, compared corruption to a cultural phenomenon in organizations (Kuran, 2011; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Because Middle Eastern organizations are greatly influenced by a unique phenomenon known as "wasta" (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994), a central topic of inquiry involved the role of wasta with respect to anti-corruption measure implementation and management.

It is important to recognize that public sector institutions in the Middle Eastern have certain specific elements that are unique from other institutions elsewhere in the world (Terrill, 2010). The Middle East, as argued by Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993), has strong historic roots that go back thousands of years and are based on tribal history. The authors contend that this history can be found in certain respects within modern public sector institutions. Some of the findings emerging from the research demonstrated how engrained traditional Middle Eastern values are still found in modern public sector institutions in Jordan.

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) are the first researchers who have published a comprehensive overview of the *wasta* phenomenon. Their respected study explains that *wasta* is difficult to translate to English today because its meaning has shifted over time. Prior to the 20th century, “mediatory” *wasta* reflected the reliance on respected tribal or family leaders to solve disputes and problems occurring between groups of individuals. However, modern-day “intercessory” *wasta* reflects the improper use of one’s personal network of family members and close friends to get an unfair advantage in various social and professional areas. Individuals who benefit from *wasta* are typically able to fast-track their way to well-paying jobs, secure successful contracts, and skip to the front of the line in receiving services (Barnett et al., 2013). The results of *wasta* on organizational corruption are therefore substantial.

Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) explicitly forbids nepotism and favoritism in governmental organizations. However, *wasta* has become engrained in the mentality of many Jordanians as a positive cultural value of respect and loyalty (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994). A major study by Loewe et al. (2008) in fact discovered that *wasta* is considered by many people in Jordan to be an important part of their history and cultural identity. The respect for *wasta* can

be traced to Jordan's earliest inhabitants who lived in the country during prehistoric times (Barnett et al., 2013; French, 2012).

Wasta has been a recognized part of Jordanian traditional culture with the earliest records of the phenomenon emerging during the 14th century (Spengler, 1964). Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993; 1994) provide a detailed historical overview of the term and explain its historical evolution over time. According to the authors, it was originally used as a form of problem-solving and diplomacy amongst tribes (mediatory) but, during the 20th century, evolved into a way of capitalizing on the opportunity of networks and connections to gain an advantage over others (intercessory). Research shows that wasta is still very influential in most, if not all, professional relationships in Jordan (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2006; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994; Loewe et al., 2008; Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Whiteoak et al., 2006). Today, intercessory wasta has evolved to reflect the use of social networks and connections in order to secure specific advantages to individual or groups. Weir (2003) argues that historic and modern wasta are closely related as they encourage families (tribes) to work together and help one another to ensure mutual survival. However, it is important to note that modern wasta allows for social networks made up of stakeholders beyond one's family though blood relatives always take priority under its unwritten cultural code (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2006).

Researchers also suggest that, because of its cultural roots, wasta has now become a distinct part of the organizational culture of Jordanian public sector departments and ministries (Loewe et al., 2008; Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Smith et al., 2012). Loewe et al. (2008) discovered that Jordanians acknowledge and justify wasta as a form of culture and tradition within organizations: "a lot of interview partners stated that the use of wasta was closely linked

to traditional values and social norms and therefore an integral part of the Jordanian culture” (p. 265). Hutchings and Weir (2006) argue that in the Arab World social and historical culture and organizational culture coexist: “it is often very difficult to draw boundaries around what can be considered to be cultural influence and what is institutional influence, as they reinforce each other” (p. 146). Evidence from a variety of sources tends to suggest that the extent of corruption in the Jordanian public sector remains high and can be explained by the difficulty of changing public sector organizations due to the culture of *wasta*.

1.2. Thesis' Goal, Overview and Structure

This thesis considers the large-scale anti-corruption initiative of the Government of Jordan in terms of an organizational change initiative. Because of the close relationship between *wasta* and organizational culture (Loewe et al., 2008), this study seeks to consider the phenomenon using and organizational culture theory. Past studies have examined *wasta* using social capital theory (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009) and economics (Barnett et al., 2013). Authors have also approached the study of *wasta* by investigating outcomes such as organizational promotion and advancement (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), public perception of those who use *wasta* (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011), as well as justifications for continuing to rely on *wasta* in organizations (Loewe et al., 2008). However, no research has addressed *wasta* from an organizational culture theory perspective or accounted for a large-scale anti-corruption initiative. Such work is relatively unseen in the Middle East (Terrill, 2010). **The general goal of this research is to better understand the influence of *wasta* in the context of public sector reforms in the Middle East.**

Using Jordan as a case study is relevant and timely largely because it is considered among the most progressive nations in the Middle East (Yom, 2013). The Government of Jordan has supported reform efforts (Mufti, 1999) and is open to international research even on a subject as sensitive as governmental corruption. Because no prior research has approached this combination of topics, this study took an exploratory approach with the goal of generating new insights and forming new understandings of *wasta* in Jordan.

In this thesis, an empirical qualitative methodology is used to determine the effects of *wasta* as a constraint to Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption initiative. Corruption has been approached successfully in past research using a qualitative methodology (Marra, 2000; Reyes,

2010; Ufere et al., 2012). The case study method is used due to its ability to further researchers' understandings of a specific phenomenon (Yin, 2009). In order to maintain relevance to public administration, the specific case study surrounds the management of the Anti-Corruption Commission from 2008 to present. Despite the recognized drawbacks, the decision to use a single case study is appropriate here because the research goal involves acquiring the qualitative deep description of one case in particular (Geertz, 1973).

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted on-site in Jordan. Because semi-structured interviewing encourages a natural flow of dialogue between researchers and participants (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011), it is considered an appropriate data collection technique in research using a qualitative design (Leeuw et al., 1999). Participants consisted of mid-level managers currently working in any pre-identified administrative federal public sector organization of the Government of Jordan. The decision to interview mid-level managers was strategic because of their unique position in the organization as having both supervisory and reporting responsibilities (Paschanski, 1985).

Snowball sampling was used in order to identify potential study participants. Snowball sampling is an effective sampling strategy for hard-to-reach populations (Sadler et al., 2010). As the Government of Jordan does not provide detailed public contact information of its staff, using referrals allowed the researcher to more efficiently reach the mid-level managers. To further improve the process, the researcher worked in close collaboration with the relevant public sector officials where staff provided approvals and initial participant contact information. Sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation. Considered appropriate in the conduct of qualitative studies where the research process evolves during fieldwork (Francis et al., 2010), data saturation occurs when no new themes emerge from continued data collection (Grady,

1998). It was determined that data saturation was reached following a total of 19 interviews. Saturation was reached based on certain themes repeating during interviews later into the data collection process. It is also important to note that this amount of interviews was surprising given the difficulty of foreign field work. Manual descriptive data coding was used to identify the main research themes (Miles et al. 2014).

In addition to interviews, the study is also using a desk review approach. The desk review technique is useful because it provides researchers with fast and inexpensive material for purposes of added understanding (Crouch and Housden, 2003). Three types of documents were consulted for the purposes of the desk review. First, official documentation from stakeholders was examined including the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) itself and materials from international organizations like the United Nations, among others. Second, peer-reviewed academic literature surrounding *wasta* was comprehensively analyzed. Third, historical accounts surrounding the rise of Jordan as a nation were analyzed because the origins of *wasta* are traced to Jordan's tribal heritage (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). In this regard, the researcher was able to apply his own experience as a Jordanian in the analysis of historical materials.

The study theoretically proposes that *wasta* prevents anti-corruption initiative implementation in the Jordanian public sector. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews proves this theoretical proposal to be relatively accurate. In addition, the research identifies, under an inductive-abductive research protocol, a total of ten overarching themes divided in two sub-themes; culture and leadership. These themes emerged as most prominent during the interview process. The themes carry both theoretical and empirical relevance.

With respect to the sub-theme of culture, mid-level managers recognized the seriousness of *wasta* in their workplaces. In line with the findings of Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), it was found that *wasta* features most prominently in the human resource aspect of public management in Jordan. That is, *wasta* is most commonly used to find employment for those with good connections or promote workers based on their personal network of family and friends. In many cases, public sector officials accept these employees because the top-down hierarchical structure of their workplace discourages them from disagreeing with the employment of these people, even if it is illegal or unethical. It is also suggested that *wasta* is difficult to defeat because it is a type of insurance. Because the future can never be predicted, Jordanians are more likely to use *wasta* in order to maintain a strong network of contacts on which they can rely in the future. Their accounts provide further evidence that *wasta* represents a basic underlying assumption (Schein, 2010) in public sector organizations.

An interesting finding reflects some mid-level managers' view that their organizations function relatively normally and do not have as much a problem with corruption as the media promotes (Sharp, 2010). The desk reviews showed also that reports of *wasta*-style corruption are under-reported to the Anti-Corruption Commission (OECD, 2013). Civil servants in Jordan appear to have generally unfavorable opinions of corrupt action involving money (bribery or kickbacks) but justify *wasta* as ethically acceptable. The majority of mid-level managers interviewed consider *wasta* to be unfair and want it to be eliminated, but have serious doubts about the ability of the Anti-Corruption Commission to accomplish this goal given that *wasta* is such a normal phenomenon in Jordan (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994).

The second sub-theme dividing the findings was leadership. The interviews showed that some participants reported having a lack of incentives to come forward and bring their concerns about corruption to the attention of the Anti-Corruption Commission. This finding showed how the organizational culture limits the possibility of employees taking a leadership role in fighting corruption. Another problem facing those who are exposed to corruption and preventing them from coming forward is the organizational hierarchy in Jordanian public-sector institutions. Employees are sometimes afraid to come forward because organizational leaders assume positions of power and dominance over their staff which is typical for the Middle-Eastern culture.

Several participants were concerned about the lack of tools provided to public servants on behalf of the Anti-Corruption Commission to specifically address supposed instances of corruption in their workplaces. They explained that while anti-corruption is strongly promoted by political leaders as an espoused belief (Schein, 2010), actual government employees get very little in the way of practical strategies (training, codes of conduct, etc.) to combat corruption and would like to see the government play more of a leadership role. This further emphasizes how, from a public administration perspective, there is a gap between policy making and practice. Although the changes are slow, it appears that leadership can be used effectively to address corruption in Jordanian public sector organizations and some public servants believe that change is possible.

Several theoretical and policy implications of the findings are discussed. The study is beneficial for public administration because it shows how Schein's (2010) three levels of culture model can be used to study change initiatives which are rare in the literature (Alvesson, 2013). The themes also carry implications for foreign policy in that they can help in the development of

future anti-corruption measures in Jordan as well as more broadly in the Middle East. Because wasta can be compared with similar social networking phenomena internationally (Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Smith et al., 2012), the findings have implications for society as a whole.

Despite the best effort of the researcher to conduct a methodologically precise study, there are several limitations to this study. Due to its qualitative nature, it is difficult for researchers to generalize from the data. There is also a very slight possibility of bias or exaggeration towards the positive in the responses of interviewees. Finally, the study relied upon a smaller sample size in order to acquire in-depth experiential perspectives from a reduced number of participants, as opposed to conducting a survey with a larger number of participants. Despite these minor limitations, the study provides a valuable contribution to knowledge and supports future work in this area of research. As there have been few empirical studies conducted on wasta, the contribution of this unique research concerns how organizational culture in a Middle Eastern context affects the introduction of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative using hands-on original data.

The following paragraph will present the structure and organization of the thesis, including a description of the table of contents. The thesis begins with an explanation of the research problem and follows with a literature review. The next chapter introduces the theoretical framework which includes the Schein model. After, the methodology used in this research is discussed. Chapter 7 uses the desk review approach to provide an analysis of the results from historical perspectives. Chapter 8 provides detailed analysis of the results from the interviews conducted in Jordan. The final two chapters include the discussion and finally a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The theoretical proposal of this study is that *wasta* is such a dominant force in the culture of public sector organizations in Jordan (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993) that it will resist the attempted implementation of even a large-scale anti-corruption initiative. *Wasta* has been acknowledge in the academic literature in Middle East public sector organizations in general and in Jordanian public sector in particular (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Barnett et al., 2013). Hutchings and Weir (2006) explain that “*wasta* is intrinsic to the operation of many valuable social processes, central to the transmission of knowledge, and the creation of opportunity” (p. 278). Loewe et al. (2008) show how Jordanians value *wasta* as a respectable social practice and how it is defended even by those of lower socioeconomic status. Their findings show that many public sector officials in positions that could easily be jeopardized by corruption justify the differentiation of *wasta* from corruption because it does not involve the illegal exchange of money. A survey by George (2005) shows that a very large percentage of respondents would justify using *wasta* if given the opportunity because, in the Arab world, it is the ticket to getting a much needed advantage and securing opportunity.

Khayatt (2008) argues that anti-corruption efforts in the Middle East are attempts at introducing a cultural shift as they strive “to promote the culture and practices of transparency and free exchange of ideas, opinions and information as the basis for implementing good governance, democracy and accountability” (p. 472). However, according to Schein (2010), introducing organizational culture change is a long and difficult process. Indeed, organizational culture is extremely difficult to change because it serves as a “frame of reference” for members of an organization (Shabracq, 2007, p. 17). Schein (2010) argues that culture brings stability to the organization and is therefore very difficult to change: “culture implies stability and rigidity in

the sense that how we are supposed to perceive, feel, and act in a given society, organization, or occupation has been taught to us by our various socialization experiences and becomes prescribed as a way to maintain the social order” (p. 3). Schein (2010) in fact argues that organizational cultures can be so strong that they achieve the power of religious or spiritual beliefs.

In other words, the anti-corruption frameworks may be successfully developed and put in place but nevertheless Jordanians’ cultural attitude towards using *wasta* will find creative ways of working around the law. Because the Anti-Corruption Commission and broader Jordanian anti-corruption strategy can be classified as tools of organizational culture change (Khayatt, 2008), they are likely to fail because they are attempting to overturn literally thousands of years of culture that has naturally grown in organizations.

An important question emerging from this theoretical proposal concerned whether the mid-level managers believe *wasta* to be untouchable by any anti-corruption initiative in Jordan. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) already suggested that the perception of negative attitudes associated with *wasta* users should be better emphasized in public relations material surrounding anti-corruption efforts in the Middle East. Loewe et al. (2008) conclude that efforts should be made to disassociate *wasta* from culture and instead replace it with a new culture of good governance. Khayatt (2008) provides the argument that true reforms in favor of eliminating corruption can only happen in the Middle East following the achievement of democratic structures of governance. In that respect, the strength of *wasta* as a “hidden force in Middle Eastern society” (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993, p. 1) is theoretically proposed to be the most significant obstacle to the achievement of Jordan’s anti-corruption goals.

More specifically, this study seeks to examine how the implementation of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative in the Jordanian public sector affected the organizational culture of various departments and ministries. **The general research question is as follows: What is the role of wasta on organisational culture and leadership when public sector institutions are going through a large-scale anti-corruption intervention?** The purpose of this research question is to better understand the resistance to anti-corruption initiatives through recognition of the extent of wasta. In answering this question, the researcher hopes to uncover specific reasons why corruption continues to exist in the Government of Jordan and, from a practical policy perspective and how it can better be addressed in the future.

Very few authors have attempted to study wasta empirically (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011). Of the limited accounts of wasta, some non-empirical texts provide overviews based on media reports and personal accounts (George, 2005). These are important to consider because they provide understanding to scholars who may be unfamiliar with how wasta affects professional decision-making in the Middle East. Empirical studies have proven that wasta plays an important role in the career success of professionals in the Arab world (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), that individuals who are perceived to have been hired using wasta will be considered as less competent and less moral than those hired without (Mohamed and Mohammad, 2011), and that use of wasta is justified in Jordan because individuals have an incentive to use it and treasure it as a valued part of their personal identity (Loewe et al., 2008). No studies have examined the effect of anti-corruption initiatives on addressing wasta, giving this research an opportunity to fill a gap in the existing literature.

Because the thesis heavily focuses on public sector re-organization and reforms, we draw significantly from organizational culture theory. While there is no universally accepted definition of organizational culture (Alvesson, 2013; Ott, 1989; Schein, 2010), the study reflects on the concept and provides some relevant interpretations. Eventually, the organizational culture theory developed by Schein (2010) is adopted as the theoretical framework of choice because of its relevance for the topic of inquiry.

Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture proposes that culture can be analyzed at three possible levels. The first level of organizational culture is made up of artifacts. This very basic level of organizational culture is easily observable but very difficult to truly understand and interpret. The second level is constructed of espoused beliefs and values. Espoused beliefs and values are promoted by members of the organization but do not necessarily translate to action. When espoused beliefs and values are tested, adopted, and eventually accepted they evolve to the third deepest level of organizational culture, basic underlying assumptions. Basic underlying assumptions are taken for granted and responsible for influencing the behavior of members of the organization. The Schein (2010) model is of particular relevance to this study because it allows for the effective analysis of contradictory organizational cultures. Therefore, the three levels of culture can help researchers explain why the anti-corruption efforts in Jordan are not successful in helping public sector institutions overcome corruption.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores two sets of concepts. First we present the review of literature related to two key contextual concepts: corruption and wasta. Secondly, we present a set of concepts that are more directly related to the theoretical framework: organizational culture and leadership.

3.1. Literature review on contextual concepts: corruption and wasta

3.1.1. *The Concept and Phenomenon of Corruption*

The principal focus in this research is the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission. Because the Anti-Corruption Commission deals with corruption it is important to clarify what is meant by “corruption” and how this term is interpreted in the literature. It is recognized that finding a single and universally accepted definition of the term corruption is fundamentally problematic (Kaufmann and Vincente, 2011). Regardless, several common interpretations are presented for contextual purposes based on a division of corruption as public office, market, and public interest (Desta, 2006; Heidenheimer et al., 2009). Ultimately, the research selects the official definition of corruption as found in Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Law (# 62). Although relying on legal definitions to identify corruption has been described as problematic in some circumstances (Heidenheimer et al., 2009), Jordan’s anti-corruption efforts are considered thorough and comprehensive enough to account for most cases of corrupt action. Possible advantages and disadvantages of corruption found in the literature are also identified.

There is no question that corruption is a frequently referenced construct that routinely gains media attention and, due to this growing awareness, is often considered one of the largest challenges facing the international community (Robinson, 2004). Corruption is frequently talked

about in the context of Jordan where it is perceived by the public at large as a real barrier to development and growth (David, 2012; El-Said and Harrigan, 2009). The problem associated with the rise in popularity of ‘corruption’ in the media and elsewhere is that understanding exactly what is meant by the term is not always perfectly clear: “what may be ‘corrupt’ to one citizen, scholar, or public official is ‘just politics’ to another, or ‘indiscretion’ to a third” (Peters and Welch, 1978, p. 974). Kaufmann and Vincente (2011) explain that across various studies different definitions of corruption have been adopted for different purposes causing ambiguity and lack of consensus among scholars. In the absence of a clear understanding of what is meant by the term, it is valuable at least to present some alternatives to help in understanding Jordanian anti-corruption efforts.

Finding a universally agreed upon definition of corruption is impossible (Desta, 2006; Sampford, 2006; Soliman and Cable, 2011; Werlin, 1994). Scholars including Gould and Amaro-Reyes (1983) argue three decades ago that “no single commonly accepted definition of corruption exists” (p. 2). Although many dozens of propositions have emerged since, Johnston (2012) contends that “The perennial question of how to define corruption cannot be solved in one article” (p. 329). So many interpretations of corruption have emerged that entire systematic reviews have been developed to creating some kind of organization or categorization system to arrange them in the literature (Heidenheimer et al., 2009).

Desta (2006) proposes that the different definitions of corruption can be placed into any of three possible categories: public office, market, or public interest. Perhaps the most well-known and frequently cited public office definition of corruption is that of political scientist Nye (1967), who writes that corruption is “Behavior that deviates from the normal duties of public role because of private-regarding (family, close private cliques), pecuniary or status gains; or

violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence” (p. 419). Desta (2006) explains that this interpretation represents the ideal view of corruption from the public office perspective. Here, authors argue that corruption constitutes any action of public servants that goes against their professional responsibilities as mandated by their employer (Kupendeh, 1995). Heidenheimer et al. (2009) acknowledge the public office interpretations of corruption to be historically among the most influential. The Nye (1967) definition in particular sets the groundwork for a large part of the modern public service concept of conflict of interest between private gains and personal responsibilities (Di Carlo, 2013). The World Bank (1997) definition uses a similar reasoning in specifying that corruption represents “the abuse of public office for private gain” (p. 3). Market based definitions of corruption consider the term from a somewhat different perspective in that they bring into light the economic and transactional implications of corrupt action as transfer of capital between parties.

In the market definitions of corruption, corrupt action is seen as an economically driven willingness to secure additional income through illegal means (Desta, 2006). Heidenheimer et al. (2009), citing Van Klaveren (1957), offer the following definition: “corruption means that a civil servant abuses his authority in order to obtain an extra income from the public... Thus we will conceive of corruption in terms of a civil servant who regards his office as a business, the income of which he will seek to maximize” (p. 49). The market-based view of corruption emerges very obviously from rational choice theory and utility self-maximization (Van Der Deer, 2012). Heidenheimer et al. (2009) explain that market based definitions of corruption emerged from efforts to create morally neutral definitions of corruption, but argue that these attempts were unsuccessful as they fail to acknowledge the illegal and unethical context through which corrupt actions take place.

The public interest view of corruption builds upon the conflict of interest approach considered earlier but also incorporates the idea of corruption being identifiable on the basis of having consequences for the public at large. A frequently cited public interest based definition of corruption is provided by Friedrich (1966):

“The pattern of corruption can be said to exist whenever a power-holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or officeholder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favor whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests” (p. 74).

This interpretation of corruption explicitly accounts for the harms enacted by corrupt action to the general public. Kurer (2005) explains that relying exclusively on public interest to recognize corruption is problematic because it mistakenly assumes universal agreement on the factors that reflect the interest of the general public.

Desta (2006) argues that these theoretical categorizations of corruption are unrealistic as they do not account for overlaps in real-life situations of corrupt behavior. According to the author, despite best attempts to classify and arrange the term ‘corruption’ for nearly fifty years, “it is virtually impossible to develop one generalized and uncontested definition of corruption. It is true that the definitions seem to blend together as public office is used to maximize personal gain with the resulting sacrifice of public interest” (2006, p. 427). This study acknowledges the fundamental difficulty in defining the concept of corruption based on the lack of a universally accepted interpretation. However, in analyzing the data from interviews with Jordanian public-sector mid-level managers, a clear pattern emerged of referencing the law when addressing its unethical nature.

Jordan's Anti-Corruption Commission is based upon its Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) that lays out several actions constituting corrupt behavior (Government of Jordan, 2006). Rose-Ackerman (1999) argues that many definitions of corruption traditionally incorporate examples of corrupt action, most notably bribery (though there are others), in their explanation of the term. Kaufmann (1997) suggests that one of the most direct ways for countries to address corruption involves legal or governmental reform measures. Heidenheimer et al. (2009) argue that using legal criteria to identify corruption is beneficial based on the straightforwardness of legal criteria: "If an official's act is prohibited by laws established by the government, it is corrupt; if it is not prohibited, it is not corrupt" (p. 29). The authors do agree that one of the problems in using legal parameters to identify corrupt action is that countries with severely underdeveloped legislation will fail to appropriately identify corrupt action in their legal statutes. However, this is not the case of Jordan where an Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) has been developed to comprehensively outline actions that constitute a violation of law. It is also important to note that Jordan's anti-corruption initiative has been praised as leading and innovative policy that systematically addresses corrupt action (Terrill, 2010).

Based on the responses of mid-level managers that were found to strongly reference Jordanian law in discussions of corruption, this study selects the definition of corruption as found in Article 5 of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62). Jordan's Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) specifies a total of seven instances which are lawfully considered 'corrupt'; included among these most cite either an explicit breach of the Jordanian Penal Code (1960), Economic Crimes Law (1993), or more generally the abuse of official authority (Government of Jordan, 2006, p. 3):

"For the purposes of this Law, the following shall be deemed as corruption:

- a) Offences contrary to the duties of the office stipulated in the Penal Code No. 16 of 1960 and any amendments thereof.
- b) Offences contrary to the public trust stipulated in the Penal Code No. 16 of 1960 and any amendments thereof.
- c) Economic crimes in the meaning specified in the Economic Crimes Law No. 11 of 1993 and any amendments thereof.
- d) Any act or refrain, which may infringe public funds.
- e) Abuse of authority contrary to the provisions of the law.
- f) Acceptance of nepotism and favoritism, which nullifies a right or validates what is void.
- g) All actions provided in international agreements related to anticorruption to which the Kingdom had acceded to.”

(Government of Jordan, 2006, p. 2)

This legal approach to corruption is relevant because it is wide in scope and reflects the institutional nature of the research being undertaken. It is complete because it is broad enough to reflect the premises of corruption as “abuse of public office for private gain” (Kaufmann and Vicente, 2011, p. 198) as well as specific enough such that “officials, government employees, and ordinary citizens can be expected to know the requirements and prohibitions spelled out in statutes” (Heidenheimer et al., 2009, p. 29). Jordan’s complete Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) covers a variety of laws (clauses a, b, c, e, g) but remains broad enough to account for general behavior that puts the best interest of the public at risk (clauses d and f).

Studies acknowledge the possibility that corruption may have “positive effects” on managing professional relationships. One of the popular arguments in favor of this view is that corruption serves as a lubricant to quickly and easily overcome bureaucracy thus helping to achieve goals with higher speed (Argandona, 2005; Hooker, 2009; Meon and Weill, 2010). D’Souza (2012) explains that this view is particularly common in developing countries where the

general public's interaction with civil servants can be moved in their favor through the use of so called facilitating payments. The author explains that individuals can offer government officials such 'payments', which is essentially another term for bribes, in exchange for more efficient service or simply to allow them to receive services altogether. This practice has also been found to occur in Jordan, where studies have shown that the combination of rising costs of living, a weakening Dinar, and public sector wage freeze incite government officials to take bribes (Hamzeh, 2006).

Windsor and Getz (1999) argue that addressing facilitating payments through anti-corruption is challenging and ethically unclear. They suggest that it can be difficult to draw an objective line between legitimate tipping or gift-giving and illegal acts of bribery. This situation becomes especially pronounced in the Middle East where certain cultural norms invite behaviors that may to an outside observer be perceived as unethical (Mikdashi, 1980). Wasta in Jordan is a good example. Barnett et al. (2013) explain that wasta can be used to simplify many processes in the public sector including employment and procurement: "wasta can be useful for those who wish to bypass the transaction costs of burdensome bureaucratic procedures or who might be unsuccessful when issues are decided based on merit" (p. 41). Despite being supported and justified as a part of culture, it is nevertheless relevant to corrupt behavior (Kamrava, 2002). Wasta can allow a less qualified builder to win government contracts and help an unskilled employee find a successful career.

To this extent, a unique proposed benefit of corruption in the Middle Eastern context is that it allows for increased security among close friends and family members. Hooker (2009) explains that hiring managers who use nepotism and cronyism have a distinct advantage of bringing in workers they already know and trust to be loyal: "Other cultures may organize their

business around human relationships that are cemented by personal honor, filial duty, friendship, or long-term mutual obligation” (p. 252). So long as one remains the son of a high-ranking official, chances are good that employment hunting will be relatively stress-free. Hiring a worker off the street remains a process still characterized by risk. A manager never knows whether the person hired for the job will adequately fulfill all of their responsibilities. Relying on a personal network of individuals already known to the manager eliminates a large portion of the surprise and could contribute to a more cooperative team environment, provided that those not hired through connections do not demonstrate backlash (Rontos et al., 2013).

Kaufmann et al. (2010) argue that corruption is a problem for society in that it slows development, prevents democracy, and contributes to making societies more dysfunctional and less able to efficiently modernize. Ohemeng (2014) explains that corruption is especially problematic for the developing world. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) explain that despite its efficiency at overcoming bureaucracy and facilitating the achievement of goals, *wasta* is obviously unfair and equals “affirmative action for the advantaged” (p. 95). The authors explain that students who are the children of successful parents routinely skirt by in Jordanian postsecondary institutions knowing full well they are virtually entitled to a job upon graduation. Their unlucky colleagues may be stronger academically, more hard working, and determined to succeed with good grades and accomplishments, but know they stand little chance against those with good connections and opportunities for taking advantage of *wasta*.

Wasta, and more broadly speaking corruption, therefore contributes to social inequity because it unfairly advantages some while disadvantaging others. A recent study of corruption in Tunisia shows that in this regard corruption contributes to socio-economic inequality demonstrated by a growing divide between rich and poor (Hess, 2013). Gaygisiz (2013) argues

that corrupt management will have a negative effect on the quality of services distributed to the public, writing: “Effective health care and education, for example, require a certain level of management quality whereas ineffective and corrupt governance leads to inefficient and badly functioning health care and educational institutions and, consequently, bad outcomes” (p. 172). Khagram (2005) explains that corruption creates a cycle whereby the rich and well-connected are continuously rewarded with growing opportunity and wealth that the lower-class cannot hope to achieve.

Historically, economists have thought that corruption can stimulate a country’s development and growth by facilitating transactions that would otherwise have not been possible to undertake (Egger and Winner, 2005; Leff, 1964). An overwhelming amount of evidence argues in opposition to this claim, instead proposing that corruption actually prevents national growth and prevents economic development (Bardhan, 1997; Buchanan and Tullock, 1962; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). International agencies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have since prioritized the elimination of corruption in order to promote stability and economic development (Jain, 2001). Sandholtz and Taagepera (2005) actually claim that “Corruption may be the single most significant obstacle to both democratization and economic development” (p. 109). Newly available statistical data has allowed researchers to empirically verify the negative effects of corruption on economic growth.

Blackburn et al. (2006) explain that corruption indices like the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index can be used to disprove early theories unjustifiably hypothesizing assumed benefits of corruption on growth. Ohemeng (2005) suggests that corruption is frequently addressed through surveys and reports implicating quantitative data and measurements. The authors studied patterns in GDP fluctuations and corruption indices arguing

that “there is overwhelming evidence of a significant negative relationship between the incidence of corruption and economic growth” (2006, p. 2449). It was earlier shown by Mauro (1995) that countries with improved corruption scores attracted greater investment. Authors have also critiqued the idea that corruption enables more efficient interaction with government or better delivery of service to the public (Ades and Di Tella, 1997). A study by Kaufmann and Wei (1999) discovered that “more bribe payment will not be associated with less delay and lower burden” (p. 15) and that, in reality, can lead to a dysfunctional situation where the number of transactions remains constant because everybody has access to bribe-paying.

The inequality and unfairness perceived to be resultant of corruption in the Middle East has been proven to cause distrust for government among members of the general public (Mujtaba, 2013). In Jordan and elsewhere, corruption has led to instability commonly referred to as the Arab Spring movement (Gunter, 2013; Smith, 2013; Soper and Demirkan, 2012). Helfont and Helfont (2012) explain that corruption was among the motivating forces behind Jordanian citizens’ willingness to take to the streets: “Like their Tunisians and Egyptians counterparts, the social problems that drove them to take to the streets – youth unemployment and underemployment, corruption, socio-economic immobility – plague Jordanians as well” (p. 88). Based on the preceding discussion, it could be argued that the trouble to find work and perceived social economy are branches of the same tree of corruption.

3.1.2. The Concept and Phenomenon of Wasta

Wasta is a phenomenon unique to the Arab world that is often translated simply to “network” (Harrison and Makhoul, 2004) but has had its actual meaning evolve over time (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994). The historical development of wasta is thus traced from historic times as a tool for peace building and problem solving among tribes to its current

modern definition as a way of seeking advantage and opportunity using connections. Evidence from the literature is used to demonstrate how *wasta* represents a form of corruption and thus how it contributes to an organizational culture of corruption in Jordanian public sector institutions. Empirical studies about *wasta* are extremely rare in the literature (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011). Nevertheless, the review is divided into two streams: “developmental” literature that contributes to hypothetical theory-building around *wasta* and empirical scientific research examining the role of *wasta* in organizations. A major study by German researchers Loewe et al. (2008) is analyzed as it finds many unique conclusions about the role of *wasta* in Jordan. However, the fact it could not take into consideration anti-corruption developments like the Anti-Corruption Commission that were only founded upon its publication leads to the existence of a gap that the present research now intends to fill.

The term *wasta* is likely to be completely foreign to most Westerners and those who have never lived in the Middle East (Harrison and Makhoul, 2004). Globalization and increasing economic activity throughout the Arab region have provided new rationale for the international community to understand the professional context of countries like Jordan where the *wasta* phenomenon is commonplace (Campante and Chor, 2012). From the limited research that has been conducted on this subject, it is known that *wasta* plays a significant role in both private and public sector organizations (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Hutchings and Weir, 2006).

If translated literally from Arabic, the word *wasta* comes from *waseet* meaning middleman (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). Barnett et al. (2013) explain that *wasta* is difficult to explain but easy to recognize by offering some common examples from the press throughout Arab countries.

An attempt to more clearly define *wasta* by Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994) divides the term into two distinct types of action. The political scientists responsible for much of the early research on *wasta* argue that “*Wasta* may mean either mediation or intercession. It denotes the person who mediates/intercedes as well as the act of mediation/intercession” (1994, p. 29). The distinction proposed by these authors in discussing *wasta* is summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994). Differentiation of *wasta* – Visual Conversion of Text.

Differentiation of <i>Wasta</i>	
Mediatory (Traditional <i>Wasta</i>)	Intercessory (Modern <i>Wasta</i>)
• Historic (3500 BC) • Seeks peace • <i>Waseet</i> as problem-solver • <i>Waseet</i> sent	• Contemporary (20th century) • Seeks advantage • <i>Waseet</i> as source of opportunity • <i>Waseet</i> approached

Wasta in the sense of mediation has deep historical origins in the Middle East. Al-Ramahi (2008) explains that in ancient times at the birth of civilization *wasta* was used to mediate between conflicting and warring tribes. If two tribes experienced conflict or disagreement, one may have decided to send a *waseet* (mediator) or *jaha* (group of mediators) to resolve the conflict and work together to create a mutually agreeable solution. Both the action of mediation and the mediator themselves are called *wasta* in this case. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994) explain that tribes would usually strive for a process of mediation in an effort to promote peace: “Intermediary *wasta* endeavors to (...) inhibit revenge being taken following an incident involving personal injury. The *jaha* seeks a truce between the parties, with the hope of an eventual agreement to resolve the conflict” (p. 29). Generally, the boundaries of tribes during

this period consisted of members of the same extended family (Al-Ramahi, 2008). Thus, *wasta* as mediation reflected something similar to a form of diplomacy among groups of extended Arab families living throughout the Middle East. Bellow (2003) argues that, over time, this historic *wasta* as mediation changed to a modern style of *wasta* whose goal was not the creation of peace but rather the securing of advantage.

Modern or intercessory *wasta* evolved as globalization and technological change were sweeping into the workforces of private and public sector organizations throughout the Middle East (Bellow, 2003). While mediatory and intercessory *wasta* co-exist even today, in its references to *wasta*, this study almost always refers to modern intercessory *wasta* unless explicitly mentioned otherwise. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994) explain that intercessory *wasta* is no longer concerned with resolving disputes or peace-building, instead, it reflects the use of personal networks and contacts in securing advantage:

“Intercessory *wasta* involves a protagonist intervening on behalf of a client to obtain an advantage for the client - a job, a government document, a tax reduction, admission to a prestigious university. Many individuals, supported by their *wasta* backers, may be seeking the same benefit. When the seekers for a benefit are many and the opportunities are few, only aspirants with the strongest *wastas* are successful. Succeeding or failing depends on the power of the *wastas* more than on the merits of the seekers” (p. 29).

Barnett et al. (2013) argue that the new style *wasta* came with significant changes to its historic counterpart. First and foremost, the middleman (*waseet* or *jaha* in the case of a group of middlemen) was no longer required as individuals now found it appropriate to approach those

from whom they sought advantage. Secondly, intercessory wasta was focused on personal interests of individuals rather than the community interests emphasized previously.

Even though the shift from historic to modern wasta has greatly changed the nature of the activity and its players, authors maintain that both are nevertheless still profoundly related (Barnett et al., 2013; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994; Hutchings and Weir, 2006b). Weir (2003) explains that the key to understanding the link between old and new wasta is the continued emphasis on family. In other words, whereas the tribal culture from ancient times enabled a family to ensure safety through the establishment of peace by mediation, modern wasta relies on family and extended networks to facilitate success. As per Arab culture, family members naturally work together to achieve individual success because this reflects positively on the family unit altogether (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011).

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994) argue that modern intercessory wasta has become the challenge of government throughout the Middle East. They contend that advantage seeking has translated into a virtual culture of corruption:

“Intercessory wasta is a commonly cited reason for ineffective or unfair government systems.

Taming wasta has no easy answer, or it would have been already proclaimed and implemented.

Remedies imported from the West – reforming administrative structures, strengthening the oversight/audit function, and privatization – have not stemmed the wasta tide” (1994, p. 30).

Hutchings and Weir (2006b) explain that part of the reason behind the relationship between modern wasta and corruption is its use in using networks and connections to essentially jump the queue in many public sector processes. The authors offer employment as one of the ideal examples of modern wasta. Those who have good connections and a large network of friends and family members to help them are able to achieve far more and have access to greater opportunities than their non-connected counterparts. The researcher of this study has, in fact,

been personally negatively affected by intercessory wasta in accordance with the findings of the authors' claims. Further, it is important to consider the effect of wasta on broader socio-economic issues facing countries in the Middle East.

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994) hypothesize that the influence of wasta on the public-sector could have serious consequences on development and nations' economic competitiveness. The authors explain that the immediate risk of wasta is not in giving an unfair advantage to those who have good connections, but rather opening an organization to unqualified or under-qualified workers which ultimately could jeopardize productivity and performance. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) argue that wasta is a form of corruption that leads to social inequality: "Since having a strong wasta requires connections, wasta may create a reinforcing cycle where the powerful receive the resources while the weak becomes weaker. As such, wasta becomes a cause of unequal employment opportunity" (pp. 412-413). According to Barnett et al. (2013), most developed countries have attempted to remove practices like wasta because they are not in alignment with fairness or good governance. Cunningham and Sarayrah contend that this has not happened in the Arab world because "wasta, like any long-standing social custom or institution, evolved in Arab societies because, at some point, it was generally perceived as a social construct that provided better solutions to a set of social problems and resource allocation issues" (2013, p. 42). Interestingly, while the emphasis of modern wasta connections was and continues to be on one's extended family, it now also includes close friends and even colleagues.

Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) explain that over the past two or three decades wasta has expanded beyond a person's extended family to include a network of close personal friends. Although not blood relatives, friends can still seek wasta amongst one another though with one qualification: family connections will always succeed in priority and strength (Ali and Al-

Kazemi, 2006). This reflects a part of the unwritten cultural code surrounding the use of *wasta* where those with the power to make things happen are at the discretion to judge priority among multiple candidates with *wasta* based on the extent and nature of their relationship.

The problem with *wasta* in countries like Jordan is that because it has such strong cultural roots it is considered to be extremely influential and very tempting for individuals to use. George (2005) studied public perceptions of *wasta* in Jordan finding that even though 87% of respondents saw it as a form of corruption, 90% of those claimed they would use it if given the opportunity. This allows the author to conclude that *wasta* is “both a cancer at the heart of the system and the glue that holds it together” (2005, p. 70). Loewe et al. (2008) discovered that Jordanians actually associate *wasta* with positive values like loyalty, tradition, and honor. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) argue that *wasta* has strong influence on professional practices and so represents something like a “way of life” in the Middle Eastern professional context (p. 6). Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) explain that many decisions in Arab organizations rely on *wasta*. Whiteoak et al. (2006) argue that individuals in the Middle East region have been culturally conditioned to use *wasta* because doing so is something of a social norm.

Although *wasta* is frequently cited as a cause of corruption and source of inequality within Middle Eastern organizations (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994; Loewe et al., 2008), authors have proposed that it can bring about some advantages. Barnett et al. (2013) for example discovered that individuals who have access to *wasta* may be given an advantage in receiving services faster and, in this way, *wasta* speeds up inconvenient public sector bureaucracy: “Those who have *wasta* can jump the queue in acquiring public services while those who do not will struggle through the ‘normal’ bureaucratic process” (p. 41). The implication is that *wasta* carries many benefits and is tempting to use in a Middle Eastern

context. Similarly, Smith et al. (2012) states that *wasta* can help government officials overcome bureaucratic rules and thus enable them to do their jobs quicker and more efficiently. Perhaps the most compelling argument towards the positive side of *wasta* is made by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), who argue that because it is so culturally valued, *wasta* takes priority over all other factors in the employment process – including gender. Thus, *wasta* can represent one of the only possible routes for promotion for women into the traditionally male-dominated Middle Eastern government organizations. Studies have found that the employment of women in public sector institutions throughout the Middle East can have positive effects on democratization and the establishment of good governance (Metcalf, 2008; Moghadam, 2008). Despite these benefits, authors have shown that *wasta*, like other forms of corruption practiced throughout the world that depend on improper abuse of one's network of contacts, can lead to unfairness and social inequality (Loewe et al., 2008).

Another interesting feature of modern *wasta* is that while it has historical origins that are unique to the Middle East, it can be compared with similar phenomena internationally (Israeli, 1997). Hutchings and Weir (2006) were among the first authors to produce a comparison between *wasta* and the Chinese concept of *guanxi*. *Guanxi* can literally be translated to mean 'interpersonal network' or 'connections' and is a fixture of management in China (Su et al., 2007). Whereas in *wasta* the emphasis is placed most strongly on extended family, *guanxi* functions among a more inclusive network of stakeholders that include family, friends, and colleagues (Fan, 2002). In their comparison, Hutchings and Weir (2006) emphasize the cultural similarities among *wasta* and *guanxi*. They argue that collectivism in China is similar to the group-based mentality of the Arab world, from which networking and use of personal contacts originate. The reliance on social networking and personal groups among Middle Eastern women

and men has also been compared to the “shame society” phenomenon explored elsewhere in the literature (Saleh, 1986). Hutchings and Weir (2006) also compare the religious influence underpinning cultural norms that include Confucianism throughout China and Islam in the Middle East. Despite having Western legal frameworks and supporting the separation of church and state, Jordanian professional culture is nevertheless spiritually influenced because government officials generally “accept Islam as a guiding principle” (Hutchings and Weir, 2006, p. 146). While *wasta* is not a recognized value of Islamic scripture, the authors explain that the influence of religion on profession is profound in order to demonstrate how both in China and the Middle East culture tends to find its way into the organization.

