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# IDEAZ

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# Organizational Culture: A Taxonomy and a Theoretical Framework

Ufot B. Inamete

*This study puts forward a taxonomy and a systematic theoretical framework of organizational culture. The taxonomy enables one to have more clarity and specificity about the levels, aspects, or dimensions of organizational cultural dynamics. The theoretical framework illuminates the variables that interact to account for organizational culture. It also enhances one's ability to generate hypotheses for organizational culture studies as well as one's capacity to explain and predict organizational culture dynamics.*

## THE CONCEPT

This study aims to view organizational culture through a varying prism. The goal of this study is to create a taxonomy and a theoretical framework for the phenomenon of organizational culture.

Due to the fact that organizational culture does require adequate attention when efforts are made to conceptualize it, before embarking on the effort to create a taxonomy and a theoretical framework for it, this study will first endeavour to adequately rein in organizational culture as a concept. As noted by Martin (2002) and Schein (1992) there are numerous views on the concept and definition of organizational culture. The books edited by Ashkanasy et al. (2002), and by Frost et al. (1985) also show that organizational culture is complex in terms of conceptualization. Thus, this study will present many views on the concept of organizational culture in order to adequately rein in an understanding of organizational culture.

Organizational culture studies constitute a vital aspect of organizational studies. It is almost impossible to adequately study organizations without studying the cultural dynamics in organizations. However, like in all other

academic areas, not all scholars of organizational studies are enamoured about organizational culture studies. For an example, some like Athos (1985) have even casually suggested that approaching organizational studies through the cultural route may not yield uniquely original ideas. He light-heartedly suggests that “the idea of ‘culture’ was too often being used as a way to repackage old stuff as if it were new” (Athos, 1985: 9). However, Louis (1985) posits that the study of organizational culture has a very long and distinguished history.

For analytic ease and convenience, the analysis of the concept of organizational culture will be divided into three sections: the individuals and groups as the building blocks of organizational culture; the impacts of other disciplines; and the varying strands of conceptualizations.

## **INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS AS THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

Organizational culture relates to both group and individual dynamics. According to Van Maanen and Bailey (1985: 35), “While a group is necessary to invent and sustain culture, culture can be carried only by individuals.” The essence of organizational culture is even tied to the identity and uniqueness of groups and individuals. Smircich (1985) examines how the concept of culture relates to the understanding of organizations and the members of the organizations. Many often see organizational culture in terms of shared values that provide meanings and identity to organizations and their members. It has been noted that “organizational cultures consist of rich sets of norms, values, rituals, and beliefs” (Hult et al., 2002: 577).

Additionally, it is important to note that organizational culture affects behaviour within organizations, since the norms and values of an organization help to condition behaviour within organizations. “Organizational culture defines a normative order that serves as a source of consistent behavior within the organization,” and thus “organizational culture is a social control mechanism” (Sorensen, 2002: 72). Schneider (2000) is another scholar that emphasizes this strong linkage between organizational behaviour and organizational culture. It is therefore not surprising that contradictions in organizational culture will result in contradictions in organizational behaviour as noted by Turnbull (2001). It is too not surprising that changes in organizational behaviour will occur when there are changes in organizational culture (Lahteenmaki et al., 2001; Ouchi, 1981). The study done by Cook and Szumal (2000), in the same way, shows how changes in organizational structures and organizational processes are linked to changes in organizational culture. Schein (2000i) too shows the linkage between the nature of organizational culture and the nature of

organizational strategy and the nature of organizational structure. In the same fashion, the study of anti-social behaviour in the workplace by Duffy et al. (2002) shows that this sort of phenomenon has significant impact on organizations. Changes in organizational cultural dynamics can be used to manage this sort of problem. Additionally, it is important to note that the dynamics of change in organizations can create the sense of insecurity in some members of the organizations (Jordan et al., 2002). Due to this reality and other factors, “the central strategic challenge of managers is managing change” (Fox & Amichai-Hamburger, 2001: 84). This fact makes the task of changing the organizational culture of organizations very vital and central, since the ability to adequately change organizational cultures of organization determines how organizations can successfully achieve desired positive change in organizational behaviour and organizational performance. The nebulous nature of the phenomenon of culture makes the task of changing organizational culture not an easy one. For example, in the immediate post-Soviet era, in Russia, when Russian firms were adopting Western business practices, these firms emphasized business plans (reflecting Soviet era culture of strongly emphasizing plans) rather than emphasizing the Western business ethos of management ruling the plan, “not vice versa” (Jacobs, 2001: 156).

Culture and values of individuals and organizations shapes the behaviour and actions of individuals and organizations. Therefore, since organizational culture affects organizational behaviour, unsurprisingly, as noted by Wade-Benzoni et al. (2002), organizational culture shapes how organizations make decisions and engage in negotiations. Likewise, it has also been noted that how people talk and how language is used in organizations are also affected by organizational culture (Weaver & Agle, 2002). Also, expectedly, the increasing globalization of business activities also means the need to recognize the importance of organizational culture in various units of firms (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Yan et al., 2002). Increasing business globalization has also resulted in studies that provide knowledge about organizational culture in various regions and countries, for example, studies done by Brodbeck et al. (2002); Hallowell et al. (2002); and Mitchell (2000). The importance of organizational culture is also rising due to the fact that firms involved in various forms of alliances need to share some common values and assumptions in order for such alliances to be workable and successful (Das & Teng, 2002).

## **IMPACTS OF OTHER ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES**

As an applied social science, the academic discipline of management utilizes a lot of ideas from the basic social sciences (Donaldson, 2002). Thus, many

like Ashkanasy et al. (2000); Pedersen and Sorensen (1989); and Pettigrew (1979), have clearly and elaborately shown how organizational culture studies have roots in, utilize a lot of ideas from, and are linked to the basic social science fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Also, Payne (2000) specifically shows how the research methods used in the discipline of anthropology are also important for research in the field of organizational culture studies.

It is also interesting to note that one can also talk of the organizational culture of the nature of the communities of scholars involved in research and publications activities in the discipline of management. A study by Kelemen and Bansal (2002) shows that those who write for, and publish in management academic journals; and those who write for, and publish in management practitioner journals, have research mind-sets, research approaches, research methodologies, writing styles, and language jargon, that actually create significant communication distance, knowledge gaps, and interaction barriers between these two groups.

## THE VARYING STRANDS OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

Organizational culture studies constitute a vital element of organizational studies. According to Pettigrew (2000), the study of organizational culture is also about the study of the vital issues in organizational studies. This vital and central element of organizational studies, as shown in this study, has varying conceptualizations. However, the conceptualization of organization culture provided by Schein is one of those that has been highly regarded, according to Hallowell et al. (2002) and Harris and Ogbonna (2002). Schein's conceptualization of organizational culture is seen as consisting of four components: first, the underlying and "basic assumptions regarding the workplace", for example the basic expectations of employee obligations; second, the set of values that an organization sees as being "most important" (these values consist of espoused values – which the leaders and publications of the firm proclaim are the values; and enacted values – which the "employees infer the values to be" from the evidence they see in the actual "management practices" and the firm's "cultural artifacts"); the third component is employee perceptions of management practices (and thus organizational culture "is what employees perceive that management believes"), as shown above; and fourth, the cultural artifacts of the firm (and "these include heroes, rituals, stories, jargon, and tangibles like the appearance of employees and facilities") (Hallowell et al., 2002: 7-8). Hallowell et al. (2002: 8) also add that "if espoused values are enacted – and thus reflected in policies, management behaviour and cultural artifacts – then a culture may emerge in which senior management and

employees share similar service-relevant thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behaviour”, and that this sort of behaviour “has the potential to enhance customer value and contribute to competitive advantage”; and also that in firms where the espoused values are not enacted the contrast dynamics, outcomes and results occur. Harris and Ogbonna (2002: 32-33) summarize Schein’s conceptualization of organizational culture as “comprising a deep level of unconscious basic assumptions manifested in shared values and artefacts”, and also indicate that Schein’s conceptualization consists of the following components: “commonly shared assumptions, values, symbols, myths, beliefs and rituals”.

Some like Bhagat et al. (2002: 208) are of the view that “culture is to a society what memory is to an individual”. Following this reasoning, one can also say that culture is to an organization what memory is to an individual. Thus, organizational memory embodies its values, assumptions and orientations and therefore affects how an organization acts, behaves, or performs. Thus, also, studying organizational culture helps researchers examine how organizations achieve or fail to achieve their goals. The adequate comprehensiveness of Schein’s conceptualization of organizational culture is shown by the fact that many other scholars touch on similar points. The linkage of culture to memory, by Bhagat et al. (as shown above) evokes the notions of assumptions, values, perceptions, heroes, rituals, stories, and artifacts that Schein postulates. The ideas of many others, like Ford (2002), Lubit (2002), Luthans (2002), Misik (2002), and Schneider (1990), directly or indirectly have bearing on Schein’s conceptualization of organizational culture. The interest of Ford (2002) in regard to assumptions, actions and dynamics that provide the foundations for core values of a firm can be related to Schein’s ideas about roles played by assumptions and values in organizations. According to Lubit (2002: 134), “An organization’s culture – norms of behaviour, values, and beliefs – is forged from the role models that leaders provide, the myths and stories leaders tell, what the organization measures and rewards, the criteria used for hiring and promoting people, and the organization’s historical norms of behavior and values.” Lubit’s conceptualization easily reminds one of Schein’s notions of underlying workplace assumptions, espoused values and enacted values, employees’ perception of the company’s actual practices, heroes, rituals, and stories. Luthans (2002) focuses on developing positive organizational behaviour (as a positive approach to the study of organizational behaviour). This focus means that Luthans has to examine core values that will fuel this sort of positive behaviour (and this focus means that Luthans is grappling with the linkages between values and behaviours in organizations just as Schein does). Misik (2002) stresses the importance of the value of excellence which many firms espouse be actually implemented,



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and this view is similar to the notions of espoused values and enacted values posited by Schein. Schneider (1990) notes how organizational culture can be understood in terms of how members of organizations interpret what goes on in organizations, and how these interpretations affect the thoughts and behaviour of the members and the performance of the organization. This is similar to Schein's view that the espoused values, being seen as the enacted values, by employees, engender positive behaviour of employees and thus positive performance of the firm. Therefore, it is very important that the managers of firms adequately practise and implement the values of their respective firms that the managers of the firms, the brochures and other publications of the firms, the forums of the firms, and the training sessions of the firms espouse as the core values of each respective firm.

The views below, by Bartlett (1988); Cummings and Worley (1993); Plunkett et al. (2002); and Allison and Zelikow (1999), also mirror the conceptualizations, notions, ideas, and approaches of Schein. Cultural frameworks and dynamics in organizational milieux are vital elements (Bartlett, 1988; Cummings & Worley, 1993; and Plunkett et al., 2002). Organizational culture is seen as “a dynamic system of shared values, beliefs, philosophies, experiences, habits, expectations, norms, and behaviours that give an organization its distinctive character” (Plunkett et al., 2002: 294). Another view is that: “The culture of an organization is a set of beliefs, values, traits, and ways of doing things that have become so ingrained and institutionalized in the behavior of that organization that attributes unique to the organization emerge” (Bartlett, 1988: 65). Also, organizational culture is seen as “the pattern of basic assumptions, values, norms, and artifacts shared by organization members” (Cummings & Worley, 1997: 479). Also, organizational culture is seen as shaping “the behavior of individuals within the organizations in ways that conform with informal as well as formal norms” and “the result becomes a distinctive entity with its own identity and momentum” (Allison & Zelikow, 1999: 145). Thus organizational culture, as shown above, is seen as the set of values, beliefs, orientations, and behaviours that structure and shape organizations. Additionally, as stressed by the above conceptions, organizational cultures also impart distinctive or unique characteristics or attributes to organizations.

According to Cummings and Worley (1997: 479), organizational culture provides “shared meanings” which help members of an organization “to make sense out of the organization” and that, additionally, these “meanings signal how work is to be done and evaluated, and how employees are to relate to each other and to significant others, such as customers, suppliers and government agencies”. Plunkett et al. (2002: 294) posit that organizational culture defines what is important to the organization, the way decisions are made, the methods of communication, the degree of structure, the freedom



to function independently, how people should behave, how they should interact with each other, and for what they should be striving. Sharing these beliefs, values, and norms helps employees develop a sense of group identity and pride – both valuable contributions to organizational effectiveness. The norms for behaviour develop around a set of values and create an ‘invisible hand’ – a consensus and driving force for goal accomplishment.

Bartlett (1988: 65) adds that organizational culture is also presented as the “correct way to perceive, think, and feel in matters concerning the organization” and that, additionally, “the fundamental concern” is the reality “that for successful implementation of strategy, there must be a good fit between the culture of an organization and its strategy”.

As shown above, organizational culture permeates all aspects of management of organizations. Organizational culture is intertwined with the structures, functioning, processes, outputs, and strategies of organizations, and therefore also accounts for how they are able, or unable, to achieve their goals.