Smith et al. (2012) recently undertook one of the most comprehensive comparative studies of *wasta*. The authors compared it with four other cultural phenomena: Chinese *guanxi*, Brazilian *jeitinho*, Russian *svyazi*, and the Western notion of pulling strings. *Svyazi* has been considered similar to *guanxi* in prior literature (Batjargal and Liu, 2004). Citing Michailova and Worm (2002), Smith et al. (2012) explain that the difference between *svyazi* and *guanxi* is in the strength of the network. In Russia, the authors explain that favors and opportunities can be sought with relatively equal influence from colleagues and friends. Like *wasta*, *Jeitinho* is morally ambiguous in that it can be used for both good and bad (Barbosa, 2006). *Jeitinho* differs from *wasta*, according to Smith et al. (2012), because it reflects any efficient approach to problem-solving including outside of official legal or regulatory constraints. The use of a social network is secondary to the overall achievement of organizational goals by any means. If a creative solution to a problem requires the use of connections or not, the solution itself – and not the connections – is the *jeitinho*. That Smith et al. (2012) chose to include pulling strings in their comparison is interesting and at the same time innovative given that no prior studies have

documented the phenomenon from the perspective of corruption. For comparative purposes, the authors illustrate how in the Western context pulling strings “is widely disapproved, with formal procedures being perceived as more equitable” (2012, p. 337). Because pulling strings reflects the taking advantage of private relationships for personal gain that creates a situation of unfairness among the public, it is found to reflect a type of organizational corruption.

Though Smith et al. (2012) approach their comparison from a British perspective, their inclusion of pulling strings alongside *wasta* is interesting because it removes the cultural basis for its justification. Their interpretation could actually be broadened to include the American constructs of favoritism or nepotism. Favoritism refers to an employer or manager giving an unfair advantage or other unfair benefits to some over others decided upon by factors outside of professional criteria (Kim, 2007; Ponzo and Scoppa, 2010). Nepotism concerns the giving of preferential treatment to members of one’s family (Arasli et al., 2006; Kuznar and Frederick, 2006). Researchers in human resource management have already recognized the variety of consequences facing organizations that rely on favoritism and nepotism (for a good overview, see Abdalla et al., 1998). Padgett and Morris (2005) empirically show how, in a Western context, opinion of employees hired through nepotism was overwhelmingly negative. Al-Ali (2008) is among the few authors who directly compare *wasta* to the Western notion of networking, though this comparison is made only in passing and is not the subject of his research. The decision of Smith et al. (2012) to include professional behavior considered unfair in the West helps to disassociate *wasta* as a unique concept of foreign cultures like the Middle East. It strengthens the inexcusability of relying solely on networks and connections in professional relationships and allows for the conclusion to be drawn that while *wasta* may be an engrained culture norm, this does not make it any less corrupt.

As mentioned, relatively few studies have examined the role of wasta on organizational culture in the Middle East (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011). According to Barnett et al. (2013), there is a need for additional empirical work surrounding the phenomenon given that “the literature on wasta in other social sciences and business is small and largely anecdotal” (p. 42). Omyan and Weir (2009) argue that additional academic research should be conducted on the phenomenon of wasta because it “is not usually mentioned by most academic writers” (p. 206). Sharp (2010) similarly argue that most specific recognized incidences of wasta in Jordan are covered in so-called grey literature consisting of newspapers and magazines. This study can distinguish two relevant sources of information about wasta in the Middle Eastern organizational context: development literature and empirical research.

Here called development literature, several works have been produced that attempt to explain and form hypotheses about wasta. The most influential and earliest analysis is without question the 1993 book on wasta written by Cunningham and Sarayrah. According to Forstenlechner and Baruch (2013), the Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) text is not only the earliest but also the most thorough exploration of wasta to date. Cunningham and Sarayrah present an overview of the concept of wasta beginning by tracing its historical lineage. Their most important findings discussed in an article (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994) play an influential role in this study’s presentation of the evolution of wasta from historical (mediation) to modern (intercessory). To help readers understand the phenomenon, Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) present wasta through the use of hypothetical scenarios based on real cases found in Jordanian grey literature. They document how students with wasta can use their connections to earn favors and good grades from professors in university, how importers with wasta connections to the customs officials can have expensive surcharges overlooked, and how

wasta influences employment decisions in government departments and ministries. Throughout their work, Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) recognize the consequences of wasta on social equality and economic development.

Terrill (2010) recently published a book outlining some of Jordan's security priorities from a distinctively international relations perspective. Although he does not explicitly mention wasta, he does provide an in-depth overview of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the official steps which were taken to bring it into existence as an independent agency of government. Based on a comparison of similar countries in the region, Terrill (2010) makes the case that Jordan's commitment to fighting corruption is among the most comprehensive and varied in the Arab world.

George (2005) published a similar book on Jordanian society, economics, and law intended as a familiarization tool for foreigners intending to learn more about the country. He chose to include a chapter about wasta because it is considered to be so widespread in all aspects of life:

“*wasta* – the use of personal connections and influence for advancement or gain – permeates the system, as elsewhere in the region. Whether it is a high-level official appointment or major commercial contract that is at stake or the speedy issue of a lowly official permit, Jordanians turn first to an intricate network of informal family and other contacts to secure their objective” (2005, p. 70).

The author includes a variety of quotes from speeches by elite Jordanian authorities to note how international pressure is being placed upon ruling elites to combat corruption that occurs as a result of wasta. In doing so, he successfully documents many of the major political decrees that led to the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in 2006. Many of the cases used as

examples of wasta were actually drawn from a report by the Arab Archives Institute on wasta and organizational corruption in Jordan's public sector. The report highlights some noteworthy cases of wasta. Among these was the example of an unnamed premier who told the Director General of a state television station to hire a busload of colleagues. Sakijha and Kilani (2002) report that the confused director respectfully asked the premier how it would even be possible to hire a literal busload of employees – he was told to come up with a solution, and the next morning “they were all appointed” (George, 2005, p. 70). Besides literature that considers the history of wasta and enlightens readers with case studies sourced from the media, authors studying wasta from a developmental perspective seek also to advance the concept theoretically.

El-Said and Harrigan (2009) use social capital theory to study wasta in Jordan. According to Coleman (1990), social capital increases “when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action” (p. 304). Another influential social capital theorist, Robert Putnam, interprets social capital from the perspective of groups explaining that social capital “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinating actions” (1993, p. 167). El-Said and Harrigan (2009) theoretically explore the possibility that the strong social capital demonstrated by wasta in Jordan could contribute to making individuals more successful in the long-term. They argue, based on social capital theory, that strong community could be used to build peace and support development in principle but that relying on networks to do so in and of themselves may in fact yield instability and inequality. El-Said and Harrigan (2009) thus recommend bridging social capital phenomena like wasta with the support of good governance and democracy: “It also requires effective and clean bureaucracy, and just and effectual courts and judicial system. Failing that, social networks, which are characterized by resource and power asymmetry, can lead to further social

divisions, isolation, and exclusions” (p. 1245). The authors also express serious concern about the ability of lower-class Jordanians to “keep up” with the social capital of other citizens who are better connected and wealthier. Unfortunately, El-Said and Harrigan’s (2009) study is merely a theoretical thought experiment with policy recommendations that are limited and vague.

Another hypothetical study on *wasta* and its role in Middle Eastern society was conducted recently by Barnett et al. (2013). Although the authors do not focus specifically on Jordan and instead provide a broader overview of *wasta* in the Arab context, they do provide extensive detail on the tribal origins of *wasta*. The authors’ research objective is to provide a theoretical explanation regarding why *wasta* is so common in the Middle East. Barnett et al. (2013) approach *wasta* from an economic perspective and propose a theory that if the cultural and historical justifications for *wasta* are accurate; *wasta* serves as an example of engrained ‘tribal morality’. They suggest that *wasta* can be compared to a type of insurance among people in the region: “With *wasta*, each member in need could ask for, and reasonably expect, assistance from other members of the group. Each member also had a never expiring obligation to provide assistance when asked. This obligation constituted the premium paid for the right to request assistance” (2013, p. 45). The results of this study find support for their proposition. The authors offer this insight as a stepping stone for further theoretical research into the extent of *wasta* throughout the Arab world. They do not provide empirical evidence to support their hypothesis, nor do they offer any formal policy implications.

Developmental literature on *wasta* provides readers with a solid foundation upon which to further their understanding of *wasta*. Whereas historical and conceptual overviews are based on grey literature and cases stemming from personal accounts, they do not address the concept through firsthand research. Theoretical explorations of *wasta* are similarly restricted by

significant gaps given that they do not offer scientifically verifiable evidence to support their claims. Among the empirical literature, three studies stand out as rare examples of primary research on the topic of *wasta*: Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), Mohamed and Mohamad (2011), and Loewe et al. (2008).

Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) adopted a mixed methods approach to determine the effect of *wasta* on promotion and professional advancement in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Their methodology consists of a literature review, a survey of 200 ‘managers’ (rank or position not specified) in the private sector, and a series of qualitative interviews with 30 of the original survey respondents. The survey design confirms the extent of *wasta* throughout all of the organizations studied. The survey also indicates that a large percentage (89%) of respondents personally used *wasta* to help further their own careers, believed that *wasta* was necessary in finding successful employment (93%), and that personal connections are more important in career success than professional skills and abilities (92%). Only around half (51%) of the respondents acknowledged that they would prefer to see *wasta* reduced. The qualitative interview methodology helps also to elaborate on the authors’ survey findings. One manager was found to differentiate *wasta* from corruption, explaining that *wasta* cannot constitute corruption because it does not involve an exchange of money. Another manager was found to defend *wasta* despite conceding that it could lead to someone getting an unfair advantage. Several participants defended *wasta* on the basis that it is something normal and a respected cultural tradition. A Lebanese interviewee, for instance, explained that people need to use *wasta* for many if not all social processes. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) therefore confirm that *wasta* is instrumental in securing promotion and advancement within Middle Eastern firms: “The majority of our respondents emphasized the importance of *wasta* or

powerful, well-connected friends, and considered it more important than professional qualifications in securing a good job or promotion” (p. 474). Their research does have some gaps, specifically, the administration of a quantitative survey instrument to only approximately 40 respondents per country leads to results of questionable statistical significance. Further, none of their methods took into consideration organizational culture theory or anti-corruption approaches. Regardless, the authors’ conclusions are reasonable based on preceding literature and what has been established regarding *wasta*. Their findings regarding the differentiation of *wasta* from other forms of corruption where the exchange of money occurs is also a noteworthy theme emergent in the present study.

Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) use a convenience sample of 421 undergraduate students from various Egyptian undergraduate classes in the business program to study their perceptions of the ability and morality of those using *wasta*. In their review surrounding the extent of *wasta* use in Egypt, the authors studied some traditional Arabic stories. The ancient stories give readers advice to “seek who you know” (Taymor, 1986, p. 32) and advise that “lucky is the person who the governor is his uncle” (p. 505). Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) use the stories to explain how *wasta* is a part of the regional culture and how it has become accepted that a good social network will yield professional benefits. The undergraduate students were only told they were participating in a study on hiring practices. Each student was given a job description for an opening as a bank teller and a summary of qualifications needed. They were also provided applicant profiles with varying qualifications (determined by nature of degree held), social status (determined by institution attended), and whether the applicant had *wasta* (determined by handwritten comments purportedly during pre-evaluation). The task of the undergraduate students involved answering a survey evaluating the competence and morality of the candidate

whom they were told was hypothetically selected for the position. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) successfully proved that the undergraduate students perceived those hired with *wasta* to be less competent and less moral than those hired without *wasta*. The authors suggest that their findings offer grounds for classifying *wasta* as a corrupt action within organizations. They also make a strong contribution to knowledge in concretely outlining a negative effect of *wasta* on the basis of negative opinions they say could help improve failing anti-corruption strategies:

“Public efforts to combat *wasta* have focused on legislative reform and improving transparency (Kilani and Sakijha, 2002). Although these strategies may be successful, it is important to understand that *wasta* is deeply rooted in society and will prove difficult to eliminate. Because of this, it will be necessary that additional and more innovative anti-*wasta* strategies be adopted. The findings of the study can help formulate a strategy that would create public awareness of the harm or stigma caused by the use of *wasta*” (2011, p. 421).

Consistent with the notion of shaming and shame culture in the Middle East (Awad et al., 2013), the authors propose that the negative way in which *wasta* users are perceived could be an effective way to target efforts aimed towards its elimination. They do not, however, elaborate upon this hypothesis with reference to any actual anti-corruption efforts like the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission.

The qualitative Loewe et al. (2008) study is perhaps the most closely related to the research being carried out in this study. Over an 11 week period in 2006, German researchers conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders in Jordan in an attempt to understand why the use of *wasta* was so prevalent and justified throughout the country. Interviews were conducted with 58 business representatives in small (< or =100 persons) and large (>100) firms. The

authors also conducted 18 interviews with a sample of mid-level and high-ranking government officials who deal with contracting and procurement. Additionally, a total of 99 interviews were conducted with other persons of interest including government officials, local academics, members of the press, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Finally, the team administered a quantitative survey instrument to 180 civil servants who work in the area of contracting and procurement. The authors reported having selected Jordan because of its accessibility and openness to foreign research, and argue that their methodology is comprehensive enough to “capture a broad picture of the Jordanian economy” (2008, p. 263). The findings of the survey capture a range of issues relevant to *wasta* including its effect on business processes and decision-making in organizations.

The Loewe et al. (2008) study discovered that *wasta* promotes an environment of dysfunction and unfairness. According to the authors, the prevalence of *wasta* in situations of trade between private industry and government “enables well connected people to speed up administrative procedures and to get exclusive access to public sector services, business opportunities, government tenders, tax exemptions, jurisdiction, and credit” adding that “*wasta* is also used by powerful businesspeople to influence legislation and policy formulation in their favor” (2008, p. 266). The researchers discovered that *wasta* introduces risk, creates unfairness, and even leads to economic instability through the creation of laws that limit competition in favor of wealthy and well-connected business owners.

Loewe et al. (2008) implicitly address anti-corruption in their study but are limited because, during the time of their fieldwork process, Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission was only in a stage of early development. Based on data collected during the qualitative interviews, they highlight a total of four themes they believe to represent the continued justification for the

use of *wasta* in Jordan. First, the authors maintain that Jordanians are not aware of any other way to conduct themselves professionally. Loewe et al. (2008) explain that this occurrence is not so much an issue of ignorance but rather one of cultural conditioning in that it is how business and professional relationships were always addressed in the past. Second, it is argued that there is no real incentive structure for people to stop using *wasta*. A person will always be better off if he or she uses *wasta*. Because the system rewards *wasta*, those who choose to go without it essentially become forgotten in the organization. The authors propose proactive policy recommendations such as incentives for organizations with transparent processes but argue that reversing *wasta* is an uphill climb. Third, Loewe et al. (2008) discovered in their interactions with Jordanians that *wasta* is actually considered by many to be a respected part of cultural heritage and tradition: “many Jordanians believe that it is part of their culture and therefore legitimate. They associate it with cherished values and norms such as solidarity, allegiance, and mutual responsibility” (p. 273). They explain that Jordanians do not simply “lose” their culture if they stop relying on *wasta* and argue that a greater public effort should be made to emphasize other cultural values. Although the authors do not make this link, it could be worthwhile to remind those with a temptation to abuse *wasta* that in the Quran (Islamic Holy Scripture), the Surah Al-Qasas encourages hiring competent workers (Ali, 2005). Finally, Loewe et al. (2008) found that Jordan’s political system which favors *wasta* remains as a significant obstruction to its removal. Interestingly, based on their interpretation of early efforts at combating corruption, the authors argue that King Abdullah II is seriously dedicated to fighting *wasta* as a form of corruption in government, but faces significant obstacles given the influence of social networks affecting politics and administration.

The Loewe et al. (2008) study presents some interesting findings regarding the role and preservation of wasta in Jordanian society. Indeed, Jordanian leaders have since made significant efforts to fight corruption including through the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Terrill, 2010). Given that the authors emphasize culture as one of the challenges to its removal, it is worthwhile to approach the topic of wasta directly from the perspective of organizational culture theory. Further, due to the anti-corruption efforts which have taken place since the publication of their major study, it is important to see how Jordan has addressed the problems of corruption, whether these solutions have been successful, and exactly why this has occurred.

3.1.3. Section Summary

Corruption and wasta are both ambiguous terms. Corruption has been discussed in the literature for decades without a suitable and universal definition (Kaufmann and Vincente, 2011). The meaning of wasta has evolved over time from mediation and dispute resolution to the seeking of advantage and opportunity through personal networks (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993, 1994). Many scholars explain that wasta has a deep cultural dimension and forms an inescapable part of Middle Eastern culture and tradition (Smith et al., 2012). Loewe et al. (2008) themselves found that Jordanians support wasta because they see it as a deeply held cultural value. However, this does not make it any less corrupt. Wasta is a form of organizational corruption that is reinforced by societal culture. It contributes to economic loss, institutional dysfunction, political instability, weakening trust in government, and socio-economic unfairness. Empirical research in this area has begun to produce some insightful findings regarding wasta. Its historical origins are traced so accurately by Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993; 1994) that no other author has deemed it relevant to offer a more compelling or detailed overview of the

phenomenon. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) show that wasta is strongly supported among professionals and, despite being recognized as unfair, defended as a legitimate practice. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) found that the general public perceive of individuals hired through wasta as being less moral and less competent. The Loewe et al. (2008) study discovered major negative effects associated with the use of wasta and identified four bases serving to justify its extent among Jordanians. Despite the findings in these important studies, research on wasta remains in a stage of continued development with no authors exploring the impact of a large-scale anti-corruption effort. Given the role of wasta as a large part of Jordanian public sector organizational culture, the next section will continue the literature review by looking at theoretical concepts such as organizational culture and leadership.

3.2. Literature review on theoretical concepts: organizational culture and leadership

This study approaches anti-corruption initiative implementation in the Jordanian public sector through the theoretical angle of organizational culture. This theoretical framework has been considered useful in studies within public administration (Claver et al., 1999). Though there is limited agreement surrounding a definition of organizational culture, most influential interpretations share some important common elements (Alvesson, 2013). Organizational culture is seen as something that is shared amongst members of an organization (Star-Glass, 2004), that influences behavior (Trice and Beyer, 1993; Schein 2010), and that includes certain commonly held and taken for granted assumptions and beliefs (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture must, however, be distinguished from organizational climate as the two constructs, though related, are markedly different. Two concepts related to organizational culture theory are theories of organizational culture change and leadership. Because organizational cultures are strongly held

among members of the organization, changing them is considered by many as a daunting task (Gagliardi, 1986). It is here that the responsibility of shaping culture is transferred to the hands of leaders who, under the right circumstances, can successfully create organizational change initiatives (Schein, 2010).

Organizational culture theory has also been chosen for this study because of the so-called enculturation of corruption in the Middle East (Cunningham and Sarayrrah, 1993; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). In order for an initiative like the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan to be deemed relevant for analysis through the Schein (2010) model, it is important to demonstrate its relationship to culture. Extensive research surrounding Middle Eastern professional relationships as well as broader socio-cultural traditions does show that the unique Arab phenomenon of *wasta* has cultural roots and fulfills the definition of culture espoused by Schein (2010).

The following section will present the review of literature used to study the impact of the organizational culture and leadership on public sector reforms. The proceeding sections provide an examination of organizational climate and organizational culture to distinguish between these two terms. Next, organizational change is discussed as it is argued that the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission can be considered an organizational culture change initiative. Finally, the construct of leadership is discussed which reflects its importance in the interview data.

3.2.1. Specifics of Organizational Culture and Leadership

It is important to discuss, compare, and properly explain the specific of organizational culture, organizational climate, and leadership, as they relate to the topic of the thesis which concerns *wasta* in Jordanian public-sector institutions. Detailed explanations of each concept are provided throughout the following chapter. Organizational culture is difficult to properly define because it has no universal definition (Alvesson, 2011; Palmer and Hardy, 1999). Alvesson

(2011) explains that organizational culture “is used as an umbrella concept for a way of thinking that takes a serious interest in cultural and symbolic phenomena or aspects in organizations” (p. 14). Public-sector organizations around the world have particular ways of functioning. For example, using *wasta* or other unethical action may be normalized in some public-sector workplaces but totally unacceptable in others. Schein (2010) explains that organizational culture “helps to explain all of these phenomena and to “normalize” them” (p. 9). Parker (2000) therefore concludes that the study of organizational culture, regardless of the definition one chooses to adopt, really involves looking for the explanations guiding organizational behavior, decision-making, action, and inaction, among other organizational processes.

Organizational climate is different from organizational culture, although both concepts are related (Schneider and Barbera, 2014). Whereas organizational culture is long lasting and difficult to change, organizational climate refers more closely to the feelings, beliefs, or attitudes shared by organizational employees (Isaksen and Ekvall, 2007). For this reason, researchers explain that organizational climate precedes culture and is easier to quantify and study through quantitative analysis (Reeves-Ellington, 2009). For instance, scholars may wish to understand how employees of a public-sector organization feel by distributing a survey or questionnaire. This would provide an indication about whether they are in a positive or negative mood, but it would not necessarily draw out the deeper reasons behind the organizational characteristics influencing their actions. A qualitative analysis, such as the one undertaken for the purposes of this study, would make more sense. Wright (1994) explains that unlike organizational climate, organizational culture “cannot be researched through ‘thin’ description of its surface features which miss the holistic and systematic aspect of culture, or through questionnaires with their *a priori* assumptions and reliance on attitudes expressed out of context” (p. 3). It is important to

discuss organizational climate to further a reason behind using qualitative research such as semi-structured interview data collection and also because organizational culture and organizational climate are frequently confused (Ashkanazy et al., 2000).

Organizational leadership is discussed throughout the thesis because it is one of the major themes of the results analysis. Schein (2010) explains that leaders can play a significant role in shaping organizational culture. According to Schein (2010), leaders are “influential in shaping the behavior and values of others” who “are creating the conditions for new culture formation” (p. 3). If *wasta* is understood as a part of organizational culture, then the role of organizational leaders must be carefully discussed because they may have a role in promoting the *wasta* organizational culture. Similarly, as discussed in the results analysis chapter, leadership could play a role in changing organizational culture in public-sector institutions towards ethical action and good governance.

3.2.2. *Organizational Culture*

The term organizational culture has no universal or standard definition (Alvesson, 2013; Ott, 1989; Schein, 2010). Hofstede et al. (1990) present a strong case establishing the relationship between organizational culture and anthropology. But even in the field of anthropology, scholars are not in full agreement regarding their understanding of just the term culture itself (Blumenthal, 1940; Jackson, 2010; Watson, 1995). Alvesson (2013) recommends that scholars take note of the carelessness so frequently used by those referring to culture, whether in organizations or otherwise: “culture is, however, a tricky concept as it is easily used to cover everything and consequently nothing” (p. 3). Following a similar line of reasoning, Schein (1990) argues that “each culture researcher develops explicit or implicit paradigms that bias not only definitions of key concepts but the whole approach to the study of the

phenomenon” (p. 109). Though disagreement exists in the creation of a definition, there appears to be greater consensus surrounding the influence of organizational culture on institutions both public and private.

Culture can also be interpreted in anthropological terms, more broadly than in the sense of organizational culture. Moore (1992) defines culture in the anthropological sense as “concerned with the discovery and description of all living peoples” (p. 22). Wright (1994) explains that the anthropological study of culture generally uses the method of participant observation to gather insight about how particular groups of people live and interact through fieldwork. The author maintains that the reason why anthropological studies of culture influence organizational studies of culture is because of methodology. This principle can be applied to organizations, where the idea of studying groups of people is applied to employees for the purposes of understanding shared behaviors (Hamada and Sibley, 1994). Schein (2010), in fact, explains that organizational culture has a history in the anthropological study of culture: “over the past several decades, organizational culture has drawn themes from anthropology” (p. ix). Inceoglu (2002) argues that many anthropological techniques involved in the study of culture, like in-depth interviewing of key informants and participant observation, are present in the study of organizational culture itself. Thus, the study of organizational culture traces its roots to anthropology in both purpose and method. For the purposes of this study, culture from the managerial perspective is used but it is important to note that many of the themes do come from anthropology.

Few MBA graduates have managed to escape studying the seminal works on the influence of organizational culture from the 1980s and 1990s. Alvesson (2013) explains that this period marked a trend towards associating organizational culture with positive organizational

outcomes like performance, and applying the result to managers interested in applying the findings to a professional environment. Ouchi (1981) documented the practices of Japanese firms and marketed them as lessons which American companies could use to achieve similar efficiency and success. The international best seller from Peters and Waterman (1982) aims at cataloguing successful corporate business strategies for aspiring managers to duplicate. Deal and Kennedy (1982) address culture in organizations directly, comparing the phenomenon with values and also claiming that these were relevant to the achievement of goals: “we think that often companies succeed because their employees can identify, embrace, and act on the values of the organization” (p. 21). These ideas surrounding the influential nature of organizational culture were also apparent in the public sector.

A similar trend of shaping organizations to adopt the concepts of efficiency and success was also happening in the public sector at the time. Khademian (2010) explains that many of the discussions behind New Public Management were in fact filled with language reflecting the establishment of new types of organizational culture: “in the public sector, efforts to “reinvent” government – and to focus public management efforts on performance through customer service, competition, and policy outcome approaches (...) drew very heavily on culture as both the challenge to reform and a potential source of revitalization” (p. 305). The author, of course, writes in reference to the Osborne and Gaebler (1992) text which was among the first popular works to formalize this radical shift towards performance in government. Khademian (2010) explains that for many writers, organizational culture could be associated with both negative results, such as government inefficiency, or positive results, such as the creation of more efficient or dynamic public-sector organizations.

In the attempt to define organizational culture, it has so far been shown that there is no consensus on its meaning but that authors seem to place extensive worth on its ability to influence organizational outcomes. Schneider (1990) argues that writing about culture in organizations presents a legitimate challenge for academics who struggle in exploring previous discourses surrounding the term. Nevertheless, it is possible to note some similarities and trends among various interpretations of organizational culture (Hofstede et al., 1990). Westbrook et al. (2012) explain that despite the many barely noticeable differences around these definitions, it is possible to identify some overlaps: “there are a few themes common to all or most definitions of organizational culture” (p. 1215). One of these themes is that culture is something shared among members belonging to the organization.

Alvesson (2013) emphasizes that many if not most definitions of organizational culture claim that organizational culture exists among members belonging to the organization. Star-Glass (2004) argues that generally, among the academic community, organizational culture is surrounded by a language of collectivity: “many academics and practitioners recognize organizational culture as a system of shared symbols and meaning” (p. 358). Cartwright and Cooper (1993) argue that organizational culture is responsible for creating unity within an organization. Trice and Beyer (1993) similarly argue that organizational culture influences without exception the behavior of all organizational members.

This idea has also been expressed by other authors who introduce notions of shared organizational myths, rituals, and assumptions shared amongst members (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952; Pedersen and Sorensen, 1989; Westbrook et al., 2012). An early definition developed by Brown (1954) also invokes the notions of myths and rituals: “The culture of an industrial group derives from many sources (...) Some of its more important manifestations may

be classed as: occupational language; ceremonies and rituals; and myths and beliefs” (p. 6). Also comparing organizational culture with anthropology, Smircich (1983) endorsed the view that cultures have an important collective dimension: “culture is a system of shared symbols and meanings” (p. 342). Schein (2010) provides a more detailed definition that generally follows the same basic line of reasoning, that is, that organizational culture reflects

“a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 180).

According to Schein (2010), organizational culture therefore suggests a kind of transference between groups and new members of the organization through a variety of shared processes as well as through socialization. He also maintains that members of the organization do not necessarily have to be aware of the beliefs and assumptions they hold as part of organizational culture; in other words, that organizational culture can be considered as an unconscious phenomenon. Schein (2010) also explains that organizational culture can be found in the relationships and roles of organizational members. Together, these factors suggest that truly understanding what organizational culture requires a high level of complexity and perhaps even in-depth analysis. However, authors have offered a simplified interpretation writing that organizational culture is simply how “things are done around here” (Martin, 2002, p. 3) or “the way we do things around here” (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p. 4).

Alvesson (2013) notes that one of the major debates among scholars of organizational culture is a result of its true meaning and concerns whether it should be understood as a critical variable or as a root metaphor. Smircich (1983) provides a thorough overview of both of these

interpretations. A similar though more modern interpretation is made by Needle (2004) who distinguishes the actual culture that genuinely forms amongst organizational staff and the corporate culture which upper management attempts to instill upon the workforce. If culture is understood as a critical variable or something that an organization has, it follows that culture can be manipulated and changed at the will of certain actors. Culture, in this sense, can become a key factor in shaping organizational outcomes and managing towards the achievement of goals and success (Bryson, 2008). Like the 'root' system of a plant, Smircich's (1983) interpretation of culture as a root metaphor sees it as something organic or something that has evolved within the organization over time. According to her, this view characterizes organizations "as" cultures in and of themselves: "Some theorists advance the view that organizations be understood as cultures. They leave behind the view that a culture is something an organization has, in favor of the view that a culture is something an organization is" (1983, p. 347). If this style view of culture is adopted, however, it must follow that organizations can have more than one culture. The idea of multiple cultures arising within organizations has also been explored in the literature. Schein (2010), for example, talks about different cultures existing among different divisions within one organization by using the example of a university (p. 67).

Within discussions of organizational culture two additional concepts are usually described: organizational subcultures and countercultures. Subcultures are defined as offshoots of an organization's main culture and comprise a select number of members (Gelder, 2007). Cooke and Rousseau (1988) argue that subcultures share important values with main organizational cultures but nevertheless contain particular characteristics unique to them and their select makeup. Subcultures are often caused by organizational change efforts (Wilkins and Dyer, 1988). On the other hand, countercultures simultaneously exist within an organization's

overall culture but carry “a pattern of norms and beliefs that sharply contracts the dominant social norms, values, and behavior patterns” (Kondalkar, 2009, p. 435). Kondalkar (2009) explains that countercultures usually form following instances of major rapid change, such as the privatization of a formerly public-sector organization or vice-versa. Thus, organizational change plays a significant role in impacting existing organizational culture.

Organizational culture can therefore be considered the main variable that structures the theoretical model. The following sections will consider the impact of organizational climate (often considered alongside culture, but different) as well as leadership which itself has been linked to organizational culture, and especially organizational culture change. The next section will deal with the relationship of organizational culture and public administration.

3.2.3. The Relevance of Organizational Culture to Public Administration Studies

Organizational culture represents an important topic of inquiry within the field of public administration. Researchers have pinpointed culture as one of the foremost factors needed to unlock much wanted improvements to governmental organizations including modernization and improved delivery of public service (Claver et al., 1999; Garnett et al., 2008; Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004). According to Denhardt and Denhardt (2009), organizational culture represents a central theme in public administration especially considering the influential role it has surrounding theorizations of cultural change:

“organizations face dynamic conditions in their internal and external environments – a variety of social, economic, and political factors impact group performance. The successful organization remains flexible to meet these changing conditions. Yet, given the multiple levels of organizational culture, change within the group cannot simply occur on the surface” (p. 179).

Authors have shown that the Schein (2010) model of organizational culture and its three levels of culture can be transferred to the public sector (Garnett, 2012; Istrate and Marian, 2012). Schein (2010) explains that though his well-respected work frequently uses terms such as corporate or business culture, his theory of organizational culture in fact can also apply to “private, public, nonprofit, government organizations” as well as broader occupational groups that he believes “transcend organizations” (p. 2). Just as businesses and firms are said to have their own organizational cultures, so too governmental departments and agencies share a certain idea of ‘how things get done around here’ (Martin, 2002).

3.2.4. Organizational Climate as Different from Culture

It is important to clarify organizational climate because it is very often confused with organizational culture, nevertheless; these are two entirely different constructs (Schneider et al., 1996; Verbeke et al., 1998). Research surrounding organizational climate emerged during the 1950s (March and Simon, 1958). Modern interpretations of climate combine two earlier schools of thought regarding the construct. The first is that the climate of the organization reflects the organizational qualities that influence employee actions (von Gilmer, 1966). Von Gilmer (1966) also believed that climate is a way to distinguish organizations between one another. The second is that organizational climate is influenced by the perceptions of organizational members (Litwin and Stringer, 1968).

Reichers and Schneider (1990) describe organizational climate as “shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, procedures, both formal and informal” (p. 22). Shim (2010) conducted a literature review of several different definitions and provided a simplified combined interpretation: “Organizational climate is defined as employees’ shared perception in their work environment” (p. 848). Unlike organizational culture theory, researchers tend to share a more

conjoined voice with respect to interpreting organizational climate. Glisson (2007) argues that organizational climate can be engaged, functional, or stressful. Like their names would suggest, an engaged climate involves workers experiencing personal involvement and fulfillment in the fulfillment of their duties, whereas a stressful work environment is marked by conflict and exhaustion.

Organizational climate precedes organizational culture. Denison (1996) thus explains that traditionally the study of organizational climate is better suited to quantitative inquiry: “If researchers carried field notes, quotes, or stories, and presented qualitative data to support their ideas, then they were studying culture. If researchers carried computer printouts and questionnaires and presented quantitative analysis to support their ideas, then they were studying climate” (p. 621). More recently, Douglas (2010) articulated that while culture and climate are conceptually similar the difference between them lies in how they are approached for study by researchers: “Though conceptually similar, the differentiation is noticeable in how these two concepts are studied. Scholars of culture use qualitative techniques to evaluate culture through ethnographies and sociological studies. Scholars of climate, on the other hand, use multivariate statistics and social psychology to conceptualize climate through organizational outcomes” (p. 1). Shim (2010) explains that individual employee attitudes and behaviors towards the organization and organizational processes constitute indicators of organizational climate. Therefore, it is possible to survey and measure climate relatively straightforwardly.

Bellou and Andronikidis (2009) approached their study of service quality in the hospitality industry from a theoretical perspective of organizational climate. From their explanation of climate as a “management tool to get a better understanding of employees’ motivations” (2009, p. 298) it is possible to draw an example to differentiate between it and

organizational culture. They give the following example. Consider two public-sector workplaces where employees are expected to deliver services to the general public. In workplace A, employees have to deal with outdated computers that run slowly and frequently break down. This, in turn, leads to increased frustration and a stressful organizational climate. In workplace B, employees are provided with cutting-edge technology but purposefully shirk, take extended breaks, and work slowly because this is the way their workplace and colleagues usually function. They are working in an organizational culture that does not have performance and client service as a basic underlying assumption.

This study on the effect of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative approaches the issue from a perspective of organizational culture and not organizational climate. The rationale for this is twofold. Firstly, the qualitative nature of the study is more relevant to research in organizational culture (Denison, 1996; Douglas, 2010). Secondly, the connection considered between organizational corruption in the Middle East with culture justifies approaching the topic from the perspective of organizational culture theory.

3.2.5. Organizational Change and Leadership

Based on the mainstream business literature cited earlier, it is clear that authors in various fields have approached organizational culture as a fundamental aspect surrounding either the success or failure of attempts to enact change (Bate et al., 2000; Wilkins and Dyer, 1988). Dawson (1994) defines organizational change as basically any modification to the usual activities occurring within an organization. According to Kanter et al. (1992), organizational change reflects a historical process of analyzing failures and successes of the past to plan and shape the future. Similarly, George and Jones (1996) characterize organizational change as a movement forward from the present to the future. For Gilgeous (1997), organizational change is

by necessity a response or coping mechanism enacted to deal with one or more factors affecting an organization. It is argued that change can come about as the result of external (Chandler, 1966; Dimaggio and Powell, 1983) or internal pressures (Baker, 1990; Prechel, 1994) within the organization.

This dual interpretation of change in the organization came about in academia as a result of shifting priorities on business during the twentieth century. The distinction between internal and external organizational change is also in a more theoretical sense referred to as planned or emergent change (Bamford and Forrester, 2003; Burnes, 2004; Stoltzfus et al., 2011). While planned and emergent are more popular in the literature, Price and Chahal (2006) use a more modern terminology to describe this dual interpretation of change describing change as being either chosen or crisis-related. French and Bell (1999) explain that planned organizational change emerged during the 1950s and remained popular up until the 1980s.

The planned approach to organizational change surrounds the ability of members within the organization, usually those in positions of leadership but not always, to make managerial decisions that structure the organization to achieve certain (usually desirable) outcomes (Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1947). In the planned approach to change, “the organization is seen as a mechanical system that needs to be continually fine-tuned and honed if it is to achieve its intended objectives” (Bright and Godwin, 2010, p. 182). The comparison of an organization to a machine is not particular to these authors’ interpretation and is used to explain planned organizational change since the emergence of early versions of the concept (Morgan, 1986).

The 1970s and 1980s brought to light new challenges for domestic firms such as increased competition from abroad and a climate of economic restraint (Burnes, 2004; Peters and

Waterman, 1982). Weick (2000) explains that these trends caused a new concept of organizational change to build upon the planned approach but focusing more on organizational reaction and adaptability. Known as emergent change, Bright and Godwin (2010) propose that this alternative to planned change reflects organizational responses to developments that are both unforeseen and impactful: “Emergent approaches have been seen as a way of describing those elements of organization that are largely beyond the direct control of leaders or change agents yet create stability, sensitivity to unforeseen developments, and the capacity to innovate and rapidly adapt” (p. 186). Burnes (2005) argues that the shift towards emergent conceptions of organizational change marked a necessary progression motivated by dissatisfaction and frustration with the internally-focused notion of planned change.

Both interpretations of organizational change require cooperation in a certain sense from organizational culture. This presents a significant challenge as one of the often agreed-upon views about organizational culture is that it is difficult to change (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2008; Handy, 1993; Schein, 2010). Organizational change has itself been interpreted in a variety of ways by authors over time.

Schabracq (2007) uses the concept of mythology taken from Schein (1985) to explain why culture is so difficult to change. The author argues that an organization’s mythology acts as a “frame of reference” that has been built over a long period of time and as such has a stabilizing effect on the organization (p. 17). This, in turn, means that efforts to modify what is responsible for creating stability and reference amongst members of the organization will almost always be met with resistance. Schein (2010) in fact believes that organizational culture can be held so strongly by members that it is comparable to religious or spiritual beliefs: “Organizations are capable of developing the equivalent of religion and/or ideology on the basis of the manner in

which past critical events were managed” (p. 111). Religious beliefs, it has been shown, are amongst the most resistant to change because they are so deeply and personally held (Okamoto, 1976). This phenomenon of experiencing opposition as threat to the success of implementing organizational change initiatives has been recognized in early literature as well (Coch and French, 1948; Mirvis and Berg, 1977; Walton, 1977).

Kanter et al. (1992) argue that organizational change can come about in one of two ways: bold and rapid or slow and steady. In other words, organizational change can result of major large-scale transformation initiatives with strong implementation support or incrementally over a span of several years, respectively. For Kanter et al. (1992), it is these latter slow and steady approaches of change that can be successful in transforming organizational culture. This process of transformation is simply not possible with a large-scale initiative in a short period of time.

Gagliardi (1986) argues that organizational cultures are “tenacious and unalterable”; while a large-scale effort may be able to change an organization’s culture, it will be at a great expense and regardless “will tend to return to its original state and attitude” (p. 119). Gagliardi (1986) builds upon work previously conducted by Schein (2010) and developed a concept identifying a struggle between organizational stability and change. According to him, change could be classified in any one of three ways: apparent, incremental, or revolutionary. Like Kanter et al., (1992) incremental change is the only strategy capable of maintaining stability and still bringing about change while revolutionary change is more similar to cultural displacement than transformation.

Schein (2010) differentiates between organizational change and organizational culture change. Whereas organizational change is relatively straightforward and requires learning new methods through existing cultural parameters, genuinely changing organizational culture (which

according to him occurs only in rare circumstances and under particular conditions) takes significant time and effort and is virtually impossible without radically altering the processes of the organization. An organizational behavior or element is a part of organizational culture where it meets his definition of the term.

Studies show that organizational culture plays a strong role in determining the outcome of organizational change initiatives (Ahmed, 1998; Silvester and Anderson, 1999). Yousef (2000) conducted a study based in the United Arab Emirates to show how traditional Islamic cultural values influenced the culture of a major organization which was later shown to have a demonstrated impact on various change initiatives. A study conducted by Tierney (1999) shows that organizational members will be more likely to support change when the change also has support from teams and especially managers. According to Iverson (1996), some of the factors that help support change within an organization include job satisfaction and security while those that cause increased tendencies towards rejection include union membership and conflict in professional roles. Organizational change initiatives that have as their goal the modification of existing organizational culture or values have been found to cause significant resistance (Lucas and Kline, 2008; Trader-Leigh, 2002).

The Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission can be considered an organizational culture change initiative given that it emphasizes an organization-wide shift from an existing culture of *wasta* to a culture of good governance. However, organizational culture theory and especially the work of main authors in this field offer some insight as to the challenges of introducing an organizational culture change initiative. One of the primary concerns is that successfully introducing organizational culture change can be very difficult and time-consuming. In the end,

the variable of organizational culture is identified in the literature as responsible for affecting a given change initiative.

3.2.6. Leadership and Organizational Culture

From the interviews conducted as part of this study, it was clear that mid-level managers played a guiding role in their organizations. Their routine duties involved, among others, using expertise to provide guidance on projects, managing staff, and making decisions on divisional portfolios and cases. In one recent study conducted among mid-level managers, Nielsen and Cleal (2011) show empirically that mid-level managers demonstrated leadership qualities: “it is encouraging that whatever activity a middle manager engages in, s/he reports being able to exert transformational leadership behaviors and engage and motivate followers” (p. 349). Writing from a public-sector perspective, Fernandez et al. (2010) similarly report that mid-level managers can play an influential role in the management of organizational change initiatives: “middle managers serve a critical role in organizations as architects and champions for organizational change” (p. 319). It is important to consider the role of leadership in organizational culture as authors have pinpointed it as an element of bringing about change.

Similar to the popularity of organizational culture literature, the effect of leadership on influencing organizational change initiatives has created a variety of highly promoted works on the subject (Carter et al., 2005; Hughes and Beatty, 2005). Skostad and Einarsen (1999) explain that discourses surrounding leadership experienced a shift in the 1970s where researchers became more focused in on the role of leaders in enacting cultural change: “leadership research started to focus on the importance of leadership behaviors within an organizational change and

development framework” (p. 289). An important feature of this research is the distinction between two different types of leader.

Burns (1978) argues that leadership possessed an inherently social dimension and proposes that there are two types of leader: transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership reflects a traditional approach to running a firm or managing an organization. Here, leaders provide direction and instruction to workers, clarify and explain tasks, monitor their progress and later either reward accomplishment or penalize failure. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, involves having the leader inspire workers not only to achieve organizational goals but also go above and beyond what is required. Gamson (2000) argues that the difference between these two types of leadership is based upon different sets of values:

“The chief monitors of transactional leadership are *modal* values, that is, values of means – honesty, responsibility, fairness, the honoring of commitments – without which transactional leadership could not work. Transformational leadership is more concerned with *end-values*, such as liberty, justice equality.

Transformational leaders “raise” their followers up through levels of morality” (p. 71).

Since this distinction was originally proposed, others have described additional types of leadership. Bass (1985) proposed a third option, ‘laissez-faire’ leadership where leaders provide their subordinates only with the bare minimum to accomplish tasks. They are not given specific instruction, feedback, or monitoring. Over the years, studies have shown that this style of leadership is among the most disfavored in an organizational context (Bass and Bass, 2008). Ekvall and Arvonen (1991) propose their less influential notion of ‘changed-centered’ leadership which reflects leaders’ ability to adapt their organization and workforce to, as the name suggests,

organizational change initiatives. More recently, research in this field has moved towards a new interpretation of leadership that appears to include both transformational and change-centered styles of leadership.

Building on the principles of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), researchers over the past twenty years have come to observe a new type of ‘charismatic’ leadership (Conger and Kanungo, 1994; Shamir et al., 1993). Conger and Kanungo (1994) identify a total of six qualities that fulfill their interpretation of what is entailed by charismatic leadership. Researchers have demonstrated concern about the potential of a conceptual overlap between both transformational and charismatic styles of leadership, as the differences between them are not particularly clear (Rowold and Heinitz, 2007; Yukl, 1999). Yukl (1999) in fact expresses strong dissatisfaction with the concept of charismatic leadership arguing that its development in the literature has been ambiguous. For example, it is not specifically clear where charisma can be found and how it can be accurately identified.

The definition of charisma with respect to leadership has evolved over time. Weber (1947) initially equated charismatic leadership with religious and military authorities. Others have equated charismatic leadership exclusively with high-ranking organizational members such as CEOs (Beyer and Browning, 1999; Trice and Beyer, 1986). More recently, Murphy and Ensher (2008) discovered qualities of charismatic leadership in a range of workers holding different positions within their organization, explaining that it “can be found at various levels in an organization (...) and charismatic leadership can operate either as an individualized or a group level phenomenon depending on organizational context” (p. 336). It is important to recognize the variety of interpretations surrounding leadership as it has been found to play a crucial role in organizational culture change.

Gagliardi (1986) proposes that change can emerge through competent leadership (see also: Latta, 2009, p. 21). Borrowing from the Weberian association of leadership with religious qualities that was noted earlier, the author precisely identifies charismatic leadership as the key to successfully creating organizational change initiatives: “On the other hand, we all know that organizations evolve, and we see that when cultural identity is being modified there is always a charismatic leader or elite which leads the group towards a new, broader or different view of things” (Gagliardi, 1986, p. 119). In this view, the leader comes into the organization with a set of specific beliefs and, even though these might not be shared among all members of the organization, can influence bringing about change over time. It is not necessarily an easy process, however, given the resilience connected to organizational culture by the author. Accordingly, the role of the leader in Schein’s (2010) theory is directly related to the changing and development of culture.

Schein’s (2010) theory of organizational culture is delivered together with his views surrounding leadership. Kuk et al. (2010) in fact argue that in his theory the two are tied together: “Schein viewed culture and leadership as being two sides of the same coin: One cannot be understood without the other” (p. 50). Schein (2010) does claim that charismatic leadership can play an influential role in changing organizational culture. He describes charisma as a tool used by leaders to facilitate the process of communication, writing that it reflects a “mysterious ability to capture the subordinates’ attention and to communicate major assumptions and values in a vivid and clear manner”, and adds that “Charisma is an important mechanism of culture creation” (2010, p. 235). The only problem, in Schein’s (2010) interpretation of charismatic leadership, is that “leaders who have it are rare, and their impact is hard to predict” (p. 235). Schein (2010) believes that even leaders with high levels of charisma will be unsuccessful at

implementing cultural change if their proposed values differ substantially from existing cultural norms.

According to Schein (2010), leadership alone cannot cause organizational culture change, even if it includes transformational or charismatic characteristics. He does propose an alternative for leaders who want to enact large-scale organizational change that involves working in alignment with existing culture to achieve desired organizational outcomes. This is, according to him, the only way to effectively address strong pre-existing cultural norms:

“Once a culture exists, once an organization has had some period of success and stability, the culture cannot be changed directly unless the group itself is dismantled. A leader can impose new ways of doing things, can articulate new goals and means, and can change reward and control systems, but none of those changes will produce culture change unless the new way of doing things actually works better and provides the members a new set of shared experiences that eventually lead to culture change” (2010, p. 312).

Schein (2010) offers the hypothetical example of an electrical company tasked by its leaders with the responsibility of being more environmentally sensitive. While it is not an example taken from the public-sector, it does serve as an effective illustration of leadership as thought up by the author. He explains that effective leaders identified specific goals in relation to the desired overall outcome of “environmental sensitivity” such as immediate reporting of dangerous situations and training for conduct around hazardous materials. Then, leaders built upon pre-existing organizational culture norms that valued hierarchy and structure to impose policies and regulations that would achieve these individual goals. In the end, the organizational change initiative of being more environmentally sensitive was achieved from within the established

boundaries of the organization's culture. Introducing organizational culture change from within the organization will be shown to have relevance in the context of *wasta*, as some traditional Arab values can be used to defend good governance given that they are strongly opposed to corruption.

In summary, organizational culture is frequently discussed beside the concept of leadership in the relevant literature. This phenomenon is not new. Some authors associate the power of changing organizational culture only to the abilities of certain types of leaders, for example those who have charismatic qualities. Authors like Schein (2010), however, explain that it is rare to find members of an organization who genuinely possess true leadership qualities. One of the key aspects of his theory is that leaders can use existing cultural frameworks to introduce change, which is an idea that carries significance in the context of *wasta*.

3.2.7. Corruption as Culture

If corruption is merely a 'behavioral pattern' (Schein, 2010, p. 329) in Middle-Eastern organizations, changing it would appear relatively straightforward. In Schein's (2010) view, this would entail simply outlining the desired organizational goals needed to achieve a "less corrupt department or ministry" and using existing culture to achieve the outcome. On the other hand, if corruption is a part of Jordanian public-sector organizational culture, changing it will be difficult due to resistance and would likely take a very long period of time.

Researchers have written about corruption in the sense of it being a part of culture (Husted, 2002; Martin, 2003; Miller et al., 2001; Ochonu, 2011; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Smith, 2007). From the earlier discussion of organizational culture, it is noted that various scholars have tried to prepare tools for managers to build certain characteristics into the culture of their workforces. Among these are the much-treasured cultures of performance and efficiency

espoused by such authors as Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1981). Hunt et al. (2012) explain that writers like these tend to envision organizations as societies in and of themselves each containing distinguishing cultural elements: “In studies of organizational culture, the primary methodological principle is to investigate organizations as mini-societies to illuminate the interpretations and understandings participants have of their role in the technical, social and political life of an organization” (p. 219). The authors argue that performance and efficiency may have been desired outcomes in the past but today there is recognition of the value inherent in concepts like corporate social responsibility and ethics within workplace culture.

Over time, inquiries into both corporate business practices and governmental affairs have come to identify workplace transparency and employee integrity as important factors to inject into an organization’s culture (Husted, 2005). The idea that is promoted now is that creating cultures of ethics and good governance are good for public relations and legitimately beneficial to ensuring organizational sustainability and even contributing to performance (Carroll, 1991; Crane and Matten, 2007; Solomon, 2000; 2004). A 2008 report released by Transparency International that was studied as part of the desk review for this research suggests in fact that “Bribery may be so much a part of a business culture in some places, that dealing with it can seem an overwhelming challenge, and no one business, especially a small one, can fight it alone” (p. 4). Undoubtedly, two of the most noticeable factors influencing these trends are globalization and increasing technical interconnectedness among the public (Heath and Norman, 2004).

Although organizational sustainability and performance are not as prioritized in public-sector culture building, governments have also come to realize the importance of bringing ethics into their workplace. Riivari et al. (2012) argue that private-sector concepts of corporate social responsibility have been quickly adopted among the public-sector internationally, writing; “High

ethical standards are important in public sector organisations (...) good governance in public administration is a key factor to improving human development in developing countries” (p. 311). This idea is becoming increasingly supported throughout the Middle East (Khayatt, 2008), and development of initiatives trying to create organizational cultures that value ethical principles are becoming prioritized among the governments of many countries.

In the Middle East region in particular, with Jordan being no exception, socio-cultural values and professional decision making come together. According to Marta et al. (2004), traditional Islamic principles guide many of the parameters of business and strongly influence professional relationships: “In the Middle East, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Islam is the major source of the written laws and most of the legal environment surrounding business transactions” (p. 55). Authors have recognized that in countries where culture is shaped by Islam, individuals apply deeply held beliefs originating in religious tradition to the organizational culture of their workplaces (Abbasi et al., 1989; Diamond, 2003; Kuran, 2013). Not all authors believe this to be something that is always negative, however.

Researchers sometimes recognize the influence of Islam and traditional cultural principles on professional relationships as something positive (Ardichvili, 2010; Rice, 1999). Rice (1999) for instance explains that Islam compels those working in sales to inform potential buyers and customers about any known concerns about whatever they are selling. For example, they are obligated by this moral code to reveal if a product is defective. The same principles apply to advertising and marketing, and can logically be extended to apply to the public sector as well. According to Gibbs and Ilkan (2008), it is the utmost responsibility of the marketer to behave honestly and not misrepresent the product he or she is bringing to the attention of the

public. The interrelationship between Islamic values and finance further proves how strongly professional and socio-cultural norms coexist throughout the Arab world.

An entire field of study has now emerged surrounding the unique field of Islamic finance and Islamic banking (Choudhury and Hussain, 2005; El-Gamal, 2006). Now considered among the fastest growing economic systems in the world and a potential alternative to Western finance, Islamic banking links moral, cultural, and spiritual principles with economics: “Islam could be seen as a foundation for the inclusion of the ethical and moral dimensions of economics and markets. At the same time, it cannot be abstracted from developments in the wider political economy” (Rethel, 2011, p. 76). A comprehensive overview of the principles of Islamic finance is beyond the scope – and indeed subject matter – of this study. But it is important to recognize how, in the Middle East, traditional socio-cultural principles become engrained with the professional world.

The negative side of socio-cultural traditions finding their way into private and public sector workplaces is the very real possibility of these translating to corruption. The unique Arab phenomenon of *wasta*, for example, has been shown by authors to be both emergent from history and culture and influential in modern organizational practice (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Whiteoak et al., 2006). According to Tlaiss and Kauser (2011), *wasta* is in the truest sense a part of Arabian culture and by implication a part of the culture of many organizations in the region: “*Wasta* is crucial for understanding how decisions are made in this region because it permeates the culture of all Arab countries and is a force in every significant decision” (p. 470). Baumann (2007) argues that *wasta* is not only a part of business transactions but that it also exists in the organizational processes of most public-sector departments and ministries in the Middle East.

In his study of wasta in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Weir (2011) finds that wasta satisfied the criteria of organizational culture and as a result discovered that it is considered very difficult to change. In other words, there is very strong and observable resistance among employees to efforts determined to eliminate wasta from the workplace: “But while Arab managers are quite critical of these practices, they clearly regard them as endemic to their culture and unlikely to be affected by any form of modernization” (Weir, 2011, p. 381). Similarly, the 2011 study by Mohamed and Mohamad finds that the persistence of wasta is sustained by two unexpected factors. The authors find, first that wasta is criticized but still used by those in higher socio-economic positions and, second, that wasta is supported and promoted by those in lower socio-economic positions. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) therefore conclude in agreement with preceding studies that wasta is a cultural phenomenon that is extremely difficult to efficiently address given that: “it may be that lower socioeconomic groups need and use wasta more than higher groups. Members of affluent groups may be so well connected that they do not need to use any wasta to receive employment privileges” (p. 421). This shows that there is general agreement in the research literature that wasta is not only a part of Middle Eastern culture in general but also a part of organizational culture.

Because of the relationship between wasta and corruption (Barnett et al., 2013; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), efforts aimed at reforming corruption like the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission therefore function as initiatives of organizational culture change. It is therefore justified to study the Anti-Corruption Commission in Jordan from the perspective of organization culture theory.

This thesis borrow from Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture to analyze the culture of Jordanian public-sector organizations. The next chapter presents this theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Schein Model of Organizational Culture

This study approaches anti-corruption initiative implementation in Jordan's public sector institutions using the theoretical model of organizational culture developed by Schein (2010). During the 1980s, Schein (1985, re-printed 2010) developed a model of organizational culture that was rooted in the idea of culture as something shared amongst members of the organization (Haugh and McKee, 2004). Atkinson (1990) explains that his interpretation of organizational culture also sees it as something that is largely responsible for guiding the behavior of workers. Schein's (2010) model has also been used to study the public sector (Brinkman de guevara, 2014; Wankhade and Brinkman, 2014).

Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture emphasizes the role of the leader in influencing organizational culture (Alvesson, 2012). This is not unusual, however, as some of his earliest works acknowledge the importance of dominating players within an organization and their role in shaping actions and even values of subordinates (Schein, 1968). According to Schein (2009), leadership and culture are profoundly interconnected within an organizational culture: "leadership cannot really be understood without consideration of cultural origins, evolution, and change. In the same way, organizational culture and subcultures cannot really be understood without considering how leaders at every level and in every function of an organization behave and influence how the total system functions" (p. 7). He explains that a conflict between the management style of a recently hired manager or supervisor and the established culture among their subordinates can have a devastating effect on the stability of the work unit and be met with resistance, frustration, and even employee turnover (Schein, 2009; 2010). The phrasing and

language used to denote organizational leadership is extremely important. It must be recognized that for Schein (2010), leadership and management are not to be understood as equal in meaning and the two play different roles with regards to culture.

Kuk et al. (2010) argue that Schein (2010) makes a distinction between managers and leaders based on his views surrounding organizational culture. This idea is further elaborated by Armenakis et al. (2011) who explain that in Schein's conception only leaders are truly capable of changing culture, managers who do not have leadership qualities will have their attempts met with little success. Schein (2010) does not elaborate on any specific factors which distinguish leaders from managers likely because this would be altogether incompatible with his observations on culture. Instead, as Kuk et al. (2010) argue, leadership in his theory is based on whether one's managerial style properly corresponds with existing organizational culture: "organizational culture defines who will be chosen and viewed as successful leaders, and leaders create, manage and change culture. The creation and changing of culture distinguish leaders from managers in Schein's view" (p. 50). Schein (1995) does, however, provide some ideas explaining the differences between organizational founders and managers but this reflects only the highest elites and CEOs in an organization. At the same time, the Schein (2010) model of organizational culture is not marketed as a tool allowing managers to somehow study, learn, and implement the qualities that will help create cultural change.

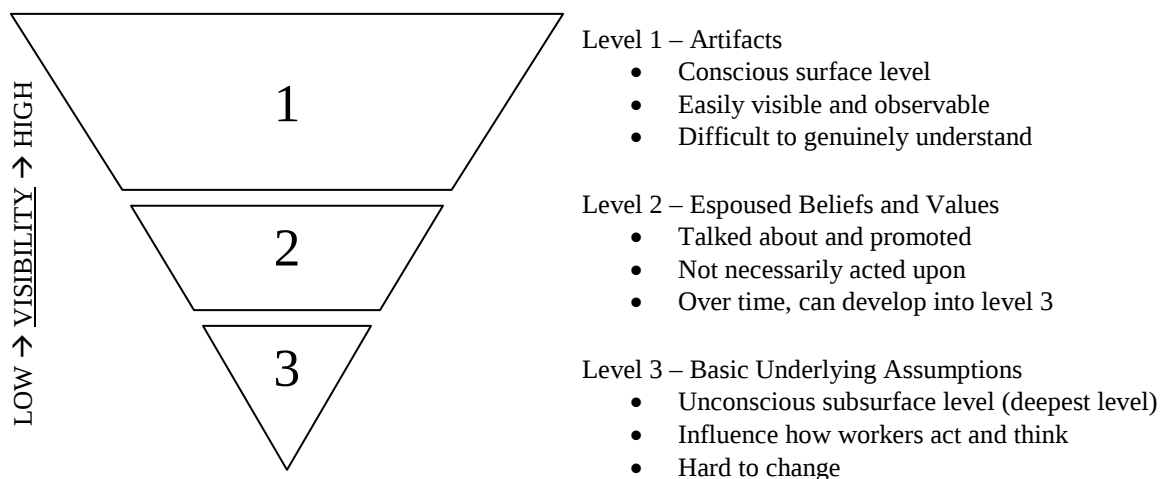
The audience for which Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture is intended is in particular researchers conducting fieldwork in real-life places of employment, either in the private or public sector (Eucker, 2005). This is because it is designed to help outside observers classify, organize, interpret, and make sense of an organization's culture (Buch and Wetzel, 2001; MacIntosh and Doherty, 2005). Schein (2010) explains in fact that his model is designed

as a tool to facilitate the “studying” of culture (p. 32). Although it was not originally intended for this purpose, Schein’s (2010) approach to the study of organizational culture is appropriate for researchers doing fieldwork in any region including, in this case, the Middle East.

4.2. The Three Levels of Culture

Schein (2010) proposed a model of organizational culture he refers to as three levels of organizational culture. He defined the term ‘level’ in a specific way appropriate to the model being a tool for researchers studying the phenomenon in organizations: “culture can be analyzed at several different levels, with the term *level* meaning the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer” (2010, p. 23). The model proposes a total of three different levels of organizational culture that range from obvious to concealed, superficial to authentic, and easily identifiable to those requiring in-depth study (Schneider et al., 2013). Schein’s (2010) three levels of culture include cultural artifacts, values, and basic assumptions. A quick reference to the levels with their corresponding explanation is provided in the diagram below:

Figure 1. Schein (2010) three levels of organizational culture.



Artifacts are representative of the first level of culture. Newberry (2008) compares them to the “tip of the iceberg” given that they are the most conspicuous indicators of culture to the outside observer (p. 41). Figure one uses a different comparison based on the visibility of each level; that is, artifacts are the most conscious, obvious, and immediately identifiable elements of an organization’s culture. Schein (2010) explains that someone looking into a certain organization would at first see its cultural artifacts: “At the surface is the level of artifacts, which include all the phenomena that you would see, hear, and feel when you encounter a new group with an unfamiliar culture” (p. 23). According to Trice and Beyer (1993), artifacts at this basic level of organizational culture can be categorized in four ways, these include; symbols, such as physical objects and locations; language, such as jokes and gossip; narratives, such as stories and tales; and practices, such as ceremonies and events. Schein (2010) also believes that while artifacts are immediately visible, they are only truly understandable upon understanding the organization’s culture through the higher levels.

Schein (2010) believes that it is possible to acquire information about artifacts through the process of observation. Some examples of cultural artifacts inside the organization are “the architecture of its physical environment, its language, its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, and emotional displays; its myths and stories told about the organization; its published list of values; and its observable rituals and ceremonies” (p. 23). It is important to note that both behaviors of workers and visual objects both appear in this level of organizational culture. Schein’s (2010) description, here, profoundly supports anthropological interpretations of culture as these earlier discussed visual indicators are taken literally to reflect “cultural artifacts” within the organization. Cultural

artifacts according to Schein (2010) can be everything including the way a government office is set up (cubicles or desks) or a poster of public-sector values displayed on a wall in the office, for example.

The next deeper level of organizational culture consists of espoused beliefs and values. Schein (2010) claims that espoused beliefs and values reflect the organizational values which can be talked about and promoted by members of the organization but which may not necessarily be practiced in real life. Weiner et al. (2012) argue based on research they conducted that most modern organizations have a code of ethics or practice similar to what Schein (2010) is referring. Espoused values are promoted and publicized by managers and encompass the entirety of an organization.

Over time and under the right conditions, it is possible for espoused beliefs and values to transform into the more fully engrained and deeply held level of culture. Schein (2010) explains that this is essentially a move from what is wanted by the leader to what is accepted by the group overall: “Whatever is proposed will only be perceived as what the leader wants. Until the group has taken some joint action and together observed the outcome of that action, there is not as yet a shared basis for determining whether what the leader wants will turn out to be valid” (p. 25). This transformation occurs over a series of steps and is gradual. When a manager first proposes some solution or plan, it takes the status of a perceived value. If her or his approach turns out to be successful, it can be accepted as an espoused value. Schein (2010) explains that it is possible for a paradox to exist whereby “we will observe in many organizations espoused values that reflect the desired behavior but are not reflected in observed behavior” (p. 27). In other words, an organization may have invested significant resources into the research and development of a code of ethics or similar and find that it is verbally supported by organizational members despite

the fact that unethical or illegal activity continues to occur. In this case, the organization's true culture is not accurately reflected in the code of ethics and researchers would be quick to assume that it authentically represents the organization's culture.

The most genuine level of culture in Schein's (2010) model consists of basic underlying assumptions. Armenakis et al. (2011) explain the difference between this and the preceding level of culture by suggesting that espoused beliefs and values are consciously formed while basic underlying assumptions develop and manifest unconsciously. The authors also point out that espoused beliefs and values are formally created in the organization as they are the product of managerial wishful thinking while basic underlying assumptions represent the informal actions and behaviors of organizational members. Schein (2004) argues that while cultural artifacts (level 1) and espoused beliefs and values (level 2) are implied and relatively easily identifiable, "basic assumptions, in this sense, are similar to what Argyris and Schon identified as "theories-in-use" – the implicit assumptions that actually guide behavior, that tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things" (p. 28). Basic assumptions are the core of 'how things get done in this organization' and to this extent are difficult to change, or at least to change in a short span of time (Heracleous, 2001).

Schein (2010) offers some examples to explain culture at its deepest level. A private-sector company operating in a capitalist country would never allow functioning at a loss financially because this stands in opposition to its very core basic underlying assumptions of securing a profit.

Because basic underlying assumptions are so fundamental to genuine organizational culture, they are extremely difficult to change. Schein (2010) explains that it would be difficult for someone to even question them: "Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be

nonconfrontable and nondebatable, and hence are extremely difficult to change” (p. 28). Lucas and Kline (2008) argue that one reason this level of culture is difficult to change is because it provides a stabilizing function in the organization. As technological and socio-economic priorities change and develop at a rapid pace, organizational members seek comfort in stability afforded by basic underlying assumptions. Schein (2010) argues that attempts to change these basic assumptions are therefore likely to be met with resistance and anxiety.

The Schein (2010) three levels of culture are useful to the analysis of *wasta* because they account for both the observable and promoted organizational culture as well as the genuine hidden culture that is functioning in an organization. The Schein (2010) model can help explain why Jordanian organizational culture resists the implementation of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative by accounting for true culture beyond what is officially promoted by government. Nevertheless, Schein’s (2010) organizational culture theory is not without some criticism which should be assessed for a well-rounded overview of his work.

4.3. Critics of the Model

Rather than undertake the leaps required to change their basic assumptions, Schein (2010) explains that organizational members will be more comfortable with “distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying” their true intentions to correspond with deeply established cultural norms (p. 28). These ideas strongly reflect the sociological frame through which Schein (2010) has crafted his theory of culture. Hatch (2004) recognizes that much of Schein’s work on organizational culture emerges from early sociological theory like Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) but this is not necessarily a problem given that in so doing Schein (2010) is building upon a solid foundation. Nevertheless, authors provide some arguments to dispute Schein’s (2010) interpretation of organizational culture.

It is a reality that Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture is not universally accepted among the academic community. Of course, to his credit, it is unlikely and perhaps even unseen for a researcher to propose a theory without at least some instances of disagreement from their peers (Simon, 1982). Collins (1998) finds the three-level interpretation unconvincing because, according to him, it presents culture through an almost magical and non-scientific lens. Collins (1998) explains that in this model, culture is elevated to almost superhuman levels because it disallows individuals from the opportunity to cause manipulations of organizational culture. He points out that in his view this is not relevant to reality where subcultures are common in organizations and where cultures must continuously adapt to reflect organizational change. The author is not alone in his critique as others find Schein's (2010) model of culture problematic.

Following Schein's (1985) original publication of the construct, Feldman (1986) published an article that strongly questioned the unconscious nature of basic underlying assumptions. He explains that devolving the most authentic level of culture to the human unconscious was unscientific and inappropriate, writing; "using one of the most misunderstood concepts in the social sciences, Schein defines culture as existing in a hidden 'unconscious'. The problem is that the term 'unconscious' does not refer to a place, but is a linguistic device to *describe*, not *locate*, mental phenomena" (1986, p. 87). In this sense, Feldman (1986) perceives of Schein's reference to the unconscious as a simplistic excuse that cannot, in his view, fully include the place of authentic culture in an organization. A similar critique has been promoted suggesting that Schein's (2010) view provides not only a simplistic, but also overly unrealistic, interpretation of similarity among organizational members.

Aulich (2012) argues that Schein's three level model of organizational culture fails to account for cultural differences among members of the organization. More specifically, he contends that the model does not fully address the very real phenomenon of organizational subcultures. A similar criticism is made by Martin (1992) who argues that Schein's (2010) model incorrectly assumes that all organizational members share universal basic underlying assumptions. The author argues that Schein's (2010) view of culture at its deepest levels assumes a complete agreement amongst all members of the organization and does not, in practice, account for the emergence of other cultures. This critique ends up being somewhat unsuccessful, however, as Schein (2010) in fact devotes an entire chapter to organizational subcultures where he explains that "subcultures share many of the assumptions of the total organization but also hold assumptions beyond those of the total organization, usually reflecting their functional tasks, the occupations of their members, or their unique experiences" (p. 55). In his approach, subcultures represent parts reporting back to the overall organizational culture.

4.4. Relevance of Schein's Model

The Schein (2010) model of organizational culture has been deemed relevant for the study of multi-dimensional organizational cultures (Iivari and Iivari, 2011; Kotrba et al., 2012). In other words, the Schein (2010) model allows for researchers to explain more concisely why the actual behaviors and attitudes of staff may differ, even wildly, from the official values promoted top-down throughout the organization. Schein (2009) writes of the example of a hypothetical manufacturing workplace, say, inside a factory. While the building may itself be covered with visual displays of worksite safety awareness, the placement of these visual safety materials beside obviously unsafe machinery that is not up to code hints at the actual culture of

the organization. But these hints can only be recognized through thorough and attentive research. This difference between the culture that is being promoted and the actual culture of the organization is because, to use the language of Schein (2010), there is a disagreement between the promoted and actual levels of culture.

The unique ability of the Schein (2010) model to address these different dimensions in organizational culture strengthens its relevance to the study of anti-corruption initiative implementation in the Jordanian public sector. This is because, in the context of the Middle East, anti-corruption strategies are often accused of falling to the problem of preaching accountability and integrity but failing to actually address problems faced by organizations (Hopper et al., 2009; Rosen, 2006). Khayatt (2008) provides an overview of the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization, a cooperative effort to reduce corruption among many nations in the Middle East including Jordan, and argues that despite this attempt corruption remains present in many organizations: “A culture of corruption exists, almost at a universal level, which requires immediate eradication, and to be replaced by advocacy for a culture of integrity and transparency. This necessitates an effort at the grass roots to reform education systems across all levels” (p. 473). Khayatt’s (2008) explanation emphasizes the enculturation of corrupt actions in the Middle East, suggesting that attempts to prevent corruption could be running into challenges at the level of implementation. Barany (2013) explains that despite highly outspoken attempts at addressing problems of corruption, growing public distrust of government as demonstrated by movements like the Arab Spring protests indicates that these initiatives are not achieving their full potential.

Jordan is one of the key players in the Middle East in establishing comprehensive anti-corruption measures through both its Anti-Corruption Commission and Anti-Corruption Law

(Law № 62) (Terrill, 2010). However, this has not made the country immune from demonstrations caused by apparent public distrust of government and concerns surrounding corruption among its departments and ministries (Ogujiuba, 2013; Valbjom, 2013). In 2010, a large citizen-led coalition in Jordan known as the National Committee of Military Retirees issued a petition to the King calling for, amongst other requests, an end to corruption (Helfont and Helfont, 2012). More recently, entire youth-oriented movements have sprung up throughout Jordan like the Karak Popular Youth Movement and the Ma'an Popular Movement for Change and Reform, among others. Ryan (2011) explains that these grassroots citizen-led coalitions are growing in both size and strength to the extent that they may in time represent a significant source of political opposition to the current government: "each focuses in particular on the problems of privatisation, Amman-centric investment and development, and especially government corruption" (p. 385). Arab Spring related demonstrations saw thousands of demonstrators taking to the streets in the early months of 2011 and during the summer of that year. On December 2, 2011, the headline of *The Daily Star*, a popular Muslim news outlet, read: "Protesters demand 'saving' Jordan from corruption". Smith (2013) explains that demonstrators were motivated by several forces including, besides governmental corruption, rising fuel prices and increasing unemployment.

Arab Spring protests have largely diminished in Jordan due to public fears of the country following its neighbor Syria and falling into a similar conflict (Gunter, 2013). But for the average member of the public who calls Jordan home, a sense of distrust of government due to corruption continues. This could indicate that Jordan's anti-corruption efforts are facing problems of implementation despite being heavily publicized and promoted by government and political leaders (Terrill, 2010). The Schein (2010) model and its ability to account for varying

levels of culture in an organization is therefore relevant to this study which seeks to account for the impact of anti-corruption on organizational culture.

4.5. Chapter Summary

Countries throughout the Middle East region are becoming increasingly pressured by the international community to establish cultures of good governance in their organizations by directly addressing corruption (Bierstaker, 2009; Bishara, 2011; Rosen, 2002; Sommer et al., 2013). Bishara (2011) explains that leaders throughout the region are beginning to come to the realization that in order to achieve goals of democratic development, increase public trust in government, and build growth through international investment, governments must address corruption in their administrations.

Without question, studies prove that many aspects of business and public-sector professional behavior in the Middle East are influenced by culture. This is particularly observable through the unique Arab phenomenon of *wasta* that not only emerged from socio-cultural traditions but remains an engrained part of organizational culture today (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). This study is therefore justified in analyzing the anti-corruption effort of the Jordanian Government from the theoretical foundation of organizational culture theory.

The Schein (2010) model of organizational culture, with three distinct levels of culture, was strategically chosen for this study. It is relevant because the study approaches an aspect of organizational culture through a qualitative methodology, and because it is designed to accommodate multi-dimensional organizational cultures where what is communicated and promoted is not necessarily how organizational members behave.

Schein's (2010) interpretation of organizational culture is also among the most thorough in the literature. Besides providing researchers with a tool through which cultures can be

externally analyzed, the author provides comprehensive explanations surrounding cultural change initiatives and the role of leadership. Both are critical to a complete understanding of organizational culture in the Jordanian public-sector. By wanting to shift organizations away from a tendency for corruption and towards good governance and ethical responsibility, measures like the Anti-Corruption Commission are examples of organizational culture change initiatives. Further, because the study interviewed mid-level managers in governmental departments and ministries, it involves elements of leadership in influencing the behavior of organizational members. The next chapter will demonstrate how an inductive-abductive grounded-theory methodology was selected in order to gather experiences of mid-level managers in the Jordanian public sector regarding the effect of anti-corruption initiatives on organizational culture in their offices and the broader public sector.

CHAPTER 5. METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to assess how the implementation and continued administration of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative, that is, the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan, impacted organizational culture in public-sector organizations which, studies show, are heavily influenced by the unique phenomenon of *wasta* (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). A literature review finds that no existing body of work has to date attempted to study this combination of issues. The decision therefore follows to approach the research objectives using an empirical qualitative design. The qualitative design reflected the exploratory nature of the study as oriented towards the identification of new concepts and themes that could be used to inform future research in public administration, or broader international affairs or organization studies. Data collection consisted of primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with presently employed mid-level managers in Jordanian public sector institutions. Secondary data was analyzed using a desk review, and included mostly peer-reviewed academic literature, official policy documents of the Government of Jordan, and reports of major organizations surrounding corruption. Snowball sampling was used to identify and recruit potential participants; while invitation notices were sent to all departments and ministries in Jordan, the researcher's collaboration with local Jordanian authorities in Ottawa helped in identifying mid-level managers likely to participate in the study prior to his leaving Canada. A total of 19 interviews were carried out, determined through the principle of data saturation. During the methodological process, the researcher was faced with some challenges including limited time to arrange fieldwork abroad, navigating a dilemma with respect to sampling, and successfully gaining the trust of participants in a formal interview setting discussing some sensitive subject matter.

5.1. Qualitative Research

An empirical qualitative research methodology was selected for use in this study. There are, in fact, very few peer-reviewed academic studies on the subject of *wasta*. Both quantitative and qualitative inquiries into this subject are quite rare, meaning it remains in a state of emerging research. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) conducted a thorough literature review to find past research which has studied the phenomenon, and despite an acknowledgement of the extent of *wasta* in Arab workplace, the authors conclude that “very little work has been published in Arabic or English on *wasta*” (p. 413). Unlike the quantitative approach which seeks to test theory and generalize from data (Bryman, 2012), qualitative research involves an exploratory dimension aimed at discovering ideas, uncovering different perspectives, and identifying new concepts (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The study seeks to account for the role of *wasta* in Middle-Eastern organizational culture following the introduction of a large-scale effort to prevent corruption in the country’s public sector. To date, no researchers have attempted to study corruption from the perspective of these two dimensions.

Scholars have, in the past, been successful in studying corruption using a qualitative methodology (Marra, 2000; Reyes, 2010; Ufere et al., 2012). Writing in the context of Jordan, Fidler (2011) for instance uses a grounded theory approach to successfully study *wasta* from the perspective of project management. Branine and Pollard (2010) conducted interviews with managers throughout various Arab countries in their study of Islamic Management, bringing to attention the delicate balance between traditional Islamic morality and professional standards of management the combination of which could result in perceptions of corrupt acts. Tambulasi (2009) employs a qualitative methodology in his study which identified a link between the implementation of New Public Management (NPM) policies and public-sector corruption. In

these examples, the researchers interviewed government officials to uncover new details about corruption in their organizations that may have otherwise been difficult to capture using a quantitative framework.

Grodeland (2010) explains that qualitative studies of corruption are valuable in terms of complementing the multitude of studies which approach the topic quantitatively using, for instance, surveys. While useful for trend analysis, these methods are not as accurate in pinpointing the experiential dimensions or ‘lived experiences’ related to corruption. Doig et al. (2006) claim that qualitative research should in actuality take priority by informing future corruption research given that it “allows an understanding of the weaknesses of state institutions and the failings of previous reform initiatives by asking about corruption from a number of perspectives” (p. 245). While nations across the globe turn to measurable indices of corruption like the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), it is important for researchers to be reminded that “statistics by themselves are no reliable indicators of progress” (Pope, 1997, p. 23-24).

Quantitative approaches to studying corruption share some important limitations. For instance, international corruption ranking authorities like Transparency International have been controversial. The Transparency International CPI represents precisely one of these well-known and often cited attempts at evaluating global corruption (Askari et al., 2012; Sioussiouras and Vavouras, 2012). This service ascribes a statistical corruption ranking to over 150 countries, including Jordan, where increasing numeric scores correspond with lower levels of corruption (Langbein and Knack, 2010). Transparency International’s annual CPI leaderboard is among the most influential international indices of corruption cited extensively in academic literature and policy reports (Andersson and Heywood, 2009). Treisman (2007) questions the reliability of the

CPI by citing various measurement changes it has undergone since its original inception in 1995. De Maria (2008) provides a more ideological critique claiming that the application of Western interpretations of corruption to non-Western nations is simply not appropriate. A qualitative research design overcomes problems of measurement by forming an understanding of corruption through eyewitness accounts and semi-directed narratives of those who experience it firsthand.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that one of the main advantages of qualitative research is its ability to attach meaning to the realities of individuals in an authentic context. In this case, the relationship between *wasta* and organizational culture was assessed by turning to the narratives of civil servants who experience these phenomena on a daily basis as part of their professional routines (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009). This study frames the experiences of mid-level managers through a specific case study of the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission.

5.2. Case Study Approach

Case study research is appropriate where scholars intend to study phenomena in a real-life context (Jaspers, 2007). Yin (2009) explains that case studies seek to further researchers' understanding of social phenomena, writing; "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes..." (p. 4). Case studies have also been called appropriate for research in the field of public administration given their ability to provide additional insight into policymaking and matters of government (Bailey, 1992; Garson, 2002).

The case study adopted for the purposes of this research is exactly one of public administration as it deals with matters of corruption in the federal government of a Middle Eastern nation. Yin and Davis (2007) encourage researchers to adopt the case study method

where a social phenomenon involves certain real-life conditions that are important for purposes of added understanding. The case study under the subject of investigation here concerns the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission which was formally created under the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in 2006 (Terrill, 2010). This format also respects the case study design which generally observes a social phenomenon over a specified timeframe (Yin, 2009). Under study here was the end of an approximately seven year period since the establishment of the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission.

It is possible to distinguish between both a single and multiple case study design (Fridlund, 1997). A single case study, although filled with controversy about its academic resilience (Yin, 2009), can nevertheless provide a strong contribution to knowledge under the appropriate circumstances (Barzelay, 1993). Specifically writing from the perspective of public administration, Barzelay (1993) notes that “producing and using single case studies are valuable ways to advance the aims of public management research” (p. 316). Pillay (2004) also defends the use of single case studies in matters of governance and public management. Single case studies are useful in instances where a particular topic of inquiry is new and unexplored and where researchers intend on gathering highly detailed observations or the so-called much wanted thick description (Geertz, 1973).

On this basis, use of the single case study methodology is justifiable given the topic of inquiry being the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission. A recent World Bank report called Jordan’s national efforts at combating corruption among the most organized and large-scale in the Arab World: “The Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network was established in Amman in July 2008 to provide regional knowledge networking, capacity development, and policy dialogue to fight corruption across the Arab region. In addition, Jordan is supporting the regional initiative

to draft an Arab League convention on combating corruption” (2013, p. 130). The report acknowledges efforts of the Jordanian government and its leaders in making not only substantial internal progress towards the elimination of corruption but in addition expanding cooperation across other Middle Eastern nations. Previous attempts at addressing corruption to this extent have never emerged from the Arab world. Therefore, it is valuable for researchers to conduct a single case study of Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission given that it is a unique and tangible policy approach that may cause development of other effective anti-corruption strategies in neighboring regions.

Yin (2009) explains that, generally, multiple case studies are considered as having greater academic strength due to the increased possibility of generalizing from their findings. It is important to note that this study, besides theoretical relevance to expanding the knowledge base on *wasta* and organizational culture, seeks to provide policy relevance to officials developing anti-corruption strategies and frameworks in a Middle Eastern context. While there are substantial differences in the economies and governments of countries in these regions, the phenomenon of *wasta* seems to overcome what is different and apply universally to business practices occurring within this geographic region (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). Multinational collaboration is not a foreign concept to anti-corruption strategists in the Middle East. On May 22 2009, the Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations sent the Secretary General of the United Nations in New York an official notification offering support to other Arab states in the development of anti-corruption divisions based on its success and experience developing and managing the Anti-Corruption Commission (Office of Public Sector Information, 2009). Therefore, it is important for the study to be relevant to contexts beyond

Jordan with the hope of making anti-corruption strategies developed elsewhere strong and long-lasting.

A recent body of work on case study methodology suggests that it is possible to generalize from the case study methodology. Mathiot and Wilson (1990) for instance argue that not only is it possible for researchers to make generalizations from case studies but that in fact this process can produce valuable results: “Generalizing through the case study approach, although approximative, gives reliable information” (p. 138). Flyvbjerg (2006) proposes that the so-called “conventional wisdom” attributed to single case studies, reflecting the inability for their findings to be generalized to other cases, is incorrect. In many circumstances, the author suggests, single case studies can produce generalizable findings: “One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods” (2006, p. 228). Flyvbjerg (2006) explains that single case studies can also be useful in that they explore the “complexities and contradictions of real life” (p. 237). These justifications are applicable to this study given the large scale spread of *wasta* throughout professional relationships occurring in the Arab context

5.3. Jordan as a Case Study

Despite its advancements in democratic governance, Jordan retains the status internationally of a developing country though one in a state of steady transition (Haddad et al., 2009). Choosing to study the effects of anti-corruption initiative implementation on public-sector organizational culture empirically in a Middle Eastern democracy is an unprecedented opportunity for researchers. Mufti (1999) explains that Jordanian citizens experience significant freedoms in their country despite being ruled by a monarchy and to the jealousy of citizens in neighboring countries – they experience political freedom, freedom of the press, regular

elections, an acceptance of the democratic process, and the ability to express political disagreement without fear of persecution. Robbins and Rubin (2013) argue that Jordan is unique in the region because its governments simultaneously protect Islamic traditions and values while embracing and encouraging official dialogue and debate through state institutions like the Advisory Council of Dar al-Ifta and the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought. Yom (2013) recently captured the steps Jordan's leaders have taken to establish their country as a progressive leader in human rights and development:

“At the institutional level, examples of Jordan's openness include its dispatch of numerous exchange students to Western universities, its welcoming of Pope Benedict's visit in 2009, and the decision to orient its tourism industry toward Christian and Jewish visitors. At the policy level, the regime burnishes not only its 1994 peace accord with Israel but also the fruits of U.S.-Jordanian cooperation, such as liberalized investment and trade agreements, intelligence collaboration regarding the War on Terror, and diplomatic coordination regarding regional issues such as the Iraq War and dealings with Iran. Not least because of such support, the regime has reaped tremendous economic rewards. Since the 1990s, the United States has become one of Jordan's largest trade partners as well as its biggest aid donor. Most recently, from 2008 to 2012, Jordan netted almost \$4 billion in military and economic assistance, with annual aid ranging from \$650 to \$800 million” (p. 129).

Though new, the Anti-Corruption Commission stands as a further example of efforts to achieve progress and democratic goals. Yom (2013) maintains that these combined efforts are unique to

the region, and as such, it is valuable for researchers to investigate how efforts like a large-scale anti-corruption initiative are being interpreted ‘on the ground’ by officials and policymakers.

Studying anti-corruption measures in Jordan allowed the researcher to have a view into what remains still a work-in-progress. Despite the fact that the Anti-Corruption Commission has been functioning for more than five years, the general public’s distrust of public-sector officials remains troublingly high. Ryan (2011) notes that while reform measures appear to be in full effect on paper, the public remains skeptical about the practical acceptance of civil servants, especially at managerial levels, of the Anti-Corruption Law. This is because “Jordanians complain consistently about rising unemployment, underemployment, poverty and corruption among business and government elites” (p. 370). The author also links recent protests and tensions to growing public concerns over corruption in government.

It is unlikely that we would have had as comparably an accessible experience studying corruption empirically elsewhere in the Middle East. Jordan’s strong relationship with the West and the willingness of its leaders to promote anti-corruption measures (Yom, 2013) likely contributed to acceptance for participants in this case study research. It is anticipated that the findings of this work will provide effective feedback to Jordanian anti-corruption policymakers and authorities with the hopes of strengthening a system that has clearly been built on a strong and ambitious foundation.