## **A TAXONOMY**

Despite the fact that the organizational culture studies constitute a vital aspect of management studies, and there is also rich literature on this aspect of management studies (as shown above), a comprehensive taxonomy and/or a systematic theoretical framework of organizational culture are not prevalent. The goal of this study is to attempt to work towards providing some knowledge in these areas (in terms of creating and developing a taxonomy and a systematic theoretical framework of organizational culture).

When there is reference to organizational culture, one is often left to wonder about the level, aspect, or dimension of the cultural framework or dynamics that are being referred to (for example, is reference being made to the cultural frameworks or dynamics for an entire organization, a department of an organization, or a factor in the external environment of an organization?). In order to provide more conceptual clarity and specificity, this study thus creates and develops the following taxonomy for organizational culture.

The study classifies cultural frameworks and dynamics into eight types and coins the following names: cohort culture, group culture, unit culture, company culture, corporation culture, regional business culture, national business culture, and continental business culture. Also, this study is of the view that these eight types can also be combined into three groups. The cohort culture and group culture can be seen as belonging to the social dynamics group; the unit culture, company culture, and corporation

culture to the institutional dynamics group; and the regional business culture, national business culture, and continental business culture can be seen as belonging to the socio-politico-economic dynamics group. Thus the taxonomy developed by this study has coined the name social/institutional/socio-politico-economic cultural dynamics framework, with the acronym SISOPEC framework.

### *The Social Dynamics Group*

As indicated above, the social dynamics group consists of the cohort culture and group culture. These two culture types differ from the other types in the sense that they occur at a level below the formal and official organizational framework. An additional feature is that these two culture types pertain to a smaller number of people. The fact that they are below the formal organizational framework, and also involve a smaller number of people does not mean that these two culture types are less important to organizations. In fact, these very attributes make these two culture types very important to organizations. The fact that these two culture types are outside the formal organizational framework makes them fertile ground for unstructured, spontaneous, unsupervised, and free-wheeling entertainment of new norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviours (the very sort of dynamics that account for the creation, development, enhancement, or weakening of cultural frameworks). The additional fact that these two culture types also involve small informal groups further accelerates this sort of dynamic, since the informal and small nature of these groups heightens the unstructured, unsupervised, spontaneous, and free-wheeling aspects and, thus, further accelerates the dynamics of new norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviours.

The attributes of these two culture types thus cause them to constitute the foundations of the cultural frameworks in organizational arenas. In this sense these two culture types play vital roles in the socialization processes (the processes through which values, norms, beliefs and orientations are acquired), the desocialization processes, and the re-socialization processes. Thus, management academicians, practitioners, and consultants specializing in strategic management (especially the aspects of creating new cultural frameworks which are more compatible with new strategies), organizational theory, organizational behaviour, organizational development and organizational change have to also pay adequate attention to the roles of the cohort culture and group culture (since their areas of specialization which involve changes in organizational strategies, organizational structures and/or organizational processes, in order to be successful, also require having compatible changes in cultural frameworks

and the dynamics of organizations).

Specifically, cohort culture refers to the smallest level of cultural framework and dynamics in an organization. This study sees the cohort culture as the starting block or the foundation framework for cultural frameworks and dynamics in organizations. As shown earlier, due to the informal, spontaneous, robust, free-wheeling, and small nature of its cultural dynamics, cohort culture has strong impacts on the cultural frameworks and dynamics in organizations. Additionally, the impacts of cohort culture in frameworks and dynamics of organizations is further strengthened by the fact that it is the foundation block or the starting block of the cultural frameworks and dynamics of organizations.

The cohort culture has a minimum of two persons. This study sees cohort culture as ideally consisting of between two and four persons. The membership of a cohort culture can be fairly stable or fairly unstable. Membership stability means change of membership is rare and infrequent and, conversely, membership instability means that members leaving and new members joining is common and frequent. The more stable the membership of a cohort culture the stronger its impact on the cultural framework and dynamics of organizations. Logically, this is due to the fact that the more stable the cohort culture, the more cohesive, active, and robust it is and, thus, more able to generate cultural dynamics. The implication of this stability/instability dynamic is that a more stable cohort culture is more able to help (or hinder) the firm in the creation or expansion of the sort of organizational culture the firm needs for the changing or maintenance of a particular organizational strategy, organizational structure, and/or organizational process. Thus cohort culture plays an important part in the ability or inability of firms to achieve their goals.

The group culture, as shown in Table 1, is the next level of cultural framework and dynamics above the cohort culture. It shares all the above dynamics and features of cohort culture. One difference between the two is that the group culture consists of more members. Ideally, the group culture consists of between five and eight members. Another difference between the two is that group culture may often have a more regular place to informally gather (due to their relatively larger size), while cohort culture does not often have a regular place for them to gather (since their relatively smaller size provides them with a lot of flexibility of where, when, and how they meet together). Thus, it is not unusual to see a cohort culture meeting for lunch, gathering for a few minutes near the water cooler, in the corridor, in the late afternoon, and exchanging just a few words in a few seconds in the car park area before leaving for their homes (and all these three meetings, more or less, can occur in one day). It is this sort of flexibility that provides the cohort culture with their vibrancy. On the other hand,

the more regularized (but still informal) meetings of members of a group culture may enable them to have more predictability in their dynamics. It is also important to note that a group culture may, or may not, consist of two or more cohort cultures.

On the whole, as shown in this section, cohort culture and group culture (as the two types in the social dynamics group) do share a lot in common as the cultural frameworks and dynamics below the formal and official organizational framework, whose informality, smaller nature, spontaneity, free-wheeling nature, and creative cultural dynamics play vibrant roles for firms at the cultural frameworks and dynamics levels.

### ***Institutional Dynamics Group***

Unlike the social dynamics group, the institutional dynamics group consists of cultural frameworks and dynamics levels that belong to the formal and official organizational frameworks (and these are the unit culture, company culture, and corporation culture, as shown in Table 1).

**TABLE 1 • Social/Institutional/Socio-Politico-Economic Cultural Dynamics Framework**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Types</b>
1. Social Dynamics Group	a. Cohort Culture b. Group Culture
2. Institutional Dynamics Group	a. Unit Culture b. Company Culture c. Corporation Culture
3. Socio-Politico-Economic Dynamics Group	a. Regional Business Culture b. National Business Culture c. Continental Business Culture

Unit culture refers to the cultural frameworks, dynamics, and profile of units or departments of a firm, for example, the operations, marketing, and finance departments. Thus the norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviours that are associated with these departments, for example, the operations, marketing, and finance departments, respectively, are the unit cultures of these departments. Though the unit cultures are cultural frameworks, dynamics, and profiles that are part of the formal and official organizational framework, the informal cohort cultures and group cultures (as the prior levels of cultural frameworks and dynamics) also impact on unit cultures. While official policies, actions and mechanisms do help

to shape unit cultures (by serving as agents of socialization for the unit cultures), the cohort culture and group culture do also help to shape unit culture (by also serving as agents of socialization for the unit culture). The important point here is that firms have to come to terms with the fact that the role of the informal cohort culture and group culture in helping to shape unit cultures is a constant reality (thus apart from the formal and official policies, actions, and mechanisms of the firm, the informal factors also help to shape unit cultures). Negative socialization tendencies by the cohort culture and/or group culture may help breed negative unit cultures. Conversely, positive socialization tendencies will help to create or enhance positive unit cultures. This reality means that firms need to actively help create environments and dynamics that ensure that the informal cohort culture and group culture tend more towards positive socialization roles and activities. This sort of informal and subtle active role for firms is vital, since informal cohort culture and group culture are beyond the formal direct control of the firms. This kind of subtle proactive posture of firms has a possibility of helping to create, enhance and expand the space for positive unit culture. For example, a cohort culture or a group culture which mainly concentrates on creating and/or enhancing long-term financial savings culture and/or further education aspirations culture among employees will help to foster positive unit cultures in a firm. On the other hand, a cohort culture or a group culture which mainly concentrates on promoting the spreading of rumours culture and/or the envy culture among employees will help to foster negative unit cultures in a firm.

Additionally, a unit culture of a department of a firm (for example, the operations department) that is more compatible with the functional strategy, the departmental organizational structure, and the departmental organizational processes of that operations department is the sort of unit culture that helps the department to achieve its goal. The policy implication is that firms have to constantly strive to have unit cultures that are compatible with the functional strategies, the departmental organizational structures, and the departmental organizational processes of their various respective departments. Significantly incompatible unit cultures will most likely result in the respective departments not achieving their goals (since incompatible unit culture will thwart functional strategies, cause wear and tear in the departmental organizational structures, and distort and enfeeble departmental organizational processes).

Also the unit cultures of the various departments of a firm need to be in consonance with the entire organizational strategy, entire organizational structure, and the entire organizational processes of a firm in order to ensure that the firm is able to achieve its goals. A firm being able to achieve its goals is also greatly enhanced if the unit cultures of the various departments of

the firm are able to be more in harmony with the firm's overall culture (which this study calls company culture).

As shown in Table 1, after unit culture comes the company culture. The company culture refers to the norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviour that apply to a firm or the strategic business units of a large corporation (a conglomerate consisting of various firms). For the success of a firm, a company culture has to be compatible with the business strategy, organizational structure, and the organizational processes of the firm. The corporation culture, as also shown in Table 1, is the next level after the company culture. The corporation culture refers to the norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviours that provide the distinctive feature of a large corporation (a conglomerate with various firms as strategic business units). The corporation culture needs also to be compatible with the corporate strategy, the organizational structure, and the organizational processes of the large corporation with its various firms as strategic business units.

As shown by the above analysis of the unit culture, the company culture, and the corporation culture (the three components of the institutional dynamics group), their most important roles are as the glues that tie all the major factors in the success of enterprises (the strategy, the organizational structure, and the organizational processes) at the departmental, strategic business unit (company) and corporate levels, respectively. Without corresponding compatible cultural frameworks (in the form of norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits and behaviours), strategic thrusts, organizational structures, and organizational processes of enterprises are troubled, immobilized and/or misdirected, resulting in the underachievement or non-achievement of the goals of an enterprise. Thus the roles of the cultural frameworks that belong to the institutional dynamics group are very important.

### ***Socio-Political-Economic Dynamics Group***

As shown in Table 1, under the socio-political-economic dynamics group are regional business culture, national business culture, continental business culture; and they are not cultural frameworks which are part of the formal and official organizational framework (in fact they constitute the cultural component of the external environment of firms). These cultural frameworks and dynamics in the external environment of firms are products of the macro social, political, and economic forces in the various societal arenas (and thus this study groups them together and calls them the socio-political-economic dynamics group).

Regional business culture refers to the set of norms, values, beliefs,

orientations, habits, and behaviours that are distinctively associated with the business environment, economic enterprises, business and economic interactions and business dynamics in the various regions of countries – for example, the Catalan region of Spain, the southwestern region of China, the prairie provinces of Canada, the Quebec Province of Canada, the maritime provinces of Canada, the northern states of Mexico, the coastal region of Kenya, the northern part of Italy, the southern part of Italy, the Rhineland region of Germany, the Bavarian Land (state) in Germany, and the Silicon Valley in the United States. The regional business culture impacts on firms in the respective regions, due to the fact that norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits and behaviours in the business and economic milieus of the respective regions, in countries, help to shape how firms function in the regions where they are located.

National business culture refers to the set of norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits and behaviours that are distinctively associated with the business and economic interactions, economic enterprises, general public policies relating to businesses and economic activities, regulation of business and economic activities, social and cultural dynamics relating to business and economic activities, business dynamics, and the general business environments, in respective countries – for example, in the United States, Brazil, Guatemala, Nigeria, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Russia, China, Japan and India. Expectedly, the national business cultures may impact on strategic thrusts, organizational structures, and organizational functioning of firms and corporations in the various countries. Additionally, as shown by earlier analysis of regional business cultures, the various regions of countries may produce, within each respective country, varying cultural dynamics relating to businesses. In short, the nature of regional business cultures, in respective countries, may impact on the nature of national business cultures in countries. Thus, in one extreme, countries with many regions with very strong distinctive and distinguishable regional cultures may have national business cultures that may exhibit very significant variations in their respective regions (due to the fact that these respective regions, in these respective countries, may exhibit more pronounced distinctive and distinguishable regional business cultures); and, at the opposite extreme point on the continuum, the small countries in almost non-existent regions (and thus with no distinctive and distinguishable regional cultures, and with almost homogenous national cultures) may exhibit almost non-existent or negligible variations in their national business cultures. In between these two extreme poles, are countries with more or less variations in their national business cultures in accord with their having more or less variations in regional cultures (and thus possibly also in regional business cultures).