5.4. Participant Selection Criteria

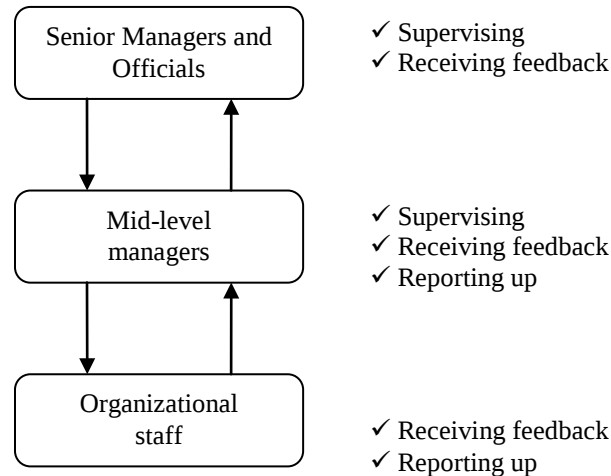
Interviews were conducted with mid-level managers on-site in Jordanian public-sector organizations. In order to contribute to the study, participants needed to be employed within at least one governmental organization at the time of data collection in a position with some supervisory responsibilities. Employees classified at the assistant director level or higher were

not eligible for participation. The decision to consult mid-level managers was strategic due to their unique position in the organization and their ability to provide a range of viewpoints surrounding their department's anti-corruption strategy.

Interviews were carried out over the summer of 2013, between the months of June and August. These dates were selected only as a matter of convenience given the academic schedule and professional responsibilities of the researcher in Canada. There is no better or worse time to interact with representatives of the Jordanian public-sector however, so the fieldwork dates have no impact on research outcomes. In Jordan, government organizations are fully operational during the summer months with little to no staff taking extended time off unlike in the North American context.

According to Peschanski (1985), mid-level managers have a dual relationship with their organizations. They share in the burden of supervising staff and many of the human resources challenges associated with this process. They must oversee one or more employees and in so doing fill a position of authority. On the other hand, they must themselves answer to superiors and fulfill their instructions. They are faced with similar pressures and goals that they demand of their own staff. The result, Paschanski (1985) argues, is that mid-level managers' unique position allows for identification with executives as well as line employees. The particular positioning of mid-level managers with respect to this study is illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 2. Diagram of organizational responsibilities for senior managers and officials, mid-level managers, and organizational staff.



The benefit of mid-level managers' role in the organizations (as both supervisor and supervisee) to this study on corruption was their ability to provide a range of unique perspectives. As shown in Figure 2, mid-level managers are in the capacity of all three organizational processes including supervising staff, receiving feedback (including instructions on anti-corruption processes) as well as reporting back up to their supervisors. Where qualitative research seeks to engage a similar sample, it is important for participants to have a breadth of varied experiences in order to contribute maximally to the data collection process (Ulin et al., 2005). A similar approach was successfully used in a recent study by Nyberg and Wright (2013) who opted for organizational diversity but restricted participants to the managerial level in their study of corruption in the environmental industry. In doing so, the authors were able to target employees within specific positions and study their experiences with corruption in a variety of organizational contexts. Participants from this study were similarly recruited from several Jordanian public-sector institutions.

Selecting interviews with mid-level managers is justified also because this ensures greater integrity of interview data. Lower-level managers are suggested to play a more observatory role with respect to corruption in their organizations as opposed to their senior-level counterparts who are more likely to being involved directly in unlawful acts (Loizeau et al., 2002). In the context of Jordan, mid-level managers are responsible for overseeing corruption and at the same time are being themselves studied by higher level officials. This plays again to their varied dual role in the organization and, in the case of this study, provided a breadth of views about these matters. Further, in the Middle Eastern context, studies show that corrupt behavior is more attributable to high-ranking senior officials (De Lauri, 2013; Williams, 2009). Therefore, reliance on mid-level managers for data is suggested to encourage more honesty in participant feedback and lower the risk of deception which should be acknowledged as a legitimate challenge in corruption research taking place abroad (Ryen, 2007). It is also important for researchers to clearly indicate the rank of managers they select as participants because this information can help future attempts at studying the phenomenon given that many studies do not provide these details (de Graaf et al., 2008).

In addition to being more comfortable speaking about sensitive matters within their organizations, mid-level managers in Jordan also have a wealth of experience in both public management and recent anti-corruption efforts. Following His Majesty King Abdullah II's taking of the throne in 1999, increasing pressure has been placed on Jordanian public servants to deliver on public initiatives transforming the country to a knowledge-based economy. Al-Jaghoub et al. (2009) provide a summary account of some of the King's most recent goals in championing a world-class public service seeking to "deliver high-quality services to consumers, business, and organizations; improve government performance and efficiency, enhance Jordan's

competitiveness, ensure public sector transparency and accountability; (...) develop skills within the public sector; (...) and improve information security” (p. 12). Their account demonstrates how policy priorities and anti-corruption matters come together. Jordanian mid-level managers exercise a position of leadership in this regard as they are responsible for overseeing development of new projects and public infrastructure to move Jordan’s government towards increased efficiency and integrity.

The eligibility criteria for participating in the study was also limited to presently-employed Jordanian employees of governmental departments and ministries. Academics in the past have successfully used accounts of former employees in major organizations to study organizational culture (Lee and Kingsley, 2009; Tourish and Vatcha, 2005). Leipnik and Krychynko (2013) for instance conducted a series of interviews with former employees of Ukrainian publicly owned utility companies to study the impact of corruption on infrastructure, showing how workers who were no longer part of the organizations expressed higher levels of confidence in sharing their experiences. Millington et al. (2006) described their strategy of interviewing former employees of multinational corporations based in China as positive in their study of “guanxi”, a Chinese term reflecting preference for doing business with family that has been compared with *wasta* (Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Smith et al., 2012). The authors describe the participants as being a positive resource contributing to the integrity of their findings. In the case of this study concerning anti-corruption in Jordan, interviewing former civil servants was seen as being unfeasible given that Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission is very new in the public sector and as such the public workforce has only been exposed to it for a relatively short period of time (Terrill, 2010). Interviewing participants from a diverse makeup of departments and ministries allowed the researcher to sidestep potential problems of bias, and achieve a

sample that was both diverse and representative in accordance with qualitative research methodology (Seidman, 2013).

5.5. Sampling

The Government of Jordan consists of 28 ministries split into 78 agencies of government (Mueckenheim, 2008). Recruitment requests were forwarded to representatives of all 28 ministries. The study made use of snowball sampling methodology, which was reflected in the invitation to participate. Snowball sampling involves selecting a few contacts that then use their personal and professional network to help in the recruitment of additional participants (Goodman, 1961). Snowball sampling is both a sampling strategy and a method of recruiting participants (Aparasu, 2011). Representatives were encouraged both in the recruitment notification and through further correspondence to inform their colleagues of the study and contact the researcher if they were interested in participating.

Snowball sampling proved effective here due to the nature of the population being studied. Jordanian public-sector departments do not offer a central directory of employee names and contact information aside from a select few personnel. Making firsthand contact with mid-level managers would therefore have been extremely challenging. Snowball sampling is a useful approach specifically when dealing with such hard to reach populations (Sadler et al., 2010). It enables the researcher to get an inside approach to recruiting participants by building-on individuals' pre-existing contacts. It was also appropriate given the geographical and cultural setting of this research.

As this study shows, many professional arrangements in the Middle Eastern context rely heavily on one's connections and network. Craig and Douglas (2005) explain that snowball or referral sampling is, as a result, a very common approach to research being conducted in the

Middle East. In order to make initial contact with Jordanian civil servants, official ministerial and departmental websites were consulted for general contact information. This search resulted in a list of e-mails to which an informational notice was sent. Several departments and ministries cooperated with the research by providing contact information of mid-level managers who subsequently contacted the researcher to express interest in the study and, in some cases, referred the researcher to other participants.

Sample size was based on the principle of data saturation. Grady (1998) explains that data saturation occurs when participant contributions begin to overlap and no new data emerges from continued interviewing. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), data saturation is reached when categories in the process of analysis become exhausted. It is generally considered an appropriate method of determining sample size in qualitative research (Francis et al., 2010). The actual research process in the field resulted in data saturation being reached after 19 interviews had been conducted.

5.6. Data Collection Process

Data collection in the study consisted of two complementary approaches. Primary empirical data was collected through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in Jordan with mid-level managers who either responded to a recruitment e-mail or were recruited through snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted in English but participants were encouraged and allowed to use Arabic phrases when they felt comfortable. Additional understanding for the findings was provided using the desk review methodology. Materials subjected to the desk review included official documentation of the Government of Jordan and peer-reviewed academic materials related to the subject matter of *wasta*, corruption, and organizational culture.

5.6.1. Achievement of Representative Sample

In qualitative research, it is important for a sample to be representative in order to produce the most informative results (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). There were a total of 19 interviews conducted between the months of June and August 2013. With respect to distribution by department, 4 interviewees were from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply; 5 interviewees were from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation; 3 interviewees were from the Ombudsman Bureau; 4 interviewees were from the Ministry of Agriculture; 2 interviewees were from the Ministry of Finance Budget Bureau, and 1 interviewee was from the Anti-Corruption Commission itself. Participants were aged between 30 to 58, with an average age of 44. The education levels of the interviewees were at least a bachelor degree to a doctoral degree. 18 participants were male and 1 participant was female. As the participants were from a range of different governmental organizations with significantly different mandates, it is suggested that the sample was highly representative.

5.6.2 Saturation Justification

The researcher concluded the data collection process after having completed 19 interviews on-site in Jordan. Royse et al. (2015) argue that data saturation occurs after the researcher identifies recurring or overlapping responses among his or her participants: “Saturation occurs when the data analyses begin to reveal repetition and redundancy, when new data tend to confirm the existing findings rather than expand on them” (p. 105). During the final 3 or 4 interviews, the researcher noted that some themes were indeed beginning to repeat. From an empirical perspective, this had to do with matters of *wasta* as human resources issue or the various attributes given to *wasta* by the managers such as insurance. Attached can be found Appendix 2 which provides more information on some of the coding categories included for data

analysis. The categories and sub-categories represent the themes which began to repeat towards the final few interviews, therefore achieving saturation in line with the definition provided earlier.

5.6.3 Sample Justification

Authors writing from an international context argue that given the difficulties of conducting fieldwork abroad, a smaller sample is justifiable and sometimes even expected (Bell, 2013; Martin and Pirbhai-Illich, 2015). Wright (1996) explains that researchers conducting fieldwork abroad who are limited by factors such as a tight schedule or lack of resources should strive to make the most from the participants who take part in their research. According to the author, this means extracting as much information as possible through in-depth interviewing and ensuring that each participant is given many opportunities to share their comments on a variety of relevant topics. This approach was adopted by the researcher who used a variety of questions, including probing questions, to let conversations flow naturally as per the semi-structured interviewing methodology.

Another issue affecting the sample size is that corruption continues to be a sensitive topic in the Middle East (Greffrath and Duvenhage, 2014; Khayatt, 2008), and especially among those who work in environments where corruption can take place like government organizations. Wynn (2007) writes based on her experience conducting interviews in Egypt that in fact many researchers are unsuccessful even receiving permission to conduct their fieldwork with state representatives concerning controversial or sensitive topics like poverty, crime, or corruption. With this in mind, the researcher in the present study was able to follow through with official regulations, like receiving permission, securing 19 interviews in a relatively limited timeframe should be considered a success.

5.6.4 Language and Context of the Interviews

Interviews were carried out in English but participants were encouraged to use Arabic words and phrases when they felt comfortable doing so, or when they felt that this would add benefit to the conversation. Official information and forms about the researcher were distributed in the English language. In terms of the context of the interviews, in most cases the interviews were conducted within the departments or ministries where each participant was interviewed. Interviews were carried out in participants' own offices, which offered sufficient privacy and were closed off from other employees. Because most of the mid-level managers finish work in the afternoon, interviews were scheduled in the morning to allow them sufficient time to complete their work-related activities.

5.7. Semi-Structured Interviewing

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted on-site throughout various Jordanian public-sector organizations during the period of June to August 2013. Interviewing is an effective approach to data collection in research surrounding corruption where the goal involves developing an experience based understanding of the phenomenon (Leeuw et al., 1999). It is also considered an appropriate data collection strategy in research using the case study method (Yin, 2009). Unlike structured research interviews which involve asking participants the same series of questions and ensuring that discussions are kept on-track at all times, semi-structured interviews use a less strong format consisting of several basic questions which serve only to guide a natural discourse which can, and should, go in unforeseen directions (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

Morse and Field (1995) recommend using semi-structured interviews in instances where researchers cannot thoughtfully predict participant responses or, in other words, where research

is exploring unknown territory. Given that no studies have attempted to investigate the effect of anti-corruption efforts in the Jordanian public sector with reference to *wasta* and organizational culture, the study was indeed covering fresh ground which provided the ideal opportunity to adopt the interview process for the purposes of uncovering new concepts which may inform future research. This interview-based approach also reflects similar research that has used this methodological approach to study sensitive issues in the Arab world.

The persistence of corruption in Middle Eastern public-sector departments and ministries is without question a sensitive matter in the Middle East (Zayani, 2013). Interviewing has been used in similar research areas to give participants the opportunity to articulate sensitive issues in their own words. Several noteworthy studies have been successful in approaching these controversial topics through interviewing within the Middle East. Hutchings and Weir (2006) built their comparative study on social networks in Middle Eastern organizations upon findings emerging from dozens of semi-structured interviews. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) conducted their study on *wasta* through informal interviews with survey participants to discover how the phenomenon plays in professional development and career success. Steele (2011) used semi-structured interviewing to understand the inner workings of journalism and journalistic integrity in the Arab media. Kassem (2012) used interviewing to gain insight into female attempts at securing public-sector careers in Lebanon. In these examples, semi-structured interviewing allowed for effective collection of the real lived experiences of participants dealing with sensitive and difficult issues.

Corruption is especially difficult to approach in Arab organizations for two predominant reasons. Firstly, as outlined above, it remains a sensitive issue which caused the researcher to believe that mid-level managers in Jordan may be outright unwilling to meet with someone from

abroad and discuss it out of fear of incriminating themselves or others. Krug (2004) for instance acknowledged difficulties in interviewing business and government officials in a foreign context on the subject of corruption in procurement due to the regularity of illegal deals in some climates. The second concern is that even if eligible participants agree to be interviewed, they may provide the researcher with untrue or dishonest representations of reality in their organizations. To a certain extent, the former concern was mitigated specifically by the selection of managers who occupied mid-level positions as outlined earlier. Following organizational data collection best practices as outlined by Hosseini and Armacost (1993), communicating data security to participants as well as assuring them of complete confidentiality during both the research and publication process were key to establishing an honest relationship enabling effective exchange of opinions and experiences.

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to reflect the themes of organizational culture, *wasta*, and anti-corruption initiative implementation. Appendix 1 presents the list of interview questions and probing questions used in this study. Given the sensitivity of the subject and in order to ensure that participants felt comfortable addressing these matters, it was important that questions were not formatted to appear personal or as if the study was intending to uncover actual incidences of corruption, as in a police investigation for example. Participants were not asked to provide potentially personal questions such as, for instance, whether they knew of any colleagues who were involved in corrupt acts. Instead, questions reflected the research themes and theoretical framework of large-scale anti-corruption initiative implementation and its subsequent effects on organizational culture. Mukherjee (2002) explains that researchers must strike a balance when designing appropriate interview questions. While sensitive or personal questions should be avoided whenever possible, it is nonetheless important for researchers to

accumulate relevant and strong data through relevant questions. Interview questions should also accurately reflect the subject matter being researched and, whenever possible, be backed up by prior scientific analysis such as a thorough desk review (Merton et al., 1956).

Following the processes of semi-structured interviewing outlined by Rogers (2001), the interview guide contains several broad questions and a series of corresponding probes with the intention to minimize formal structure and allow for a freer and more open-ended flow of ideas. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) argue that semi-structured interviewing is appropriate for research centered on a qualitative methodology. The authors suggest that questions should give the conversations the opportunity to venture in new and unpredictable directions. To this extent, participants were given a reasonable amount of freedom in sharing their experiences surrounding *wasta* and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In all cases, interviews took place at the workplaces of each mid-level manager. Generally, it is advisable for interviews to take place in a location where the participant feels comfortable and which is at the same time relevant to the process of effective data collection (Bolderston, 2012). Where feasible, participants allowed the researcher to conduct the interview in their offices. On more than one occasion, the researcher conducted more than one interview session in a given day at the same organization. It was originally estimated that interviews would last approximately 60 minutes, but in practice, most interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes as mid-level managers demonstrated considerable openness to discussing not only the effect of anti-corruption initiatives but also their experiences surrounding perceived drawbacks and challenges to their effective implementation. Participants were not provided compensation for their contributions to the study.

5.8. Ethical consideration and approval

Ethics approval for the study was sought from the researcher's home institutional Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa in Canada. There were some concerns about seeking ethical approval overseas given that the fieldwork and data collection was being conducted there in its entirety in Jordan. However, this was not possible after it was discovered that no comparable research ethics bureau exists in Jordan. To ensure compliance with official norms, the researcher approached Jordanian officials with a request for support to carry out the study overseas. Representatives expressed strong support for the study even going so far as to recommend public servants in Jordan who could serve as initial contacts to facilitate snowball sampling and further participant recruitment.

Verbal as opposed to written consent was requested from study participants. Studies dealing with corruption abroad have, in the past, used verbal consent scripts as a way to make participants feel less anxious in sharing controversial information or details about illegal acts taking place in their organizations (Wafula et al., 2013). Chickweche and Fletcher (2012) contend that using verbal consent scripts in research addressing sensitive subject matter can help promote trust between participants and the research team, showing in their own research how African officials were more likely to voluntarily choose verbal rather than written consent. The authors also recommended selecting hand-written note-taking over audio-recording of interview sessions.

As a part of the verbal consent process, participants were informed of the opportunity to cease from answering any questions which made them uncomfortable. They were also given the option to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time with no resulting direct or indirect consequences. This practice is consistent with standards of ethical research practice and is

especially important to secure trust in instances where researchers are studying sensitive or difficult topics like public sector corruption (Gordon and Prohaska, 2006).

It is generally regarded as a standard of qualitative research to audio-record interviews for the purposes of accurate future transcription and data collection (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Tilley, 2003). However, there are some instances where undertaking an audio recording of an interview is problematic and can work against the best interests of both the researcher and the participant. Guest et al. (2013) argue that there are justifications for selecting handwritten note-taking over audio-recording in some research scenarios, including where material is sensitive and could prevent a participant from disclosing valuable information or where “having digital records may create a risk for you or for your interviewees” (p. 157). Rubin and Rubin (2012) advise researchers who feel any doubt about participant comfort to choose taking handwritten notes as opposed to audio-recording whenever possible. In the case of this study, given the sensitive nature of a topic such as corruption in Middle Eastern public-sector institutions (Helmy, 2012), the decision was made to take handwritten notes instead of audio-recording the interviews.

5.9. An Inductive-Abductive Grounded-Theory Analysis

The study adopts an inductive-abductive approach in the organization and presentation of its results. Originally, it was determined that this exploratory research was not suited for a hypothetico-deductive model. Intuitively, this research project was designed under an inductive methodological protocol. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explain that inductive data analysis is most conducive to exploratory research adopting a qualitative methodology. Yin (2011) explains that in an inductive approach, the researcher becomes guided by the data itself to formulate and draw meaning from the data: “Inductive approaches tend to let the data lead to the emergence of concepts; deductive approaches tend to let the concepts – if only taking the form of initial

“categories” (...) lead to the definition of the relevant data that need to be collected” (p. 94). In the context of this research, it is clear that we created an explanation based on our observations. So we still consider induction as an important heuristic component of this research.

Nevertheless, it was determined after that in fact a rather abductive approach was adopted to create the explanation. Abductive and inductive approaches are not entirely different as they both follow a grounded-theory research philosophy. The difference lies in how theoretical knowledge was used in order to guide the empirical analysis. Richardson and Kramer (2006) describe the abductive approach as:

“In fact, the process of associating data and ideas is abduction, and what Coffey and Atkinson stress is that existing theory can be used as a tool to develop such ideas.” (p. 500).

In this research, a significant amount of theoretical ideas were borrowed especially from Schein. His model helped shape the questionnaire and the interpretation of data. In the data interpretation (results sections) a highly iterative approach was also used by integrating existing theories and empirical evidence. In the context of this research, the heuristic process is highly iterative drawing from the theory and observation. Kelly (1995:34 – cited in Richardson and Kramer, 2006) describe the benefits of abduction in grounded theory like this:

“Within this context, the theoretical knowledge and pre-conception of the researcher must not be omitted. Nevertheless, this knowledge can be used much more flexibly than with hypothetico-deductive research: theoretical knowledge and pre-conceptions serve as heuristic tools for the construction of concepts which are elaborated and modified on the basis of empirical data.” (p. 498).

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, the thesis borrowed from the theories of organizational culture and leadership to design the qualitative field work. The following sections will explain the coding and the development of ten themes that emerged from a mix of theory and empirical observations. This is why it is preferable to talk about an inductive-abductive grounded theory approach to describe the overall approach.

The present study drew from the conversations between the researcher and Jordanian public servants who had experienced firsthand the issues being examined.

The inductive-abductive analysis proved to be effective in putting meaning to the claims put forth by interviewees while confronting the data to the existing theories. The results help respond to the initial research question which asked: What is the role of *wasta* on organisational culture and leadership when public sector institutions are going through a large-scale anti-corruption intervention? Some of the cultural obstacles and challenges to anti-corruption strategy implementation were identified, and theoretical frameworks can be used to understand why change is so difficult to implement. Unlike a deductive approach which attempts to test existing knowledge, the inductive-abductive approach was useful to bring out the meaningful views and experiences of managers who experience *wasta* in their workplaces on a routine basis.

5.10. Coding of interview data

As mentioned earlier, a set of handwritten notes was produced following each semi-structured interview. A total of 19 sets of handwritten notes resulted from the interviewing process. Given that audio recording was not used and, as such, direct transcripts were not available, data was coded manually. Manual data coding can be an effective alternative to coding through electronic software packages in order to capture more fully “the quality and richness of the response to a social situation” (Basit, 2003, p. 151). Basit (2003) explains that manual data

coding reflects an intellectual analysis of a full range of participant views and experiences that escape quantification.

Given the inductive-abductive nature of this study, data was coded to allow for the emergence of new concepts and ideas. Consistent with a qualitative grounded-theory methodology, coding sourced from the data accumulated during the interviews allowed for participant views and opinions to shape the findings as the researcher noted elements of similarity among participant responses (Richards, 2005). When possible, data analysis in its preliminary state was conducted as soon as possible following the completion of each individual interview. This reflects the data analysis process specified by Miles et al. (2014) who recommend that researchers undertake some analysis in the field to continuously reflect back on their findings and incorporate new ideas as their studies progress onward: “we strongly advise data analysis concurrent with data collection. It helps the fieldworker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data” (p. 70). Conducting data analysis in the field is also the only way to accurately ensure that data saturation has taken place (Guest et al., 2006).

Miles et al. (2014) recommend using descriptive coding in instances where researchers are faced with data collected in the form of handwritten field notes. They also encourage researchers to use the descriptive approach where data exists in more than one format, in the case of this study, this applies to primary interview notes and secondary materials collected as part of the desk review. It has been regarded in the literature as relevant to various qualitative research projects: “descriptive coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies” writes Saldana (2013, p. 88), who also recommends the approach for researchers balancing data stemming from various sources including interview notes and data compiled as part of a desk review.

Miles et al. (2014) argue that descriptive coding involves reading through data and assigning descriptive codes, usually words, to noteworthy aspects of a text including “patterns, categories, or themes” and later “hunches and findings” (p. 162) to render the data meaningful and allow for additional explanations to emerge. Following the process recommended by Rogers and Goodrick (2010), the researcher assigned categories to various segments of the handwritten notes and subsequently studies these comparatively and with respect to the subject matter of *wasta*, corruption, and organizational culture. For example, mid-level managers who reported witnessing the phenomenon of *wasta* in instances of professional development or career progression were assigned the category of “*wasta* – hiring and promotion”. Given that several managers spoke to the use of networks in facilitating employment and advancement within an organization, this ultimately emerged as a major finding of the research. The following section explains how the analytical themes were developed.

5.11. Main themes identified

Following an inductive-abductive interpretation of the interview data, a total of ten overall themes were identified. Of course, the inductive-abductive approach is not totally disconnected from the proposed theoretical framework based on the Schein’s model. In this research, the theoretical framework is considered as a background that guides the qualitative analysis (Bendassolli, 2013). In other words, the induction is developed through a constant dialogue between the theory and the empirical evidences. Consistent with Schein’s analysis, two main variables have helped structure the analysis: organizational culture and leadership.

We identified ten themes which emerged from the semi-structured interviews with mid-level managers in the Jordanian public sector. Each theme is discussed in detail in the results section of the thesis (part two). It is possible to divide these themes into, firstly, the impact of

culture as an obstruction to the implementation of a large-scale anti-corruption strategy and, secondly, leadership, reflecting the public sector management constructs that surround wasta within ministries of the Government of Jordan. These themes reflect a variety of theoretical and policy issues surrounding wasta, anti-corruption, and organizational culture in the Government of Jordan. Table 2 presents the analytical structure of part two of the results section (chapter 8). Each theme will be further developed using the material of the interviews.

Table 2. Summary of main themes identified.

	Main themes identified
Culture	
C1	Despite legitimate efforts to invest in anti-corruption infrastructure, organizational culture of the Jordanian public sector is stuck in a culture of wasta. Interviewees explain that wasta is most frequent in matters of human resource management such as hiring and career advancement.
C2	Defeating wasta is difficult because many public servants consider it to be a form of insurance. Because it is impossible to predict the future, individuals rely on wasta in case they need to acquire a favor in the future. Regardless of one's position in the organization, using wasta will almost always produce a more favorable benefit than not using wasta.
C3	Some mid-level managers believe that the actual level of corruption in Jordan is exaggerated by international media. Thus, the anti-corruption efforts are more a tool of public relations and have little real organizational impact. Managers believe that Jordanian public servants have the same responsibilities and challenges as public servants anywhere else in the world, and corruption is not nearly as systemic as the media would lead observers to believe.
C4	Mid-level managers differentiate wasta from corruption. Consistent with the literature, many believe acts of bribery, embezzlement, and fraud to be clearly wrong and punishable but accept wasta as a normal course of action. This makes it difficult for the Anti-Corruption Commission to effectively address certain types of widespread organizational corruption, like nepotism or cronyism.
C5	Mid-level managers are doubtful about the ability of the Anti-Corruption Commission to affect very deep

	values like those of wasta. Several respondents argue that wasta can never truly be eliminated from Jordanian workplaces. At least, the literature makes a resilient case for addressing wasta beyond the workplace and in all aspects of daily life for Jordanians.
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Leadership

L1	Managers and public servants in general have little incentive to report supposed incidences of corruption to the Anti-Corruption Commission. Whistleblowers may be fearful of coming forward because of subsequent negative effects on their professional future. This may be changing for the positive with the introduction of whistleblower protection legislation in the 2012-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy (Government of Jordan, 2013b)
L2	Traditional hierarchal and authoritative Middle Eastern organizational structure makes it difficult for managers to contest or disagree with the actions or decisions of a superior. While the Government of Jordan is hiring a new generation of younger workers some of whom support reform, they are likely to display loyalty to their managers and supervisors even in the face of ethical wrongdoing.
L3	The Anti-Corruption Commission does not effectively communicate specific anti-corruption strategies to organizational staff at all levels. Managers are not provided with the necessary tools to incorporate anti-corruption into the running of their organizations. Consequently, organizational cultures do not really introduce anti-corruption and as such there is continued difficulty in addressing problems like wasta.
L4	Some mid-level managers believe in the elimination of wasta and argue that this can be accomplished through leadership. Some are beginning to set personal examples of anti-corruption by refusing to fulfill wasta requests. This represents a significant progress in achieving reform as going against wasta means challenging established traditions and norms.
L5	There is evidence that the Anti-Corruption Commission is introducing change and principles of good governance to the public sector, but slowly. Some organizational members are beginning to recognize the wrongfulness of wasta and, over time, it is likely that anti-corruption “subcultures” may appear in organizations.

5.12. Desk Review

Finally, while the primary source of data for this study consisted of empirical semi-structured research interviewing on-site in Jordan, secondary data was accrued through the use of desk review methodology. The desk review was conducted beginning in September 2013 to January 2014. This secondary data collection tool has been considered an ideal method to begin the information gathering process because it helps researchers familiarize themselves with relevant and accessible findings: “Desk research makes a good starting point for any research programme because it is generally quick and cheap to acquire and can be readily assimilated” (Crouch and Housden, 2003, p. 19). A desk review consists of analyzing secondary sources pertaining to the relevant subject matter (Bryman, 2012). Blaxter et al. (2010) contend that an effective desk review involves engaging the secondary material with specific questions to understand author perspectives, impacts, purpose, and so on. The authors argue that a desk review is valuable to the research process because many documents have social meaning and influence over their readers.

Official regulations, policies, and frameworks developed by the Jordanian Government were assessed as part of the desk review. For example, the most relevant piece of legislation related to the Anti-Corruption Commission, Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Law (# 62), was analyzed from the perspective of literature relating to the study of corruption. The Anti-Corruption Law outlines specific actions constituting a breach of law and applies to the whole of government (Government of Jordan, 2006). Given that every department therefore falls under its jurisdiction and that every civil servant must, at least theoretically, abide by this law renders it perhaps the most influential and specific piece of internal anti-corruption documentation in the Jordanian civil service.

In addition, the desk review consisted of an in-depth analysis of relevant peer-reviewed academic literature in the areas of corruption, the Arab phenomenon of *wasta*, and organizational culture. The primary work of Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) on *wasta* provide useful understanding about the concept as well as a review of different interpretations and understandings. The authors also provide historic and traditional perspectives of the term which provided further interpretation. Conducting a desk review on *wasta* is important because, as Barnett et al. (2013) recently noted, the term is quite particular in Arabic and articulating an effective English translation is not easy. The desk review of peer-reviewed literature also involves studying works related more specifically to corruption and organizational culture.

Given that organizational culture represented a significant topic of inquiry within this study, the desk review process also involved the analysis of historical documentation for the purposes of understanding the phenomenon of *wasta* as a product developed throughout the history of Jordan. Studies show that in the Arab world many modern traditions and practices reflect historical realities transferred over and adapted from early civilizations (French, 2012; Grafton, 2012; Strakes, 2011). Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) for instance note the relationship between modern-day use of *wasta* among professionals and its early applications in solving problems among local communities and families: “*Wasta* is rooted in family loyalty and tribal dispute resolution. The *shaykh* united the family and dampened the fires of conflict that seemed ever near the surface. In tribal society, one lives by well-known rules. The traditional *shaykh* serves as a mediator internally and a protagonist for the tribe externally” (p. 33). It is therefore relevant for the researcher, who has a Jordanian background, to examine secondary materials elaborating on Jordan’s early history to form the historic basis for understanding the cultural underpinnings of *wasta* as they exist today.

The same approach was adopted to study developments related to anti-corruption strategies created by the Jordanian government. Formal and institutionalized anti-corruption initiatives are a relatively new phenomenon in the Arab world, having emerged only roughly within the past two decades (Common, 2008; Haseeb, 2013; Khayatt, 2008). They emerged as part of a wider recognition of the effect of corruption on management of Arab organizations (Jreisat, 2002). Here, the desk review seeks to study the emergence and development of Jordan's Anti-Corruption Commission in the frame of more recent 20th century developments. This process involved studying a combination of peer-reviewed literature surrounding changes in leadership and governance priorities within the country as well as reports from major international bodies like the United Nations.

5.13. Methodological Challenges

5.13.1. Conducting Fieldwork Abroad

The researcher was faced with some unanticipated challenges throughout the course of conducting fieldwork on-site in Jordan. The possibility to communicate with organizational representatives while still in Canada was problematic and prevented the creation of a well-structured fieldwork plan. With time differences and fast-approaching deadlines, communication problems have been emphasized as legitimate barriers to conducting international research (Hoogendoorn, 1998; Ricks et al, 1990). Frost and Raby (2009) suggest that these limitations can be greatly overcome by researchers who come into their projects with a pre-existing knowledge or experience navigating the field or culture they intend to study. In this case, the researcher had lived in Jordan for over half of his life prior to relocating to Canada and was already familiarized

with local customs. In addition, the ability to send out preliminary informational advisories to officials in Jordan using the Internet helped in the pre-arrangement of fieldwork activities.

Despite use of the Internet and reasonable efforts to pre-arrange a fieldwork plan in Canada, the researcher was faced with only a very limited window of time to finalize planning and conduct interviews in Jordan. Barrett and Cason (2010) explain that researchers conducting fieldwork overseas should be prepared to invest additional time in “settling in” to their new environments, even if they have past experience living in or researching the area. In the case of this study, the researcher spent a considerable amount of time in-site immersing himself in the Middle Eastern culture for the purposes of adding authenticity to the research findings.

5.13.2. Sampling Dilemma

The sampling subsection provides more detailed information about the use of professional contacts to encourage participation in this study. However, this process did result in some methodological challenges for the researcher. That is, that a study essentially about the relationship between *wasta*, which reflects these personal network and connections (Hutchings and Weir, 2006), and organizational corruption with which it is often linked in the existing culture (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Smith et al., 2012) rely heavily on the use of professional networks and contacts for sampling purposes.

The resulting challenge could be considered similar to a moral dilemma – would it be appropriate to utilize *wasta* to conduct a study about *wasta* in public-sector organizations and its relationship to the management of large-scale anti-corruption initiatives? It was ultimately decided that using the snowball sampling technique to find participants was the most appropriate and perhaps only approach given the circumstances and limitations. Barnett et al. (2013) argue that *wasta* is used by individuals in the Arab world to achieve goals in virtually every aspect of

life: “It is deeply embedded in the fabric of these societies and visible in everything from the way in which governments interact with businesses to the way in which public policy is formulated” (p. 41) The limited timeframe available to organize, plan, recruit, and carry out the interviews would have made it otherwise impossible to achieve data saturation. It should be noted, however, that none of the study participants were personally known by the researcher. The majority of mid-level managers who were motivated to participate emerged, in fact, from the recommendations of Jordanian officials with connections to departments and ministries in Jordan. The rest were recruited from the networks of these existing participants, as is the case with snowball sampling methodology. The result equaled a good distribution between departments and representative sample among the research participants.

5.13.3. Gaining Participant Trust

Qualitative specialists across academia have already noted the difficulties faced by researchers in gaining the trust of participants in interview settings where subject matter could be construed as personal, sensitive, difficult, or unsettling (Jones and Ficklin, 2012; Yadama, 1997). Qualitative studies on corruption have shown that participants may not be fully trusting of researchers in cases where a study is being conducted by people coming from abroad (Hodder, 2010). The researcher’s Jordanian background may have had an impact on helping participants feel more comfortable, for example, in some discussions they were able to comfortably use English and Arabic words and phrases interchangeably without this interrupting the flow of conversation. Conversations also benefitted from the occasional informal dialogue about professional responsibilities and global events that helped set a more natural tone to discussion.

In order to encourage greater participant trust, the researcher followed the advice of Pearce (2012) who recommends that scholars in this position establish “legitimization” for their

work and themselves. For her, legitimization involves a combination of practices including maintaining an official behavior, being professional at all times, and relying on support from available infrastructure to make the research project a success. It was thought that even mid-level managers may be reluctant to open up about corruption in their organizations, or about possible negative effects associated with the introduction of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative. The researcher achieved study legitimization by formatting all correspondence with potential participants and other contacts professionally and by seeking cooperation from Jordanian officials.

During the interviews themselves, the researcher followed the advice of Bingley (2008) to develop a rapport with participants. Bingley (2008) explains that researchers should balance professional conduct with the objective of making participants feel comfortable. The researcher therefore dressed professionally but not overly formally, in line with usual daily Jordanian office dress codes. Again, reminding participants of the relevant ethical steps that had been conducted and of their rights in the interview process ensured a positive exchange of ideas as participants were confident that their views would be kept confidential and anonymous (Wiles et al., 2008). The researcher also not only provided each participant with his contact information, as well as the contact information of his supervisor, but strongly encouraged them to contact either at any time should they have any questions or comments that were perhaps omitted during the interview stage.

5.14. Chapter Summary

The research successfully adopted a qualitative empirical methodology to study the effect of the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Commission on the organizational culture of the Jordanian public service. This approach reflects the need for gathering exploratory data based on

participant experiences. Data collection consisted of using both primary and secondary data. A total of 19 semi-structured research interviews were conducted on-site throughout various Jordanian departments and ministries based on the principle of data saturation. A comprehensive desk review allowed the researcher to study peer-reviewed documentation related to research themes, as well as official publications from government and international organizations. The researcher established process legitimization by contacting Jordanian authorities prior to beginning fieldwork. Sampling methodology consisted of snowball sampling which proved highly effective due to the popularity of professional networking in the Jordanian civil service. Despite good collaboration and pre-planning, the researcher overcame some methodological challenges including limited time to arrange interviews in the field, relying on networks and connections to recruit participants, and gaining participant trust in a study about sensitive and controversial subject matter. In the end, it appeared as though the methodological decisions made by the researcher were appropriate given the circumstances and topics under study as interviews produced findings of value to public administration, among other fields.

In the next two chapters, we present the results analysis sections. First, describe the historical perspective, both in terms of the development of Wasta in the Middle East and in terms of anti-corruption reforms in Jordan (chapter 7). Secondly, we will exploit the interview data material to analyze how mid-level managers viewed the implementation of anti-corruption initiative, the role of wasta and its impact on organizational culture and leadership (chapter 8).

CHAPTER 6. RESULTS ANALYSIS PART 1:

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WASTA AND ON

ANTI-CORRUPTION INTERVENTIONS

Consistent with a case study analysis, it is of particular importance to understand the historical context that shaped *wasta* in the Middle East and the efforts granted by Jordan to curb corruption. This chapter introduces some of the historical background of *wasta* to provide additional context about its role in Jordanian and a description of anticorruption reforms. Most of the analysis presented in this chapter is based on the desk review. The historical context helps understand the role of *wasta* in the context of anti-corruption intervention.

Jordan has a tribal history that stretches back thousands of years. From early hunter-gatherer communities who banded together for survival to tribes that established much-needed alliances during long periods of colonialism, *wasta* has shaped the region for millennia (French, 2012). Historical records show that present-day Jordan enjoyed growth and prosperity under Persian and later, Roman rule. Later, short shifts of power between the Muslim Umayyads, Abbasids, and the Fatimidis established a permanent tribalism with groups within these empires wrestling for power and control although practicing diplomacy and problem-solving through early mediatory *wasta*. Under Ottoman rule, Jordan was neglected and turned into a stopover for travelers heading between the Middle East and North Africa but sought the possibility for independence after the end of the First World War. The Hashemite dynasty, itself a tribe with a history spanning more than 1300 years, has ruled the country since – first as a British emirate and later as an independent monarchy. The 20th century history of Jordan was defined by periods of uncertainty and violence but also optimism and growth. Today, it has become established as

one of the most progressive nations in the Middle East but still governed in many ways by a tribal culture that presents a challenge for even the most large-scale anti-corruption initiatives.

6.1. 7250BC – 1921AD

The history of Jordan is one shaped by centuries of tribalism and colonial rule. The body of land today known as Jordan was always considered to be a strategically valuable geographic area (Alon, 2007). Although Jordan is neither rich in oil nor water, it was valued as a gateway between North Africa and the Middle East (Posusney, 2003). Early historical evidence dating back to 7250 BC shows that people were living in Jordan even in prehistoric times (French, 2012). According to Dambricourt Malassé and Gaillard (2010), this period was defined by the coexistence of primitive hunter-gatherer tribes who had formed early communities throughout the region. Working together was important for survival, the authors report, due to the lack of resources and harsh conditions during this period. French (2012) argues that Jordan became established as a popular trading post during the Bronze and Iron Ages and found stability under rule of the Persian Empire. Alon (2007) explains that under the rule of the Persians strong and successful tribal communities had formed across Jordan. Following the assassination of Philipp II of Macedon in 336 BC, Alexander the Great sought to expand his empire and took over what was left of the Persian Empire.

Alexander the Great died at the age of 32 and later would have his son killed at the age of 13 by Cassander, who sought revenge for not inheriting the Empire (French, 2012). A series of turbulent and bloody shifts for power followed that greatly weakened Jordan and made it more open to an external attack. In 321 BC, Nabatheans arrived in the region and established a major city state in Petra which remains one of the most well-known tourist destinations and among the most visited historical sites in the world (Tuttle, 2013). Over time, Petra became a huge trading

post which allowed the Nabatheans to flourish and grow in wealth. French (2012) describes the gigantic ancient city, writing that “Petra grew from being a small settlement to one of the most magnificent cities of the ancient world with palaces and dwellings, tombs and even a theatre hewn into the rose-coloured sandstone rock face” (p. 16). Eventually, Petra and other cities became allied with the Roman Empire.

Shortly before the start of the first millennium, the Roman military established a strong presence in ten cities throughout present-day Jordan. Known as the *Decapolis* (Ten Cities), they would come to represent the earliest beginnings of tribal culture due to independence between them with active trade among them (Balfour, 2012). Each city grew in wealth and prominence under Roman leadership with impressive infrastructure and architecture.

Christianity was persecuted under Roman rule; however, this changed under the leadership of Galerius in 311 AD. Jordan continued under the rule of the Roman Empire. In 324 AD, under the leadership of the first Christian emperor Constantine the Great, Christians were given full rights to worship (French, 2012). Ratliff and Evans (2012) explain that the religious shift during the period was responsible for causing the construction of some of history’s first Christian places of worship. A stone Christian church in Ayla, Jordan is believed by many to be the oldest such structure in the world (*Ibid.*).

Over the next several hundred years, Jordan enjoyed major cultural and infrastructural growth. Nevertheless, there was a constant danger of an impending attack from Persian forces who had attempted to lay siege to its magnificent cities in the past. In 570 AD, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (PBUH) was born and orphaned when he was young. He was raised by relatives of the Hashemite tribe, finally pasturing sheep before receiving a revelation from God at the age of 40. Muhammad (PBUH) became a prophet and founded the religion of Islam which attracted many

followers – Muslims – who would visit and later occupy present-day Jordan in 636 AD (Peterson, 2007). Muhammad (PBUH) died before formal settlement of Jordan began, but his army remained strong under the leadership of Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali (*Ibid.*).

The Muslim forces would fight energetically over the next years establishing their presence in the Middle East region. French (2012) explains that between 661 and 1171 AD Jordan would be ruled by three Muslim groups consecutively: the Umayyads, Abbasids, and the Fatimidis. The Abbasids, who ruled Jordan for more than 200 years after overthrowing the Umayyads, claimed to be representatives of the Hashemites (Salibi, 1993). Shoup (2007) argues that it was during this period where tribal conflict and diplomacy were developed in Jordan, as separate groups had loyalties to different leaders. Despite their best efforts at using *wasta* to solve problems and come to agreements about the best source of leadership for the expanding Muslim empire, internal conflict was present during this period of history.