Some of the factors that account for a country possibly having more or less regional cultural variations, within its boundaries are geographical, language, religious and political. The physical size of a country is an example of the impact of geography – for example, the very large size of countries like the United States, Russia, Brazil and China creates significant regional cultural variations within these countries. Thus, for example, there are significant regional cultural variations among the New England, southern, and southwestern regions of the United States; between the Brazilian northeastern region (like in the states of Bahía and Pernambuco) and the Brazilian southern region (like in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina); between the Far Eastern region and the Volga River region of Russia; and between southern region of China (like in the province of Guandong) and the northwestern region (like in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region). On the other hand, in extremely small sized countries like Monaco and San Marino, regional cultural variations are likely to be very negligible.

Another geographical factor that can impact on regional cultural variations in a country is the physical relief in terms of the mountains (due to the mountains restricting regular contact between and among communities). Thus the mountainous nature of Nepal, Afghanistan and Switzerland possibly helps to deepen the nature of regional cultural variations in those countries. Variety of languages and religions in countries like Nigeria and India possibly also account for significant regional cultural variations in such countries. Political factors like federal systems in Nigeria and India, and the policy of devolution of powers like in the United Kingdom (in terms of the devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales), possibly also help to deepen regional cultural variations in such countries (but, however, note should also be taken of the fact that some measures governing regional autonomies, provided by federal systems and power devolutions possibly help to ease perceptions of political marginalization greatly among some groups and regions, and thereby possibly help to minimize acute political tensions and to promote political stability).

In some countries, one of the above factors may possibly promote regional cultural variations, while in other countries two or more of the geographical, language, religious and political factors may possibly account for regional cultural variations. For example, in a country like India, all these factors seem to be at work in promoting regional cultural variations in that country. In a country like India, therefore, it is possible that the multiplicity of factors accounting for regional cultural variations helps to contribute more pronounced variations to that country's national business culture (since the variations in the regional business cultures are also more pronounced).

As shown in Table 1, the phenomenon of continental business culture



also does occur. Simply, this refers to the set of norms, values, beliefs, orientations, habits, and behaviours that are associated with the business environment of respective continents. As shown above, the large physical size of many countries presents significant internal regional cultural variations (and thus also significant internal variations in their national business cultures, due to the pronounced variations of regional business cultures in the various regions of these countries). Since continents are composed of various countries, the internal variations within continents are even more pronounced than those found within countries. Thus continental business cultures have highly pronounced internal variations. For example, the continental business culture of Europe has enormous internal variations (in terms of the Mediterranean, Western, Nordic, Central and Eastern portions of Europe). Therefore, while the recognition of continental business cultures enables one to speak of African, Asian, Australian, European, Latin American, and North American business cultures, one has to also recognize that such continental business cultures do have highly pronounced internal variations.

On the whole, as the analysis done in this study shows, and as clearly indicated in Table 1, the various levels or packets of organizational cultures are intertwined in the form of building blocks, with the cohort culture at the foundation and the continental business culture at the zenith; and in-between these two levels or packets are the group culture, unit culture, company culture, corporation culture, regional business culture, and national business culture.

The goals and hopes of the SISOPEC taxonomy framework, created, developed and analysed in this study, are that this taxonomy will enable various cultural dynamics in organizational milieux to be more clearly identified and understood. Additionally, the SISOPEC taxonomy framework has arranged (through orderly classification) organizational cultural dynamics in a way that promotes conceptual clarity and delineation of distinguishing features of each of the various cultural levels or categories. Thus the SISOPEC taxonomy framework aims to provide management, academicians, consultants and practitioners with adequate identification, understanding, clarity and distinguishing features of the various forms, levels, packets, or categories of organizational cultural dynamics. Additionally, this same knowledge will help organizational development and organizational change specialists to more precisely identify and understand the sort of organizational cultural forms, levels, packets, or categories they have to synchronize with organizational processes, organizational structures, and/or organizational strategies.

Furthermore, the SISOPEC taxonomy framework also provides this study with an adequate scheme of variables to try to develop an organizational

culture theoretical framework.

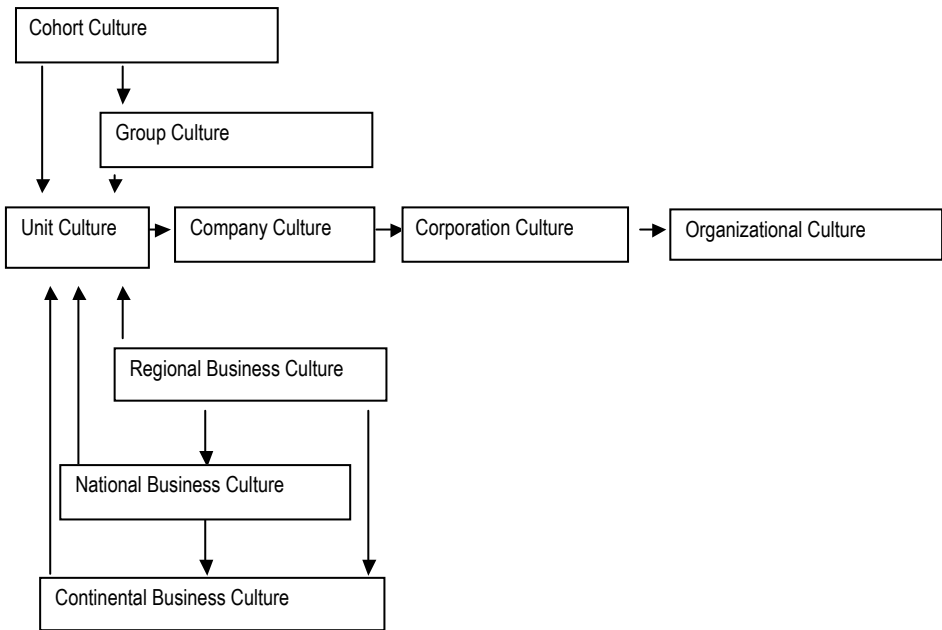
## A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Utilizing the taxonomy of organizational culture developed in the preceding section, this study will create and develop a theoretical framework for organizational culture, and name it the Social/Institutional/Socio-Political-Economic Cultural (SISOPEC) theoretical framework, as shown in Figure 1.

As demonstrated in the analysis of the SISOPEC taxonomy framework in the preceding section, and in the SISOPEC theoretical framework (Figure 1), this study has shown that organizational culture dynamics fall into three broad categories: the organizational cultural dynamics that occur below the formal structures of the organizations; the organizational cultural dynamics that occur within the organizations; and the organizational cultural dynamics in the external environments of organizations. The social dynamics group (consisting of cohort culture and group culture) constitutes the organizational cultural dynamics that occur below the formal structures of the organization; the institutional dynamics group (consisting of unit culture, company culture and corporation culture) constitutes the organizational cultural dynamics that occur within the organization; and socio-political-economic dynamics group (consisting of regional business culture, national business culture, and continental business culture) constitute the organizational cultural dynamics that occur in the external environments of the organization.

As shown by Figure 1, the organizational cultural variables below organizations and in the external environments of organizations impact on the organizational cultural variables within the organization starting with the unit culture. Cohort culture directly and/or through group culture impacts on unit culture, as shown in Figure 1. Regional business culture, national business culture and continental business culture also impact on unit culture. Figure 1 also shows that regional business culture directly and/or through national business culture also impacts on continental business culture. Thus, the regional business culture can have single, double or triple impacts on unit culture – single impact only directly on unit culture, double impacts directly on unit culture and indirectly through the impact of regional business culture on national business culture, and/or triple impacts directly on unit culture and indirectly through national business culture and continental business culture. In the case of national business culture, the impact on unit culture can be single and/or double – single impact only directly on unit culture, and/or double impacts directly on unit culture and indirectly through continental business culture. The regional business culture having pronounced double or triple impacts on unit culture, and the

FIGURE 1  
Social/Institutional/Socio-Politico-Economic Cultural (SISOPEC)  
Theoretical Framework of Organizational Culture



national business culture having pronounced double impacts on unit culture may be determined by the robustness of regional variations in national business cultures and robustness of national variations in continental business cultures, respectively.

The impacts that cohort culture, group culture, regional business culture, national business culture and continental business culture have on unit culture also mean that all these cultural variables also, indirectly through unit culture, impact on company culture and, in turn, through company culture, also indirectly on corporation culture as shown in Figure 1. Thus, as Figure 1 shows, the SISOPEC theoretical framework clearly displays how organizational cultures of firms are determined by the interactions and linkages of the variables of corporation culture, company culture, unit culture, group culture, cohort culture, regional business culture, national business culture, and continental business culture. The SISOPEC theoretical framework therefore helps to illuminate the factors and variables that shape the organizational culture of firms.

Additionally, this SISOPEC theoretical framework enhances the capacity for adequate hypotheses to be generated for rigorous empirical and analytical study of organizational culture since it shows the variables that interact to

shape organizational culture. Examples of hypotheses that can be generated for the study of organizational culture are: the more synchronizing the unit cultures of the various departments of a company the more cohesive the company culture will be; the less synchronizing the company cultures of the various business units of a corporation the less cohesive the corporation culture will be; the more positive the cohort culture the more positively vibrant the unit culture will appear; and the more entrepreneurial the national business culture the more positively vibrant the organizational culture will appear.

Note should be taken of the fact that in relation to Figure 1, the organizational culture will be synonymous with company culture for a firm with only one business unit, and for a firm with two or more business units the organizational culture will be synonymous with corporation culture.

The SISOPEC theoretical framework also means that for a corporation that operates in various regions of a country, there is a need for the management of that corporation to make room for adjustments since the various regional business cultures in a country will impact on the unit culture, company culture, and/or the corporation culture, in varying degrees, depending on where the various regions of the country, the departments (as units of the firm), the business units, and the corporate head office are located. Likewise, for a corporation with operations in various countries in various continents, in addition to the above adjustments to various regions in various countries, the corporation has to also make adjustments for the various national business cultures in various countries and for the various continental business cultures in various continents.

On the whole, as shown in this study, the taxonomy and the theoretical framework created and developed by the study enable management academicians, consultants, and practitioners to understand organizational culture as consisting of various forms, levels, packets, or categories, and also to easily identify and distinguish these various forms, levels, packets, and categories of organizational culture. Additionally, these various forms, levels, packets, or categories of organizational culture also serve as interacting variables in the organizational culture milieu, and thus also serve to enhance the dynamics of organizational culture. The abundance of variables also enables and enhances the generation of hypotheses for rigorous scientific study of organizational culture. The theoretical framework also presents organizational development and organizational change specialists with a new tool they may be able to use to adjust the organizational culture of a firm to be in consonance with the organizational structures, processes, and strategy of the firm. Lastly, the theoretical framework also enables the organizational culture dynamics to be adequately explained, understood and predicted (in terms of explaining the dynamics in the past, understanding

the current dynamics, and predicting the future dynamics). Concisely, the taxonomy simplifies and unpacks the phenomenon and concept of organizational culture, and the theoretical framework expands the space for the understanding of organizational culture dynamics.

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# Newspaper Representations of Portia Simpson-Miller's Abstention in Parliament and Westminster Politics in Jamaica

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*In 2004 there was a fierce and intense debate in the Jamaican media in general and the major newspapers in particular about whether the Leader of the Opposition Portia Simpson-Miller who was then a government minister and member of Parliament (MP) acted inappropriately by abstaining on an Opposition resolution in Parliament criticizing a shortage of funds to the fire service. The purpose of this article is to deconstruct the representations of Portia Simpson-Miller's abstention in Parliament in *The Jamaica Gleaner* and *The Jamaica Observer* newspapers in 2004 and what the representations reveal about Jamaican politics.*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2004 there was a fierce and intense debate in the Jamaican media in general and the major newspapers in particular about whether the Leader of the Opposition Portia Simpson-Miller who was then a government minister and member of parliament (MP) acted inappropriately by abstaining on an Opposition resolution in Parliament criticizing a shortage of funds to the fire service. The purpose of this article is to deconstruct the representations of Portia Simpson-Miller's abstention in Parliament in *The Jamaica Gleaner* and *The Jamaica Observer* newspapers in 2004 and what the representations reveal about Jamaican politics. There is a dearth of research on social representation and the conduct of Westminster politics in Jamaica, and this article is a modest start in addressing this paucity of research.

I commence by outlining the social representation theory; this is followed by a review of the Westminster system in Britain. I then go on to do a brief review of Westminster politics in Jamaica. From there I proceed to a brief outline of the abstention as a social object. Next, I outline my methods section, which is followed by my findings. In the discussion section I use social representation theory to further analyse my findings. I now turn to

the social representation theory.

## **SOCIAL REPRESENTATION**

Moscovici (1976a) traced the social representation of psychoanalysis in which there was appropriation and resignification of psychoanalysis as it moved from private clinical practice into various social groups within French society. This knowledge was dynamic and there was mutual transformation between this knowledge and the individuals in the various social groups. Moscovici (2001) argues that social knowledge is the core of social psychology because it is important to understand how new images and new ideas receive social acceptance by penetrating all areas of life. People are able to render strange or disturbing things common or familiar by forming representations of them. Reality is given its character through social representation in which cultural practices and beliefs are integrated with semantic knowledge. Therefore, representation and communication are at the heart of social knowledge.

Social influence is important in representations because each individual in a group, regardless of his or her rank, exerts some amount of influence on group members (Moscovici, 1976b). Three important virtues of social representation compared to other social psychology paradigms are that social representation places “an emphasis on the content or meaning of human life, an emphasis on communication as a basis for shared social understandings [and an] emphasis on the constructive processes through which versions of the world are established” (Potter & Wetherell, 1998: 139).

The social representation paradigm locates individuals in their social setting. The thinking of individuals is not devoid of the social sphere because individuals create shared references from their interaction with others that influence how they think about the world. Social thinking drives representations which structures the information and beliefs about the experiences that a community deems important. The representations define reality for these individuals because it shapes how they think and talk about objects that are important to them. In other words, the representations are socially constructed because they are social elaborations shared by the community (Moscovici, 1992; Philogene, 2000).

The interpretation of reality in the community is plural, and the processes of objectification and anchoring explain how these experiences reach the minds of the individuals in the community. In objectification, an object that is unfamiliar or new forms a symbolic core, which leads to the projection of images and the process turns the abstract object into a concrete object so that people can talk about it because it now exists. During anchoring, the new or unfamiliar object is categorized and placed in the mental system of individuals so that the object becomes familiar to them. The categorization

and placing of the object by individuals into their pre-existing mental sets allows the individuals to name and classify the object (Philogene, 2000).

Individuals who are involved in a debate about a theory will take a position that has some commonalities. The embracing of these commonalities does not imply that there is consensus, but the fact of the debate suggests that there is shared knowledge among the debaters. The position taken is a function of the normative values acquired during socialization. "These groups are not only different because they do not have access to the same information, but also their members share specific beliefs and experiences" (Clemence, 2001: 87). In the emergence of new ideas, there is a diffusion phase in which there is relative variance among social actors, which creates some common points of reference. Multiple themes and opinions on the issue are circulated by the media. The second phase commences when the various groups start to organize a network of meanings based on their knowledge and belief systems (Clemence, 2001).

In the public sphere, the argument of the authority is replaced by the authority of arguments because the public sphere is a social space in which social knowledge is produced. In the production of social knowledge, traditional arguments are contested by new arguments and the social representations are created because of the diversity among social groups. New forms of social knowledge are a function of fresh public spheres. In other words, social representations arise from the fizz of dialogue in which there are disagreements and differences in worldview and experiences among the various social groups (Jovchelovitch, 2001).

Mass communication not only influences but also reflects social representation. Mass communication combines social practices, opinion leadership, daily decisions and conversations in the public sphere. These cultural practices are fundamental to social representation. The representation of social groups requires an analysis of their differentiation. In addition, the characteristics of mass communication must not be divorced from one another at any time, and the social positions of the social actors (columnists, editors, letter writers and journalists) and their debates and shared knowledge in the public sphere about Simpson-Miller's abstention, the Westminster system and Jamaican party politics, will aid our understanding of politics in Jamaica. I now turn to a discussion of the Westminster system.

## **THE WESTMINSTER SYSTEM**

There is an underlying assumption by the British that the Westminster system has the intrinsic capability to foster accountability and effective governance. As Britain began to colonize the world, it exported aspects of the Westminster system to its colonies (which later became the commonwealth

states after they gained independence and established their own versions of the Westminster system). The model outlined in this section is the British model, unless otherwise stated. There are three branches of government: (a) the Executive Branch headed by the Prime Minister (PM) who controls the central government, comprised of civil servants, ministerial departments, and the PM's office; (b) a Bicameral Legislature that is sovereign; (c) the Judiciary Branch which administers justice by interpreting the laws enacted by Parliament. The Executive and Legislative branches of the government are fused (some members of the House of Commons are members of the Cabinet). Moreover, there is no codified supreme constitution that can constrain Parliament because Parliament is sovereign. The rights of citizens are enforced by adherence to a Bill of Rights rather than by judicial response to Parliamentary decisions (Epstein, 1994; Merchant, 2003; Norris, 2001; Rose, 1971).

The PM predominates by using personal resources such as public popularity, high standing in the party, reputation, skills, and anticipated success. The PM also uses institutional resources such as his or her position as the head of government, management of the agenda, and control over Cabinet and ministerial departments. The PM has the authority to hire and fire ministers. However, some senior ministers can check and balance the PM given their relationship with the PM, their public popularity, and their personal skills (Heffernan, 2003). The PM selects Cabinet ministers based on (a) the representativeness of the various party factions and the social origins of the minister; (b) loyalty to the PM; (c) ministerial competence. The selection process is guided by three conventions: (1) the minister has to be a MP; (2) the principle of collective responsibility which dictates that ministers should not disagree with each other (thereby privatizing decision making conflicts in the executive); (3) the movement of the PM and his ministers in and out of office at anytime because there is no fixed election date (and this fosters insecurity and the use of patronage to secure personal loyalty). These conventions aside, the minister is responsible for all that occurs in his or her department, and represents his or her ministry in the House of Commons and in the Cabinet. In addition, the minister negotiates with interest groups on behalf of the ministerial department. The minister's capability is a function of the skills he or she brings to office and the demands of the office (Rose, 1991).

Cabinet ministers operate in several decision making arenas. These arenas include unilateral decisions, internalized coordination, bilateral decisions, multilateral decisions, Cabinet committee decisions, Cabinet decisions, and party decisions. The decision making process is more complex than is typically assumed. In some countries, the authority for decision making in a ministerial department resides with the minister and not as

part of the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. Even where collective responsibility operates, ministers exercise discretion about which matters to refer to colleagues; only important matters are referred to the PM. Issues straddling several ministerial departments may be resolved by inter-ministerial negotiation or a Cabinet committee rather than by the Cabinet (Mackie & Hogwood, 1984).

There is a greater capacity to produce policy changes in the Westminster system (in comparison with the United States presidential system) because there are very few veto players in the system to check the executive (Tsebelis, 1995). Party cohesion in this majoritarian system ensures the rubber-stamping of government policies in the Lower House and the Upper House can only delay government policy for a limited period of time (Epstein, 1994; Norris, 2001). However, an analysis of the Labour Party Government from 1974 to 1979 suggests that legislative behaviour between the Westminster and the presidential systems is similar despite the institutional differences. The MPs (like congressmen) have to balance the demands of their constituents, party activists, and the leadership of the party, and engage in intra-party struggles over policy direction (Ganes & Garrett, 1993).

The structure of the system facilitates the dominance of the PM. The system of awarding Parliamentary seats is the first-past-the-post system or the winner takes all system. Political parties in the system are usually cohesive and one of the parties has a Parliamentary majority and this ensures a stable government. Revolt by an MP is the exception rather than the rule. Power is concentrated in the hands of the party that controls the government because of the fusion of the executive and legislative branches, and the absence of checks and balances. The MPs are not elected based on their personal appeal and skill, but rather as supporters of their political parties. Therefore, party members and voters who elected the representatives expect them to be loyal to the party and support the national leader. In addition, the political parties have a national appeal because of the unitary political system (Epstein, 1994).

Consensus among MPs about the importance of loyalty transcends party affiliation, Parliamentary rank, party line, and socialization. Among MPs, the severity of an act of dissent is a function of the risks the dissent poses for the government and the public visibility the dissent attracts (Crowe, 1983). In spite of this, many backbenchers play the role of good constituency members by acting as welfare officers who address the needs of individual constituents at their surgery or bureau or by acting as local promoters who address the collective needs of constituents. These MPs also advocate for their constituents at Westminster (Searing, 1985). An analysis of cross voting from 1945 to 1974 in the House of Commons suggests that

revolt by government MPs is linked to the size of the government majority because government MPs do not seek to topple the government. The MPs on both sides of the House revolt when they want an important role in the policy making process, and when they become disillusioned with the political system (Crowe, 1980).

Some scholars have argued that the two-party system of Westminster promotes centralized parties which are all-embracing, and the promotion of centralized parties provides an incentive to curb redistributive policies. However, the counter evidence suggests that the two-party system does not generate economic efficiency because the political parties are not sufficiently responsive to the people. In addition, adversarial politics leads to shifts in policy, which undermines investments (Jankowski, 1993). Some other criticisms are that Westminster is insufficiently responsive to national problems and sometimes the winning party receives the most Parliamentary seats and less of the popular vote. In addition, there is concentration of power in a single party, which may rule for a very long time and there is a lack of continuity of public policies (Epstein, 1994). For further discussion on the criticisms of the Westminster system see Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) and Norris (2001). I now transition to the Westminster system in Jamaica.

### ***The Westminster System in Jamaica***

The Westminster system in Jamaica follows (with some modifications) the basic British model, viz. constitutionalism (the Jamaican constitution is codified), pluralist representation, a two-party dominant system, competitive elections, party cohesion, the neutrality of the police and the bureaucracy, the predominance of the PM and the ruling party in Parliament, the use of the first-past-the-post system, the practice by the judiciary branch of administering the law by interpreting the acts of Parliament, and the supremacy of Parliament (Payne, 1993; Ryan, 1991). In addition to the issues inherent in the Westminster system mentioned above, the operation of the system in Jamaica has produced its own set of problems. Tight party cohesion has not curbed redistributive policies. In fact, party cohesion has increased pork barrel politics which has turned the two-party system into a fierce adversarial system with two hostile and warring political groups, including the police which violate the neutrality of the police (Charles, 2002, 2004; Stone, 1980).

The discriminatory distribution of scarce state resources promotes political violence because some members of the urban poor tie their survival to this patronage and seek to maintain this support by using violence to keep the rival party from gaining office. Moreover, the distribution of houses to hardcore party supporters has led to the formation of garrison

constituencies in which political competition is thwarted by party gunmen. The garrison process is undermining democracy in Jamaica. There is a link between crime and politics because some Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and People's National Party (PNP) MPs secure electoral victory with the aid of gunmen who contribute to the high homicide rate in Jamaica (Charles, 2002, 2004; Figueroa & Sives, 2002; Gray, 2001; Robotham, 2001; Stone, 1980).

There have been some soft reforms in the Jamaican legislature with the establishment of the Public Accounts Committee chaired by a member of the Opposition to question Ministers and public servants. An Integrity Commission has been established to tackle corruption (Hart, 2005; *Sunday Observer*, 2004b). The components of a Charter of Rights are being debated in Parliament. An Electoral Advisory Committee (EAC) has been established, consisting of representatives of the PNP and the JLP, the Director of Elections, and a majority of independent members who oversee the running of elections along with the Electoral Office. In addition, the government has allowed local and international observers to monitor the polls since the 1997 General Election (Charles, 2006; Vasciannie, 2002). For a detailed discussion of the criticisms of the Westminster system in Jamaica and the option for reform see Stone (1989) who suggested the Capitol Hill model as an alternative. The operation of the Westminster system is an important part of the public sphere in Jamaica; Simpson-Miller's abstention became a controversial social object in the debates and shared references about Jamaican politics.

## THE SIMPSON-MILLER ABSTENTION

Portia Simpson-Miller is one of the most popular PNP politicians in Jamaica, one of the longest serving MPs, and the leader of the Opposition. At the time of her abstention in Parliament, she was Minister of Local Government and Sports and Acting Head of the government on behalf of PM Percival James Patterson who was overseas. Simpson-Miller is also MP for the garrison constituency of South West St Andrew, a very poor and violence prone low-income constituency.

On April 7, 2004 in the Finance Committee Meeting in the House of Parliament as the minister responsible for the fire service, Simpson-Miller declared that there existed the possibility that there would be staff cuts and a closure of some fire stations because of a lack of funds (*Sunday Observer*, 2004a). Armed with this information, the Opposition JLP introduced a resolution criticizing the Government's under-funding of the fire service. The Government, with its majority in Parliament, defeated the resolution by 25 to 15 votes. However, Simpson-Miller abstained, thereby breaching party unity and the cohesion of the government Parliamentary group. This



breach of collective responsibility led to fierce verbal attacks and acrimony against Simpson-Miller by some of her Cabinet colleagues, MPs, and party activists of the ruling PNP (Anderson, 2004; *Sunday Observer*, 2004a). However, Simpson-Miller was supported by the Opposition JLP and the Kingston and St Andrew Corporation (KSAC) that it controlled (Edwards, 2004). Upon his return to the country, the PM told an angry PNP National Executive Council (NEC) that he would deal with Simpson-Miller in his own time and style (*Daily Gleaner*, 2004; *Daily Observer*, 2004).

The main goal of this article is to unpack the representations of Simpson-Miller's abstention in the *Jamaica Gleaner* and the *Jamaica Observer* newspapers and to suggest what the representations reveal about politics in Jamaica. My research questions are: how was Simpson-Miller's abstention in the Jamaican Parliament represented in the two major newspapers? What do these representations suggest about the conduct of politics in Jamaica?