In addition to internal conflict and disputes, the Muslim Empire was facing a daunting threat from Crusaders who promised to restore Christianity to the region. Beginning in 1096 AD, Christian warriors began their attempts at recapturing territories including present-day Lebanon, Turkey, Palestine, and Syria. The Crusaders were successful in once again establishing a Christian presence in Jordan (MacEvitt, 2008). Salahadin, a famous 12th century Ayyubid sultan, and loyal Muslim military official, embarked on a violent counterattack to take back Jordan and the surrounding area. French (2012) explains that later the strategic decision to use the slave warriors in the Mamluk Sultanate gave Muslims the military edge to defeat their enemies (first Christians and later Mongols) and helped return normal life and stability to Jordan.

During the early 16th century, control of Jordan and much of the surrounding region was seized under the Ottoman Empire. French (2012) argues that the Ottomans saw Jordan as nothing

more than a stopover for travelers heading across the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, the country fell into chaos and resulted in tribalism without solid structures of governance: “Control of the indigenous population of the region by colonial powers, particularly during the period of Ottoman and European rule, was facilitated by exploiting the tribal nature of Arab society” (Barnett et al., 2013, p. 44). The end of World War I caused the Ottoman Empire to weaken, creating an opportunity for Allied forces to establish their presence in Jordan.

6.2. 1921 – Present

During 1915 and 1916, France and Britain drafted the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement to determine which areas previously under Ottoman rule would fall under the rule of which country (Fitzgerald, 1994). In 1921, the British established the independent protectorate of the Emirate of Transjordan with control going to Abdullah I bin al-Hussein (King Abdullah I) as the first King of Jordan. Jordan has had a total of four kings since 1921 with each being a member of the Hashemite dynasty. Loewe et al. (2008) argue that this political support of tribal heritage at the highest level of authority in Jordan indirectly prevents attempts at reducing people’s reliance on *wasta*.

French (2012) contends that King Abdullah I began large-scale development efforts during his period of rule and was supported by the population which was comprised largely of “tribesmen who were loyal to Abdullah, himself of the same ancestry” (p. 23). Ullian (2007) contends that King Abdullah I was dedicated to making Transjordan truly independent from Britain and at the same time wanted to expand the country’s role on the world stage. According to Jreisat (1989), King Abdullah I played an important role in bringing new vital infrastructure to Jordan including “an impressive social and economic development at the domestic level which achieving greater influence at the international level than seems warranted by its natural

resources, size, or military power” (p. 94). On May 25 1946, the British Emirate of Transjordan became independent and its name was changed to Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan and later just Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1950. Although the Jordanian people were happy having achieved the dream of independence, early attempts at governmental administration in the country were wrought with corruption.

Corruption became a problem for the government of the newly formed independent Emirate of Transjordan at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Rogan (1999), bribery became one of the most prominent forms of corruption as early structures of governance and public administration were being built. The author explains that, during the time, the temptation for bribery and kickbacks was significant as the salaries of public officials were “so low and often paid months in arrears” (1999, p. 57). King Abdullah I is considered by historians to have been a realist politician who believed that the main ingredient to the success of building a successful society was in maintaining a good relationship with key international players. For this reason, the King established and remained in a good rapport with Britain while maintaining a good diplomatic relationship with the West (El-Hasan, 2010).

El-Hasan (2010) argues that King Abdullah I was swept into a no-win situation in trying to satisfy both Jews and Palestinians. Palestinians came to Jordan following the Arab-Israeli War. On July 20, 1951, King Abdullah I was assassinated during a visit to the Al-Aqsa mosque by a Palestinian militant for being accused of showing allegiance to Israel. King Abdullah I's grandson was witness to the attack but survived. For a brief period between 1951 and 1952, Jordan was ruled by King Talal bin Abdullah who gave up the throne in favor of his son, King Hussein bin Talal, due to severe health complications. King Hussein, who witnessed the assassination of his grandfather, became King of Jordan on August 11, 1952 as a teenager. He

subsequently ruled the country for a period of 46 years until his death in 1999. His successor, King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein, took the throne on February 7, 1999 and is the current King of Jordan (El-Hasan, 2010).

While the ability to elect members to the Jordanian House of Representatives was established by the 1952 constitution, Jordanian Prime Ministers are appointed by the King. During the 1950s, Tell (2013) reports that tempting opportunities for acquiring fast wealth in the growing arms market caused corruption, in the form of bribery and kickbacks, to rise throughout Jordan. The author argues that during this period of time political authorities abused a growing spread of foreign aid that was “able to take advantage of public capital without being constrained by public interest” (2013, p. 122). There was also growing political support during this time as high-ranking officials, including prime ministers, appointed other leaders based on their network of personal contacts, relatives, and close friends.

Tell (2013) identifies former Jordanian Prime Minister Bahjat Al-Talhuni, who held the post from 1960-1962 and 1964-1970, as being among the most lenient with corruption: “Under the regime of Palace favorite Bahjat al-Talhuni in particular (...) corruption reached levels unparalleled in the history of Jordan” (p. 123). Al-Talhuni had been responsible for supporting monopolization and limiting competition in the arms industry, as well as manipulating extremely high-value government military manufacturing contracts to benefit those with *wasta*. Tell (2013) contends that the corrupt actions of Al-Talhuni had contributed to increasing social inequalities and a growing gap between the lower and upper class: “By the end of Talhuni’s term in office, an unhealthy combination of official corruption and political repression (...) seemed to be putting Jordan on the same course that led to the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq”

(p. 123). The extent of corruption was being recognized by other officials, however, who sought to establish reform in the face of a desperate outlook for the future.

The earliest attempts at introducing anti-corruption to Jordan came under the leadership of former Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tall. Al-Tall has been described as an “outstanding statesman” (Dann, 1989, p. 13) and “the most powerful man in Jordan at the time” (Hart, 1984, p. 339). Robins (2004) notes that after becoming Prime Minister from 1962-1963, al-Tall chose to divert from the traditional politically-based appointment methods and instead “formed a cabinet that was drawn from among the new generation of younger, university educated government servants” (p. 108). Al-Tall had a fruitful and trusting relationship with King Hussein bin Talal and promoted the creation of a more efficient and administratively competent public service.

Wasfi al-Tall was also a controversial figure because he was strongly opposed to public-sector corruption. During his first term in service, Al-Tall attempted to repair the politically-based and army style government established by his predecessor Bahjat Talhouni by dismissing approximately 700 bureaucrats, including senior legal officials and prominent judges, on grounds of corruption (Robins, 2004). For the first time in history, the former Prime Minister did not appear to care of the tribal or family background of the individuals he was dismissing. Al-Tall also instituted minimum requirements for the hiring of civil servants and appointment of political figures in Jordan as previously the process relied fairly exclusively on *wasta*. Robins (2004) notes that Al-Tall set out clear policies and rules to introduce some aspect of fairness into public-sector employment: “In order to bolster standards in the civil service, the Tall government set minimum educational levels for recruitment” (p. 109). In addition, new regulations were drawn that increased the work hours of public servants government-wide. Wasfi Al-Tall also made the

controversial decision to give greater opportunities for Palestinians in government and helped promote democracy through free elections in 1962.

Over the next decade, Wasfi Al-Tall continued to press for administrative reforms in Jordan including serious initiatives to promote the rights of women (Robins, 2004). However, priorities would shift during the late 1960s as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) sought independence from Jordan. Given the growing presence of Palestinians in Jordan, King Hussain was quick to sign an agreement with Yasser Arafat in 1968. However, the Jordanian military was dispatched in February of 1970 to deal with Palestinians who had violated the treaty (Baracksky, 2011). Despite the signing of another ceasefire between King Hussein and Yasser Arafat, Palestinian militants in Jordan refused to peacefully cooperate with restrictions and Jordanian authorities, under the direction of Wasfi Al-Tall, launched a delicate military effort to remove the Palestinian militants from Jordan. Baracksky (2011) argues that the decision to fight against the militants successfully expelled the PLO from Jordan by July 1971.

Unfortunately, the preoccupation with the Six Day War and looming threat of militants' attacks and hijackings changed priorities for the al-Tall government. Security and stability became of primary importance over anti-corruption and administrative reform (Robins, 2004). Wasfi Al-Tall became personally disliked by members of the PLO for his role in commanding military operations against several thousand militants in the mountains and Jordan Valley. On November 28, 1971, Wasfi Al-Tall was assassinated outside a hotel by members of Black September, a newly formed Palestinian extremist group. The killers claimed to have been motivated by revenge for Palestinians targeted by the Jordanian military including some who were close to Arafat (Baracksky, 2011). The turbulent events shifted the power back in favor of traditional wasta tribal culture and it appeared that the administrative reforms championed by

Wasfi al-Tall were to die alongside him. Thankfully, the seeds of reform had been planted and would emerge again following international pressure for the developing world to fight corruption in the 1980s and 1990s.

6.3. Anti-Corruption in the Arab World

The global priority of fighting corruption is a new phenomenon that emerged alongside globalization (Ogrea et al., 2008). Major pressure is being put on developing countries, especially those with progressive political agendas like Jordan (Yom, 2013), to develop strategies designed to combat and eliminate corruption (Terrill, 2010). Public-sector corruption in Jordan has therefore only recently become the subject of international attention as social and economic changes, including a greater acceptance of capitalism, have created new justifications for unethical actions in the nation's civil service (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009). This has prompted Jordan's current monarch, King Abdullah II, to introduce a large-scale anti-corruption initiative that affects all branches of the Jordanian civil service.

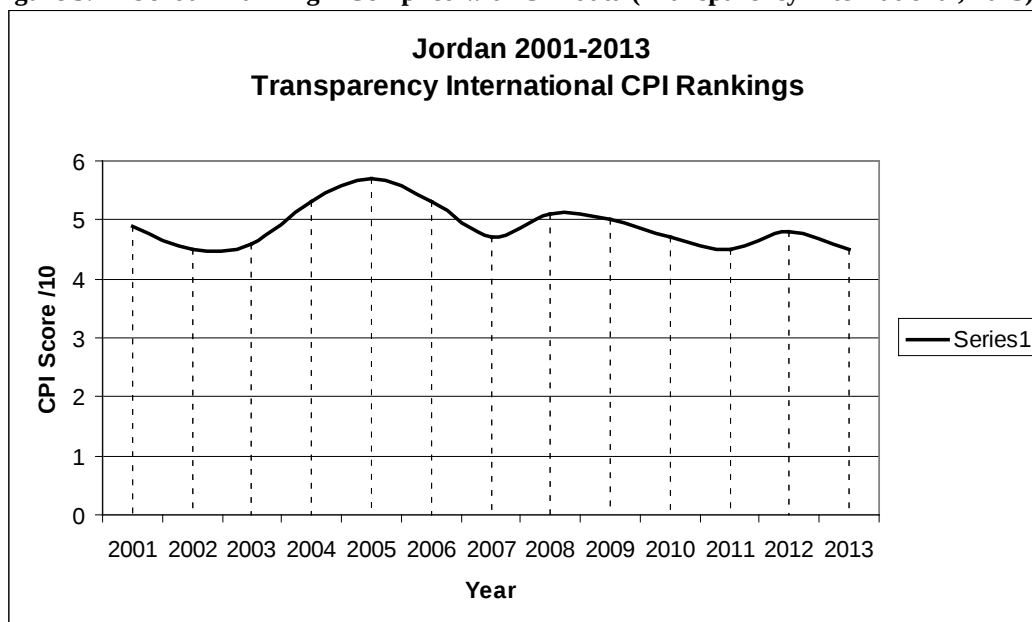
A 2001 report on corruption in the Arab World issued by Transparency International recognized the commitment of King Abdullah II in putting anti-corruption high on the list of priorities in his administration (Hodess et al., 2001). This is likely because corruption has been identified as a significant problem in the Middle East (Hafez, 2009; Helmy, 2012; Sioussiouras and Vavouras, 2012). Hafez (2009) explains that during the early 2000s, leaders throughout the Middle East responded to concerns from international organizations like the United Nations that accused their governments of economic downturn by blaming corruption: "corruption had become so pervasive in the Arab World that a culture of corruption, so to speak, had emerged and plagued Arab society" (p. 473). The idea that corruption was damaging these countries socially and economically began to draw support in the early 1990s.

In May 1993, the non-governmental organization Transparency International was founded by former members of the World Bank to monitor, analyze, and develop policies addressing corruption internationally (Eigen, 1996). In 1995, Transparency International created the well-known Corruption Perceptions Index abbreviated as CPI (*Ibid.*). The CPI used a numeric score to rank-order dozens of countries (over 175 in 2013) based on the perceived levels of corruption assigning each country a score between “1” and “10”. Lower scores denote countries that are considered as having higher levels of corruption, while higher scores denote countries that have lower levels of corruption (Blake and Martin, 2006). According to Khayatt (2008), the consistently poor to average scores of countries in the Middle East region on behalf of Transparency International represented the first catalyst towards change.

The Transparency International CPI is not without critics. De Maria (2008) argues that the CPI is broken because it attempts to impose Western interpretations of corruption and good governance on non-Western nations and in so doing should be considered a form of neo-colonialism. Seguiti (2009) argues that the constantly changing methodology and sample used by Transparency International in the CPI makes it difficult for analysis and trend forecasting. Beets (2007) argues that the CPI is considered scientifically questionable among many researchers because it references subjective perceptions rather than empirical data; however, the author does argue that because of the difficulty in finding empirical data related to corruption it is nevertheless a reliable measure if used in reason. The CPI has been used by scholars in the past as an additional source of evidence about the comparative level of corruption among one or more countries (Clarke, 2011; Willhelm, 2002; Wolf, 2010). Kenny (2009) explains that CPI data is used in official policymaking as “metrics have been used to determine aid allocations (for the US

Millennium Challenge Account, for example) and guide approaches to reform both at the general and sector level” (p. 314). The Transparency International CPI scale ranges from a ten (most corrupt) to zero (least corrupt). Recognizing that Transparency International indexes are imperfect, this study presents data from Transparency International’s CPI compiled as part of the desk review to contextualize corruption with respect to the country’s large-scale anti-corruption effort:

Figure 3. TI Jordan Ranking – Compiled with CPI data (Transparency International, 2013).



The chart above uses statistical data compiled as part of the Transparency International CPI between 2001 and 2013 to provide a contextualization of corruption in Jordan over time. Between this period of time, Jordan ranked on average 4.8 out of a possible ten. Though Jordan’s ranking on the CPI is competitive with respect to its geographic placement (Grinin and Korotayev, 2012; Rontos et al., 2013), it is nevertheless a failing score. In 2013, Jordan’s CPI score was similar to Saudi Arabia (4.6 – slightly better) and Kuwait (4.3 – slightly more corrupt). Worse, according to the most recent data available, it appears that Jordan’s position is getting worse – not better – on the CPI index. This is despite efforts by the Jordanian government to

seriously address corruption. The data compiled from the CPI is interesting because it shows that corruption levels have remained steady despite the introduction of major reform efforts by Jordan in the mid-2000s.

Mead and Andrews (2009) explain that the Jordanian public service has suffered over the past few decades as a result of corruption. Increasing waste and inefficiency they argue were the initial reasons for pushing towards anti-corruption strategies and reform measures. Yet despite the implementation of formal anti-corruption standards as early as 2003 and a mandate to fight corruption that stretches back even earlier, the authors contend that “In Jordan, the public service has become bloated by the number of people hired through using *wasta*” (p. 174). Government managers are constantly at the direction of senior officials who frequently require an organization to hire additional workers because of their *wasta*. Using *wasta* in the hiring and promotion of new and current employees, they argue, remains common and largely under-investigated by Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission.

Besides data compiled on corruption by organizations like Transparency International and literature overwhelmingly supporting the persistence of corruption in Jordan (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009; Gerlach and Franceys, 2009; Lust-Okar, 2006; Nanes, 2008; Yom, 2013) including as an respected cultural reality (Loewe et al., 2008; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), recent developments related to the Arab Spring provide evidence of the general public’s recognition of corruption in the Jordanian public sector.

Ohemeng (2011) argues that corruption can result in distrust of government by the general public. To this extent, Ogujiuba et al. (2013) define the Arab Spring as a series of revolutionary uprisings and protests across the Arab world expressing dissatisfaction with government and, in some cases, promoting regime change. Arab Spring protests were successful

in bringing major changes to the highest levels of government in Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, among others (Trabelsi, 2013). Protests did materialize throughout major cities in Jordan, but these did not lead to a removal of the ruling Hashemite clan (Helfont and Helfont, 2012; Ryan, 2011). According to Wolfsfeld et al., part of the reason the protests occurred was general public frustration with continuing corruption in the Jordanian public sector. Recognizing the potential threat of a growing protest movement in Jordan, King Abdullah II reacted swiftly during the protests by imposing change to the country's political order.

Jordan-based Arab Spring protests began in January of 2011. Thousands of protesters represented by the political association Muslim Brotherhood as well as students and other citizen groups came to the streets of Jordan's capital of Amman and several other major cities (Sakbani, 2011). Asseburg (2013) argues that the top three reasons motivating the presence of approximately 10,000 protestors in Amman were unemployment, inflation, and perceptions of corruption in government. In response to the protests, King Abdullah II dismissed Prime Minister Samir Rifai on February 1, 2011 appointing Marouf al-Bakhit as his replacement. Because protests continued, Abdullah II replaced al-Bakhit with Awn Al-Khasawneh in October. After the resignation of Al-Khasawneh in May 2012, Abdullah II appointed Fayez Tarawneh who led Jordan as Prime Minister for five months before being replaced by Abdullah Ensour on October 12 2013 (Maras, 2013). King Abdullah II remained committed to modernization and reform and cited slow progress in the achievement of these goals as the rationale for his successive replacements of the country's political leaders (*Ibid.*). The continuing protests show that despite the efforts of Jordan to address corruption, the general public still perceives it to be very common in their government.

6.4. Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission and Anti-Corruption Law

Scholars note that the combination of external pressure from the international community and internal pressure marked by growing public outcry against public-sector corruption were responsible for motivating some nations in the Arab world to take the problem of corruption more seriously (Common, 2008; Jabbra and Jabbra, 2005). Shortly after taking the throne, King Abdullah II wrote a letter to the newly appointed Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb. In this letter, the King prioritized that under his rule the newly appointed government should “work for an end to all forms of administrative bloating, negligence, corruption, abuse of public posts, nepotism, cronyism, and whimsical decisions as a means of creating a society of equal opportunities” (cited in George, 2005, p. 69). Over the next ten years, Jordan undertook a coordinated effort to develop the most comprehensive anti-corruption strategy ever undertaken in the Arab World (Terrill, 2010).

Jordan became a signatory of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) on December 9, 2003. Jordan signed the UNCAC on February 24, 2005 (Kumar, 2006). This process was important for Jordan because it placed upon the government the responsibility of developing practical anti-corruption measures (Berkman et al., 2008). Shortly after the signing of the UNCAC in 2005, King Abdullah II directed the government led by Prime Minister Adnan Badran and later Marouf al-Bakhit to form an independent governmental agency dedicated to fighting corruption (OECD, 2013).

In 2013, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report on investment priorities in Jordan. The report provides valuable information about the development and creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission. The OECD report commends the initiative taken by King Abdullah II in addressing corruption in accordance with

United Nations principles: “King Abdullah II stepped up the fight against corruption by directing the government to form an independent commission, draft a law to combat corruption, and stamp out payment of *wasta*” (2013, p. 125). The government created the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in 2006, which set the precedent for the creation of an Anti-Corruption Commission. The Commission itself began operations in 2008 (Government of Jordan, 2013).

Two important policies related to anti-corruption have also been released by the Government of Jordan: The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2008-2012 and National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2013-2017 (Government of Jordan, 2008; 2013b). In its most recent version, the Strategy has seven goals including raising awareness, strengthening preventative measures, strengthening the capacity of the Commission, promoting participation, increasing efficiency of the investigative process, improving international cooperation, and developing further legislation. The Strategy includes a goal-oriented progress list of priority areas in the short, medium, and long term that involve key stakeholders in Jordan and abroad. It seeks to continue in the development and evaluation of current anti-corruption processes to ensure sustainability and growth of the program over the next four years.

The Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission was established as a financially and administratively independent agency of government, and has always remained at arm’s length from departments and ministries. It reports directly to the Jordanian Prime Minister and has several official mandates: to prevent corruption, enforce the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62), and investigate supposed incidence of corruption. It is mandated to immediately investigate all reported cases of corruption and has jurisdiction over the whole Government of Jordan which includes roughly 200,000 employees (OECD, 2010). In 2012, the Commission broadened its scope significantly by providing additional protection to whistleblowers (OECD, 2013). The

Commission can now provide whistleblowers with financial assistance and has increased its ability to provide confidentiality for those who disclose supposed incidences of corruption (Government of Jordan, 2013b). Its jurisdiction is limited exclusively to the public sector but does include Members of Parliament and all political figures (*Ibid.*). The Commission does not currently have the capacity to prosecute individuals for breaking the law; however, it does work in close cooperation with the courts that currently assume this responsibility (*Ibid.*). The current Chairman of the Board of the Anti-Corruption Commission is Samih Bino who presides over eight additional board members holding their positions for four year terms beginning in 2011 and ending in 2015. The Anti-Corruption Commission currently has one female board member, Sanaa Hikmat Mahyar.

Jordan's Anti-Corruption Commission is considered to be among the most comprehensive and aggressive effort for creating an effective platform to develop policy, promote awareness, and administer anti-corruption efforts in the Middle East (Terrill, 2010). According to the OECD (2013), the Commission continues to see an increase in cases and, in 2011, handled over 700 individual complains – 46 of which were referred to the public prosecutor. One of its most high-level successes involved striking at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company corruption scandal in 2009 which led to the arrest of Khalid Shahin and other public sector officials for graft payments (Pollack, 2011). Nevertheless, corruption remains a significant problem in Jordan as many incidences are claimed to go unreported; according to the US Department of State, "Allegations of influence peddling and a lack of transparency do arise in government procurement and dispute settlement. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests is endemic and regarded by many Jordanians as simply part of the culture and part of doing business" (2012, par. 70). Jordan's

2013-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy calls for a broader effort at promoting the unacceptability of corrupt action throughout all areas of the public sector.

6.5. Chapter Summary

Early historic records prove that present-day Jordan was occupied by tribes (French, 2012). Historically, tribalism had played an important role with several groups competing for power and authority in the region. This early community method of survival had become a strong part of Jordanian culture that persists to the present day. After independence in the early 20th century, Jordanian political leaders and officials used their connections and personal network to further their own interests instead of working in the best interest of the general public (Tell, 2013). The earliest efforts to prevent corruption came about during the 1960s but were short-lived due to escalating violence and priorities of safety and national stability (Robins, 2004). Following the restoration of peace, globalization and increasing pressure from the international community restored anti-corruption as a priority for Jordanian leaders. King Abdullah II, the fourth monarch of the ancient Hashemite dynasty, promoted the development of an Anti-Corruption Law in 2006 and Anti-Corruption Commission in 2008. Although these large-scale anti-corruption efforts were successful in investigating and uncovering some incidences of corruption, evidence from non-government organizations and the Arab Spring movement show that progress in eliminating public sector corruption has been limited by several factors including wasta.

CHAPTER 7. RESULTS ANALYSIS PART 2:

THE ROLE OF WASTA IN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

In this results analysis chapter, we exploit the material drawn from the 19 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with mid-level managers in public sector organizations throughout Jordan. As mentioned earlier, the research question looks at the role of *wasta* on organizational culture and leadership when public sector institutions are going through a large-scale anti-corruption intervention. This section seeks to understand the impact of the culture of *wasta* on anti-corruption reforms in the Jordanian public sector. As mentioned in the methodology section, our approach is based on an inductive-abductive research model where theory and empirical observations are constructively integrated to create the knowledge. In other word, we consciously use theoretical insights to shed light to the interview analysis. The result of our analysis is an iterative process where theory and research field are in constant dialogue. We are connecting the elements together in order to understand the phenomenon and confront existing theories to our empirical observations.

The chapter follows the same structure as the ten themes identified after reviewing the interviews (see table 2). This chapter is separated in two sections. The first sub-section analyses each theme associated with organizational culture. The second sub-section analyses five themes associated with leadership and change management.

7.1. The role of wasta in organizational culture

The results are divided into five corresponding themes. Firstly, the use of wasta in hiring and promotion is discussed as this issue appeared throughout many of the semi-structured interviews. It concerns how wasta is most often present when it comes time for a division to hire a new employee or recommend an existing employee for a promotion. Secondly, the comparison between wasta and insurance is addressed. This important cultural dimension surrounds how the phenomenon of wasta is interpreted as something which could provide future benefits for those who have it and offers some reasons regarding why it is so difficult to eliminate wasta. Thirdly, the idea of corruption levels in Jordan as being exaggerated offers some insight into how the phenomenon is perceived within the organizational culture of the Jordanian public sector. Fourthly, the perceived difference between wasta and corruption is discussed. This sub-section is particularly important because it shows how wasta has become normalized in the culture and that many Jordanian civil servants do not necessarily consider it as something unethical. Finally, the continuing persistence of wasta is discussed from an organizational culture perspective as one of the challenges for the Anti-Corruption Commission to overcome. Throughout this section, the Schein (2010) organizational culture theory and corresponding three levels of culture are used to explore the issues raised empirically during the interviews.

7.1.1. C1. Wasta Common in Hiring and Promotion

Using evidence from Jordan, El-Said and Harrigan (2009) showed how much reliance was placed on one's social network and connections in the professional environment. As a Jordanian, the principle researcher himself was personally affected by a culture of wasta and so has firsthand experience of wasta in the hiring process. Arguably the most relevant study on wasta in human resources management was conducted by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) who found

that *wasta* played an instrumental role in managers' achievement of professional advancement and career objectives. The authors explain that for many Middle Eastern professionals having *wasta* can literally be the vehicle in securing employment regardless of experience and qualifications: "Our findings clearly suggested that many individuals have progressed in their careers through befriending influential people. This may result in unfairness to those groups who do not have access to *wasta*" (p. 478). Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) also found that individuals with less opportunity to use *wasta*, including many from lower socioeconomic positions, will actually be actively disadvantaged in their careers by not being able to rely on interpersonal networks and connections. A similar situation was reported by Ali and Al-Kazemi (2006) using data from Kuwait. The authors argue that even qualified and competent staff applying for a position may be disadvantaged if their competition consists of less qualified and less competent outsiders who possess enough *wasta*.

Most mid-level managers interviewed explained that the Anti-Corruption Commission has had little influence on reducing *wasta* in human resources. They explained that reliance on networks and connections to find employment and get promoted remains commonplace throughout the Jordanian government. For instance, one mid-level manager revealed that many employees are selected based solely on the recommendation of a close friend or family member. The mid-level manager stated that:

"The biggest place where you see *wasta* in the organization is in human resources. Any time somebody wants to go for a promotion or somebody is getting hired, it is obvious that *wasta* will play a role in there".

In some cases, an evaluation process or interview is not even carried out. For example, a high-ranking official who would like to find a job for a family member simply needs to contact the right person to begin the paperwork and hiring process. The mid-level manager is only told in passing that the decision has been made and must accommodate the decision.

The mid-level managers' explanation of *wasta* usage in hiring new employees gives additional weight to the claims made by Sakijha and Kilani (2002). The authors provide an example of how the director-general of a state television network was asked by the premier to hire a group of new employees and was inconvenienced by the request. The amount of new employees was disproportionate to the needs of the organization, its day-to-day operations, and its future priorities. But the director-general's hands were tied and he was simply compelled to proceed with the hiring process. The opportunity to question the premier's request did not even arise. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) offer several additional examples of instances where the possession of *wasta* went around official processes. Their interviews discovered that many of the participants employed in positions of responsibility in the banking and financial sector stated that they would have never gotten to that point in their careers without *wasta*. Some recalled without any hesitation that their initial career beginning was thanks to *wasta*.

Mid-level managers in this study did not make such outright claims regarding their own career experiences. However, they did recognize that *wasta* was still widely practiced in hiring and promotion throughout their organizations. One respondent stated "as a fact" that most career advancements, especially at the senior level of government, are either directly or indirectly influenced by *wasta*. In the worst of cases, individuals are promoted or given the opportunity to hold prestigious positions thanks to the assistance of a family member who could "make it happen for them". By consequence, the existing structure makes it substantially more difficult

for ordinary Jordanians who do not have *wasta* to succeed in their careers. It was particularly interesting to note how one mid-level manager explained that many public servants think of *wasta* in the same way that Canadian professionals think of networking.

The claims made by the mid-level managers during the interview suggest that *wasta* is different from the concept of networking as it is known in the West. Al-Ali (2008) compares *wasta* with networking in terms of how it can be used by individuals to get an advantage when searching for employment or looking to move upwards in an organization. Nabi (2003) defines networking as a relational activity that involves “the identification and acquisition of support, information and advice from a group of relevant friends and acquaintances” (p. 659). According to Forret and Dougherty (2001), networking reflects “individuals’ attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career” (p. 284). In the majority of definitions consulted, it appears that networking reflects the establishment and maintenance of professional relationships and does not guarantee a successful professional outcome.

Various researchers have proven that building professional networks can have a positive effect on professional outcomes such as career advancement (Carroll and Teo, 1996; King, 2004; Mcardle et al., 2007; Thompson, 2005; Tonge, 2008). Fernandez and Weinberg (1997) proved that networking can provide some advantage for those looking to find work. The difference, it seems, is between the types of relationships highlighted in professional networking as per its Western interpretation and those inherent in *wasta*. Whereas networking surrounds casual relationship-building and socialization for instance through “going out for drinks with business acquaintances after work, introducing oneself to colleagues, or passing on professional gossip” (Wolff and Moser, 2010, p. 239), *wasta* relationships “are personalistic and most often derive

from family relationships or close friendships” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 137). Generally, Western networking relationships place qualifications and experience above connections and friendships in matters of selection and advancement (Padgett and Morris, 2005). Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) explain that attempts to use *wasta*-style behavior in the West will undoubtedly be labeled negatively as either nepotism or cronyism and perpetrators frequently will be met with penalties. On the other hand, Hutchings and Weir (2006) argue that those possessing *wasta* have the power and willingness to go around any inherent limitations simply because of their connection: “Managers in the Arab World will often show higher commitment to family and friends, rather than organizational goals and performance” (p. 151). The authors explain that managers would justify using *wasta* to fulfill their obligations to their network even at the cost of introducing organizational consequences.

Comparisons to power and strength are used by several authors writing about the phenomenon of *wasta* in the past. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) argue that *wasta* is a “hidden force present in every decision” (p. 191). Throughout their book, the authors use terms like “power” (p. 21) or “force” (p. 43) to describe *wasta*. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) describe it in terms of a “significant force” (p. 468) and write at length of its influence and capacity in Middle Eastern decision making processes. Writing for an audience of international managers and those intending to travel abroad to conduct business in the Middle East, Mead and Andrews (2009) contend that *wasta* is “powerful” and responsible for introducing severe bloating and dysfunction to the country’s civil service (p. 174). The mid-level managers interviewed similarly attributed a high degree of influence and power to *wasta* with respect to hiring and promotion.

The mid-level manager who earlier shed additional light on the importance of family connections in securing high-level employment opportunities within the Jordanian public service

mentioned to the researcher that when it comes to hiring and promotions, “wasta is basically everywhere”. He was not alone in this view. Several participants mentioned that wasta is extremely prevalent in determining the career path of Jordanian civil servants. In many of the discussions the mid-level managers elevated wasta to a deeply held personal value amongst many civil servants. One interviewee suggested that many managers likely had used wasta to achieve their goals at a minimum of once in their careers. As a result, they valued and appreciated wasta as something positive and something they wanted to pass down to the next generation and use in an effort to return the favor.

The strong appreciation of wasta in Jordanian human resource management confirms the findings of Loewe et al. (2008) exploring the justifications for wasta use in organizations. The authors suggest that individuals value wasta to such a great extent that losing wasta can even be likened to losing a part of their cultural identity. Interestingly, the authors mentioned in passing that Jordan’s tribal history also values reciprocity. In other words, individuals feel compelled to return acts of good favor and pass down benefits assigned to them. Their findings, along with data collected during the interview sessions as part of this study, make it possible to understand wasta in human resources management as a form of loyalty.

Jordanians who decide to use wasta demonstrate two combined forms of loyalty. The first level of loyalty is to the family and friends who form a part of their network. According to Mohamed and Mohamad (2011), wasta relationships thrive on the reinforcement of existing networks, including those between family members: “many top governmental positions are reserved for members of the ruling families or members of their supporting tribes” (p. 414). Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) describe the phenomenon as loyalty to one’s family, writing that support of individual members for the greater good of the family unit as a whole represents

one of the treasured values in Arab culture: “Family is the traditional basis for intervening to resolve a dispute or to seek a benefit, and family loyalty remains the foundation of the *wasta* system in the contemporary Middle East” (p. 2). Thus, the second level of loyalty is one of allegiance to culture and tradition. This observation originates directly from the work of Loewe et al. (2008) who discovered that *wasta* is directly associated by Jordanians to tradition and culture.

With respect to human resource management, *wasta* then fulfills the definition of a basic underlying assumption as espoused by Schein (2010). In order for a behavior or activity to correspond with the third or deepest level of organizational culture, Schein (2010) argues that there must be little deviation among members of the organization: “Basic assumptions, in the sense defined here, have become so taken for granted that you find little variation within a social unit” (p. 28). According to him, a cultural value will persist so long as members of the organization continue acting upon it and therefore implicitly legitimize it as the norm: “The power of culture comes about through the fact that the assumptions are shared and, therefore, mutually reinforced” (2010, p. 31). Almost all of the mid-level managers interviewed either directly highlighted concerns over *wasta* in hiring and employment or used examples from human resource management in their explanations of the phenomenon.

Some interviewees explained that the Anti-Corruption Commission and anti-corruption efforts in general will have an extremely difficult challenge to overcome in eliminating *wasta* from hiring and promotion. This reflects Schein’s (2010) theory of organizational culture change where he argues that basic underlying assumptions are among the most difficult to overturn. Schein (2010) argues that attempting to inspire organizational culture change at the deepest level is likely to be met with resistance and, ultimately, failure: “culture change, in the sense of

changing basic assumptions, is difficult, time-consuming, and highly anxiety-provoking – a point that is especially relevant for the leader who sets out to change the culture of an organization” (p. 33). Besides outlining the unacceptability of networking and cronyism, there appeared to be a general agreement among respondents that the Anti-Corruption Commission has not been aggressive enough in addressing *wasta*.

Engaging *wasta* to hire a family member or promote a close friend is only one among many of its uses. *Wasta* can also be applied in a variety of other illegal dealings, for example, to facilitate the procurement of government contracts (Khakyar and Rammal, 2013) or even receive mercy in sentencing during a trial (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). However, the mid-level managers noted that Jordanian civil servants have difficulty in differentiating *wasta* from other corrupt acts like bribery or embezzlement. This confirms earlier findings as well as the conclusions of Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) that, because it does not involve the exchange of money, less ethical wrongfulness is attributed to hiring and promoting employees through *wasta*. One mid-level manager argued that Jordanian public sector departments and ministries could benefit from stricter enforcement to human resource management processes given that they are so open to *wasta*.

One particularly interesting conversation with a mid-level manager of a large Jordanian public sector institution revealed doubt about the ability of the Anti-Corruption Commission to change the way hiring and promotion is carried out, especially at the senior levels of government. The interviewee explained that control and oversight measures would likely be unsuccessful at introducing reform because individuals would develop creative workarounds to using *wasta* within the parameters of regulations and law. He suggested that what is needed instead is a shift in the mentality of organizational members to recognize that hiring should be

done in accordance with official policies and with the best interest of the institution and general public in mind.

Schein (2010) differentiates between organizational change and organizational culture change. While the former is relatively straightforward to introduce, the latter requires considerable time and effort and is likely to be met with resistance. Because hiring and promotion is so strongly reliant on the use of *wasta*, even to such an extent that it is a valued aspect of the culture of public sector organizations, introducing a change to the mentality of Jordanian civil servants is likely to be a difficult and complicated process that will take time.

7.1.2. C2. *Wasta as Insurance*

During the interviews, one of the questions asked to all of the participants was if there could be any positive values associated with *wasta*. Eight of the mid-level managers explained that for many people who have *wasta*, it is something that can provide a huge benefit. One mid-level manager who worked in the Ministry of Agriculture stated that losing *wasta*, at least theoretically, would be a bad decision for many different reasons. Getting rid of *wasta* would put the person at a very real disadvantage in many aspects of life. His comment, and similar reflections by other participants, can be linked to the cultural idea of *wasta* as insurance.

Barnett et al. (2013) linked the modern prominence of *wasta* in Arab society to the need for managing risk in early tribal cultures. French (2012) argue that early tribal conflicts were a mainstay for present-day Jordan in prehistoric times. Towards the end of the 19th century, historian Leonard Nason (1880) characterized early tribes as savages and barbarians who had little reservations about taking up arms against neighboring communities: “What is now Turkey was at that time inhabited by nomadic tribes of Arabs, who lived by plunder. They would frequently cross the mountains which formed the southern boundary of the Thracians and lay

waste to the country” (p. 306). More recently, Guilaine and Zammit (2005) conducted a study of archaeological evidence to conclude that the region’s prehistoric tribes were prone to barbarism and warfare.

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993; 1994) differentiate between mediatory and intercessory wasta, claiming that during the 18th century and earlier wasta helped establish peaceful relations between tribes. The role of the shaykh involved representing a family’s best interests, negotiating agreements, solving problems, and forging alliances with other families and tribes. Because attacks were unpredictable and could have devastating consequences, wasta represented a type of early risk management system:

“Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and parts of North Africa, for example, were sparsely populated by nomadic herders and traders who had few easily transferred assets. The desert climate was harsh, raiding occurred between tribal groups, and there were few formal avenues for conflict resolution. In short, life was a risky business and wasta provided mutual insurance that facilitated survival in such harsh environments” (Barnett et al., 2013, p. 45).

Using wasta enabled early tribesmen to have increased opportunities for prosperity and survival. In a sense, the use of mediatory wasta among communities could be said to have become engrained into the deepest level of culture through the continued achievement of successful outcomes, as per Schein (2010). The notion that wasta could help create peace started as an espoused belief and after repeated instances of success began to take the role of a basic underlying assumption.

During the interviews, some mid-level managers shared the belief that intercessory *wasta* is valued by civil servants because it can help forge relationships that can be useful in the future. One respondent explained that civil servants may justify granting favors through *wasta* because they themselves may require assistance in the future. Unlike the earlier-discussed positive interpretation of mutual help, where officials are willing to help a younger generation to pay back the favor that was once bestowed upon them, the mid-level managers here wanted to build a resilient network as insurance in case they needed to approach someone for a favor later on.

Using *wasta* was found to influence job security because of the benefits associated with building a large network of personal contacts. Officials believe that helping relatives and friends achieve their goals through *wasta* enables them to fall back on a large network of individuals who are virtually obligated to help them should the need arise. Here is a typical example of *wasta*: a manager grants a favor to a friend by enabling him to find work in another department. Years later, the same manager's daughter – fresh out of university – needs a job. Because his friend is still employed in the other department, help is just a phone call away. One mid-level manager explained that *wasta* is widely practiced because it is in all respect better than the alternative of not using *wasta*. According to him, there is always an incentive for using *wasta*:

“Because *wasta* is everywhere and *wasta* can bring you positive results, if you have the opportunity most people will choose to use *wasta*. It is especially useful for people who already have the qualifications to get a job because it gives them the opportunity to get in front of the other candidates. So it is like helping you win the game when you deserve to win anyway.”

For those who have *wasta*, using it will often mean achieving success. Managers who refuse to be accomplices to corrupt action perceive themselves to be in a losing situation. The official from the Ministry of Agriculture similarly noted that one could never be sure if *wasta* would be needed in the future.

El-Said and Harrigan (2009) chose to base their study of *wasta* in Jordan on social capital theory. The authors argue that Jordanians subconsciously equate networks and relationships with wealth and opportunity: “Bridging SC is good for ‘getting ahead’ in life because it provides a broader reach to those seeking social and economic gains beyond their immediate communities. Bridging SC is also important in establishing more generalized norms of trust and reciprocity” (2009, p. 1237). The authors’ decision to use social capital theory is hardly surprising given its relevance to Jordanian culture. Building a strong social network is identified as an important characteristic of professional success. During the interviews, almost all mid-level managers explained that employees who are known to have ties to senior-level government officials or influential political authorities receive better treatment and are given leniency if they stray from workplace policy.

Schein (2010) argued that basic underlying assumptions provide comfort and stability to members of an organization. They are difficult to challenge because they are held in high respect and supported by a mutual reinforcement mechanism the author calls “social validation” (2010, p. 26). Social validation reflects the fact that cultural values are supported by all members of a group. The test of social validation is whether organizational members feel comfortable abiding by the values inherent in their basic underlying assumptions. In the case of *wasta*, the opinions of mid-level managers in Jordan suggest that the phenomenon has been normalized and taken for granted throughout government. The official from the Ministry of Agriculture suggested in fact

that many individuals could not even imagine living in circumstances where wasta does not factor into their daily lives.

Acting in accordance with established organizational values and norms also represents a kind of insurance for those who support the use of wasta. Public servants are careful not to disturb routine in Jordan knowing that social relationships and reputation are closely related to professional advancement and career success (El-Said and Harrigan, 2009). Schein (2010) argues that individuals who try to stray from existing organizational culture or who act in noncompliance with cultural rules and norms could face serious consequences: “Those who fail to accept such beliefs and values run the risk of “excommunication” – of being thrown out of the group” (p. 26). One mid-level manager who was interviewed in this study argued that the pressure of using wasta was extremely strong throughout the public service.

Because wasta is a taken for granted cultural assumption (Schein, 2010) in Jordanian organizations, employees are pressured to abide by it and are fearful of diverging from a system that has been in place for generations. The examples of managers refusing to provide relatives with jobs or facilitate the procurement of contracts for their friends are surprising and rare. Although those who chose to abide by the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) and internal policies set out by their respective departments (OECD, 2010) are acting in accordance with measures of good governance and reform, one mid-level manager argued that they are in reality doing themselves a professional harm. Schein (2010) uses a similar example to demonstrate how espoused values of “team culture” can actually be harmful to organizations: “being a good team player meant going along with where the group seemed to want to go, not objecting too much” (p. 106). Jordanian public servants who refuse to grant favors – especially to other colleagues – using wasta risk being singled out and earning a bad reputation. Thus, one of the challenges for

the Anti-Corruption Commission involves overturning the social validation that keeps *wasta* firmly entrenched within organizational culture.

Barnett et al. (2013) interpret historical mediatory *wasta* as insurance needed for survival. However, it is possible to extend their theory that present-day *wasta* is used as a mechanism for survival as well. Schein (2009) argues that it is human nature to seek out stability and predictability: “Humans do not like chaotic, unpredictable situations and work hard to stabilize and “normalize” them” (p. 35). One mid-level manager explained that because Jordanian public servants are not accustomed to alternative methods of career advancement, hiring, or promotion, they are unwilling to act in accordance with the principles set out by the Anti-Corruption Commission in fear of disrupting organizational stability.