## METHOD

### *Sample and procedure*

Newspaper articles such as news stories, editorials and letters to the editor, and columns dealing with the abstention were collected from the online editions of the *Jamaica Observer* and the *Jamaica Gleaner*.

The Internet editions of the newspapers were monitored from April 11, 2004 (the day the news story about the abstention first appeared) to June 27, 2004 (the starting point of a two-week period in which no further mention was made of the abstention). This two-week period was used to determine the cut-off point when references to the abstention and Simpson-Miller ceased. The newspaper pieces that mentioned the abstention or any issue relating to Simpson-Miller from April 11, 2004 to June 27, 2004 were collected. This was done because all references in the newspapers about the abstention and Simpson-Miller within this period are a part of the shared understanding in the debates about the abstention in particular and Jamaican politics in general. The newspapers are important sites of shared knowledge in the public sphere. *The Gleaner* and *Observer* are the major newspapers in Jamaica and they are circulated nationally.

The articles were read several times. Positive, negative, and neutral articles in relation to the abstention were identified, as were the themes in the headlines and the content of the articles. The different positions taken on the themes identified were used to determine the content and meaning of the representations that came out of the arguments and debates about the abstention. The positive, negative, and neutral articles were used to determine the amount of support for Simpson-Miller. The positive, negative, and neutral articles and the themes identified in the headlines and content



of the articles were tallied. The frequency/tally of the themes was used to determine the salience or importance of the themes in the fizz of dialogue about the abstention. Exemplars for the various themes were selected.

Newspaper articles that were supportive of Simpson-Miller's abstention were coded as positive articles. Newspaper articles that were unsupportive or critical of Simpson-Miller's abstention were coded as negative articles. Newspaper articles that were neither supportive nor unsupportive of Simpson-Miller's abstention were coded as neutral articles. A recurring issue/idea in each paragraph in the articles was coded under a theme or issue category. An exemplar is a typical or representative issue of the various theme/issue categories. A representation is the meaning-imbued content, knowledge, or image that arises from the social thinking, shared references, shared knowledge, shared understanding, shared meaning, and shared elaborations of discourse among societal groups about social objects in a cultural milieu. The newspaper articles were coded by the author and two trained independent coders. The inter-coder agreement .85, .87 and .89.

### Results

There were 62 newspaper articles. News stories accounted for 22.5% of the articles, columns 35.4%, letters to the editor 40.3%, and editorials 1.6%. The majority of *The Observer* columns (69.2%) supported Simpson-Miller, while only 44.4% of *The Gleaner* columns were supportive. Overall, the majority of columns in the sample (59%) supported Simpson-Miller. The majority of the letters in *The Gleaner* (87.5%) were negative towards Simpson-Miller, but 58.8% of the letters in *The Observer* supported the minister. Overall, the majority of letters (56%) did not support Simpson-Miller. The news stories in the two newspapers were neutral and the sole Editorial in *The Observer* was supportive of Simpson-Miller. In the overall sample of articles, 40.3% of the articles supported Simpson-Miller and 27.4 % did not support her. See Table 1.

**Table 1 • Support in the Newspapers for Simpson-Miller**

Type of article	Gleaner			Observer			Total	%
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative		
News	0	7	0	0	7	0	14	22.5
Columns	4	3	2	9	4	0	22	35.4
Letters	1	0	7	10	0	7	25	40.3
Editorial	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.6
Total	5	10	9	20	11	7	62	100

**Table 2 • Representations in the News Stories**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Exemplars</b>	<b>Representations</b>
Budget/state of fire service	102	34.2	Ministry under-funded by \$637m; possibly cut in staff; a unit broke down on the way to a fire	<i>In terrible condition</i>
MPs/Ministers' response	34	11.4	PNP MPs defeated resolution 26 to 15; KD shouted an expletive at her	<i>Portia under attack</i>
KSAC/JLP response	26	9	Expressed satisfaction; JLP backs Portia; JLP councillors protest in support of Portia	<i>JLP supports Portia</i>
Abstention	24	8	Responded out of conscience; her admirable move; declined to support her colleagues	<i>Action morally correct</i>
PNP/NEC's response	21	7	Party pressure/noticeable hostility; discussion quashed at NEC; PNP officials peeved	<i>PNP angry/hostile</i>
Portia's constituency	20	6.9	Shaky peace; pockets of stagnant water; images of poverty are stark	<i>Violent &amp; poverty stricken</i>
Govt./Cabinet response	16	5.3	To be handled delicately; no staff cuts; we were [not] unaware & insensitive to the problems	<i>Will treat service good</i>
Portia's popularity	14	4.7	The people like her; the most popular minister; winning the admiration of many Jamaicans	<i>The people love Portia</i>
PM's response	11	3.8	Refused to discuss the matter; will deal with Portia in own time and style	<i>PM in charge</i>
Collective responsibility	9	3	Gross violation of the principle; she should resign	<i>Collective responsibility is sacrosanct</i>
Westminster governance	7	2.3	Prime Minister is all-powerful	<i>PM is a dictator</i>
PNP leadership race	5	1.7	Portia most likely to succeed PJ; seen by many as the next PM; has compromised position as potential leader	<i>Portia strong contender</i>
Portia's ministry	4	1.3	No initial objection from Portia to her ministry's budgetary allocation	<i>Portia agreed with budget cuts</i>
Party unity	3	1.0	PNP keen to avoid nasty public quarrel	<i>Disunity in the PNP</i>
Party v national interest	2	0.6	Portia did not shore up party prospects and impede the people	<i>Portia put people first</i>
Total	298	100		

In the news stories 15 issue categories or themes were identified. The categories with the largest frequencies were the fire budget/state of the fire service (34.2%) with the representation that the service was in terrible condition. Responses of the PNP ministers/MPs totalled 11.4% with the representation that Portia was under attack; and the responses of the JLP/KSAC totalled 9% with the representation that the JLP supported Portia. The abstention was 8% of the reported themes with the representation that the abstention was morally correct. Three per cent of the themes dealt with collective responsibility with the representation that it is sacrosanct and 2.3 % of the themes dealt with Westminster governance with the representation that the PM was a dictator. See Table 2.

In the content of the columns, 22 themes were identified. The budget/state of the fire service accounted for 12.7 % of the issue categories with the representation that the service was in terrible condition. This was followed by the issue of collective responsibility at 11.8% with the representation that collective responsibility was sacrosanct. The issue of Simpson-Miller's popularity constituted 10.1% with the representation that she was loved by the people. These three issue categories each accounted for 10% of the frequency. All the other issue categories had frequencies of less than 10%. Westminster governance was 9.6% with the representation that the system was ineffective, the PNP leadership race was 8.7% with the representation that there was a leadership succession struggle. See Table 3.

In Table 4 there were 22 issue categories in the letters from the public. The largest issue category was collective responsibility at 13.4% with the representation that collective responsibility was sacrosanct. The second largest issue category was Simpson-Miller's popularity which accounted for 9.7% of the themes with the representation that she was loved by the people. This was followed by the issue category of the PNP leadership race which was 10.7% with the representation that Portia was not a leader. The frequencies of the other issue categories fell below 10%, including the budget/state of the fire service at 9.3% with the representation that the service was in terrible condition. The issue category of Westminster governance claimed 8.4% with the representation that the system was ineffective. See Table 4.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this article was to analyse how the newspapers represented Portia Simpson-Miller's abstention in Parliament and what the representations reveal about Jamaican politics. In the debate about the abstention *The Observer* newspaper was more supportive of Simpson-Miller than was *The Gleaner*. The data reveal that 64% of *The Observer* columns supported her compared to 44% of the columns published in *The Gleaner*.

**Table 3 • Representations in the Columns**

Issues	No.	%	Exemplars	Representations
Budget/state of fire service	45	12.7	Poor state of fire brigade; under-funding of the fire service	<i>Terrible condition</i>
Collective responsibility	42	11.8	Is a shackle; Cabinet liable for wrong doing; she should resign	<i>It is sacrosanct</i>
Portia's popularity	36	10.5	Polls have consistently shown Portia as the most loved politician	<i>People love Portia</i>
Westminster governance	34	9.6	Majority carried the vote; outmoded system; many called for reform; fiddle while Rome burns	<i>System ineffective</i>
PNP leadership race	31	8.7	Polls say she is the people's choice; struggle for PNP leadership; too many runners for PNP job	<i>Leadership struggle</i>
MPs/Ministers' response	28	7.9	In her face antics of colleague MPs; KD told Portia a bad word; KD's stress lines	<i>Govt. hostile to Portia</i>
The abstention	23	6.5	Turn her back on her party; her principled stance; her refusal to vote	<i>Party loyalty paramount</i>
Party versus national interest	13	3.6	Does collective party brotherhood supersede the national interest?	<i>National interest paramount</i>
PNP/NEC response	13	3.6	Campaign to discredit her; sheer ferocity; she has come under fire	<i>Portia under attack</i>
Portia's personality	12	3.3	Calm determination; exuberant style; warm personality; so charming; woman of courage	<i>Courageous and charming</i>
Portia's policy competence	11	3.1	Has more style than substance; lacks innovation; managed with some success	<i>Portia incompetent</i>
Citizen's response	11	3.1	Wide scale public support; the entire country kneels at her feet	<i>People support Portia</i>
Portia's social class	9	2.5	Doesn't know how to sip a glass of port; from humble background	<i>Portia is working class</i>
Government/Cabinet response	8	2.2	Left the country at risk of fire; Cabinet members losing their cool	<i>Incompetence and anger</i>
Party unity	8	2.2	PNP ready to start internal nastiness; not happy campers	<i>Intra-party struggle</i>
Portia's gender	6	1.6	Some people use the fact that she is a woman against her	<i>Gender discrimination</i>

JLP response	5	1.4	Jubilation on the Opposition side; standing ovation from Opposition	<i>Opposition support</i>
PM's response	5	1.4	PM needs to deal with this; PM has been trying to cool tempers	<i>PM cannot control situation</i>
Portia's constituency	5	1.4	It is starved of funds; underdeveloped	<i>In a terrible condition</i>
Political apathy	3	0.8	Nearly one half of voters did not vote in the last election; so much dissatisfaction	<i>Voters turned off</i>
Portia's ministry	3	0.8	She inherited a poorly managed ministry	<i>Don't blame Portia</i>
Portia's education	2	0.5	Not lettered as some want; has no brand name Ivy League education	<i>Portia not very educated</i>
Total	353	100		

**Table 4 • Representations in the Letters**

Issues	No.	%	Exemplars	Representations
Collective responsibility	32	13.4	She broke an old age principle; if she felt so strongly how come she is there? She had no responsibility to vote	<i>It is sacrosanct</i>
Portia's popularity	32	13.4	The most popular politician; universal acclaim greeted action; let's assess Portia's ratings	<i>People love Portia</i>
PNP leadership race	26	10.7	She doesn't have leadership qualities; if she leads the country will be in dire straits; Portia can't lead the way	<i>Portia is not a leader</i>
The abstention	21	8.6	Call a spade a spade; bold move; right decision; side with Opposition; irresponsible behaviour	<i>Parliamentary cohesion important</i>
Budget/state of the fire service	20	8.2	Cut in budget allocation; the service is barely limping along	<i>Terrible service</i>
Westminster governance	19	7.8	Her actions show workability of the Westminster system; huge bureaucracy; need for fundamental change	<i>System ineffective</i>
Portia's personality	16	6.6	Bold and courageous; independence of thought; captivating; fortitude and strength	<i>Charming and strong</i>

MPs/Ministers' response	14	5.7	MPs publicly berating Simpson-Miller; KD told her she was wrong; not so K.D.; KD Knight not alone	<i>PNP attack Portia</i>
Portia's policy competence	13	5.3	Never heard her with a plan for the poor; does she have the technical ability?	<i>Portia incompetent</i>
PNP/NEC response	11	4.5	PNP members are upset; comrades hurting; the PNP has been most discreet	<i>Party angry</i>
Party versus national interest	11	4.5	Serve the people before you serve the party	<i>People supreme</i>
Portia's constituency	10	4.1	She has failed; doesn't have concern for the poor; her constituency is in shambles	<i>Terrible condition</i>
PM's response	4	1.8	Told NEC that he will deal with Portia; "I will deal with her in my own time and style."	<i>PM in control</i>
JLP response	4	1.8	Where has Portia been for the last 15 years? Call on govt. to move beyond promises to the fire service	<i>Portia is a part of the problem</i>
Portia's ministry	3	1.2	Budget cut for Local Government Ministry	<i>Meagre budget</i>
Party unity	2	0.8	Tribal psychology expects unanimity	<i>PNP disunited</i>
Political apathy	1	0.4	The disconnected youth laud Portia	<i>Youth connect with Portia</i>
Portia's gender	1	0.4	As a woman I am pleased with her progress	<i>Women support Portia</i>
Portia's social class	1	0.4	Her own humble beginnings	<i>Portia is working class</i>
Govt./Cabinet response	1	0.4	Government fiddles while Jamaica burns	<i>Government incompetent</i>
Total	242	100		

The newspaper columnists were opinion makers in the debates about the abstention in the Jamaican public sphere. Support from *The Observer* was also evident in the letters it published about the abstention because 58% of these letters were supportive of Simpson-Miller, while 87.5 % of the letters published by *The Gleaner* did not support her. Moreover, the sole editorial which was supportive of Simpson-Miller was published by *The Observer*. See Table 1. The editorial is an index of the official support and position

a newspaper takes on societal issues. The newspaper editor possesses the autonomy to determine how the issues are framed, to alter what is written, and to determine which letters, news stories, and columns are published. Therefore, the editors and their line staff – the journalists – are important gatekeepers in the dissemination of information that is debated in the public sphere. The contents of the public debate about an issue in Jamaica are partly a function of what is carried by *The Gleaner* and *The Observer* newspapers and how the issues and arguments are depicted.

### **Representations in the news**

In their reportage, the newspapers represented the abstention (the object) in various ways as it moved from the confines of the Jamaican Parliament to the public pages of the Jamaican newspapers. Representation and communication are at the heart of social knowledge because it is through the newspaper dissemination that the issue categories about the abstention were communicated to the Jamaicans in the diffusion phase, which provided the opportunities for Jamaicans to increase their social knowledge about politics in Jamaica. The issues in the diffusion phase of knowledge-production are dealt with below.

**The news content:** There are 15 issue categories in the news content. The information and opinions provided the bases for the shared social understandings of the abstention through which competing versions of the Jamaican political world were established. The shared knowledge defined political reality for the Jamaicans who read *The Jamaica Gleaner* and *The Observer* newspapers and these representations structured how they talked about the abstention as a social object. In reporting on the abstention, the news stories framed Simpson-Miller's decision as a function of her conscience, which generated public admiration for her. The socially shared understanding is that the abstention is morally correct. The most frequent issue category of news reported was the budget/state of the fire service which depicted the budget as under-funded and the fire service as deplorable. The frequency of the budget/state of the fire service issue category in the content of communication suggests that this issue category was salient in driving the public discourse.

The discussion of the issue category of Simpson-Miller's ministry in the debate suggested that although she argued in support of her ministry in Parliament, Simpson-Miller, as a government minister, was party to the budget cuts, having agreed to these in an earlier governmental decision making arena. The representation is that collective responsibility is sacrosanct. Given the conventions of Westminster, the Parliamentary and ministerial colleagues of Simpson-Miller expected her to abide by the agreements arrived at in inter-ministerial negotiations and the decision



making arenas of Cabinet and party. Therefore, the social construction of collective responsibility articulated by Simpson-Miller's critics was that her action was a violation of a Parliamentary convention which demanded her immediate resignation from the Government.

The news reports depicted Simpson-Miller's constituency as poverty-stricken and violent. However, Simpson-Miller was presented by her supporters as popular, and many people expected her to become the next PM. On the other hand, Simpson-Miller's critics argued that by abstaining Simpson-Miller had damaged her chances of winning the upcoming PNP leadership race. The social commonalities were that she was a strong contender in the PNP leadership race. The PNP tried to create a unity image to counter the negative representations of the party's response to Simpson-Miller which was framed as pressure, anger, and hostility. The Government's response was constructed as sensitivity to the fire service difficulties and care in handling the abstention. The depiction of the PM's response was that he was in control because he exercised strategic silence with the sole caveat that he would deal with the matter. Party supporters and the public expect the PM to quell quarrels among Cabinet ministers in the service of governmental unity and societal stability.

The responses of Simpson-Miller's colleague MPs and ministers were reported as their defeat of the Opposition motion in Parliament and their verbal attacks against Simpson-Miller. The consensual and socially shared references are that party loyalty and Parliamentary cohesion are paramount. The acrimonious attacks against Simpson-Miller reveal that it is of critical importance that ministers in the Westminster system delicately and strategically balance the demands of their party, their constituency, and their ministerial portfolio in dealing with policy decisions. Unlike Simpson-Miller's PNP colleagues, the Opposition's response was framed as support for and satisfaction with Simpson-Miller's action. These news stories which accounted for 22.5% of the total articles about the abstention made up the content of communication that set the stage for the larger public discourse. Social representation theory posits that in the content and meanings of the representations appropriated by the columnists there was mutual transformation between this knowledge and the individual columnists in the positions they took in the public discourse as representatives of their social groups.

**The column content:** The themes in the columns were all related because there existed some common points of reference on the abstention along with the points of variance which sparked a debate about the governance of the Westminster system in Jamaica. The content of the columns represented important sites in the public sphere where the salient issues and ideas were developed, argued and contested. The columns accounted for 35.4 % of the



articles dealing with the abstention – a 13% increase over the news stories. There were 22 issue categories in the columns which constituted a 46.6% increase over the issue categories reported in the news stories. See Table 3. The period that follows the circulation of ideas is the post-diffusion phase in which the debate among the columnists started to create a network of meanings that were read by the public which influenced their political reality. The most frequent issue category mentioned by the columnists was the budget/state of the fire service because it was the most salient issue in their discourse which was a response to the news reports. The budget/state of fire service is also the most frequent issue category reported in the news. The particular framing of these issues was not only a product of the columnists' social thinking guided by their beliefs and experiences, but also information that the columnists deemed important to the Jamaican public.

All of these opinion makers acknowledged that there was a lack of funding and that the fire service was in a bad state. This commonality does not necessarily suggest that there was total agreement among the columnists, but that the same knowledge was shared among them. The columnists were divided over the issue of collective responsibility. Some columnists argued that the minister should resign, while others voiced the opinion that the minister was not a prisoner to the principle of collective responsibility, unless the principle served the national interest. The socially shared elaboration is that collective responsibility is sacrosanct in Westminster.

The columnists who took a neutral position framed the abstention as an indication of Simpson-Miller's refusal to vote, but her critics reframed the abstention as a betrayal of the PNP and the national interest. The columnists who supported Simpson-Miller countered that the abstention is a virtue. The arguments about the abstention also triggered debates about the quality of governance. The supporters of Simpson-Miller criticized Westminster by depicting it as an archaic system which should be reformed, and her detractors argued that she was undermining the system. The socially shared meaning is that Jamaica needs good governance. The outmoded political system was blamed for political apathy, especially among the youth in Jamaica. The blaming of Westminster is contrary to the underlying assumptions that Westminster naturally engenders good governance. The violence arising from political competition and the garrison communities' undermining of democracy, the pork barrel politics, political corruption and poor policy solutions in Jamaica were some of the reasons which spawned the Stone report (1989). Recall that the report suggested the Capitol Hill model as the alternative. The reasons for suggesting an alternative to the Westminster system in the Stone report are socially shared knowledge about the negatives of Westminster politics in Jamaica.

In the fizz of dialogue, the critics of Simpson-Miller highlighted her limited level of education, her alleged lack of policy competence and the poor state of her constituency, and ignored her popularity. Simpson-Miller's supporters countered that the attacks occurred because of her grassroots origins, and because she did not display middle-class values and behavioural styles. Simpson-Miller's supporters also argued that she inherited a poorly run ministry and that she managed with some success, and was extremely popular with the people, cared about them and had an attractive personality despite being a victim of patriarchal dominance. The consensual and socially shared reference among Simpson-Miller supporters was that she was charismatic and was loved by the people, while the polemical commonalities among her critics was that she did not possess leadership qualities.

The columnists who supported Simpson-Miller also argued that the response of her colleagues was a function of disunity in the PNP because the party leader, Percival J Patterson, was stepping down and Simpson-Miller was the front runner to lead the party. Simpson-Miller was attacked by colleague ministers and party members who launched a campaign to discredit her, but she was buffered by the widespread support of the Jamaican people, her seniority as a Minister of Government, and as one of the longest serving MPs. The consensual and socially shared understanding was that there was a struggle over leadership succession in the PNP and Portia was the front runner.

Popularity and ministerial seniority are two important prerequisites in Westminster to successfully withstanding attacks from Parliamentary and Cabinet colleagues, and Simpson-Miller possessed these prerequisites. The PM, Patterson, became the political referee in the party disunity that resulted from the fights over the abstention. Patterson's institutional resources gave him the political power to address the matter as he deemed appropriate. The institutional resources were that Patterson was a party leader with high standing and public popularity and with the most electoral victories as PM. The PM was able to calm the tempers of his ministers over time. The beneficiary of the PNP internal divisions appeared to be the Opposition JLP who, it was argued, was elated about the abstention and gave Simpson-Miller a standing ovation in Parliament.

**The letter content:** The contents of the letters/editorials revealed basically the same themes as the content of the columns. See Table 4. Similar issue categories and representations across sections of the newspapers over time suggest social elaborations which are shared by the Jamaican community because citizens find these elaborations culturally important. Letters to the editor accounted for 40.3% of the newspaper articles about the abstention. While the columnists are paid opinion makers, the letters provide an

opportunity for the average citizen to become involved in the debate within the confines of editorial prerogative. The published letters gave the minority voice of the average Jamaican citizen the opportunity to exert some amount of rhetorical and social influence in the public debates about the abstention.

The most frequent issue in the content of the letters was collective responsibility which was framed as a breach of principle for which Simpson-Miller's resignation was expected because of the social image that collective responsibility is sacrosanct. This is not surprising given the fact that the majority of the letters to the newspapers were critical of Simpson-Miller's abstention. It is possible that the majority of these letter writers were PNP supporters who were attacking Simpson-Miller in support of their political party because their non support for her was at variance with the consistently documented widespread popularity of Simpson-Miller in Jamaica. In the Westminster system the electoral fortunes of ministers are facilitated by the popular appeal of the party and the party leader, so partisan voters of the PNP in 2004 expected the ministers, including popular ones like Simpson-Miller, to be loyal to the party and the government.

The PNP leadership race was the second most frequent theme or issue category discussed. The stance taken was extremely negative against Simpson-Miller and went beyond previous representations by declaring that in addition to Simpson-Miller not having leadership qualities, Jamaica would be ruined if she became prime minister. The socially constructed reference was that Simpson-Miller did not have the requisite leadership qualities and capabilities. Despite this scathing attack on Simpson-Miller, the depictions of the fire service and the budget are in keeping with the representations of scarcity and bad service. Simpson-Miller's detractors could not deny the characterizations that the fire service was under-funded and deplorable. Therefore, Simpson-Miller's supporters in the debate in the public sphere pointed to her popularity; the support for her abstention was represented as receiving national acclaim, and the abstention itself was characterized as the "right" thing to have done. Simpson-Miller's critics countered by framing the abstention as irresponsible behaviour, because party coherence in Parliament is an age-old convention of Westminster, and she sided with the Parliamentary opposition. The representation from the discourse is that party loyalty and Parliamentary cohesion are paramount in Westminster.

The scathing attack continued in keeping with the discourse about the poverty-stricken state of Simpson-Miller's constituency. Simpson-Miller was deemed a failure because it was argued that she was not a good constituency member/welfare officer who looked after the individual needs of her materially deprived constituents, nor a good local promoter who addressed the collective needs of the residents of South Western St Andrew.

They argued that these are the reasons why her constituency was in shambles, which meant she did not care for the poor. The critics of Simpson-Miller also argued that she did not possess the technical competence to develop her constituency and attract investments to Jamaica. These stinging criticisms are in keeping with the negative representations of her policy competence held by Simpson-Miller's critics in the columns. These negative representations of Simpson-Miller reveal that mass communication not only comprises the arguments of public authority and opinion leaders, but also the views, discussions, and conversations of the average citizen, because the media not only create representations, they also reflect representations.

In response to the criticism, Simpson-Miller's supporters pointed to the budget cuts in her ministry which hampered her, the yoke of her gender, the strength of her character, her warm personality, and the fact that she placed the national interest over the interest of the PNP. Similar arguments were presented by the columnists who supported Simpson-Miller. The socially shared and consensual understanding and meanings that arose from these social elaborations are that Simpson-Miller was charismatic, that national interest was paramount, and that Portia was a victim of gender discrimination. The majority of Simpson-Miller's supporters also argued that fundamental changes were needed in the political system. The two-party dominant Westminster system did not formulate economic efficiency by making the PNP and the JLP responsive to the needs of the Jamaican people. The deplorable state of the fire service was a case in point. Despite the reforms to the system – like the creation of the Public Accounts Committee, the Integrity Commission, the Charter of Rights, the Electoral Advisory Committee – and the acceptance of international election observers, Westminster, in its Jamaican manifestation, could not solve the national problem of the under-funded and ailing fire service, among other problems. However, one of Simpson-Miller's supporters took the competing position that the abstention revealed the Westminster system was working in Jamaica. This variance means that among the letter writers who supported Simpson-Miller there was no unanimity on the representation that the Westminster system was “ineffective”. Therefore, even among members of a group who support a particular social position on a public issue, there is relative variation or heterogeneity of the position. Representation theory argues that the positions these supporters took was anchored in their values and belief systems derived from their political socialization in the Jamaican political culture.