A resulting concern is that mid-level managers who support the Anti-Corruption Commission and want to see reforms take place throughout government are not comfortable about showing support for anti-corruption initiatives in their organizations. Earlier, it was shown how whistleblowers are fearful of reporting supposed instances of corruption to the commission and have little incentive to do so. Similarly, they are fearful and have little incentive of supporting anti-corruption efforts in their organizations.

The OECD (2010) has strongly encouraged Jordanian departments and ministries to develop internal codes of conduct, policies, and frameworks for good governance and reputable conduct. However, with the exception of a few agencies like the Audit Bureau, progress in this area is reported as being slow. One reason for this is a lack of support throughout organizations to take the initiative in creating, maintaining, and updating these tools. Staff is reluctant to jeopardize the current organizational culture and, combined with a lack of direction from the commission itself, lack the support needed to enact change initiatives.

Loewe et al. (2008) recognize how wasta can be considered a tempting form of insurance by describing it as a “collective prisoner’s dilemma” (p. 273). Regardless of one’s socioeconomic status – wealthy or poor, well connected or not – using wasta always brings increased chances of success: “Regardless of what their fellow citizens do, people are worse off when they refrain from using wasta. Nobody can therefore be blamed for using it – especially not the poor and vulnerable who struggle every day to survive” (2008, p. 273). The authors argue that the Jordanian Government should invest in the infrastructure needed to pursue and penalize offenders efficiently and harshly.

Examples of corrupt officials sentenced under the anti-corruption law using their connections to receive leniency in their punishments are popular in Jordan. One participant from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation brought up the case of Khalid Shahin and used it as an example to show how wasta can provide serious benefits for those who have it. Khalid Shahin, the mastermind behind the multimillion dollar Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company corruption scandal of 2009, was given a three year conditional sentence (Pollack, 2011). Several months into his prison stay, Shahin was granted medical leave from the minimum security facility where he was being housed to travel abroad to receive emergency treatment for “obesity” (Omari, 2012). Loewe et al. (2008) argue that Jordanian civil servants are unlikely to stop using wasta unless they can deem it too costly a form of insurance. Currently, the advantages of using wasta far outweigh the disadvantages. Organizations are slow to adopt anti-corruption reporting and develop internal tools to address corruption. Employees are fearful of reporting supposed incidences of corruption. There is an incentive structure in place, though it is a negative one: its use is encouraged by common logic and reason and at the same time justified by existing cultural parameters.

The interviews showed that *wasta* can have very significant benefits for those who have it. Connected to this is the cultural point of view that situations may arise in the future where using *wasta* could make a difference between successfully accomplishing a goal or being unable to do so. Based on some key discussions, it was concluded that *wasta* is therefore considered as a form of insurance which is in accordance with other literature surrounding *wasta*.

7.1.3. C3. Are Corruption Levels in Jordan Exaggerated?

Mid-level managers were asked to explain how *wasta* influences the culture of their organizations. In accordance with the literature (Barnett et al., 2013; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), many stated that *wasta* is prevalent in human resources matters of hiring and promotion. Interestingly, a sub-theme emerged in the responses indicating participant frustration at the attribution of corruption to their organizations. This was indicated especially in the comments of one mid-level manager who explained that Middle Eastern governments are being unfairly targeted by international media, especially in the West, as being completely overrun with corruption and as a result painted with labels such as dysfunctional and criminal.

Critical studies of anti-corruption efforts acknowledge that the developing world is frequently branded by the media and policy groups as inherently corrupt and hopelessly overrun by white collar crime (Sampson, 2010; Wedel, 2012). This is reflected for instance in the early influential work on designing and managing anti-corruption efforts by Klitgaard (1988) who argue that corruption disproportionately affects countries in the developing world: “corrupt activities are more widespread – and more systematically embedded – in many governments of the developing world than in the West” (p. 10). Heidenheimer et al. (2009) also claim that because of weak governmental enforcement “behavior that is considered corrupt is likely to be more prominent in less developed countries” (p. 282). Perhaps the strongest critique of anti-

corruption discourse can be found in the work of De Maria (2008; 2008b) who likens the manner in which developing countries are labeled corrupt to a form of neo-colonialism.

De Maria (2008) specifically focuses his critique at anti-corruption discourse originated in the West and targeted towards the developing world. According to him, corruption is made synonymous with a disease which immediately and unfairly paints the developing world as terminally ill: “Portraying ‘corruption’ in this way does nothing to make us smart about how to prevent and contain this wrongdoing phenomenon in conditions of great social and economic variance. It simply licences a fantasy that ‘corruption’ is (like all diseases) no respecter of culture” (p. 187). De Maria (2008b) argues that the persistent designation of developing countries as corrupt by policy groups and the media influences the investment efforts of governments. As Wedel (2012) maintains, the result is the creation of an anti-corruption “industry” that simultaneously supports what it was originally designed to eliminate.

Authors have addressed corruption in the Middle East by equating it with culture (Kuran, 2013; Williams, 2009). Kuran (2011) contends that the justice system through much of the Middle East is flawed due to extreme corruption that is permanently engrained in culture: “the Middle East’s culture of corruption has undermined campaigns to modify and strengthen the rule of law” (p. 295). Authors like Khayatt (2008) and De Maria (2008; 2008b) argue that these labels, when attributed to Arab countries by Western authors, are unproductive and fail to take into consideration the broader societal factors causing corruption in the Middle East. This study, for instance, makes the delicate attempt to characterize *wasta*, a traditional value embodying problem-solving and mutuality (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994), as engrained in the organizational culture of the Jordanian public-sector. While *wasta* can (and does) lead to corrupt

action under the correct circumstances, it is itself a morally neutral concept (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993).

The mid-level manager interviewed put forth the notion that his organization is neither dysfunctional nor hopelessly struggling with corruption as the media and literature would suggest (Kuran, 2011; 2013). He argued that the Anti-Corruption Commission is making progress in developing the infrastructure needed to address corruption over time. Speaking about how the actual level of corruption is overblown by the media, an interviewee said that

“the way the Middle East is portrayed by Western media is really over the top, with corruption happening everywhere. I think that there are ways of doing things here that may be different from how they are done in other places but where I work it is a very normal way of doing things”.

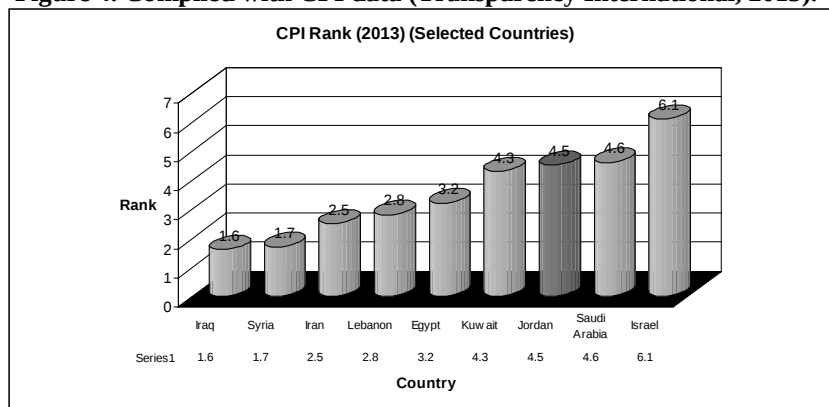
While not perfect, he maintained that instituting norms of good governance and reducing reliance on *wasta* will take time but is an accomplishable goal. In particular, he supported the Anti-Corruption Commission as an independent Jordanian institution employing experienced professionals who are familiar with the administration of the Jordanian public service. Similarly, Khayatt (2008) argue that anti-corruption efforts in the Middle East must be local and take into account the regional issues from where they are operating. The author argues that attempts to introduce foreign anti-corruption systems will be met with opposition and, ultimately, failure: “The fact that these measures are being introduced by Western democracies does not give them credibility. Those responsible for their introduction and implementation can hardly be described as democrats even if they are responsible officials in a democratic state” (2008, p. 475). The mid-level manager’s opinions are also consistent with findings that the Government of Jordan is

putting forth among the most tangible and focused approach to combating corruption (Terrill, 2010).

Corruption detection indicators also provide an interesting point of reference regarding Jordan's performance in addressing the problem. Hammerstein (2011) notes the impressive progress made by Jordan in comparison with its neighbors in the combined areas of anti-corruption, human rights, and standards of living: "Jordan ranks at the top for good governance (...) According to data provided by the UN, World Bank, and Transparency International, Jordan not only outbids its neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, but also promising cases in the Maghreb such as Tunisia and Morocco" (p. 163). In a recent report issued by the League of Arab States (2010), Jordan's anti-corruption efforts were found to surpass even those of some European nations including Latvia and former Czechoslovakia.

The competitive Transparency International CPI ranking of Jordan is unique in comparison to other nations in the Middle East. According to the CPI rankings released by Transparency International in 2013, Jordan scored a 4.5 out of a possible ten. While this does constitute a failing result, Jordan performs better and is in some cases found to be significantly less corrupt than other neighboring countries in the region:

Figure 4. Compiled with CPI data (Transparency International, 2013).



Recalling that a higher score indicates a lower amount of perceived corruption, Jordan's result is reasonably good when compared with other Middle Eastern nations. In the 2013 rankings, only Israel and Saudi Arabia achieved a better result. We need to consider that reports of corruption to the Anti-Corruption Commission have been fairly low since 2008. In 2010, only 87 complaints made to the Anti-Corruption Commission were referred to the office of the public prosecutor; in 2011, this amount was reduced to just 46 total complains referred (OECD, 2013). This data is consistent with the views expressed by the mid-level manager who argued that Jordan's public sector is not as hopelessly overrun with corruption as the media would make it seem.

The OECD (2010b) discovered that the media played a prominent role in promoting anti-corruption reform efforts in Jordan during the early 2000s. Corruption was regularly featured in the news and likely worked together with growing public dissatisfaction of government to cause the signing of the UNCAC and subsequent development of the country's large-scale anti-corruption initiative. Over the past few years and likely as a result of increasing pressure from demonstrations, public sector corruption has once again become a popular topic for Jordanian news outlets (Martin, 2011). Wedel (2012) argues that with the advent of corruption rankings, the mainstream media has become interested in publishing stories about corruption without providing deeper insight or background: "metrics made corruption media-friendly without the need to investigate a specific case or news story. A regularly updated, soundbite-ready ranking is, in the words of a former TV business news producer during the 1990s, 'an easy hook' for a simple story without much context" (p. 468). Martin (2011) argues that young Jordanians are becoming increasingly exposed to digital media, including social media, that provide frequently updated news surrounding scandals and illegal acts perpetrated by high-level officials. The

explosive Shahin case uncovered in 2009 continues to be a popular source of entertainment in Jordan, with important players reaching near-celebrity status especially on the Internet.

The mid-level manager, in conjunction with other interviewees, explained that his office has fairly routine day-to-day operations. Its workers face many of the same struggles that public servants face anywhere else in the world: stress, balancing conflicting demands, and dealing with constantly changing priorities are some of the examples that were shared by multiple interviewees. In one case, the researcher had arrived to conduct an interview with a mid-level manager who was particularly frustrated after receiving an additional caseload of work to complete in his already limited schedule.

Seeing corruption as an easy target for publication, some media in Jordan artificially creates publicity knowing it will attract views and clicks and find an audience with the younger generation. What results is that youth activist movements and news reports play off of one another exaggerating the actual extent of public-sector corruption. The phenomenon is interesting because of the extent to which freedom of the press is allowed in Jordan (Yom, 2013). According to Ryan (2011), King Abdullah II chose to retain this freedom in favor of moving the country to democratic reform but felt disappointed at the media abusing its privileges by exaggerating anti-regime and anti-government news: “In a nationally televised speech to the nation on 12 June 2011, the king decried disunity, *fitna*, and irresponsible media reporting” (p. 387). Ryan (2011) explains that loyalty to Jordan and promotion of national identity were always considered important priorities for the King. The media, he argues, uses some isolated incidents to characterize all political officials or government authorities as uniformly corrupt. The mid-level manager interviewed explained that protests against government corruption were illegitimate.

7.1.4. C4. Perceived Difference between Wasta and Corruption

Some of the mid-level managers proposed that wasta can be considered as something different than obvious actions of wrongdoing such as bribery and fraud. This points strongly to the cultural strength of wasta as something that is respected in Jordanian society and which does carry some positive connotations.

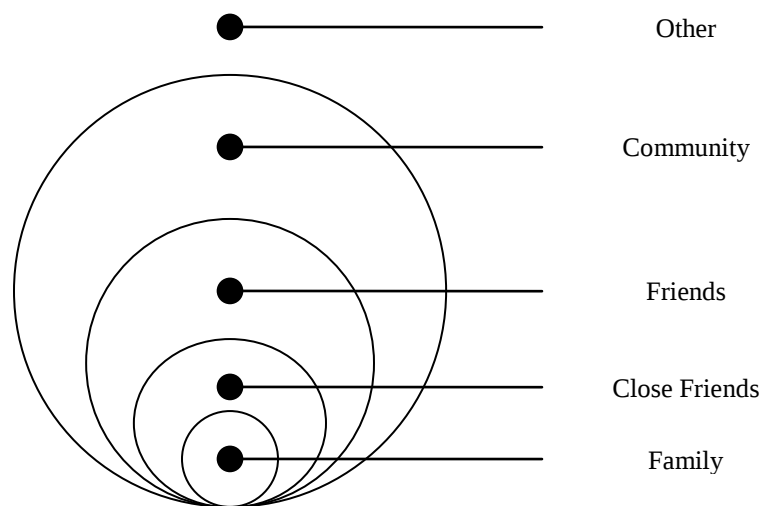
From an empirical perspective, an interesting conversation arose with a manager employed at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply. The interviewee was familiar with a case where an official was responsible for managing the importation of wheat into Jordan from the United States. This individual possessed wasta and was able to import a very large quantity of wheat. Unfortunately, the amount was so extreme that there was no place for the wheat to be stored securely. It was ultimately decided to place the wheat into many large silos while they waited for distribution to occur. During this time, the wheat supply became infested with rats. Regardless, the wheat was picked up for distribution and sold publically despite having been infected by the rat infestation. Upon being questioned regarding his role in this incident, the official responsible for managing the wheat sincerely believed to have done nothing wrong. The interviewee used this example to illustrate how some public servants, including those with a higher ranking, are oblivious to the problems of wasta and consider using connections and personal networks as something different than criminal activity like bribery or theft.

Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) showed empirically that managers in the Arab world often firmly differentiate wasta from what they consider actual incidences of corruption. The authors explain that although it is difficult to draw the line between the two, managers perceive an action to be legitimately corrupt if it involves the unethical exchange of money, otherwise; “wasta is not corruption because no money is exchanged” and is merely used to “speed things up” (2011, p. 473). In their study, Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) found that managers have difficulty understanding

how the abuse of relationships like family contacts to facilitate organizational processes like hiring or promotion constitute corruption. Loewe et al. (2008) similarly discovered that Jordanian officials often have trouble recognizing where the lines between *wasta* and corruption blur: “it is not easy to make a clear-cut distinction in Jordan between favoritism and bribery” (p. 271). Studies confirm the generally favorable attitudes towards *wasta* showing that, regardless of socioeconomic status, Middle Eastern professionals would take the opportunity to use *wasta* to further their own goals (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011; Sakijha and Kilani, 2002).

Loewe et al. (2008) found during their interviews that many Jordanians disliked bribery and fraud, even before full implementation of the Anti-Corruption Commission. According to the authors, many Jordanians “claim that *wasta* is a form of corruption when it serves to circumvent the law but not if it is merely used to speed up a procedure. For this reason, many Jordanians legitimize the use of *wasta* in at least some situations, while almost everybody condemns bribery” (p. 265). The authors discovered that Jordanians see loyalty in increasing levels of prioritization. Their conception is illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 5. Diagram of modern interpretation of Jordanian tribal loyalty. Adapted from textual explanation by Loewe et al. (2008).



George (2005) compares *wasta* to glue in the sense that it binds together interpersonal relations throughout Jordan. As shown in Figure 5, *wasta* relationships can fall within any of the four spheres. The most important network will always be comprised of one's family members, with the other groups following behind. This mentality existed in Jordan throughout history, though in its early states would have additionally included loyalty to one's tribe or clan (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994).

The mid-level managers interviewed explained that the Anti-Corruption Commission has been successful in promoting regulations against bribery and fraud. This is confirmed by statistical data surrounding the complaints that are most frequently reported to the commission. According to the OECD (2013), the Anti-Corruption Commission's total 2011 caseload included largely complaints of abuse of authority (31%) and waste of public funds (27%). Nepotism and favoritism represented just 9% of complaints investigated by the commission that year (OECD, 2013). One mid-level manager explained that nepotism and cronyism are extensive throughout government, but argued that because of *wasta* being engrained in organizational culture, it is largely dismissed by public servants and not considered unethical or a breach of law. Recall the example of the official responsible for ordering the wheat who had sincerely believed to have done nothing wrong even though it was his *wasta* that secured his role in the importation agreement.

The Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) anticipated the problem surrounding the acceptance of *wasta* and explicitly addresses the acts of nepotism and favoritism in its "f" clause (Government of Jordan, 2006). However, the law is facing an uphill climb as *wasta* has now asserted the role of a basic underlying assumption throughout the Government of Jordan. According to Schein (2010), the deepest unconscious level of culture "defines for us what to pay attention to, what

things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations” (p. 29). Shaped in part by hundreds of years of tribal history and reinforced by waves of colonial influence (French, 2012), loyalty to one’s family or close friends assumes the utmost importance in Jordan (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994).

One mid-level manager explained the difference between *wasta* and corruption in the following way. If a high-powered government official is asked by a relative to provide them assistance in finding a job, culture dictates that he fulfill the request. This is consistent with the observation made by Barnett et al. (2013) surrounding the unwritten rules of *wasta* whereby allegiance and loyalty are valued in and of themselves: “Members of the group have a largely unqualified obligation to provide assistance when asked, and those who ask for assistance have no obligation to provide direct compensation for assistance provided” (p. 41). However, if a stranger approaches the same official and asks to be provided with assistance – either with finding a job or securing a profitable contract – the *wasta* values of family and loyalty are clearly absent:

“If a director is asked to provide an advantage by a relative, he is almost culturally forced to go along with that request. This is because, as you know, family is very important here. But if somebody he does not know or never met before asks for the same thing it is a much weaker request at that point”

In Jordan, helping a family member is an important cultural norm that does not carry negative or unethical connotations. Thus, public servants have an easier time classifying fraud and bribery as legitimate acts of corruption because they are outside of their essential, taken for granted, socially validated, and mutually reinforced cultural framework (Schein, 2010).

Besides taking the form of an engrained cultural value, *wasta* was also deemed difficult to remove because it may be unclear when an employee's actions cross the boundary into being unethical or corrupt. While some actions like a senior official giving a job to an unqualified relative are obviously corrupt usages of *wasta*, this is not always perfectly clear. Here is a typical example of *wasta*: a manager in a Jordanian department must quickly fill a position in their division with a qualified staff member for an important project. The manager has a friend whom he knows is looking for work, is available, and qualified, but is the decision to hire the person corrupt because it approaches cronyism as per the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62)? This exact example was given by a mid-level manager during the interview process, and was used to illustrate how Jordanian civil servants may have difficulty in understanding the ethical boundaries between legitimate and unacceptable behavior.

Wrestling with ethical dilemmas is not a new phenomenon, and has been discussed at length in the scholarly literature (Jennings, 2006; Lockhart, 2000). Bruhn (2009) argues that organizations have tried time and again without success to discern the boundaries between right and wrong: "Rightness or wrongness are not the only moral choices in organizations, however, the choice not to make a decision is not always a morally neutral choice. Many decisions in organizations must be situationally resolved because they neither fit black nor white criteria" (p. 206). The author explains that over time, organizations build an identity with which employees come to identify themselves. He argues that the resolution of challenging ethical problems in the workplace can be more easily achieved through four interrelated steps.

Bruhn's (2009) study regarding the recognition and management of ethical dilemmas in organizations is interesting and relevant because it draws from organizational culture and reflects some of the opinions expressed by Jordanian mid-level managers. First, Bruhn (2009) contends

that organizations should work to achieve ‘ethical cultures’ where employees are frequently reminded of overarching standards of right action through organizational artifacts. Chen et al. (1997) argue that staff should be provided with the building blocks for deciding how to manage challenging problems like conflict of interest situations to facilitate “managing and facilitating the development of a corporate culture that provides a context for, promotes, and encourages ethical behavior throughout a firm” (p. 856). Examples of these could include posters hanging from walls that remind public servants they are to act in the best interest of Jordanians or even an e-mail signature that embodies principles of good governance. These visible artifacts, according to Schein (2010), can carry deep cultural implications: “among the artifacts, you can find important symbols that reflect deep assumptions of the culture” (p. 24). The mid-level manager who was concerned about staff being able to make judgment calls effectively remarked about the lack of resources developed and promoted by the Anti-Corruption Commission for employees at all levels of the organization.

The second point made by Bruhn (2009) is that managers should take into consideration the socio-cultural makeup of their organizations and how it impacts organizational culture. His point is more aligned towards American workplaces where employees from different nationalities may experience culture clashes, though it does apply to the Jordanian case. Several mid-level managers explained that tendency for *wasta* in departments reflects its use outside of the organization as well. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) argue that individuals in the Middle East use *wasta* in some way or another in their day to day lives outside of the workplace: “*Wasta* intervention permeates every decision point in life – entry into higher education, obtaining a job or promotion, importation of goods, passports and licenses, disputes with other citizens, and accusations of lawbreaking” (p. 12). Jordanian public servants are therefore given the

extraordinarily difficult task of suspending their use of wasta when they go to work and are socially obligated to use it again in other aspects of life.

Third, Bruhn (2009) explains that staff members should be given the opportunity to participate in the development of organizational regulations and codes of conduct. One mid-level manager explained that some of his colleagues are likely to use wasta without even knowing or realizing they are acting against the regulations of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62). This is because wasta has become so engrained in the Arab mindset that it has reached the level of normalization: “Compared to the West, where social connections generally serve to assist people, wasta in the Middle East is a way of life” (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011, p. 479). Employees who are simply given a code of conduct may dismiss it simply because it is in such disaccord with existing culture that they cannot process or understand its message. By participating in the development of organizational regulations, Bruhn (2009) argues that employees are essentially forced to understand their purpose and application. The author thus makes a strong case for introducing collaborative anti-corruption policy development.

Finally, Bruhn (2009) argues that perhaps the most important strategy in helping employees solve challenging ethical problems is opening workplaces to increased communication between staff at all levels and positions. Studies show that organizations open to free expression and dialogue are better at resolving problems (Bowen, 2004; Ruppel and Harrington, 2000). Sandholtz and Gray (2003) prove in their study that higher levels of communication in an organization led to reduced tolerance for incidences of corruption. Brill (2012) argues that good communication can not only help prevent corruption but helps organizations build trust and become more competitive. Previously, this study showed that effective communication is in many ways limited in the Jordanian public sector. This is not

unusual for the Middle East where organizations often have a strict top-down authoritative structure (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Yeganeh and Su, 2007). However, successfully resolving ethical conflicts and judging between acceptable and unacceptable actions consistent with the regulations of the Anti-Corruption Commission is near impossible without the support of other members of the organization.

As part of the interview process, mid-level managers were asked whether *wasta* could ever be used for good. The majority of respondents maintained a hard line against *wasta* as a source of organizational corruption that should be eliminated in order to achieve good governance. But one participant gave a particularly insightful response, saying that many public servants who frequently use *wasta* to act unethically genuinely do not believe they are doing anything wrong. The same individuals may be strictly against committing acts of bribery, stealing from organizations, but see absolutely nothing irresponsible or unacceptable about using *wasta* to help a family member or friend.

One of the findings of the desk review of this study is that the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan has investigated only a handful of corruption cases, and that only a small percentage of these were referred to the office of the public prosecutor (OECD, 2013). However, the literature suggests that illegal behavior motivated by *wasta* is so extensive that it fuses with organizational culture (Loewe et al., 2008). The example of the official responsible for publicly distributing contaminated wheat shows empirically the type of cultural mentality that surrounds *wasta*. It can therefore be concluded that many acts of corruption are going unreported. The disagreement between the high rate of supposed corruption and low rate of reporting may be, in addition to some of the reasons elaborated earlier, due to the fact that employees are unable to associate *wasta* with corruption.

7.1.5. C5. Persistence of Wasta

One of the prominent themes that emerged during the interviews concerned the idea that wasta can never be completely eliminated from Jordanian society. Some mid-level managers expressed doubt about the ability of the Anti-Corruption Commission to defeat wasta to such an extent that it no longer exists in departments and ministries of government. One mid-level manager shared some doubts about whether wasta could ever really be eliminated:

“I think that wasta is so strong that it will be very difficult to change how things are done, not only in Jordan but in this part of the world”.

Many admitted that the commission in cooperation with government and its own internal anti-corruption policies could have some impact on reducing corruption. However, because wasta is so profoundly embedded in Jordanian culture, they assume that it will always persist throughout the public sector to a certain degree regardless of any anti-corruption effort.

Evidence of the strength of wasta can be found throughout the literature (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993, 1994). The scientific rationale behind the persistence of wasta in organizations reflects its tribal history (Barnett et al., 2013). Loewe et al., (2008) contend that the socio-cultural values held by present-day Jordanians do not differ much from those held by tribes thousands of years ago: “in the Arab world, wasta is more prevalent because of the tribal mentality and inheritance. In fact, tribalism is based on the same values that constitute the basis of *wasta* – loyalty, commonality, and reciprocity” (p. 274). Few of the interviewees explicitly went into detail about how Jordanian history impacts present-day organizational culture. However, many explained that the Anti-Corruption Commission has had difficulty in addressing corruption (especially actions and behaviors related to wasta) because it represents such a deep and engrained part of culture.

Barnett et al. (2013) argue that *wasta* has been preserved throughout history because it almost always produces a positive result for those who use it. The authors argue that the temptation of turning to *wasta* was strongest during Jordan's lengthy colonial history as tribes could ally with ruling powers and receive much needed benefits:

“Colonial rule provided a format for political advancement and a mechanism for those who climbed the political ladder to assist relatives in following their footsteps. In short, the social stratification that occurred during this period determined the kind and quality of assistance that could be provided to kin within a network, and hence the power, wealth and prestige of the tribal group” (p. 44).

Relying on *wasta* today can yield a range of equally positive results. Everything from starting one's career to achieving financial security by getting a competitive edge can be easily attained through reliance on *wasta*. Using social capital theory, El-Said and Harrigan (2009) attributed a literal value to *wasta* in terms of the connections between people in the Arab world can have individual economic benefits. A far-reaching network of power family and friends is a source of wealth for those who have it; according to the authors, taking away *wasta* can be likened to taking away one's source of livelihood.

Many interviewees believed that *wasta* had entered into the organizational culture of government from broader societal culture in Jordan. They argued that because *wasta* is so common in all aspects of life throughout the country, it will emerge in organizations because it is natural for organizations to reflect the environment in which they exist. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) share a similar view, arguing that organizations can be thought of as “miniature societies” (p. 193). Based on the interviews, there is no question that *wasta* represents a basic underlying assumption in the Jordanian public service (Schein, 2010). Time and again, mid-level managers

expressed the notion that many of their colleagues are not accustomed to another way of doing their jobs.

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) were among the first authors to describe wasta as “power” (p. 21). Other authors have since used the same comparison to describe the influence wasta has in Middle Eastern organizations (Mead and Andrews, 2009; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). In describing the process needed for recognizing the essence of culture, Schein (2010) also noted the importance of understanding cultural evolution as well as the influence that deep culture can carry: “If we can understand where culture comes from, how it evolves, then we can grasp something that is abstract, that exists in a group’s unconscious, yet that that has powerful influences on a group’s behavior” (p. 17). As the product of almost ten centuries of evolution (Barnett et al., 2013), wasta today has assumed the role of a taken for granted norm embedded deep within the culture of Jordan’s public sector organizations.

The mid-level manager who had worked for the government for over 25 years described Jordan’s large-scale anti-corruption effort as a good start towards setting the foundation that may take generations to achieve results. Like many of the other participants, he acknowledged that King Abdullah II was sincerely committed to addressing corruption and that significant effort was being made to invest in the development of initiatives that reflect this vision:

“I have done my own research and I can see that with the new initiatives they are trying to put forward new policies to stop corruption. Actually this was one of the things the King has been promoting so it is something that is being taken more and more seriously here.”

This view corresponds with evidence from the literature that Jordan is taking the initiative of establishing anti-corruption infrastructure in government (Terrill, 2010). However, he maintained that the Anti-Corruption Commission faces a daunting challenge in eliminating *wasta* from public sector organizations. Further, he considered that the commission is and will continue to be overwhelmed by *wasta* because of its commonplace nature in organizational culture.

Documents studied as part of the desk review of this research indicate that the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan rarely addresses *wasta* directly. The 2008-2012 National Anti-Corruption Strategy did set out a goal aimed at promoting awareness surrounding the wrongfulness of *wasta*, giving the commission a responsibility “to create an environment based on fairness and justice and equal opportunities and that *Wasta* and nepotism violate moral and religious values in the society, while at the same time working to protect national institutions and personnel of the danger of character assassination” (Government of Jordan, 2008, p. 21). But *wasta* is entirely absent from the 2013-2017 national strategy and is rarely mentioned on the official website of the Anti-Corruption Commission and on other official documents.

Because the influence of *wasta* is so strong in Jordan, there is a possibility according to the views expressed by one mid-level manager that anti-corruption efforts will be less dedicated towards its removal. Thus, while anti-corruption information campaigns and investigations in Jordan target other more obvious acts of corruption like bribery and fraud (OECD, 2013), *wasta* remains under-investigated precisely because it is so common. One mid-level manager stated during the interview that he hears about *wasta* being used in his department at least once every week. According to him, getting rid of *wasta* in Jordan would be like dismantling the basic foundations of society and would grind the country to a stop.

One of the interesting suggestions subsequently brought forward during the interview was that removing *wasta* from the culture of public sector organizations should also be mirrored by its removal from broader society. Petty corruption remains a problem in Jordan including at the level of public service provision (George, 2005). Clark (2012) addresses some of the common ways corruption occurs in Jordan at the lower level in municipal government:

“A more widespread culture of corruption is created as municipal employees use public resources, such as trucks (and the required gasoline), for their personal use. Others take bribes (from a tribe member or simply the person who offers the largest bribe) in order to expedite procedures or grant approvals for various applications when they are not warranted. Perhaps most egregious is the selling of municipal lands (potentially at a highly reduced rate) to family and tribe members, the impact of which is not only a loss of funds but also the fact that many municipalities simply do not own any land on which they could build public facilities such as libraries or day-care facilities for their constituencies” (p. 366).

According to Clark (2012), Jordanians are accustomed to using *wasta* in ordinary day-to-day life. Knowing somebody who works at a hospital, for example, can help speed up the provision of medical treatment and even reduce cost. Other authors have written about *wasta* by commenting on how it plays a role in many aspects of life in the Arab world (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994; Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011). Thus, it is difficult to assume that *wasta* can be somehow surgically removed from the organizational culture of white-collar public sector workplaces but remain accepted and utilized elsewhere.

Schein (2010) argues that organizational cultures react and are influenced by their environment. According to him, basic underlying assumptions that are reinforced

environmentally and organizationally will be most difficult to change: “If an organization has had a long history of success based on certain assumptions about itself and the environment, it is unlikely to want to challenge or reexamine those assumptions” (p. 289). Schein (2010) believes that organizational culture change is possible through cultural adaptation to a changing environment. For example, if a firm is all of a sudden faced with increased competition and pressure, this could cause its culture to adapt towards a greater valuation of creativity and innovation.

Thus, one of the most prominent challenges facing the Anti-Corruption Commission noted during the interviews was accomplishing the complicated task of removing *wasta* as a basic underlying assumption of organizational culture while it continues to remain a taken for granted value in broader society (Loewe et al., 2008). Because it is considered a custom in Jordanian society, *wasta* is socially reinforced and validated (Schein, 2010). This legitimization and normalization of *wasta* is transferred to workplaces where it becomes common perhaps even without the conscious knowledge of employees. If the view that *wasta* will always be a part of Jordanian society is accepted, it then becomes virtually impossible for it to be eliminated from public sector organizations. At the very least, it should be recognized that changing the organizational culture of Jordanian departments and ministries from one where *wasta* is business as usual to one where employees value ethics and good governance will take some time. According to one mid-level manager, the best the Jordanian public can hope for is that over the years society as a whole will begin to understand the wrongfulness of *wasta* and, as a result, strive to eliminate it from not only their workplace but every aspect of their lives.

7.2. The role of wasta on leadership

The second sub-section addresses the concept of leadership and how it relates to wasta, and more generally the Anti-Corruption Commission, based on the opinions of the mid-level managers who were interviewed as part of this study. Firstly, the idea that there is little incentive to report corruption by Jordanian public servants is presented. This is connected to leadership because it is a fear of punishment that in many cases prevents individuals who are witness to corruption from coming forward. Secondly, the authoritative leadership structure in Jordanian government is considered as one of the main challenges to introducing effective anti-corruption reforms such as the work being done by the Anti-Corruption Commission. Thirdly, a significant interview finding concerning the communication of anti-corruption strategies to public sector managers is addressed. This finding in particular was reflected in the responses of several participants who showed dissatisfaction in the leadership practices of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the approach it took to address corruption and wasta in organizations. Fourthly, the elimination of wasta through leadership and mentorship sub-section offers some possible solutions based on the adoption of certain leadership and mentorship practices. Finally, some forward-thinking results are presented showing that with a transformation in leadership there is a possibility of anti-corruption subcultures to form in organizations. Relevant theoretical constructs regarding leadership are used to frame this sub-section throughout, which is also linked to some aspects of organizational culture as developed by Schein (2010) and others.

7.2.1. L1. Little Incentive to Report Corruption

Mid-level managers explained that employees who are witnesses to corruption may be hesitant to file a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan. Two corresponding reasons were provided specifically: fear of punishment and a lack of incentives to come forward.

Mid-level managers also explained that public servants may be unwilling to report incidences of certain types of corruption, like nepotism and cronyism, simply because they do not consider these actions to be legitimately corrupt by definition. It can be argued that both issues are relevant to leadership because employees who are fearful to come forward demonstrate a lack of trust towards their leaders and on the other hand it is a lack of leadership where employees do not have the incentive to come forward.

Some mid-level managers stated during the semi-structured interviews that they did not have any incentive to report incidences of corruption to the Anti-Corruption Commission nor had access to the reward structure to encourage their subordinates to do the same. These participants expressed concern that employees who are witnesses to corruption may be hesitant about making a complaint out of fear of facing professional consequences later on. The interviews were taking place at an important time of evolution within Jordan's anti-corruption strategy in that whistleblower protection had just been introduced as a new feature of the 2013-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy (Government of Jordan, 2013b). The whistleblower protection goal claims to offer additional regulations in support of informants and witnesses. As part of its short-term goals for 2013-2014, the Anti-Corruption Commission has been tasked with developing a dedicated "Unit to protect informants, witnesses, whistleblowers and experts in corruption cases" (Government of Jordan, 2013b, p. 10). Despite this goal, mid-level managers remained nervous about whether or not protection would be enough to encourage more complainants to come forward to the commission.

The discussions with mid-level managers suggested that organizational members may be unwilling to bring forward knowledge about supposed incidences of corruption for two reasons. First, they may be fearful of professional consequences due to insufficient protection that the

latest national strategy is trying to address. Second, and perhaps more importantly, they are not provided with an incentive to report their observations to the commission. Therefore, the mid-level managers suspect that even those employees who are witness to corruption or who obtain knowledge through another source about an act of corruption would rather keep things the way they are than take a significant professional risk for minimal gain.

The Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan has always had policies in place to protect the confidentiality of complainants. These have been substantially improved in the 2013-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy to the extent that confidentiality will now be treated as a subset of the commission, administered by a specialized unit (Government of Jordan, 2013b). However, mid-level managers believed that civil servants may still have doubts about coming forward to the commission. According to one mid-level manager working in a smaller Jordanian ministry, his organization is small enough such that it would not be unreasonable to conclude that whistleblowers do fear being found out at some point during an investigation.

Past research proves that employees do fear bringing suspicions of illegal activity within their organizations to the attention of authorities (Alford, 1999; Myers, 2004; Rothschild, 2008). Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt (2012) argue that potential whistleblowers may perceive there to be a range of negative outcomes following their decision to bring an accusation of corruption to light: “repercussions include a range of social, legal and financial sanctions, ranging from victimisation and marginalisation in the workplace and beyond, to dismissal, standing trial and being jailed” (p. 401). The authors argue that in many cases witnesses are frequently caught off guard when faced with evidence of corrupt behavior. Especially true for employees at lower levels of an organization, it can be unexpected and intimidating. One mid-level manager interviewed as part of this study explained that their employees would likely be hesitant about bringing an instance

of corruption to the attention of the commission out of fear of angering supervisors and having this later impact their opportunity for advancement in the government. According to Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt (2012), the psychologically stressful process of interacting with corruption causes witnesses to exaggerate the possible consequences of coming forward out of fear.

Richardson and McGlynn (2011) argue that employees may be fearful of exposing corruption in their workplaces out of a belief they are acting in noncompliance with organizational norms. Other researchers have identified silence as a deeply held value within some organizational cultures (Beamish, 2000; Beresford, 2010). The question thus becomes whether or not the Jordanian public sector has a similar culture of “secrecy surrounding corruption” (Andrieu, 2012, p. 552). Interviews with the mid-level managers suggest that this is not necessarily the case. Based on the in-depth interviews with mid-level managers, there were no claims made suggesting that maintaining silence with respect to corruption in the public sector could be deemed a basic underlying assumption or deep level of organizational culture (Schein, 2010).

The interviewees who were aware of the changes being implemented to the Anti-Corruption Commission for 2013-2017 expressed confidence in the abilities of the commission to attract more complainants by reducing fear. One interviewee argued that it would be better for witnesses to feel comfortable bringing supposed incidences of corruption to the commission rather than advising the media. Interestingly, this has also been the subject of research in the literature. Dworkin and Baucus (1998) distinguish between internal and external whistleblowers, arguing that some employees who are witnesses to illegal acts within their places of employment may choose to bring the allegations to the attention of external actors like journalists and the media. The authors explain that this does not frequently lead to the efficient and timely

resolution of problems, and suggest that resilient and independent internal anti-corruption institutions like the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan are better equipped to handle and investigate complaints. According to Es and Smit (2003), internal mechanisms – if managed correctly – are generally much better prepared to address corruption complaints. To this extent, it is more probable that witnesses are simply unmotivated to come forward and report incidences of corruption to the commission due to a lack of incentive.

The mid-level managers interviewed generally believed that the lack of incentives to disclose suspected incidences of corruption played a larger role in promoting hesitation to come forward among witnesses. One interviewee expressed this in the following way:

“Why do I care? What do I have to gain? The best case scenario is that nothing happens and the worst case is that someone will find out I was the one who reported it and actually I will end up getting in trouble and getting a bad reputation. So actually if you do see someone acting badly, or using *wasta*, you turn the other way.”

Studies have shown that the lack of incentive for employees to bring forward allegations of corruption result in a significant risk to the success of organizational anti-corruption efforts (Jos, 1991; Rose-Ackerman, 2010). In one case, an interviewee actually stated that it is “playing with fire” to encourage a situation where employees do not have leaders who support them coming forward with concerns about corruption. According to him, this could result in serious consequences because known situations of corruption go unreported.

Rothschild (2008) argues that anti-corruption laws put significant additional pressure and responsibility on complainants that could require considerable work and stress; he explains that most laws “do not invoke significant penalties on the violator (usually back pay and

reinstatement) and they offer would-be whistleblowers very little incentive to go through a long legal battle. It is hard to see how these laws serve as a major deterrent” (p. 895). Alam (1995) argues that encouraging witnesses to come forward is considerably easier in the private sector as firms can benefit from having the government “black list” competitors who break the law.

Instituting a reward system to encourage members of an organization to communicate incidences of supposed corruption has been met with disagreement (Lipman, 2012; Palmer, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2010). Dervenis (2009) explains that some organizations in the financial industry have thought about the idea of creating a plan whereby whistleblowers receive a portion of the recovery amount if a corruption case is successfully prosecuted. She argues that these plans have been met with resistance because of the danger they may lead to an extreme increase in illegitimate claims. Lipman (2012) contends that such schemes can lead to the creation of toxic environments among workers motivated to act like private investigators and earn bonuses for detecting and reporting corruption. Though it may be initially successful, the author argues it could create an environment marked by a lack of trust between employees who are fearful of colleagues conspiring against them.

Based on the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews, witness hesitation to come forward to the commission may in fact be the product of *wasta*. Mid-level managers explained that employees may see themselves as being loyal to more senior-level officials and unwilling to compromise members of their own professional network. Rothschild and Miethe (1999) argue that individuals who are made aware of acts of corruption are often informed of illegal deals by a work colleague or partner in the organization. The authors argue that it is rare for individuals to randomly discover serious breaches of the law such as bribery as the individuals responsible will go to great lengths to keep their actions hidden. One mid-level

manager explained that this has to do with leadership in the organization because leaders are individuals subordinates would be in fear of to criticize. The fear of criticizing a superior is especially raised in instances of wasta or corruption according to another interviewee. Even in similar sensitive issues like performance employees in the Jordanian government would be relatively comfortable to open a discussion, but this would be very outside the norm to bring about a similar discussion with respect to corruption.

Near and Miceli (1996) found that employees were considerably less likely to disclose supposed instances of corruption when the illegal dealings were done by managers or supervisors due to the authoritative nature of the relationship. This finding in the literature was related to the empirical data as one manager said that Jordanian civil servants would be very hesitant to make public even very serious offences. Uys (2008) discovered that employees who choose not to file a complaint regarding managerial-level corruption may simply be “rationally loyal” to their supervisors (p. 904). In addition, the author argues that employees who are loyal to their superiors can also offer them blind support contradicting accusations of corruption in the hopes of demonstrating their loyalty.

The permanence of wasta in the Middle Eastern public sector (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994) may be responsible for increasing organizational loyalty and preventing witnesses from disclosing supposed incidences of corruption. One mid-level manager stated that workers are naturally liable to follow the saying “don’t bite the hand which feeds you”. Among the respondents who discussed why civil servants may be hesitant to file complaints, about 6 or 7 mid-level managers said that they themselves would have no problem filing a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Commission if they witnessed a serious breach of organizational policy. It is not clear if the mid-level managers who said this only did so because they were participating in an

interview about wasta and corruption or if their claims were genuine. Even if they were being honest, however, there were additional concerns identified that may prevent them coming forward to the Anti-Corruption Commission if they were exposed to wasta. That is, the more significant obstacle, however, occurs among workers who do not consider wasta as a legitimate act of corruption.

The Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) study initially highlighted how professionals in the Arab World are likely to differentiate wasta from corruption. Through their own interview process, the authors discovered that “Although almost all condemned bribery, many legitimised the use of wasta in at least some situations. Furthermore, many of those interviewed stated that the use of wasta was closely linked to traditional values and social norms and is therefore an integral part of Arabic culture” (p. 473). Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) found that justification for the use of wasta was most prominent in human resources where individuals secured their careers either through hiring or advancement based on their personal network of family and friends. A separate subsection of this study is provided to specifically address this phenomenon.

Several of the mid-level managers interviewed in this study agreed that wasta appears most obviously in the organization when, for example, new employees are hired or others are promoted based on a prior relationship with a high-ranking director or minister. This reflects the authority granted to some organizational leaders who have the power to manage human resources at their will even if conflict of interest situations arise. There were about 12 interviewees who participated in a discussion about the role of wasta in human resources. This indicates the extent of wasta in this area within the organization. They explained that most Jordanians were familiar with such behavior and did not see it as an outright example of corruption. Indeed, using wasta in human resources appears to be a basic underlying assumption

or deep level of organizational culture. Schein (2010) explains that basic underlying assumptions are unquestioned truths existing in among members' organizational values. Schein (2010) explains that such basic assumptions are simply taken as fact: "if a basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable" (p. 28). The mid-level managers interviewed explained that the Anti-Corruption Commission's classification of nepotism and cronyism alongside more traditional corrupt behaviors like bribery or fraud is not taken seriously among staff who value *wasta*.

Because *wasta* is supported even by Jordanians of a lower socioeconomic status who are less likely to benefit from it themselves (George, 2005) and associated with positive cultural values and traditions (Loewe et al., 2008), the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) is unrealistically ambitious in its condemnation of actions like nepotism which originate from *wasta*. According to the OECD (2013) report on investment in Jordan, nepotism and favoritism represented only 9% of cases investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2011. Given that a total of 714 cases were investigated by the commission in that year, *wasta* was only reported 65 times in the entire Jordanian civil service in that year. Despite this, all mid-level managers agreed that corruption in hiring and promotion of employees through *wasta* was widespread at all levels of the organization.

A follow-up prompt was asked to one participant who was particularly outspoken about the difficulty of motivating workers to report incidences of *wasta*-based human resources incidents. He was asked what could be done to shift the mindset of employees to such an extent that they understand the importance of filing complaints about new hires and promotions undertaken with *wasta*. The manager claimed that he would like to see more focus placed on specifically addressing the problem of *wasta* instead of passively listing it among other

traditional examples of corruption. He argued that doing so undermines the system as a whole because employees, given the organizational culture that values *wasta*, will instinctively dismiss the idea that *wasta* should be treated with the same level of seriousness as bribery.

To strengthen the previous finding whereby mid-level managers felt unprepared to specifically address corruption in their organizations, the participant who criticized the treatment of *wasta* also suggested that the commission should become more involved and work closer with departments and ministries to determine their organizational needs and find cooperative ways to address more common incidences of corruption. As it stands, there appears to be a general perception that the commission is designed to fight major high-level incidences of corruption but is poorly equipped to address everyday issues like the use of *wasta* in managing human resources.

7.2.2. L2. Authoritative Leadership Structure as Challenge to Anti-Corruption

The interview data demonstrated that the hierarchal leadership structure in Jordanian organizations made it difficult to effectively address the culture of *wasta*. Studies on management indicate that Middle Eastern organizations tend to favor an authoritative organizational structure (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Yeganeh and Su, 2007). Kabasakal et al. (2011) differentiate between egalitarian and hierarchal establishment of power at the institutional level, arguing that the latter is most valued in Middle Eastern organizations. Sheikh et al. (2013) argue that the rigid hierarchies in Arab organizations represent one of the most compelling reasons regarding why change initiatives are so difficult to successfully implement.

Lower ranking employees are unlikely to question the actions or disapprove of the demands made by their supervisors or managers. Using evidence from the United Arab Emirates, Harrison and Michailova (2012) argue that Middle Eastern organizations are naturally likely to

establish authoritative power structures because these societies themselves share values of power and control. In fact, one of the participants said that his department was “especially bad” with having a very strict chain of command that involved a top-down style of leadership. He explained that this was natural, however, because it reflected the culture of Jordanian society as a whole. During the interview, the interviewee shared how his workplace works in a very authoritative structure saying

“Employees will be used to doing what their boss tells them, because this is how the culture of our office is... unfortunately if they see the boss doing something wrong they will be hesitating of speaking out against that manager. I have seen this happen myself a number of times”.

The success of the Anti-Corruption Commission depends on the willingness of employees to communicate and report on actions that goes against the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62). However, the views of mid-level managers interviewed in this study indicate that the balance of power may prevent the reporting of corruption.

One mid-level manager shared an interesting personal account of *wasta* to highlight some of the obstacles facing anti-corruption initiatives in Jordan. Two years ago, his colleague was responsible for overseeing a major project that involved managing a small team of specialists. For reasons of confidentiality and ethics, the specific details regarding the nature of the work in question have been omitted from this recounting. Successful completion of the project was a priority area in his department’s division. After several weeks, tasks had been divided up among the specialists and timely progress was being made despite some unforeseeable setbacks. One day, he received a call from the administrative assistant of a senior manager working in the same

department albeit in a separate division. The senior manager was interested in finding a job opportunity for the son of another colleague, who had recently graduated from university. The mid-level manager's colleague was compelled to hire the senior manager's child despite the fact that he was inexperienced in the work being done and had an irrelevant educational background.

The senior manager's son was hired without any competitive process or formal job posting. The mid-level manager stated that his colleague was frustrated at the introduction of what was essentially an unneeded new team member. To make matters worse, the presence of the new employee was detrimental to the work climate of the remaining specialists. Because the son was not familiar with the type of work being conducted, he asked questions without stop and required almost full-time supervision. The mid-level manager's colleague also reported noticing some backlash and dissatisfaction coming from the rest of his team. He suspected based on their actions and demeanor that they began to feel undermined and unappreciated given that a new unqualified coworker had been brought in only because of his *wasta*.

Despite the negative effects caused by the unexpected new hire, the mid-level manager's colleague could never bring his concerns to the attention of the senior manager. The authoritative and hierarchal culture of the department made it impossible to show any dissatisfaction with the decisions of a superior. Further, because *wasta* is so pervasive within the culture of public sector organizations, these situations are not uncommon and so the colleague's experience was not unique. In the end, the senior manager's son was given unrelated menial tasks to complete so the remaining members of the team could freely continue with their responsibilities and complete the work. The project was ultimately completed but at the cost of reduced work group cooperation and a diminished work environment. To add insult to injury, the senior manager's son was later hired in a separate department at a better paying position.

Rice (2006) conducted a study on organizational values and employee perceptions based on data acquired in Egypt. The author found conformity and obedience to be among the most widespread values in the firms studied. The result is a situation where employees are unlikely to question orders and go along with demands that are unethical, illegal, or simply not in line with the best interests of the organization. Coincidentally, a similar scenario is adopted by Schein (2010) in his explanations of how deeply held cultural values can slow down effective decision-making in an organization. Employees who must balance the professional responsibility of doing what is best for an organization with absolute loyalty to their superiors will end up being placed “into an impossible double bind” (Schein, 2010, pp. 30-31). A Jordanian civil servant who is asked to hire a new employee because of *wasta* will in almost all circumstances be inconvenienced or frustrated but be reluctant to show any disagreement due to the culture of obedience.

A 2010 OECD Joint Learning Study examines the barriers for implementation of a government-wide code of conduct that would help set the foundation for better cooperation with anti-corruption efforts in Jordan. The study discovered that a potential barrier to success surrounding the implementation of such programs concerned lack of support from authority figures within departments and agencies. It was therefore recommended that should a government-wide code of conduct be implemented, “successful implementation of standards of conduct and ethics depends upon leadership from the top (...) Employees will readily see that management is serious about the Code of Conduct. A Code of Conduct is likely to fail if employees believe that the Code is only for junior workers, not the senior managers” (2010, p. 45). Some mid-level managers believed that the Anti-Corruption Commission should place a

greater emphasis on encouraging organizations to address issues internally instead of expecting whistleblowers to file reports through official channels.

One interview participant who had been employed with the Government of Jordan in various capacities for more than 25 years explained that passing the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) represented one of the biggest “paradigm shifts”. All of a sudden, the established and commonplace way of approaching a scientific phenomenon must be rewritten to accommodate the newly observed deviation. Schein (2010) invokes the notion of paradigms when explaining why cultural change was difficult to enact: “when we see the essence of a culture – the paradigm by which people operate – we are struck by how powerful our insight into that organization now is, and we can see instantly why certain things work the way they do (and) why change is so difficult” (p. 193). The mid-level manager who had been employed for a long time in government argued that encouraging higher-level officials to act in accordance with anti-corruption frameworks is challenging and also requires additional changes to organizational culture.

A noteworthy aspect of the Arab Spring movement is that it tends to attract younger individuals including students and those who have recently finished obtaining a degree (Benski et al., 2013; Zubaida, 2012). Avina (2013) surveyed younger supporters of reform throughout Egypt and found that many were knowledgeable and determined to institute good governance principles to the public sector including measures in line with corporate social responsibility. Asseburg (2013) argue that young people in the Middle East have a personal interest in reducing corruption based on their own need to find stable employment. The mid-level manager interviewed suggested that departments and ministries in Jordan should break down the

hierarchical barriers between senior and junior level employees in order to encourage transparency and faster resolution of problems.

It was also suggested that employees should be made comfortable to ask their superiors for clarification and advice on sensitive matters such as conflict of interest. Because the Anti-Corruption Commission represents such a significant leap in public sector integrity management, employees may have questions and concerns about relevant laws and newly established policies. Once again, the rigid authoritative structure of Jordanian governmental institutions was indicated to be an obstacle for free and open dialogue about corruption. The OECD (2010) for instance discovered that one of the most misunderstood provisions of corruption reform concerns official gift-giving.

Tabsh et al. (2012) discovered that exchange of gifts between individuals in conflicting relationships was commonplace in the United Arab Emirates and overlooked by both givers and recipients as a commonplace practice reflecting politeness and good manners. Indeed, the OECD (2010) report highlights the exchange and receipt of gifts as a significant problem that could lead to perceptions of corruption in Jordan. For this reason, some departments and ministries have acted swiftly and independently to develop internal policies and regulations limiting the exchange of gifts. Jordan's Audit Bureau has developed an internal anti-corruption code to specifically address the acceptance and provision of gifts with respect to conflict of interest. The rules state that without exception auditors are disallowed from accepting gifts of any sort from members of the organization or business they are auditing. However, it is customary for organizational representatives to offer guests coffee and considered rude of guests to refuse. The OECD (2010) also notes that there are some ambiguities with regards to this policy as "even in jurisdictions that forbid officials from accepting a gift for private benefit, there may be occasions

in which a company offers to provide, for example, computers to an agency, transportation for officials attending a governmental event, or supplies for an office” (p. 53). Currently, employees are basically left to their own judgment about the provision and receipt of gifts.

The mid-level manager who brought up the ethical dilemmas faced by Jordanian public servants who work in positions that could tempt conflict of interest exchanges stated firmly that organizational culture does not permit going to a superior and asking for advice about sensitive or controversial matters like the possibility of corruption. He believed that supervisors and managers should put forth the initiative to schedule routine meetings where employees could discuss and consult one another about their experiences and, if applicable, questions surrounding the new organizational operations and specific applications of anti-corruption law. While open dialogues during business meetings may be common in the West (Karlsson, 2001), Jordanian meetings are a much more top-down affair. In order to create internal cultures of good governance and integrity, the interviewee suggested that managers should not only bring corruption into discussion but also put the results into action.

7.2.3. L3. Communication of Anti-Corruption Strategies to Public Sector Managers is Insufficient

Several mid-level managers who participated in the semi-structured interviews reported dissatisfaction with the provision of information regarding specific anti-corruption measures and strategies that could be used in their organizations. These managers explained that while senior-level officials and political representatives promoted the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission, this was done in overly broad terms that left them wanting more. One participant explained that he would like to be provided with additional training on the detection and management of corruption but argued that no such opportunities are currently in place. The result, according to

him, was that Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption effort is more an exercise of public relations than public management.

Studies on anti-corruption efforts in the emerging world show that, despite the formation of plans and even agencies to address corruption, there are frequent problems at the level of implementation (Grodeland, 2010; Rothstein, 2011). The OECD (2009) hypothesizes that the challenge is made worse by the lack of consultation with key organizational stakeholders during the development of anti-corruption efforts. Indeed, from an empirical perspective, several mid-level managers expressed disappointment at not being invited to take part in the development of anti-corruption strategies specific to their organizations. This is in line with Bukovansky (2006) who contends that the developing world's anti-corruption frameworks are constructed and administered without mutual consultation which he argues is ineffective, instead promoting a more inclusive discourse that brings in not only high-level actors but also those directly affected by corruption: "the anti-corruption discourse would benefit from an injection of alternative modes of deliberating about what corruption actually means, and what needs to be done to engage leaders and citizens in deliberation about the substance of the public good, and the pursuit of collective ends" (p. 204). The author argues that in some instances governments develop basic overall anti-corruption strategies but fail to consider the actual needs of organizational members. Some authors argue these deficiencies to be caused by a lack of political will to genuinely reduce corruption, as many political representatives of developing countries are themselves corrupt (Quah, 2008).

The majority of comments about perceived deficiencies in Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption initiative emerged following the second interview question asking how these initiatives have influenced the day-to-day running of the organization. Mid-level managers did,

in some cases, admit that King Abdullah II was seriously committed to fighting the problem and had given reasonable resources in an attempt to introduce reform. This is consistent with the finding of George (2005) who notes that the King repeatedly prioritized anti-corruption as an important goal for Jordanian politicians. The mid-level managers were more concerned, however, that they were neither consulted nor instructed on how to implement the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) or how to communicate with the Commission.

Interestingly, mid-level managers who claimed to have been in their current positions since the initial phases of development of the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission were the most outspoken about its perceived deficiencies. They recalled seeing extensive information in the media happily promoting the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption but noticing little organizational change in their actual workplaces. During one interview, a participant said that

“We don’t even know, as employees in this ministry, what we are supposed to do specifically when we encounter these types of incidents. The most we got is sometimes we meet a member of the Anti-Corruption Commission representative but there is no framework or policy actually given to us on how to work with the commission to deal with corruption. It is very frustrating.”

Interviewees were understandably unwilling at this early point in the interview to mention whether or not they have witnessed acts of corruption occurring in the following weeks. The introduction of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) and later Anti-Corruption Commission also appeared to have little actual relevance to their workplaces. They were discussed in passing as newsworthy events and were occasionally the subject of office chatting, but soon after forgotten.

During the interviews it came about that anti-corruption training or even detailed information was not provided to the mid-level managers or their subordinates. It seemed as though the interviewees who brought up this issue of lacking information felt as though they could have benefitted from more instruction to their specific organizations on how to deal with corruption given the new policies in place. But in the end, it was business as usual according to some of the mid-level managers despite the introduction of one of the largest institutionalized anti-corruption efforts in Jordanian history (Terrill, 2010).

Western attempts at creating organizational change are generally noticed in the most obvious first level of organizational culture espoused by Schein (2010). Organizations choose to implement training and informational campaigns targeted towards their workforce because “Employees are often the first to know of any unethical, immoral or downright illegal dealings that go on within an organization” (Vinten, 2003, p. 14). The Council of Europe has strongly encouraged European Union nations to implement anti-corruption education initiatives alongside their pre-existing laws and policies to provide employees at all levels of the organization with the appropriate knowledge and tools to address corruption: “anti-corruption training represents a key activity in the overall fight against corruption. Anti-corruption training develops important human capital upon which all other reforms depend and generates a body of knowledge which contributes to a government’s improved capacity to govern” (Michael, 2005, p. 9). The mid-level managers reported being insufficiently briefed about the role of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Further instructions and hands-on tools were not provided, and follow-up information was virtually nonexistent.

Schein (2010) would argue that in developed countries with ongoing and inclusive anti-corruption strategies the initiatives are heavily emphasized at the easily observable artifact level of organizational culture. Employees are exposed to a range of “phenomena that you would see, hear, and feel” (Schein, 2010, p. 23). One of the mid-level managers explained that these types of physical tools, like briefing notes or even instructions, would have been effective in communicating the role of the Anti-Corruption Commission. It would have also been effective, according to him, in helping public servants understand how and when to bring issues to the Anti-Corruption Commission or if informal alternatives were available. In general, it was explained that there is a definite lack of communication. Research has suggested that one of the challenges to successful anti-corruption initiative implementation in the developing world is that governments take a reactive as opposed to proactive stance in their approach (Grodland, 2010; Meagher, 2005; Tabish and Jha, 2012).

According to the OECD (2012), effective anti-corruption initiatives in the developing world should incorporate proactive as well as reactive elements. It is recommended that public sector organizations in regions like the Middle East provide the necessary information and tools to employees at all levels of the organization. Further, the OECD (2012) encourages anti-corruption efforts to have ongoing strategies that continuously update and inform employees about proactive strategies to work in the interest of the public good. From an empirical perspective, another mid-level manager noticed that while the Anti-Corruption Commission is effective at advertising and promoting itself it has little in the way of proactive anti-corruption solutions that could actually be put into practice to meet current workforce requirements.

Grodland (2010) argues that without a proactive anti-corruption strategy, developing countries will be unsuccessful in appropriately striking at corruption in their organizations. The

author contends that many of these countries invest millions in building infrastructure that is ready to “combat the consequences of corruption by investigating what had happened but not eradicating the problems at their roots” (p. 238). Choi (2009) argues that reactive anti-corruption measures will fail by definition because they are not appropriately adjusted to the constantly changing and adaptive nature of corruption. The mid-level managers expressed some concern about the enforcement abilities of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

During the interviews, some mid-level managers explained in their own words that the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission is not equipped to take on a proactive role. Instead, they argued that it is limited to serving as essentially a type of middleman between complainants and the courts system. While they do have an investigative power, it is basically limited to evaluating complaints which, if deemed serious enough, are passed on to be handled by another party.

From the perspective of organizational culture theory (Schein, 2010), it cannot even be concluded that Jordan’s anti-corruption efforts exist at the preliminary artifact level of culture within any of the public sector organizations studied. In order to exist at this level of culture, anti-corruption would have to be embedded in observable elements of an organization’s culture. Wedel (2012) provides several examples of how managers incorporate anti-corruption strategies into their organizations at this level. Although the author is writing from a distinctively Western perspective, his suggestions do reflect anti-corruption initiatives at the ‘artifact’ level of organizational culture. According to Wedel (2012), managers may be interested in updating employees about the latest anti-corruption priorities at scheduled meetings, send out regular informational briefings, offer training sessions or workshops, or incorporate good governance and integrity indicators into their departmental reports or scorecards. In Jordan, one mid-level manager remarked that the Anti-Corruption Commission simply “exists”. Public servants are

aware of it but, beyond their basic knowledge, it is neither an organizational priority nor a subject of discussion in the workplace.

Conversely, Jordan's efforts at reforming the public sector through the implementation of large-scale anti-corruption initiatives are routinely promoted in the country's mainstream media. The 2009 arrest, subsequent trial, and finally conviction of Khaled Shahin and his associates which was among the most publicized legal cases in Jordan in recent years. According to Sharp (2010), the entire event sparked the attention of news agencies throughout Jordan as well as elsewhere in the Middle East because "the government rarely has taken such aggressive measures against prominent individuals from the elite of society" (p. 1). Sharp (2010) nevertheless maintains that publicizing the high-profile case gave the Jordanian government the ideal opportunity to promote its anti-corruption effort and label it a resounding success and source of national pride. In reality, the author concludes based on reports compiled by analysts that the Shahin case was artificially exaggerated as only symbolic of successful reform: "Observers believe that officials have embarked upon an anti-corruption campaign designed to boost the image of the government in the lead up to elections" (*Ibid.*). Some of the mid-level managers felt that the anti-corruption effort was of little significance in day-to-day government operations. This was especially well articulated in the opinions of one interviewee in particular.

According to the response of one participant, organizational anti-corruption strategies should come from the ministerial level down to individual directors and subsequently throughout all levels of government. The mid-level manager claimed that this was not currently the case, reporting an overall lack of information at all organizational levels. At most, personal accounts suggest that high-ranking officials are given infrequent advisories about the overall goal of addressing corruption but no additional specific instructions. One mid-level manager explained

that, in his view, anti-corruption efforts should not only offer him specific tools he could use on the job but that these tools should also be particular to the needs of individual departments and ministries. He argued that anti-corruption strategies should be promoted that take into consideration the unique organizational environment and mandates of individual Jordanian departments and ministries. In general, mid-level managers stated that neither the Anti-Corruption Law nor Anti-Corruption Commission played a significant role in their organizations. Nevertheless, they were supportive of reform efforts and would like to eventually see more tangible strategies implemented within their organizations in the future.

Some mid-level managers interviewed seemed disappointed that the Anti-Corruption Commission was not taking a more proactive and involved role in their organizations. This was especially true with respect to some of the earlier interview questions about the role of the commission in their own workplaces. Some participants clarified that they would like to have had more communication from commission representatives as well as their leaders in terms of receiving hands-on tools to address *wasta* as corruption. Further, these respondents stated that these types of tools would have been beneficial in their organizations.

7.2.4. L4. Eliminating Wasta through Leadership and Mentorship

Two interview participants separately admitted to being approached and asked to provide personal favors through *wasta*. In one case, a mid-level manager was asked by a family friend to hire one of the friend's relatives into a senior position. In the other, a mid-level manager was asked to act as an intermediary between one of his family members and another colleague in the organization to arrange a contract with a private sector firm. In both cases, the participants reported abstaining from undertaking the corrupt action based on their own personal ethical values which went against the request.

Towards the end of the interview, participants were asked about what effect the Anti-Corruption Commission had on the culture of the organization. This question caused some mid-level managers to reflect on their own responsibilities and how they themselves interpret and apply the provisions of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) in their day-to-day work environment. The respondent who was asked to hire a family friend's relative into a senior position denied the request and explained that he would feel uncomfortable doing this without following the appropriate procedures. He followed up with some useful advice to the requestor from his own experience and his professional background and knowledge. This was interesting because it reflected an observation made by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) that in the Middle East there really is no equivalent to mentoring or coaching as it transpires in the West: "The absence of role models and mentoring programs is a major organizational concern limiting in particular women's access to top managerial positions" (p. 469). The authors discovered that individuals who are seeking employment are limited in their ability to become better equipped in looking for a job. As a result, they believe that people instead submit to the temptation of using *wasta* because there simply are no other alternatives.

The second example was particularly interesting in that it highlighted a case of *wasta* that did not reflect the more common human resource management examples of hiring and promotion. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) explain how individuals working in entry-level private sector sales position can score sizeable commissions and bonuses by selling services to the public sector or establishing partnerships with government departments. El-Said and Harrigan (2009) show the lengths some people would go to in an effort to secure profitable business deals: "Some individuals with original roots outside Jordan went further to "Jordanize" their names, that is, "to changing their name to reflect a tribal origin" in order to cement their

links and form working alliances with top state officials (...) This, they hoped, would improve their chances of acquiring a state contract” (p. 1242). Reports of money being exchanged under the table represented among the most in-depth and costly investigations for the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2012 according to the commission’s annual report (Government of Jordan, 2012).

The mid-level manager was put in the position of acting as an intermediary between a private sector representative and another colleague in his department who worked in contracting and procurement. In this case, the mid-level manager would be helping the private sector worker develop a *wasta* with his colleague and so expand his network through him as a connection (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). The situation was rendered especially problematic for him because the individual making the request was a member of his extended family. Therefore, based on the unwritten rules of *wasta* culture, his request had a resilient legitimacy. The mid-level manager reported telling the requestor that the increasing emphasis on anti-corruption made it more risky to engage in these types of unethical deals. He recalled using the commission as an excuse knowing that in all likelihood it would be possible to easily fulfill the request. However, he did not want the extended family member to know that his denial was based on a conscious unwillingness to commit an unethical action. He explained that although his excuse made it seem like he was not capable of doing the favor, in reality he was unwilling to break the rules and wanted to conduct himself ethically.

The researcher used the opportunity to ask each of the mid-level managers a prompting question about their desire to set an example. That is, how could they guarantee that their efforts at acting ethically would set a good example if nobody knew of their decisions and actions? One replied that it did not matter because it was more important to uphold anti-corruption principles

in the hope that others do the same. The other argued that those trying to use *wasta* to, for example, gain an unfair advantage at finding a job or securing a profitable contract, would recognize firsthand the shift towards good governance happening in government.

Consistent with literature on organizational leadership being exhibited at varying levels within an organization (Fernandez et al., 2010; Nielsen and Cleal, 2011), the mid-level managers perceived themselves to be in positions of leadership and wanted to use their status as a way to promote organizational culture change. One of them actually said that he “considers himself to be in a position of leadership” and would be unable to go ahead with the promotion. Another time, a participant explained that leadership could play a role in promoting an alternate culture of good governance:

“If employees see that their managers are making good decisions and not abusing the system, not using *wasta* to get an advantage, they could see this as being the right way of doing things and behave in the same way. But this is not an easy thing to change especially at the higher levels”.

This is in line with the idea that organizational culture is difficult to change (Schein, 2010). In doing so, he saw himself as a symbol of ethical action that he hoped other employees would follow.

These two responses were interesting to note because neither of the mid-level managers appeared to be bragging about their decisions. Instead, they were explaining the new role they assumed as personal agents of change. It appeared as though the respondents wanted to affirm their commitment to good governance through their own actions and values. Their decisions may be attributable to what Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) call stigmatization as a result of *wasta*

use. The authors explained that individuals who use *wasta* have a higher tendency of being perceived as less moral and less competent: “Results indicated that *wasta* did have a negative or stigmatizing effect on its’ users’ perceived competency. In other words, subjects viewed employees hired with *wasta* as less competent than those that were hired without *wasta*” (p. 420). At the same time, family loyalty remained important for the second mid-level manager who discouraged using *wasta* not because it was wrong but because the probability of getting caught was high following the government’s anti-corruption effort. This shows that family values continue to remain very resilient in Jordan but that some officials are taking on the responsibility of enacting change, though slowly.

Schein (2010) explains that transformational or charismatic leadership, while useful to a certain degree, are not alone capable of efficiently bringing about organizational change. He argues that organizational culture change will always involve a struggle and be met with resistance: “Culture change is always transformative change that requires a period of unlearning that is psychologically painful” (2010, p. 312). Schein (2010) proposes out some specific ways organizational culture change can be facilitated if used together with willing and committed organizational leaders.

According to Schein (2010), transformative leaders can enable organizational culture change by introducing change elements through existing cultural frameworks. This is somewhat relevant to the claims put forth by Loewe et al. (2008) who suggest that Jordanians should be re-educated to refrain from associating *wasta* with culture and tradition and instead infuse their cultural mindset with positive values, including for example those in the Surah Al-Qasas (Quran) (Ali, 2005). The mid-level manager who refused to assist his extended family member with securing a business opportunity technically used existing cultural parameters to discourage him

from using wasta. Instead of trying to preach a new vision of morality that would have certainly been ignored, he stated that the risk of getting caught was too great and, as such, thoughts of abusing the system in light of the efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission should be abandoned.

Another organizational culture change principle put forth by Schein (2010) suggests that leaders can encourage colleagues and low-level employees to follow through with change by ensuring that the new method of doing something produces a better result than how things were done previously. Thus, Schein (2010) proposes that true cultural change can happen if members sincerely believe that the change produced will yield a better result: “Old cultural elements can be destroyed by eliminating the people who “carry” those elements, but new cultural elements can only be learned if the new behavior leads to success and satisfaction” (p. 312). He also argues that organizations should not expect for these changes to occur quickly, but given time, they are not impossible to implement.

Recall that the mid-level manager who offered to help the young man who was looking for a job by giving him advice on where to send his application tried to propose an alternative instead of outright refusing to fulfill his request. Karkoulia et al. (2008) showed that Lebanese workers are appreciative of mentoring and that the process leads to positive organizational outcomes. However, the authors discovered that organizations do not actively promote mentoring or have formal structures in place to facilitate the process. The mid-level manager considered himself to be in a position of leadership and so took the initiative to counsel the young man on employment opportunities using his own experience and knowledge acquired from years of experience in the public sector workforce. For Schein (2010), the success of this

initiative, and others like it, will depend on whether the changes produced will yield positive results.

Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) called upon organizations in the Arab world to develop formal and resilient mentoring initiatives for employees. The results of their survey data indicated that the majority of respondents did not have access to mentoring programs. The authors explain that in the Arab world *wasta* has taken the place of mentoring, but that these two have important differences. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) argue that positive mentoring does not offer the promise of potential employment but rather serves as a tool of education and professional development: “mentoring on the other hand is a more deeper and regular kind of relationship that focuses on the person as an individual” (p. 475). They suggest two ways in which *wasta* differs from ethical mentoring. First, mentors are usually experienced professionals within an organization whereas *wasta* can be attributed to anyone – both inside and outside the department or ministry – so long as they have power and influence. Second, whereas mentors take time to learn about the background and experience of the people they are mentoring and are supposed to keep regularly updated with progress, those with *wasta* are expected to use their influence to grant favors without much additional follow-up.

Transformational leadership has been connected with organizational mentoring processes (Allen et al., 2004; Holmes, 2005; Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994). Scandura and Williams (2004) argue that based on the understanding of transformational leadership as a process that serves to inspire change (Bass, 1990), taking on the mentoring role as an organizational leader can help managers achieve the goals of change initiatives: “Leaders may need to serve as mentors to activate transformational leadership and promote positive work attitudes and career expectations of followers” (p. 448). Ghosh and Reio (2013) contend that mentoring is a two-

sided activity using empirical evidence proving the emergence of positive personal and professional outcomes for mentors and mentees alike. Consistent with the recommendation of Schein (2010), it may be possible for Jordanian mid-level managers as organizational leaders to use the existing values of mutual assistance to replace wasta with mentorship.

To an outside observer, especially one coming from the West, it may appear that wasta is used to take advantage of individuals within an organization. Indeed, at the basic artifact level of culture (Schein, 2010), it would seem that individuals use the opportunity to abuse their wasta relationships to gain an advantage over other competitors in hiring or contracting. However, this is not the case in reality because wasta functions on a two-sided system. Loewe et al. (2008) discovered that Arab officials are pleased to grant favors because they themselves benefited from them in the past:

“the person that does a favor for another person does not know when and how the latter will reciprocate it. In many circumstances, the recipient of a favor does not even have to reciprocate to the donor himself. Especially in the context of family networks, he is rather expected to give back what he has received by showing solidarity to any other relative in need, which is a form of “generalized reciprocity”” (p. 261).

This confirms the interpretation of wasta by George (2005) who explains that it is responsible for creating stability within the Arab world. Stability is a part of basic underlying assumptions in organizational culture according to Schein (2010) in that it provides members of the organization with shared meaning and has been validated over time. The mid-level manager who was earlier found to break the tradition of wasta and place himself in a mentoring role chose to embody

leadership characteristics by introducing a new framework and not following the tradition of wasta.

Currently, the Jordanian public service does not have any formal mentorship infrastructure in place to accommodate this process. However, the concept is not entirely foreign to Jordan and has been used in the field of education since the 1990s. Momany and Cullingford (2006) argue that under the rule of King Hussein bin Talal, Jordan's Educational Reform Plan of 1987 established new priorities for the country's educational system. Because Jordan is not rich in oil, Talal believed that education should be a top priority in order to develop human capital elsewhere and in so doing build economic strength. In 1996, a teacher training program was developed that relied heavily on mentoring and passing down knowledge between generations of educators: "Jordan has been in a hurry to introduce reforms and, to use a term invoked in other countries, to 'drive up' standards. Mentoring has become part of this drive" (Momany and Cullingford, 2006, p. 87). The use of mentoring in training educators has been successful in Jordan from primary school to graduate programs in its universities. However, the same system is virtually absent from government institutions. The mid-level manager who reflected positively on his experience coaching the young man who was looking for work proves that a similar system could see success and may be an important step in fulfilling the anti-corruption objectives set forth by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Earlier, it was shown that transformational leaders see themselves as playing inspirational roles within their organizations by "raising" their subordinates and colleagues through personal adherence to positive values (Burns, 1978, p. 426). According to Eseryel and Eseryel (2013), transformational leaders do not attempt to force or instill change but rather embody change as agents committed to representing the outcomes they want to see in their staff: "The

transformational leaders whom we interviewed were aware of their effect on others since they mentioned how they tried to become role models to the team members by exhibiting the behaviors that they would like to see in others” (p. 111). The authors observed how transformational leaders came to earnestly believe the values they sought to champion through their own actions and behaviors in the organization.

Transformational leadership has been considered a potential influence to the achievement of organizational culture change (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004). Schein (2010) explains that in order to successfully change, organizational cultures must first be unfrozen because organizational members are so used to a certain way of behaving: “strong new change managers or “transformational leaders” are likely to be needed to unfreeze the organization and launch the change programs” (p. 293). Both mid-level managers who refused to fulfill their so-called traditional and cultural obligations to *wasta* chose to promote organizational culture change at the source: themselves.

7.2.5. L5. Future of Change and Anti-Corruption Subcultures

All of the mid-level managers interviewed as part of this study were supportive of Jordan’s anti-corruption efforts and recognized that *wasta* should be eliminated in order for good governance to be achieved. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) similarly found in their interviews that managers acknowledged how *wasta* can put some individuals at a significant disadvantage: “many of our respondents who were interviewed stated that *wasta* is unfair to those who do not have good connections” (p. 473). One of the repeating themes emerging from the interviews was that *wasta* provided an advantage to Jordanians who already have higher levels of socio-economic status.

Recall that Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) characterize wasta as “affirmative action for the advantaged” (p. 95). One mid-level manager explained:

that wasta is unfair because it is not really something a person can acquire through effort or training. Either a person is born into a wealthy, well-connected family or not. And if they are, this will allow them to have a significantly easier life in Jordan because they will be able to fall back on their connections.

Barnett et al. (2013) characterized this as a consistently self-reinforcing cycle of social inequality:

“Those who have wasta can jump the queue in acquiring public services while those who do not will struggle through the “normal” bureaucratic process. Those with wasta get job interviews and jobs, while those who do not suffer through calls that are not returned and letters that go unanswered. Those with wasta get favorable rulings from agencies and courts while those who do not often wade through red tape in processes that are not well defined and where outcomes are often unpredictable. Those who have wasta get government contracts and are the beneficiaries of government rules that limit competition, while those who do not find it difficult to enter markets. In short, wasta helps those who have it to navigate bureaucracy or gain favorable treatment in business and government” (p. 41).

The mid-level manager who shared his example about a colleague who was compelled to hire the son of a senior official was visibly frustrated when telling the story. He explained that decisions made using wasta can undermine government and create a society torn apart by class. Members

of the advantaged class take the benefits of being well-connected while those in the lower levels of society have little hope for escaping their underprivileged status.

Studies point to the growing socio-economic inequality in the Middle East region and specifically the gap between powerful well-connected elites and the rest of society (Goulden, 2011; Hay and Muller, 2012). A 2011 report by Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies discovered "widespread public frustration in Jordan with the widening income gap between the rich and poor" (p. 17). Ryan (2011) argues that the majority of this inequality is experienced most prominently among the country's youths. Many who are born into working-class families struggle to balance their financial responsibilities and complete an education only to discover that jobs are handed out to their lesser-qualified classmates because they have a family friend or relative who can arrange them with a job. According to Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993), privileged young people are virtually guaranteed a future in Jordan because of their connections: "getting a job is so much a matter of luck that they are better off having a good time during their four years at university, and then depending on *wasta* to find them positions" (p. 104). Having *wasta* is more important than any other criteria when it comes to finding work in Jordan (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). According to a Jordanian educator interviewed by Loewe et al. (2008), university students in the country often graduate to the harsh reality that even despite having good grades and committing themselves fully to school they are considered only in second place to those who are well connected. However, the strong anti-corruption stance being taken by the government is beginning to change the tide, though slowly.

It was interesting to note how many of the mid-level managers shared a similar view regarding the use of *wasta* to secure an unfair advantage over others. None of the managers interviewed defended the use of *wasta* and, along these lines, none attempted to justify examples

in which *wasta* could be identified as a positive or beneficial organizational phenomenon. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) discovered in their study that individuals sharing a lower socioeconomic status will stigmatize individuals who are hired through *wasta* as being less competent and less moral than those hired without the use of networks or connections. Based on the views of Jordanian mid-level managers interviewed as part of this study, it is possible to extend their finding to employees already working in the organization.

The mid-level manager who shared the story of nepotism that affected one of his colleagues in another department explained that *wasta* is not only unfair but that it can carry organizational consequences. Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) believe that because *wasta* justifies the hiring of potentially unqualified or inexperienced individuals, it may have impacts on performance: “Unqualified applicants may receive undeserved appointments because they have an important *wasta*. As such, *wasta* may hinder equal employment opportunity and lower the organization’s overall performance” (p. 420). For him, the preferential treatment of some public servants can dissolve organizational trust, especially in workplaces where employees are working on complex or scientific projects.

Using evidence from family owned businesses, Arasli (2006) show that organizations with hiring practices that relied heavily on nepotism caused other workers to feel less committed and loyal to their organization. The authors thus strongly encouraged organizations to develop and follow ethical policies. In Turkey, Mutlu (2000) argue that preference given to some public sector workers disagrees with the principles of democracy and destabilizes organizations. Padgett and Morris (2005) conducted an extensive empirical quantitative study on preferential treatment and its effect on employees within a workplace, finding that

“a supervisor given preferential treatment due to family connections was evaluated more negatively on a variety of outcomes. Specifically, in the preferential treatment condition, subjects viewed the supervisor as less capable, they were less willing to provide behavioral support for the supervisor and viewed a lower starting salary as appropriate for the supervisor. Subjects in the preferential selection condition were also less confident about receiving future promotions as a result of having this individual as their new supervisor. Finally, we found that subjects who perceived their supervisor to have been hired due to a family connection expressed significantly less commitment to the organization” (p. 41).

One of the mandates most strongly supported by King Abdullah II since he took the throne more than a decade ago has been building a capable and resilient public sector workforce (Hammerstein, 2011). Some mid-level managers’ comments that creating a government which the people of Jordan can trust should also be a top priority. Conditional to these goals, however, is the removal of wasta throughout Jordanian departments and ministries. The views of some mid-level managers suggest that tides of change are slowly moving towards the defeat of corruption. This phenomenon is visible in the emergence of what can be classified as anti-corruption subcultures within Jordanian public sector organizations.

Gelder (2007) argues that organizational subcultures are essentially cultures within cultures. The author contends that they involve a select group of individuals within the organization establishing their own culture, usually (but not always) based on the nature of work they perform. This idea is adopted from Schein (2010) who discuss the existence of three so-

called “generic” subcultures in almost every organization: operators (who are essentially line personnel), engineers/designers who research and create on behalf of the organization, and executives who play a managerial role (pp. 57-63). Although these are quite specific and seem to apply most directly to the private sector, Schein (2010) argues that any organizational “subunits” can have a distinct culture: “These subcultures reflect the functional units, the rank levels in the hierarchy, isolated geographic units, and any other groups that have a shared history” (p. 68). Based on his interpretation of subcultures as representing the shared assumptions of a smaller unit within an organization, it is possible to conclude that anti-corruption subcultures may be forming throughout the Jordanian public sector.

One mid-level manager explained that there are growing numbers of civil servants in Jordan who are uncomfortable with *wasta* and willing to support further development and implementation of anti-corruption efforts in the country. While still the minority, they represent a subculture as they demonstrate a tendency to oppose dominant organizational culture. The Anti-Corruption Commission, despite its shortcomings, has increased opportunities for Jordanians to assume positions of authority in the government without relying on *wasta*. As a result, a new subculture of individuals with a personal shared interest in its removal is slowly emerging throughout organizations.

Because the anti-corruption subculture is only beginning to emerge in organizations, traces of its impact are limited for now. According to Schein (2010), cultural development is traced to leadership: “Leadership begins the culture creation process and, as we will see, must also manage and sometimes change culture” (p. 195). The interviews showed how some mid-level managers were beginning to set the precedent towards ethical action by refusing to follow through with requests for abusing *wasta*. Because the mid-level managers who were interviewed

wanted to eliminate wasta, they assume this as a personal responsibility in their divisions. However, they explain that despite their willingness to develop organizations with positive anti-corruption values, change is slow because they are the minority to others who still value and routinely make use of practices like wasta.

Basic underlying assumptions are the most difficult elements to change in the culture of an organization (Schein, 2010). However, the emergence of individuals who are willing to take on this responsibility from within organizations shows that the Anti-Corruption Commission is achieving the important goal of finding allies to their change initiative within the organization itself. Consistent with the need for additional support to fight corruption, one mid-level manager suggested that departments and ministries could benefit from the development of committees that meet regularly to study and discuss the corruption problems facing their workforce. This, in turn, will create more influential anti-corruption subcultures that could ultimately help influence other members of the organization. This is a process that will take time and, despite this progress, some Jordanian public servants question the ability to truly eliminate wasta from government.

7.3. Chapter Summary

Ten main themes were identified following the interview data coding process under an inductive-abductive grounded theory research protocol. The semi-structured interview format allowed participants to move discussions into topics and subjects not necessarily highlighted in the original questions, which is appropriate and is reflected in the themes. Results can be divided into two complementary sections: the effect of culture on anti-corruption reform and the effect of leadership on anti-corruption reform. Beginning with culture, the issue of *wasta* in hiring and promotion is identified first. This finding points to the extent of *wasta* as a deeply held espoused belief and value in the Jordanian public sector. *Wasta* as insurance was discussed second. This sub-section reflects on some of the cultural attributes given to *wasta* as something that can have a benefit for those who hold on to it. The idea that corruption levels in Jordan are exaggerated was discussed third. This was based on the views of some interview participants who said that the actual level of corruption is very overblown. The perceived difference between *wasta* and corruption was discussed fourth. This sub-section addresses the cultural assumption that *wasta* is considered as something different from obvious criminal activity like bribery or theft. Finally, the fifth section regarding culture examines the view that *wasta* is very persistent in the organizational culture of the Jordanian public sector which is challenging for anti-corruption efforts to overcome.