Similar to the meaning-imbued content in the news stories, there was the understanding that the PNP comrades were upset with Simpson-Miller, which created the socially shared and integrated knowledge that there was disunity in the PNP. Some PNP members tried to counter this

widely shared social understanding of the PNP's response by arguing that the party was discreet in how it dealt with Simpson-Miller in the service of party unity, which demanded unanimity. The supporters of Simpson-Miller highlighted the berating she received at the hands of her PNP ministerial and Parliamentary colleagues. This is because among PNP MPs the abstention was viewed as dissent. The severity of an act of dissent in Parliament was a function of the perceived embarrassment it posed for the Patterson administration based on the intense media coverage it attracted and the perceived political advantage it gave to the Opposition JLP.

Simpson-Miller's critics argued that Minister Knight was correct in verbally attacking her, and that Knight needed public support for his action. In the letters the PM's response was framed as political referee which is the same way the PM's response was portrayed in the news stories and columns. The continued portrayal of the PM as referee suggests that the letter writers' social thinking about the abstention was influenced by the information previously produced in the newspaper stories and columns. Prime Minister Patterson told the party that he would deal with the matter in his own time and style, which created a representation that the PM was in control. Despite the concentration of power in the office of the PM, Patterson could not discipline Simpson-Miller because her action received widespread public support and she was loved by the people. The response of the JLP that was socially articulated in the letters was negative and was a radical departure from the earlier position of the party that supported Simpson-Miller in the news stories and columns. The different stance between the news reports and columnists on the one hand and the letter writers on the other is a function of the fact that the letters used to code the response of the JLP were from publicly known, high-ranking JLP members (not holding elected office) who were criticizing Simpson-Miller outside of the formal JLP position taken in Parliament and the KSAC. Recall that although a social group may take a particular stance on a public issue, there is usually some heterogeneity among the members of the group because of their varying values, subjective experiences, and worldview.

This article has shown that social representation is useful for delineating the meaning-imbued images in the content of communication dealing with important and controversial issues in the Westminster system. A political psychology approach was used which applies the psychological theory of social representation to explain the political cognition and social thinking of political actors in Jamaica regarding Simpson-Miller's abstention in parliament. However, the limitations of using the content of communication in newspapers cannot be ignored. Newspaper reports are sometimes incomplete and inaccurate, so there are gaps in the representations. Not to mention the fact that newspapers have political agendas of their own,

and sometimes support political parties, and that reports carry with them strong biases. Also, a report is always just a 'story', and as such, it requires a perspective – one perspective, one voice. The writer stands in one particular place and shows you a picture from that angle. If he or she stood elsewhere, the picture would be different. In addition, the newspapers provide a snapshot of the evolving social object. It is useful in future research to look at how an object in the political system is depicted not only by newspapers, but also by radio, television, magazines, and the Internet. Multiple news sources allow for triangulation and the unpacking of the commonalities and variances in the various media representations. Representations are by nature dynamic, so it is also useful in future research to look at how the representations of the object changes over time and impacts cognition and political behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

Social representation theory argues that competing images are created from dialogic interaction about controversial societal issues which structure people's social reality and influence their behaviour. The Jamaican media is an important part of the society's public sphere. Simpson-Miller's abstention in Parliament became a controversial social object that was debated in the Jamaican media in general and the newspapers in particular because of the cultural norms of party loyalty and the age-old conventions of Westminster in the political culture. The representations are that collective responsibility, party unity, and cohesion of the government majority are paramount, but the supporters of change argued that the Westminster system needs to be reformed. Other representations were that Simpson-Miller is a popular and charismatic politician, and there was a leadership succession struggle in the PNP and the party leader must be very educated and the PM must have leadership qualities and capabilities. All of these competing images of the Jamaican political environment suggest that politics in Jamaica demand loyalty to the party, to the party leader, and to government over and above the national interest. Otherwise, politicians stand the risk of facing political attacks and character assassination from political colleagues. In addition, the party leader and PM must have policy competence and should not come from the working class. The Jamaican political culture and the tribalist interpretations of the conventions of Westminster make the system reportedly insufficiently responsive to the policy needs of the Jamaican people. There were calls for reform which was evident in the debate over Simpson-Miller's abstention in Parliament in support of the under-funded and deplorable fire service.

SRT argues further that the competing images held by the debaters are a function of their political socialization in Jamaica and these images reflect

not only their political cognition and social thinking but how they will behave politically.

The positive representations of Simpson-Miller articulated by her supporters were dominant in the societal debates in the public sphere up to two years after the abstention controversy, because Simpson-Miller succeeded P.J. Patterson as PNP leader and PM in 2006. Simpson-Miller staved off a fierce challenge in the PNP leadership race in 2006 from Peter Phillips who used the negative representations of Simpson-Miller discussed in this article in his campaign. Despite the popularity of their leader, the Simpson-Miller-led PNP was defeated by the JLP in the very close 2007 General Election. However, Simpson-Miller was successful against Peter Phillips in a challenge to her leadership of the PNP in 2008.

The success of Simpson-Miller in two PNP leadership races suggests that popular politicians in Jamaica can take a stance in support of their ministries or constituencies over their party and withstand the political attacks. Although this possibility and this example exist, PNP and JLP politicians continue to place the interests of their party over the interests of country.

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# An Epidemiological Study of Tuberculosis in the Gulf

David Achanfuo Yeboah

*This article examines one of the most potent communicable diseases in the Gulf, tuberculosis (TB). While the main subject matter is risk, the study also looks at morbidity, mortality, levels of detection and treatment of the disease. It focuses on the risk of being infected in the Gulf Cooperating Countries (GCC) of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The study found that the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis has been declining in the Gulf Cooperating Countries, except Qatar, and that the levels of detection and treatment have increased in many of the countries. The study concludes that, contrary to the existing belief and anecdotal evidence, the risk of contracting TB in the GCC is quite low.*

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, communicable diseases are assuming increasing importance both in terms of morbidity (disease) and mortality (deaths). Communicable diseases are the principal causes of deaths in many countries around the world. Communicable diseases incapacitate millions of people every year and, while much of this incapacitation is usually temporary, productivity is, by and large, adversely affected. The effect of communicable diseases on productivity is often measured in terms of years of life lost as a result of the incidence and prevalence of communicable diseases. The Arabian Gulf is one geographical region where anecdotal evidence suggests that not only do communicable diseases thrive but they substantially impact on productivity.

According to the World Health Organization (2003), all the Gulf Cooperating Countries (GCC) incurred productivity losses as a result of communicable diseases. For example, the Organization reported that, in 2002, the Years of Life lost due to communicable diseases were 10, 18, 24, 16,

22 and 12 for Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) respectively. Oman recorded the highest Years of Life lost, while the UAE recorded the lowest. The prevalence of communicable diseases and their impact in the Gulf presupposes a need to examine some of the leading communicable diseases in detail, hence the rationale behind this study. Besides, the Gulf region is under-represented in the literature on communicable diseases. Two of the most prominent communicable diseases in the world are tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. These diseases are also present in the Gulf and, in this first article in the series of investigations into communicable diseases in the Gulf, the focus is on tuberculosis.

## **THEORY**

A number of health theories exist in the public health literature. Theory is fundamental to policy formulation, service provision and programme development, and covers both preventative and curative health care. Consumer based theories tend to emphasize health communication, social marketing, and a focus on the consumers of health services (McKenzie and Smeltzer, 2001). Consumer based theories are particularly important for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, albeit they also have massive relevance for chronic diseases. The underlying theme is the consumer is the main focus of service development and delivery and so on. Sometimes, consumer based theories are reported as population based models as both approaches tend to focus on the population as the ultimate beneficiary of the health programmes.

Closely related to consumer based theories is the theory of ethics in health care. Proponents of ethics argue that language, culture and cultural practice especially norms and values and related ethical issues should be given adequate recognition in health care (see, e.g., Seedhouse, 1998). According to the ethics theories, the provision of health services should be consistent with the norms, values, perceptions and cultural practices of the population consuming the health services (Yeboah, forthcoming). The development and delivery of health care together with programme evaluation and research should be sensitive to the values of the society, including all confidentiality and privacy requirements, existing laws and beliefs.

Theories of equity propose that issues of equity in health care should be an integral or essential component of the whole process of modernization of health systems. The issues of equity, access and affordability of health care are increasingly assuming greater importance throughout the world. Disparities in health status among population subgroups within and across countries have resulted in various health advocacy groups demanding equality and fairness in service provision and control of health care costs.

Goals based theories in health care emphasize the attainment of stated goals as the ultimate measure of the success of health systems. These theories have a central desire to achieve results as measured by the attainment of stated health goals and objectives. Most health systems have performance measures and the goals based theories propose that the provision of health services should strive to achieve all goals and objectives within stated time frames.

Funding based theories, as the name suggests, emphasize the need for adequate health funding in all societies. Funding is seen as the sine qua non for successful health systems. In other words, no health system should be expected to function effectively and efficiently without adequate funding. Funding theories provide a useful guide during these times of increasing demand for health care and limited resourcing of health systems.

There is a new but growing school of thought which emphasizes the locality of service delivery as central to successful health systems. Proponents of place based health theories propagate that the population, service availability, infrastructure, medical facilities and health workforce, economic situation and the other characteristics of the locality should be the most important features in service provision and should be given the greatest recognition and emphasis (Yeboah, 2005). The other key attribute of place based theories is demand. While service provision is not able to match service demand in virtually all societies, place based theories argue for consideration of demand for services in health planning and service provision.

Finally, epidemiological theories propagate the central importance of understanding disease as an effective means of controlling it and improving health through service provision. The epidemiological approach works through the scientific collection and analysis of health data using various epidemiological measures, and the inclusion of health data in health care and health service planning, development and provision. This theme is the focus of this study, which uses epidemiological analysis to examine tuberculosis in the Arabian Gulf.

## **A BRIEF REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES**

Not much epidemiological literature exists on tuberculosis in the Arabian Gulf, and this was another motivating factor and underlying rationale for this study. Prominent among the few studies are the following: Dissanayake et al. (2001) undertake an epidemiological study of the Al Ain District of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. This retrospective study covers the period 1995-2000. The interesting findings include an average incidence of 7.1%, over 3 times higher than the 2.15 recorded for the 1983-1992 period. The study reports further that the highest incidence during

the 1997-2000 period occurred in the health care facilities servicing the local Emirati population and long term residents. This is an interesting finding because of the general belief in the Gulf region suggesting that tuberculosis is mainly brought in by the foreign population.

Akhtar and Mohammad (2008) examine seasonal patterns in pulmonary tuberculosis among migrants entering Kuwait for work. They acknowledge the paucity of data on the seasonal variations in pulmonary tuberculosis in Kuwait and other developing countries, and analyse monthly data on the diagnosis of tuberculosis among migrant workers entering Kuwait from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2006. The study finds an incidence rate of 198 per 100 000 migrant population during the 10-year study period. Using chi square goodness of fit test, it finds that there was no significant difference between the observed frequencies and fitted simple harmonic curve. Seasonality explained 55% of the variance in the rate of tuberculosis cases among the migrant population.

In another study of tuberculosis in Kuwait, Abdul-Ghaffar et al. (1998) undertake a clinico-pathological review of abdominal tuberculosis in the Ahmadi geographical area of Kuwait. The study examines the files of all the in-patients of the hospital with abdominal tuberculosis during the 15-year period 1981-1996 and finds that (i) young adults were the predominant group, and (ii) non Arab Asians recorded the highest frequency, while (iii) the local Kuwaitis recorded the lowest frequency. These findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence suggesting that in most GCC countries tuberculosis is brought in by foreigners, albeit the disease has a marked presence among the local populations. The study finds laparoscopy to be a helpful diagnostic tool for abdominal tuberculosis, and recommends the method for use by other practitioners.

In 2001 Alsoub and Alousi examine military tuberculosis in Qatar by defining the demographic, clinical and laboratory features and methods of diagnosis. Consistent with the norm, the study finds the most common symptoms were fever, cough, night sweats, weight loss and sputum production. The study further finds that trans-bronchial biopsy was diagnosed in 1 of 2 patients, bone marrow biopsy in 45%, liver biopsy in 50% and lymph node biopsy in 100% of cases. The study concludes that military tuberculosis was very common in Qatar, especially among foreign workers.

Al-Marri's study (2001) determines incidence rates and the effectiveness of the expatriate screening programmes on paediatric tuberculosis in Qatar. Focusing on the population aged 0-14 years, the study performs a state wide, population based retrospective epidemiological analysis of all causes of tuberculosis. An interesting finding is that there was a decrease in childhood tuberculosis case notification, and that this decrease correlated

with foreign born children, older children and the implementation of the expatriate screening programmes in 1986. The study concludes that the rate of paediatric tuberculosis was high in Qatar and recommends continuation of the BCG vaccination at birth.