Connected to the sub-section on culture are findings regarding leadership and how leadership was interpreted by the interviewees. The idea that Jordanian public servants have little incentive to report corruption is discussed first. This section addresses the issue that leaders are sometime feared to such an extent that employees will simply be unable to report supposed instances of corruption. The authoritative leadership structure is discussed second. This related

sub-section explores themes regarding the traditional hierarchal organizational structure that makes it difficult for employees to report on supposed instances of corruption. The way anti-corruption strategies are communicated was examined next, in the third sub-section. Interviewees shared frustration about how the Anti-Corruption Commission should be taking a more proactive leadership role in providing staff with the tools to address corruption before it even occurs. The use of leadership and mentorship as tools to eliminate *wasta* is discussed fourth. This sub-section is most directly related to leadership as it identifies how leadership can be used to bring about organizational culture change. Finally, the emerging of anti-corruption subcultures at the hands of ethical leadership is discussed in the fifth section. Combined, the ten interrelated themes demonstrate how *wasta* prevents effective anti-corruption strategy implementation and how leadership can be both something negative or something positive in the fight against *wasta* depending on how it is used. The next chapter will offer a discussion of the results including implications, future research, and limitations.

CHAPTER 8. DISCUSSION

The study sought to better understand how the introduction of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative affected or not the organizational culture in Jordan's governmental departments and ministries. In the end, it was discovered that the deeply held tribal value of *wasta* (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994) resisted the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) and Anti-Corruption Commission and remained a regular occurrence throughout the public sector. The use of organizational culture theory and Schein's (2010) three levels of culture proved effective in studying anti-corruption efforts from a perspective of public administration. The themes which emerged from the interviews carry important policy implications for practitioners working in Jordan as well as in neighboring countries in the Middle East. Besides *wasta*, the authoritative and hierarchal structure of Jordanian public sector organizations prevents managers from opening up a free flow of conversation. Because mid-level managers were also concerned about the lack of specific tools and strategies available to them in developing anti-corruption protocols within their places of work, it is recommended that the Anti-Corruption Commission work in closer collaboration with departments and ministries to better address their needs and priorities. Because *wasta* has been compared with various other similar phenomena internationally (Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Smith et al., 2012), the findings carry implications for society as a whole. Future research should take into consideration the views of a wider range of stakeholders in Jordan including public servants at other levels in the organization and ordinary Jordanians. Scholars interested in approaching the subject of *wasta* are encouraged to consider studying the effects of *wasta* on organizational outcomes like performance, as this remains the next logical area of interest given the exploratory findings of this study. Despite producing valuable in-depth results, the study is not without limitations including a limited ability to generalize from the

findings, a minor possibility of respondent bias that must be acknowledged, and a limited sample size appropriate given the nature of the study.

8.1. Implications

The research carries implications for public administration, foreign policy, and society as a whole. It is important for the academic study of public administration because it serves as an empirical analysis of culture change that is rare in the literature (Alvesson, 2013). It also serves to demonstrate that research in public management can successfully make use of organizational culture theory (Schein, 2010) to study corruption and anti-corruption initiative implementation and administration. Foreign policy relevance is demonstrated through several practical strategies organizations can adopt to facilitate anti-corruption efforts based on the views expressed by mid-level managers consulted. Finally, the research is beneficial for society as a whole because *wasta* can be compared to similar organizational phenomena elsewhere in the world (Hutchings and Weir, 2006; Smith et al., 2012).

8.1.1. Public Administration

Various authors have attempted to study corruption from the perspective of organizational culture within the boundaries of public administration (Balci et al., 2012; Klinkhammer, 2013; Pillay, 2004). Organizational culture is highly relevant to the field of public administration, and is an important concept especially concerning the introduction of change initiatives (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2009). Peters and Pierre (2007) explain that public administration surrounds the day-to-day running of government and includes two corresponding sides: “Public administration is an area of substantial academic activity, but it is also the focus of important practical work” (p. 1). According to Hou et al. (2011), public administration

scholarship should strive to take into consideration international and global perspectives relevant to an increasingly globalized society.

Corruption presents itself in different ways depending on where in the world it takes place (Kaufmann et al., 2010; Loughman and Sibery, 2012). The Arab world has its own unique difficulties and challenges that will undoubtedly impact how anti-corruption measures should be developed and implemented by public policymakers (Hafez, 2009). Nevertheless, *wasta* has not been the subject of extensive research in the academic literature (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011). Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) maintain that empirical research surrounding the phenomenon has been particularly rare. This is despite the fact that Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) call *wasta* “the hidden force present in every decision” in the Middle East (p. 191). Corruption in the Arab World presents a unique challenge for public policymakers and researchers alike because of its two-sided status. While officials in high-level positions of power promote values of anti-corruption and good governance, the everyday administration of matters in government is business as usual.

This study sought to provide the much-needed further empirical research on *wasta* and corruption in the Arab world through the lens of organizational culture theory. Specifically, the Schein (2010) three levels of culture were used because these were found most relevant given the two-sided status of the public sector organizations in Jordan. Khayatt (2008) explains that efforts at preventing organizational corruption throughout the Middle East have been met with failure at the level of implementation. As *wasta* has been characterized by researchers as a cultural phenomenon (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994; Loewe et al., 2008) Schein’s (2010) model provides a useful framework for analyzing various cultural phenomena in Jordanian public sector organizations.

The findings of this study are that *wasta* falls under Schein's (2010) deepest level of organizational culture: basic underlying assumptions. The discussions with the mid-level managers, including the differentiation of *wasta* from more obvious forms of corruption like bribery, combined with its history tribal roots (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994), make it clear that *wasta* can be listed among the "implicit assumptions that actually guide behavior" (Schein, 2010, p. 28). Consistent with the predictions made by Schein (2010) concerning the difficulty in changing this level of culture, it is remarkable that even some progress is being made following Jordan's implementation of the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Alvesson (2013) notes that few studies have successfully addressed cultural change initiatives in organizations. This study attempts to fill this void in the literature by looking at the Jordanian Anti-Corruption Commission as a large-scale attempt to cause organizational culture change and evolve culture from one where corruption is common to one where the principles of good governance are respected. Consistent with Schein's (2010) view that basic underlying assumptions are extremely difficult to change, mid-level managers in Jordan have reservations about the anti-corruption effort and are skeptical about its ability to successfully eliminate *wasta* from the workplace.

8.1.2. Foreign Policy

The study has significant implications for the design and administration of anti-corruption efforts in the Middle East. The findings can be interpreted as useful for strengthening anti-corruption in Jordan which could also apply to other nations in the Middle East. Egypt and Yemen have, for example, struggled with the implementation of their own anti-corruption infrastructure that was ultimately left with failure (Loughman and Sibery, 2012). While it is

important to recognize the unique position of Jordan as one of the foremost progressive nations in the Middle East (Yom, 2013), scholars like Khayatt (2008) maintain that the Arab world is seeking an increasingly collaborative approach at addressing corruption. Jordan has already proven itself ready to take the initiative as a leader in the region towards the establishment of suitable anti-corruption measures (Office of Public Sector Information, 2009). Thus, while the foreign policy implications of this research are directly applicable to the anti-corruption measures undertaken in Jordan, it is not unreasonable to conclude that they can also be applied elsewhere in the Middle East.

Schein (2010) argue that artifacts represent the most immediately visible “surface” level of organizational culture (p. 23). An example of an artifact of organizational culture could be a printed code of conduct specific to a governmental department or ministry in Jordan that organizations are slowly creating (OECD, 2010). However, mid-level managers explained during the interviews that there is a disconnect between the espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2010) promoted by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the specific tools and strategies that governmental officials receive. In other words, several mid-level managers explained that they lacked the necessary mechanisms, like training opportunities and instructions, to effectively carry out anti-corruption in their organizations.

It is important for the Anti-Corruption Commission to work in association with individual Jordanian departments and ministries to develop, promote, and manage the tools necessary for assisting employees at all levels in the appropriate actions to take when faced with supposed instances of corruption. Studies have also shown that developing nations frequently limit their anti-corruption measures to a reactive as opposed to proactive approaches (Grodland, 2010; Meagher, 2005; Tabish and Jha, 2012). In order to foster an organizational culture of good

governance, it is strongly recommended that organizations develop preventative frameworks that “identify and/or investigate these root causes of corruption” (Grodeland, 2012, p. 238). Organization-specific anti-corruption tools and strategies will only be successful, however, if built on certain principles that reflect the needs, goals, and priorities of organizations.

The authoritative and hierarchical organizational dimension of Jordanian departments and ministries represents a barrier to successful anti-corruption policymaking and management. Strong top-down authoritative power structures make it difficult for organizations to genuinely adopt open lines of communication and horizontal dialogue (Kabasakal et al., 2011). Leadership can be a useful factor towards enabling Jordanian public servants to feel comfortable asking questions about corruption, especially in cases where solutions are not black and white (Bruhn, 2009). Burns (1978) explains how “transformational” leaders can inspire and motivate their staff towards a desired course of action through their own actions and sincere willingness to accept change (p. 426). Schein (2010) similarly argues that this style of leadership can be an important part of the “unfreezing” process whereby employees let go of their cultural predispositions in favor of new and better approaches (p. 293). The mid-level managers who shared their narratives concerning their refusal to participate in *wasta* showed how they and their colleagues are beginning to plant the seeds of change in organizations. While this finding does reflect positively on the early efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission, leadership alone could be insufficient in imposing real change.

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) originally noted how *wasta* is an ever-present reality in the Arab world that affects almost every aspect of daily life. From the findings of this study, it is clear that not much has changed since their comprehensive study was undertaken as *wasta* remains prominent throughout Jordan. The mid-level managers interviewed explained that it is

especially common in organizational human resources processes like hiring and promotion. Loewe et al. (2008) argue that *wasta* remains utilized in Jordan because of the “collective prisoner’s dilemma” (p. 273). That is, public servants resort to *wasta* because the payoff for using it is always higher than the consequences of doing without. An important foreign policy implication of their finding, that is confirmed and enhanced by this study, is that governments in Middle Eastern countries like Jordan should develop aggressive penalties for corruption and follow through with prosecution of wrongdoing. The actions of the media in becoming absorbed in one or two extreme cases of corruption unfairly position the Jordanian public against their government without contributing positively to the elimination of corruption. Strict consequences for corrupt action will mean little, however, if judicial systems are themselves corrupt and ineffective in penalizing those who break the law.

Because *wasta* is so embedded in Arab culture (Barnett et al., 2013; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994), restrictions and penalties alone will not truly eliminate corruption. From a theoretical perspective, they will not genuinely change the basic underlying assumptions of Jordanians. Schein (2010) promotes the idea that because cultures are so valued, it may be more effective for leaders to base change initiatives on existing cultural beliefs. Because the Middle East is consistent with what authors describe as a shame culture society (Awad et al., 2013), it may be possible for anti-corruption efforts to use existing values of loyalty and honesty to develop a campaign showcasing the societal wrongfulness of corruption.

Ali (2005) explains that Islamic values actually encourage individuals to hire qualified and competent workers. In addition, there is a variety of evidence in the research literature that behavior stemming from *wasta* hurts organizations and that corrupt acts like nepotism in the public sector could lead to negative effects for society as a whole (Arasli, 2006; Mutlu, 2000;

Padgett et al., 2005). Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) explain that individuals who use *wasta* to get ahead have a higher statistical probability of being perceived as less competent and less moral. The mid-level managers interviewed explained that civil servants perceive *wasta* differently from what they referred to as more obvious acts of corruption like bribery and fraud. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) also discovered a similar phenomenon, so their suggestions are therefore confirmed. This is a problem because corruption cannot be eliminated if it is normalized and undetected.

Raising awareness about anti-corruption and promoting the principles of good governance represents one of the highest priority mandates for the Anti-Corruption Commission of Jordan. In the 2013-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the Government of Jordan is tasked with “furnishing comprehensive and correct information to the public about the nature, extent and impacts of corruption as well as anti-corruption measures and legislations” (2013b, p. 5). Jordan’s tribal history emphasized values of mutuality, solidarity, and group cooperation (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994). Barnett et al. (2013) speculate that these values remain embedded in the country’s culture still today and are responsible for driving *wasta*. Loewe et al. (2008) maintain that *wasta* is associated with deep personal values close to the heart of all Jordanian people. The interviews conducted with mid-level managers as part of this study showed that *wasta* is a basic underlying assumption and that Jordanians feel naturally obligated to provide assistance to an expanding and hierarchal network of personal contacts. The Anti-Corruption Commission could see success in developing an anti-corruption campaign that uses the established tribal values listed earlier to show how *wasta* in fact hurts, not helps, one’s family and friends.

Some authors suggest that corruption can provide some benefits like speeding up confusing bureaucratic processes (Argandoña, 2005; Hooker, 2009; Meon and Weill, 2010). However, Rose-Ackerman (1999) provides a good review of compelling evidence that corruption carries significant

economic and national consequences. Other scholars have also established the many inequalities that result from corruption (Andrieu, 2012; Bardhan, 1997; Buchanan and Tullock, 1962; Sandholtz and Taagepera, 2005; Sika, 2013). Wasta does provide an immediate benefit for those who use it because it can give someone an unfair advantage in finding a career or help secure a profitable contract (Barnett et al., 2013). Jordan's future anti-corruption awareness campaigns should stress how these types of actions hurt other Jordanians, for example by contributing to a less responsive and competent public service. Because all Jordanians rely on governmental services, an act of wasta should be portrayed as something that can ultimately end up harming one's family, friends, and community. Schein (2010) explains that highly effective organizational culture change initiatives do not shy away from using existing engrained cultural principles to *reach change goals* instead of simply trying to force *overall culture change*.

8.1.3. Society as a Whole

One of the findings of this study was that mid-level managers believed that actual levels of corruption are exaggerated and that, in many ways, their organizations do not differ much from how governmental institutions are operated in other parts of society beyond the Arab world. To a certain degree, this seemingly careless attitude towards corruption may come from the view of some managers to subconsciously lower the importance of wasta given how strongly it is embedded in culture. However, studies comparing wasta to other organizational phenomena used around the world show that while it may have unique origins in Middle Eastern history (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994) it functions today in a manner that is very similar to other forms of organizational networking.

Hutchings and Weir (2006) compare wasta with the Chinese concept of guanxi. The authors discovered that in both cases family members receive distinct advantages in matters of

business and public service delivery. Later, Smith et al. (2012) conducted a comprehensive study comparing *wasta* with four other cultural workplace phenomena. The authors found that the reliance on personal networks and connections to secure favors was as much a reality in China, Russia, Brazil, and even the West. Although they chose to focus their analysis on the British concept of pulling strings, they highlight important similarities between *wasta* and how nepotism and favoritism still exist and find justification in American workplaces.

The findings of this study could therefore be broadened to apply to society as a whole. Participants believed that because *wasta* was such a deeply held cultural value in Jordan, they suspected it would be nearly impossible to remove and even showed that it may be difficult for anti-corruption initiatives to identify. Public sector institutions trying to maintain good governance and integrity across the world should therefore conduct audits of their organizational cultures in an effort to see if any basic underlying assumptions could have ethical implications. Smith et al. (2012) for instance argues that the existence of informal networks in all of the cultural phenomena studied made it challenging to implement human resources strategies that could detect conflict of interest situations: “the use of selection procedures intended to discount the influence of prior acquaintance between selectors and candidates on hiring becomes increasingly problematic where informal influences are strongly present” (p. 345). This reflects the finding that many instances of ethical decision making in organizations cannot be reduced to black and white divisions or an easily identifiable difference between right and wrong (Bruhn, 2009). In any public sector institution throughout society as a whole, employees must have a trained ability to make these judgments as well as a professional environment that values mutual trust and cooperation allowing them to bring up controversial issues with their superiors and

question supposed instances of corruption without fear of jeopardizing their career or their future.

This study also makes an important theoretical contribution to society as a whole in its application of the Schein (2010) three levels of culture to anticorruption research. Throughout the data coding process, it was interesting to note how the in-depth participant responses accurately corresponded with the framework devised by Schein (2010). It was clear to the researcher that the ambitious anti-corruption views of Jordan's political leaders (Terrill, 2010) represented espoused beliefs and values as they were heavily promoted but did not necessarily translate to action at the organizational level. Instead, the organizational members' basic underlying assumptions, including *wasta*, resisted change initiatives. The Schein (2010) model thus represents a useful tool for future anticorruption researchers seeking to understand the role played by corruption in the culture of a given organization. Further, the author's conceptions surrounding the management of change initiatives and the role of leadership and existing culture can be used to develop policy implications for both private and public sector organizations seeking to achieve specific organizational goals. While the model is shown to be particularly useful in the area of the Middle East, researchers looking to examine similar topics in other places including Africa and the West could stand to benefit from the analytical capacity of Schein's (2010) views surrounding organizational culture.

8.2. Future Research

8.2.1. Other Forms of Public Sector Corruption

This study focused on anti-corruption efforts in Jordan's white-collar public sector departments and ministries. However, studies show that Jordanians also struggle with petty

instances of corruption (Clark, 2012; George, 2005). These acts of corruption generally occur with what Lipsky (1980) called “street level bureaucrats” (p. 3) or public servants who work directly with the public. Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission is mandated to investigate reports of corruption at all levels of government. Understanding the impact of the anti-corruption commission on public hospitals and government service centers for instance would complement the findings of this study.

The Loewe et al. (2008) study remains among the most comprehensive empirical research on *wasta* in Jordan. The authors consulted with a variety of stakeholders to develop their findings including public and private sector representatives, academics, and a variety of specialists. However, they did not interview ordinary Jordanians who experience *wasta* in their daily lives (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994). This study chose to focus on mid-level managers exclusively in order to study the impact of anti-corruption efforts on organizational culture. It is recommended that future researchers study the views of ordinary Jordanians to better understand their outlooks surrounding anti-corruption policymaking in government. Sharp (2010) contends that beyond high-level examples of corruption like the Shahin case, ordinary Jordanians experience corruption when receiving routine services from government representatives. For examples, bribery is often used to speed up lengthy procedures when applying for certain official licenses and permits (*Ibid.*).

Rose-Ackerman (2008) argues that high-level and petty corruption both affect ordinary citizens through a variety of resulting consequences. Olken and Pande (2012) contend that petty corruption unfairly affects the poor in developing countries because these individuals tend to require more government services. The authors explain that corruption induces a further financial burden on families who rely heavily on support from public institutions. While Mohamed and

Mohamad (2011) found that wasta users were labeled as less moral and less competent, George (2005) proved in his study that the vast majority of Jordanians would use wasta if given the opportunity. It would be interesting, relevant, and timely to study how the so-called ‘everyday Jordanian’ considers wasta with respect to corruption in the public sector.

An important and unexpected theme that emerged in the findings of this study concerns negative opinions of the media’s demonstration of public sector corruption. Studies do indicate that corruption is a tempting issue to raise in the media (Wedel, 2012) and that many of the youth protest movements are fueled by anger towards perceived corruption as highlighted in media reports (Martin, 2011). It would be interesting to conduct a more comprehensive documentary analysis of news reports and articles published about matters of corruption and Jordan and observe whether any themes emerge. It would also be interesting to consider whether the amount of news reports corresponds with any of the violence in the Arab Spring protests. From a more qualitative perspective, interviews could be carried out with representatives of Jordanian media to understand their responsibilities and priorities in providing the public with information about corruption and reform.

8.2.2. Effect of Wasta on Workplace Characteristics

The findings of this study establish some important conclusions about wasta in public sector organization. It was shown that wasta is a deeply held and engrained part of organizational culture and that it is difficult for anti-corruption efforts to change this culture in the Jordanian public sector. Based on this important conclusion, it would be appropriate to consider next how Jordan’s organizational culture of wasta affects certain conditions in the workplace. This type of research could be focused on the human resources management characteristics of an organization, given that this study has found wasta to be most prominent in matters of hiring,

promotion, and career advancement. The Mohamed and Mohamad (2011) study is the only empirical work that considers the impact of *wasta* on employee competence, but the authors limited their research to understanding other workers' opinions of the competence of colleagues who were hired with *wasta*.

Kimuyu (2007) conducted a study on private sector corruption in Kenya. The author considered how bribery and unethical deals affected the performance of firms, where performance was measured by firm growth and export capacity. He discovered that many private businesses engage in corrupt acts especially in the acquisition of government contracts. More importantly, Kimuyu (2007) found that these corrupt actions carry consequences for the sustainability of a firm: "our analysis has shown that corruption reduces the ability of firms to grow and penetrate external markets" (p. 215). Azfar and Gurgur (2008) conducted a similar study examining the impacts of corruption on healthcare provision in the Philippines. Their study considered the ability of healthcare professionals to perform in the sense of providing timely and appropriate service to hospital patients. The authors discovered that bribery had a negative impact on the ability of lower-income clients to receive care.

It would be relevant for researchers to conduct a similar study in Jordan to understand how *wasta* impacts employee performance in governmental departments and ministries. This may not be completely straightforward, however, as van Dooren et al. (2010) remind scholars that measuring performance and establishing performance indicators in the public sector is made difficult because of disagreements and various partisan agendas. Nevertheless, the previously mentioned studies successfully consider the effect of corruption on important organizational outcomes. In one case, the ability of business to grow was seen as limited by corruption. In the other, performance of a hospital was evaluated based on its ability to render service to the client.

Studies show that hiring and promotion based on nepotism or cronyism have negative organizational outcomes (Padgett and Morris, 2005). However, many of these studies dealt with corrupt behavior in organizational cultures where members shared widely unfavorable opinions of individuals who abused their family or friend connections to secure employment. Barnett et al. (2013) explain that *wasta* is a unique phenomenon in the Middle East because it is unfair and at the same time widely accepted and promoted: “*wasta*-like practices have existed in other societies. Indeed, we hold the view that such practices are an integral part of lengthy social processes that generate order within and across all societies. We observe that in most developed countries such practices have fallen into disrepute, and in many cases they have been banned” (p. 42). While Padgett and Morris (2005) found a variety of negative organizational consequences resultant of nepotism used to recruit new members in the organization, their study was based in the United States where such actions are known to be “unfair and unethical” (Jones, 2012, p. 78). Future studies in Jordan could empirically examine the impact of *wasta* on the ability of employees to deliver services to the public or fulfill their professional responsibilities.

8.3. Limitations

Despite the best possible effort made by the researcher to select the most relevant methodological approach as well as conduct accurate data collection and coding, some study limitations must be discussed. Three limitations were identified over the course of conducting research. First, the qualitative design of the research puts into question the ability to generalize scientifically from the findings. Second, due to the controversial nature of the research it is possible, though unlikely, that there was a participant bias towards making themselves sound good during the interview. Third, the sample size is limited to a total of 19 interviews but this

limitation was the only way to achieve the in-depth experiential account of wasta and organizational culture in order to answer the research question.

8.3.1. Ability to Generalize from Findings

Flick (2009) argues that researchers using a qualitative study design are limited in their ability to generalize from their findings. The author explains that the data produced from interviews is limited to the opinions of the individual participants and may not apply representatively to other individuals. Writing for an audience of researchers intent on studying organizations and management, Myers (2009) reaches a similar conclusion: “A major disadvantage of qualitative research, however, is that it is often difficult to generalize to a larger population” (p. 9). Although both of these authors make a strong case against the ability to generalize from qualitative data, the purpose of this study was to explore and generate new insight about the uncommon phenomenon of wasta rather than to make statistical generalizations.

A qualitative design is ideal for research where the goal involves studying unexplored topics, considering experiential narratives or participant experiences, uncovering new perspectives, and identifying undiscovered concepts (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Hesse-Biber (2011) argues that despite its limited ability for making generalizations, qualitative research is nevertheless extremely beneficial as qualitative findings can set the basis for future studies. This is indeed true in the case of this study on wasta, where many of the findings can be used to inspire the design for future work. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) concede that qualitative researchers cannot use the results of their studies to make claims about the wider population. However, the authors argue that the real advantage of qualitative research is in its ability to allow scholars to uncover and give meaning to participant experiences.

The purpose of this study is to consider how the organizational culture of the public sector in Jordan was affected by the introduction and administration of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative. Because of the lack of prior research on this topic, the use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to discover how mid-level managers perceived of anti-corruption with respect to *wasta* and the culture of their organizations. Though it may not be possible to generalize from their views scientifically (Flick, 2009; Myers, 2009), the themes which emerged from the data provide a wealth of insight to the research community about cultural resistance to change initiatives and place of *wasta* in the Government of Jordan today.

8.3.2. *Potential Bias*

Before beginning the participant recruitment process, the researcher considered the impact of respondent bias on the data collection process. Corruption remains an extremely sensitive subject in the Arab world (Demmelhuber, 2009; Helmy, 2012). Vogl (2012) argues that individuals participating in investigations of corruption in the Middle East region will likely be hesitant to disclose their real observations on the topic at hand. Thus, there was a present concern that respondents of this study will feed the researcher untruthful observations or trim down the actual extent to which corruption is present in their organizations.

In order to prevent the emergence of respondent bias, the researcher reminded participants that the purpose of the study was to discuss the effect of the Anti-Corruption Commission on organizational culture. Participants were reminded that the interview was not meant to serve as an investigation of corruption in their workplace, nor were they under the suspicion of having broken the law. The use of a verbal consent script and handwritten note-

taking was also valuable in reducing participant anxiety and likely contributed to increased accuracy in data collection.

During some interviews, participants provided responses that may at first reading appear overly positive. The specific example that comes to mind concerns the mid-level manager who refused to use *wasta* to help a family friend's relative find employment. Although it is impossible to know for sure, the honest tone with which this example (as well as the other involving refusal of using *wasta* to secure a public sector contract) was shared seemed believable and genuine. Despite the possibility of a bias in the responses, participants did disclose that the Anti-Corruption Commission has been unsuccessful in eliminating *wasta* from their organizations with respect to hiring and promotion. Based on the experience of conducting the interviews, it must be acknowledged that the possibility for bias exists as in any interview based research (Elmaleh, 2009) but that the themes reflect a balanced and fair representation of corruption and *wasta* in Jordanian public sector institutions.

8.3.3. Sample Size

The study is limited in that only a total of 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted on-site among Jordanian governmental organizations. This was partially caused by the sensitive nature of the topic of corruption in the Jordanian public sector area (Demmelhuber, 2009; Helmy, 2012). Klenke (2008) argues that qualitative research does not have a universal pre-established threshold for the number of interviews that should be carried out. Instead, the author explains that researchers should use their best judgment in determining the appropriate sample size: "qualitative designs are flexible (i.e., reflexive) and can and should be changed to match the dynamics of the evolving research process" (2008, p. 11). The author contends that qualitative sample size will depend on a variety of factors including amount of previous research conducted

on a given subject and the depth in which the interviewer wants to explore a given topic. During the recruitment process, it was evident that many potential participants were unwilling to volunteer for the study because of the sensitive nature of the topic of corruption.

Because studies of *wasta* from the perspective of organizational culture are very limited, the researcher intended to conduct highly in-depth experiential interviews. With this in mind, it was decided to select a lower number of participants but aim for the highest possible amount of detail. Data saturation was used to allow the researcher to continuously evolve the interview process and because it is generally considered appropriate in the qualitative study design (Francis et al., 2010). The data saturation process involves no pre-determined limit of sample size but rather allows the researcher to cease conducting additional interviews when participant responses and themes begin to overlap (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). While a small sample size can be considered a limitation to research in that, again, it will limit generalization (Patton, 2002), each interview produced the thick description (Geertz, 1973) that allowed the researcher to produce valuable experiential findings and expand the existing knowledge surrounding *wasta* and organizational culture.

8.5. Chapter Summary

The research makes both a theoretical and practical series of contributions. It is highly relevant to the study of public administration due to the incorporation of organizational culture and the Schein (2010) three levels of culture. *Wasta* is identified as a basic underlying assumption and a significant obstacle to the implementation and administration of a large-scale anti-corruption initiative. Practical policy recommendations also emerge from the findings. Schein's (2010) proposition that existing organizational culture can be used to successfully achieve change goals is particularly relevant to the Middle East where the culture of workplaces

is shaped by thousands of years of tribal heritage and traditions (Barnett et al., 2013; French, 2012). Mid-level managers' views concerning how anti-corruption measures have been implemented in Jordan to date also lead to practical recommendations like the need for a more equal organizational structure, better communication, and increased support for anti-corruption measure development in organizations. The research is beneficial for society as a whole and also for other Middle Eastern nations where *wasta* is also valued among the population. Future research should consider the views of a wider range of stakeholders and assess the effect of *wasta* on organizational outcomes like performance. Finally, despite the best efforts of the researcher, the study has some limitations. However, many of these limitations represent only minor sacrifices needed to obtain in-depth experiential overview relevant to qualitative inquiry. The next chapter will provide a general conclusion bringing together all of the previous sections to summarize the thesis.

CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

Jordan has been one of leaders in public sector anti-corruption initiative development in the Middle East. When King Abdullah II ascended the throne in early 1999, he decided for his administration to take a stand against corruption (Csicsmann, 2007). Jordan was ultimately among the first countries in the Arab world to sign and accept the United Nations Convention against Corruption (United Nations, 2014). A comprehensive Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) followed in 2006, and provided the legislative framework for the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2008 (Government of Jordan, 2008). Two national strategies were published by the commission with the latest setting ambitious and innovative goals for dedicated whistleblower protection and increased collaboration with international partners (Government of Jordan, 2013b).

That being said, eliminating public sector corruption in the Kingdom is an objective of monumental proportions. Early historical evidence supports the view that prehistoric tribesmen lived in hunter-gatherer communities and practiced “wasta” – a unique Arab approach to mediation, diplomacy, and problem-solving for mutual survival and peace (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; French, 2012). Jordanians came to rely on wasta in recognition of the benefits it could bring to their interdependent communities. During colonial times, establishing alliances with ruling authorities helped some families and tribes achieve wealth and prosperity (Barnett et al., 2013). Wasta thus became associated with something positive and beneficial throughout history, even appearing in the 14th century writings of Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun (Katsiaficas, 1999).

During the 20th century, wasta evolved from mediatory to intercessory (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994). Intercessory wasta retained the principles of loyalty and allegiance to

one's personal network but was not used improperly to get an advantage in a variety of domains. In Jordan, individuals who have *wasta* live an easier life: they have access to more employment opportunities, can compete more effectively in business, and receive services quicker (Barnett et al., 2013). A once important cultural belief that helped protect communities and ensure survival, *wasta* has today crept into the organizational culture of public sector institutions in Jordan and is responsible for corruption within them.

Despite strong efforts by the King and other political leaders to address corruption (Terrill, 2010), many Jordanians are unconvinced that true reforms have taken place (Ryan, 2011; Smith, 2013). In 2011, five years after the creation of the heavily publicized Anti-Corruption Law (# 62), protestors took to the streets of many major cities throughout the country to vocalize their dissatisfaction with, among other social problems, governmental corruption (Helfont and Helfont, 2012). It would therefore appear that the public at large remains skeptical about Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption initiative.

In order to research potential barriers to anti-corruption implementation, this study seeks to examine the impact of Jordan's anti-corruption measures on the organizational culture of public sector organizations. It is theoretically proposed that *wasta*, because of its enculturation throughout Jordanian and broader Middle Eastern organizations, would be the most prominent source of resistance for the implementation and management of anti-corruption policy.

The study grappled with two difficult to define concepts: corruption and *wasta*. Various different interpretations of corruption abound in the literature making it extremely difficult to interpret universally (Kaufmann and Vicente, 2011). In the end, the study defers to the official definition of corruption as specified in the Anti-Corruption Law (# 62) because of its comprehensiveness and relevance (Heidenheimer et al., 2009). However, this was not done

before various oft-cited considerations were explored and evaluated. Presenting an English-language translation of the Arabic word *wasta* is similarly difficult because of its dual meaning and evolution over the past century (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994). Various theoretical accounts of *wasta* were explored, including its relationship with corruption as well as proposed advantages for its adoption in the Middle Eastern field of study.

Studies on *wasta* are not common. To date, scholars have provided some comprehensive explanations (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993; 1994; George, 2005; Terrill, 2010) and theoretical ideas (Barnett et al., 2013; El-Said and Harrigan, 2009) surrounding *wasta*. These authors often rely on media reports and personal accounts to demonstrate how *wasta* functions in Arab society. Empirical literature is even rarer, but researchers have proven that individuals who use *wasta* will be stigmatized by their colleagues (Mohamed and Mohammad, 2011), that *wasta* plays an influential role in the career advancement of Middle Eastern professionals (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), and that the use of *wasta* is justified by Jordanians because it is considered a valued cultural belief (Loewe et al., 2008).

This study considers Jordan's large-scale anti-corruption effort to be an organizational change initiative. Based on the findings of Khayatt (2008), it is argued that such efforts seek to transform workplaces from relying on corruption for the achievement of organizational outcomes to the appropriation of cultural values of good governance, integrity, and accountability. The most appropriate theoretical framework for this approach is organizational culture theory. There is no standard universal definition of organizational culture theory (Alvesson, 2013; Ott, 1989; Schein, 2010). The organizational culture theory of Schein (2010) was selected as most relevant because of its ability to address paradoxical organizational cultures where values and beliefs which are promoted do not necessarily translate to action.

Schein (2010) proposes three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts are the most basic level of culture, are conscious, easy to identify, but difficult to genuinely interpret. Espoused beliefs and values reflect what is spoken and promoted in an organization but not necessarily acted upon by organizational members. Basic underlying assumptions are considered the deepest and most authentic level of organizational culture. These are actually responsible for guiding and influencing the behavior and actions of employees. Although Schein's (2010) theory has been the subject of critique (Aulich, 2012; Collins, 1998; Feldman, 1986), it is comprehensive and relevant for this study because it addresses the concepts of leadership and organizational subcultures.

Because of the lack of existing literature on *wasta* (Mohamed and Mohamad, 2011), the study takes an exploratory approach. A qualitative design was adopted because qualitative research is most appropriate to the identification of new ideas and development of emerging constructs (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Jordan's Anti-Corruption Commission was adopted as a case study which was justified given the need for acquiring in-depth information about anti-corruption initiative implementation (Yin, 2009). The decision to focus the study on the Jordan and not elsewhere in the Middle East was made strategically. Jordan is one of the few stable countries in the region with a developed anti-corruption program (Terrill, 2010) and is progressive enough to allow for international researchers to study a subject as controversial as corruption (Yom, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with mid-level managers throughout various Jordanian departments and ministries in Jordan. The participant inclusion criteria specified that

respondents had to be presently employed mid-level managers. Mid-level managers were selected in particular because of their unique position in the organization as responsible for both supervision and reporting up (Peschanski, 1985), which ensured a thorough account of anti-corruption and organizational culture experiences. Because of the difficulty in communicating with the population, snowball sampling (Sadler et al., 2010) was chosen. Sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which is considered relevant for qualitative research (Francis et al., 2010). The research themes were identified using manual descriptive coding which allows researchers the freedom to interpret their data (Miles et al. 2014).

In addition, a comprehensive desk review was undertaken because of its value in providing researchers with additional information (Crouch and Housden, 2003). The desk review consisted of three types of documents. First, official regulations and policies of the Government of Jordan as well as reports by stakeholder groups including international organizations were analyzed. Second, peer-reviewed academic literature relating to *wasta*, corruption, and organizational culture were examined. Third, documentation pertaining to the history of Jordan was studied based on the notion of *wasta* being a cultural phenomenon that dates back thousands of years in the country's past.

A total of 19 interviews were conducted with mid-level managers on-site in various departments and ministries of the Government of Jordan. As the researcher coded data during the fieldwork process, this amount was determined as themes began to overlap based on the principle of data saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The theoretical proposal of the study was that *wasta* would serve as a barrier to anti-corruption initiative implementation in the Jordanian public sector. Based on the interviews conducted with the mid-level managers and

documentation studied during the desk review, this theoretical proposal appeared to be relevant and adequate.

A total of ten overarching themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews, each with theoretical and policy implications. The themes can be divided into the effects of culture on anti-corruption reforms and the effects of leadership on anti-corruption reform. Wasta is identified as a basic underlying assumption (Schein, 2010) in Jordanian public sector organizations. Mid-level managers reported that it is especially present in matters of hiring, promotion, and career advancement in organizations. In agreement with the existing literature (Loewe et al., 2008; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), Jordanians rely on their personal network of family and friends to get stable and well-paying jobs, while already-employed public servants rely on their connections to be first in line for promotions when the opportunity becomes available (and occasionally even in the absence of available openings, if the wasta is high enough). Thus wasta was seen as a type of insurance. It was also discussed how some mid-level managers believed corruption to be greatly exaggerated in Jordan. The perceived difference between wasta and corruption was also discussed which showed how deeply the phenomenon is held as a level of culture. This connects to the final sub-section regarding culture which concerns the persistence of wasta and how many mid-level managers perceived it to be something difficult to eliminate.

With respect to leadership, the lack of incentive to report corruption is discussed first. Mid-level managers were dissatisfied with the level of support provided by the commission to individual governmental organizations. They explained that the commission has been generally unsuccessful in penetrating the organizational culture of workplaces because employees are not provided with any specific tools or strategies they can use to actually fight corruption. Middle

Eastern organizations tend to favor a hierarchal and top-down organizational structure (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Yeganeh and Su, 2007). This was affirmed during the interviews as a challenge to reporting corruption as well as an obstacle to encouraging open communication across all members of an organization. Some mid-level managers reported being approached by individuals seeking to take advantage of *wasta*; though the requestors were not employed in the organizations or in a position of authority over them. Two mid-level managers explained that they refused to fulfill the request, which shows that some progress may be being made in encouraging ethical behavior within the Jordanian public sector. Still, mid-level managers perceived *wasta* as a type of insurance (Barnett et al., 2013). That is, they were motivated to build and maintain a strong network in case they needed help in the future. Using *wasta* almost always produces a more favorable result than choosing to follow through with a more formal and/or legal process.

We also observed that many mid-level managers perceived *wasta* to be unfair and want it to be reduced in power but are skeptical about the ability of any anti-corruption effort to penetrate Jordanian organizational culture where relying on social networks and connections is business as usual.

The findings carry implications for public administration, foreign policy, and society as a whole. Using Schein's (2010) three levels of organizational culture model proved successful as it allowed for a thorough interpretation of barriers to anti-corruption implementation measures as well as accounting for the role of leadership and subcultures. The study of the Anti-Corruption Commission as an organizational change initiative from the perspective of organizational culture in a government area represents an important contribution to knowledge given the lack of research in this area of research (Alvesson, 2013). The overarching themes identified can help

practitioners develop more effective anti-corruption frameworks in Jordan and, more broadly, in the Middle East by better understanding the role of *wasta*. Using existing cultural values to shift organizations in the direction desired by policymakers, as espoused by Schein (2010), should be considered in the development of future informational campaigns. The Anti-Corruption Commission should also work in closer proximity with individual departments and ministries of government to support them in incorporating and managing anti-corruption policies. It is also recommended that the Government of Jordan introduce stricter penalties for all types of corruption, including *wasta*, to dissuade public servants from committing unlawful acts.

It is recommended that future researches consider other stakeholders such as managers at various levels of the organization and ordinary Jordanians. Additional research should also be conducted on petty corruption at the street level (Lipsky, 1980) to determine the similarities and differences in order to help shape thorough policy. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this study has some limitations. Due to its qualitative nature, researchers would be hard pressed to generalize from the findings of this research. There is also a very minor risk of participant bias towards positive response, however small, must be recognized. Finally, the study relies on the opinions of a smaller number of participants in order to achieve the sought-after thick description (Geertz, 1973).

Jordan has made incredible progress despite facing rapid and successive shifts of power in its political direction. During the 20th century, Jordan's leaders remained committed to building a progressive nation and planted the seeds of anti-corruption as early as the 1960s. King Abdullah II, committed to reform and under never before seen pressure from the internal community and his own people, has championed a large-scale anti-corruption initiative that continues to expand and become perfected. The 2013-2017 National Anti-Corruption Strategy is

adaptive and responsive, though Jordanian workplaces will require time and support to achieve the King's ambitious corruption elimination objectives. Schein (2010) argue that cultural change can take a significant period of time to fulfill. From the fieldwork experience, it is clear that progress is slowly but surely beginning to occur. Wasta continues to have a firm grip on the organizational culture of public sector institutions, and while there is skepticism about it ever being eliminated, it is clear that the Anti-Corruption Commission and its supporters are not ready to give up their fight.

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Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Question	Probing question(s)
Can you please introduce yourself?	-What is your age? -Where are you from originally? -What is your educational background?
What is your role in the organization?	-How long have you worked here? -What made you choose this career? -What is it like to work here? What is the culture like? Do you get along well with your colleagues? -Do you enjoy working here? Why or why not?
Are you familiar with “wasta”?	-What does it mean to you? -Have you heard this in your organization? -Are you familiar with Jordan’s Anti-Corruption Commission? Has their work affected yours?
What role do you believe “wasta” plays in your organization?”	-Do you believe there is any way to prevent it? -Do you believe wasta can ever be used ethically or for ethical reasons? -What is the relationship between the culture of your organization and the phenomenon of wasta? Is it a part of culture? Why or why not?
Do you think wasta is common or rare?	-What about in Jordan overall? -What about in this organization specifically? -What do you think is the role of leadership?
Speaking of leadership, do you see leadership as something positive or negative when it comes to wasta?	-If positive: why is this the case? -If negative: why is this the case?
Would you be able to offer some personal experiences about wasta?	-If yes: who was involved? What happened? -If no: why is that?
Knowing that, can you tell me in more details about the Anti-Corruption Commission?	-When did you first hear about the Anti-Corruption Commission? -How did you first hear about it? -Do you have a representative from the Anti-Corruption Commission in your department? How many times do you interact with them?
How has the Anti-Corruption Commission affected the way this organization runs?	-How has it affected your role directly? -Do you think the Anti-Corruption Commission has impacted wasta in any way?
What impact has the ACC had on the culture of this organization?	-Is anything done different now than before? Can you explain in more details?

How do you think the Anti-Corruption Commission is considered in terms of leadership?	-Would you say that it is playing an effective leadership role? -What else could it be doing to demonstrate leadership?
Do you think the ACC has had any effect on ministerial/governmental reform measures?	-Can you explain in more details?
How is the Anti-Corruption Commission interpreted throughout your organization?	-What about with your superiors? -What about with your subordinates?
What role has the Anti-Corruption Commission played on how Jordan is ranked in terms of corruption by international bodies?	-Is the Anti-Corruption Commission encouraging public servants to report on incidences of corruption? -Could this explain the rise of corruption levels as evidenced in the Transparency International rankings in 2007?

Appendix 2: Coding Categories

Category	Sub-Category Identified
Human Resources Issue	• Promotion • Employment • Staying inside family/tribe
Communication	• Espoused beliefs promoted but not put into action • Little information provided to the mid-level managers • Hierarchy and authority • No incentive to report corruption
Wasta elimination	• Anti-wasta beliefs noted • Some do not comply with requests • Challenging to remove wasta • Maybe can be done through mentorship (leadership)
Wasta as interpreted by managers	• Type of “insurance” (good thing to have in case you will need it later) • Different than bribery or corruption • Some traditional/positive connotations • Actual level of wasta exaggerated
Anti-Corruption Commission	• Not always reflected in department/agency action • Not always well communicated • May be challenging to remove wasta through commission only