Al-Maniri et al. (2007) set out to investigate trends in tuberculosis in Oman during the period 1981-2005. This Omani study focuses on the interrelationships between the incidence of tuberculosis and the socio-economic characteristics of the population. The study finds that during the period 1981-1993, the tuberculosis notification rate declined by 15% compared with just 3.6% in the following years. The study also makes the disturbing finding that tuberculosis notification declined by 85% during the preceding 25 years, but that the decline was slower in the last 10 years.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

The purpose of this article is to examine the incidence, prevalence and the risk of acquiring tuberculosis in the Gulf region, focusing particularly on the Gulf Cooperating Countries (GCC as they are usually called). The article also examines detection and treatment rates as well as mortality from tuberculosis in those countries. The objective is to throw more light on the subject, provide useful insights, and increase understanding of the epidemiology of the disease in those countries. While the disease is rife in the region – affecting both locals and expatriates – studies on diseases in the Gulf are conspicuously missing in the literature.

### ***Sources of data and methodologies***

The data used in this study have come from the statistical sources of the World Health Organization. The methodologies involve epidemiological analyses of data and the computation of epidemiological measures such as incidence and prevalence rates, risk indicators, mortality, detection and treatment rates. These computations and analyses increase the existing knowledge and understanding of tuberculosis in the region.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are summarized under the broad headings of population, morbidity, risk, mortality, detection and treatment. The population of any country has the potential to acquire any diseases prevailing in the country. The population is also the ultimate beneficiary of any programme including treatment or therapeutic programmes available in that country (Yeboah, 1998). Thus the study examines the population of the GCC in terms of their population sizes. The findings on morbidity concentrate on incidence, prevalence and risk associated with tuberculosis, while the mortality findings look at mortality from tuberculosis for the



population which is not positive to HIV/AIDS (HIV/AIDS tends to exacerbate mortality from TB). These epidemiological analyses are followed by a discussion of levels of detection and treatment.

## Population

Member countries of the GCC have a total population of over 35 million. Table 1 shows the total population of the Gulf Cooperating Countries. Saudi Arabia recorded the largest population size of 24.2 million in 2006, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) 4.2 million, Kuwait 2.8 million, Oman 2.5 million, Qatar 0.8 million and Bahrain 0.7 million.

**Table 1 • Population size, GCC, 2006 (000s)**

Country	Population
Bahrain	731
Kuwait	2 770
Oman	2546
Qatar	871
Saudi Arabia	24 175
UAE	4 248
Total	35 341

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

## Morbidity

With regard to morbidity analysis, the study examines three essential areas, namely incidence, prevalence and the risk of getting infected with tuberculosis in the GCC.

### *Incidence Rates*

Table 2 shows the Incidence Rates of TB in the GCC from 1990 to 2006. Incidence Rates refer to new cases of TB and indicate the level at which residents are being infected with the disease. In 1990 Bahrain recorded the highest Incidence Rate of 78 per 100 000 population. This means that out of every 100 000 residents of Bahrain in 1990, 76 became infected with the disease for the first time (new cases). The second highest Incidence Rate was recorded by Qatar (60 per 100 000 population), followed by Kuwait (45), Saudi Arabia (43), UAE (30), and Oman (26 per 100 000 population). Oman therefore recorded the lowest Incidence Rate of TB in the GCC in 1990. The Mean Incidence Rate for the GCC as a whole in 1990 was 46.7 per 100 000 population.

**Table 2 • Incidence Rates of TB, GCC, 1990-2006 (per 100 000 population)**

Country	1990	2000	2006	% Change 1990-2006
Bahrain	76.0	47.0	41.0	46.1
Kuwait	45.0	28.0	24.0	46.7
Oman	26.0	12.0	13.0	50.0
Qatar	60.0	66.0	60.0	0.0
Saudi Arabia	43.0	47.0	44.0	-2.3
UAE	30.0	18.0	16.0	46.7
Mean	46.7	36.3	33.0	29.3

Source: Computed from WHO data

A new pattern emerged in the Incidence Rates in 2000. Qatar recorded the highest Incidence Rate of 66 per 100 000 population, overtaking Bahrain. The second highest Incidence Rate was recorded by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (47 per 100 000 population), followed by Kuwait, UAE and Oman recording 28.0, 18.0 and 12.0 per 100 000 population respectively. Qatar continued to record the highest Incidence Rate in 2006 followed in descending order by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE and Oman (Table 2). Thus, Qatar recorded the highest Incidence Rates in both 2000 and 2006 – having been the second highest in 1990; and Oman continued to record the lowest Incidence Rates in 2000 and 2006 – having recorded the lowest in 1990 as well. The point must be made that Qatar actually recorded an increase in Incidence Rates between 1990 and 2000, from 60 per 100 000 population in 1990 to 66.0 per 100 000 population in 2000. While Saudi Arabia also recorded an increase in Incidence Rates, the increase from 43 to 47 per 100 000 population was comparatively smaller.

It is significant to note that with the exception of Qatar where the rates remained stagnant (0.0) and Saudi Arabia where the Incidence Rate increased slightly by 2.3%, most member countries of the GCC recorded large declines in Incidence Rates of TB. The highest decline in Incidence Rates occurred in Oman (50.0 %), followed by the UAE and Kuwait (46.7% each) and Bahrain (46.1%). During the same 16-year period from 1990 to 2006, the mean Incidence Rate for the GCC as a whole declined by 29.3%, a positive indication of the successful efforts to control the disease in the GCC.

### ***Prevalence Rates***

The difference between Incidence Rates and Prevalence Rates is that the former refer to new cases or new infections only while the latter cover all cases or the total number of infections (both new and existing cases). Prevalence Rates are usually higher than Incidence Rates basically because, by definition, Prevalence Rates include Incidence Rates. Prevalence Rates of TB in the GCC during the period 1990 to 2006 are presented in Table 3.

***Table 3 • Prevalence Rates of TB, GCC, 1990-2006 (per 100 000 population)***

<b>Country</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>% Change 1990-2006</b>
Bahrain	120.0	57.0	45.0	62.5
Kuwait	89.0	32.0	25.0	71.9
Oman	40.0	13.0	14.0	65.0
Qatar	71.0	78.0	73.0	-2.8
Saudi Arabia	68.0	67.0	62.0	8.8
UAE	47.0	27.0	24.0	48.9
Mean	72.5	45.7	40.5	44.1

Source: Computed from WHO data

A glance at Table 3 reveals that the patterns and trends in Incidence Rates recorded during the 1990-2006 period were similar to the patterns and trends in Prevalence Rates in the GCC during the same period. Bahrain recorded the highest Prevalence Rates in 1990 (120 per 100 000 population) followed by Kuwait (89), Qatar (71), and the UAE (47 per 100 000 population). Oman recorded the lowest Prevalence Rate in 1990 (40 per 100 000 population). The mean Prevalence Rate for the GCC as a whole in 1990 was 72.5 per 100 000 population.

As in the case with Incidence Rates, Qatar leaped to the front and recorded the highest Prevalence Rate in 2000. The only exception in the pattern is that Saudi Arabia also overtook Bahrain and recorded the second highest Prevalence Rate in that year. Qatar and Saudi Arabia recorded Prevalence Rates of 78 and 67 per 100 000 population respectively compared with 57 per 100 000 population for Bahrain. Consistent with the Incidence Rates, Oman recorded the lowest Prevalence Rate in 2000, just 13 per 100 000 population (Table 3). All the countries studied recorded declining Prevalence Rates during the 1990-2000 decade, except Qatar which recorded an increase of about 9.9%. In epidemiological terms, an increase of almost

10% is significant and worthy of mention, especially during a period when the rates for surrounding or neighboring countries were on the decline. The mean Prevalence Rate of TB in 2000 for the GCC was 45.7 per 100 000 population, a decline of 37% during the 1990-2000 decade.

The prevalence of TB in the GCC declined generally during the 16-year period from 1990 to 2006. All the countries studied recorded declining rates during the period, except for Qatar which again recorded a small increase of 2.8% in the TB Prevalence Rate. Saudi Arabia recorded a slight decline of 8.8%, while Kuwait recorded the highest decline of a massive 71.9 %, followed by Oman (65.0%), Bahrain (62.5%) and the UAE (48.9%). The mean Prevalence Rate for the GCC as a whole declined steadily from 72.5 per 100 000 population in 1990 to 45.7 per 100 000 population in 2000 and 40.5 per 100 000 population in 2006, a decline of over 40% between 1990 and 2006. Prevalence Rates are very useful epidemiological tools for measuring the burden of disease, with implications for resource allocation and policy and programme development (see also Rothman, 2002)

## **Risk**

Risk refers to the probability or chance of being infected with TB. The logical question is “what is the risk of getting TB if you are a resident of one of the GCC?” Absolute Risk and Odds Ratio are used in this article to investigate the risk of becoming sick with TB. Absolute Risk is the risk to the whole population of each country (see also Moon et al., 2000). In empirical terms, the Absolute Risk is usually equal to the Incidence Rate. Odds simply are the chances that a resident of the GCC may become infected with TB, measured by a ratio of the probability of becoming sick with TB to the probability of surviving the disease (i.e. not catching TB).

### ***Absolute Risk***

Absolute Risk or the probability of becoming sick with TB is indicated in Table 4. It is evident that Absolute Risk was generally low for the GCC in 2006, with Oman (.0001) and the UAE (.00016) recording the lowest risks. With an Absolute Risk of .0002, Kuwait also recorded a very low risk. Qatar (.0006), Saudi Arabia (.0004) and Bahrain (.0004) recorded the highest Absolute Risk in the GCC. These low Absolute Risks mean that, with regard to the whole population of each country, the risk of becoming ill with TB is very low.

**Table 4 • Absolute Risk and Odds Ratio, GCC, 2006**

Country	Absolute Risk	Probability of Surviving	Odds	Odds Ratio
Bahrain	.0004	.9996	.0004/1-.0004	0.0004
Kuwait	.0002	.9998	.0002/1-.0002	0.0002
Oman	.0001	.9999	.0001/1-.9999	0.0001
Qatar	.0006	.9994	.0005/1-.0006	0.0006
Saudi Arabia	.0004	.9996	.0004/1-.00041	0.0004
UAE	.0002*	.9998	.0002/.1-.0002	0.0002*

Source: Computed from WHO data

\*Rounded from the lower figure of .00016

### ***Odds Ratio***

As shown in Table 4, the odds of getting TB in the GCC are very low, with Oman, Kuwait and the UAE recording comparatively lower Odds Ratios. While the Odds Ratio was still very low in the other countries, Qatar (0.0006), Bahrain (0.0004) and Saudi Arabia (0.0004) recorded higher Odds Ratios in 2006. In epidemiology, when the number of new cases of the disease is small, the Absolute Risk is low and the Odds Ratio tends to equate the Absolute Risk. This is especially true of low incidence and rare diseases which tend to record small incidence levels (see, e.g., Moon et al., 2000).

### ***Mortality***

Mortality or deaths due to TB are shown in Table 5. Deaths due to TB in the HIV-negative population are used in this analysis because TB has become part and parcel of HIV patients and many HIV-positive patients are acquiring and dying from TB (see, e.g., Population Council, 2005). Again, the rates are low, with Bahrain recording the highest mortality rate of 9 deaths per 100 000 population in 1990, followed by Qatar (6 per 100 000 population) and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (5 per 100 000 population each). Consistent with the lowest risk found in the UAE and Oman, the two countries recorded the lowest TB caused mortality in 1990, 3 and 2 deaths per 100 000 population respectively. Needless to say, most TB positive foreigners are deported, thereby reducing potential deaths in the Gulf.

With the exception of Qatar and Saudi Arabia which recorded minor increases in mortality rates, all the other countries witnessed declining mortality due to TB in 2000. In Qatar the rate increased from 6 to 7 per 100 000 population while in Saudi Arabia, the increase was from 5 to 6 per 100 000 population during the 1990-2000 period. Kuwait recorded the highest decline (albeit still small) from 5 in 1990 to 3 per 100 000 population

in 2000, followed by Oman (from 2 to 1 per 100 000 population) and the UAE (from 3 to 2 per 100 000 population) during the same period.

**Table 5 • Mortality due to TB among HIV Negative Population, GCC, 1990-2006 (per100 000 population)**

Country	1990	2000	2006	% Change 1990-2006
Bahrain	9	5	4	55.6
Kuwait	5	3	2	60.0
Oman	2	1	1	50.0
Qatar	6	7	7	-16.7
Saudi Arabia	5	6	5	0.0
UAE	3	2	2	33.3

Source: Computed from WHO Data

In 2006, further declines occurred in most of the countries. In Bahrain mortality from TB declined from 5 per 100 000 population to 4 per 100 000 population between 2000 and 2006. Kuwait recorded a decline from 3 to 2, and Saudi Arabia from 6 to 5 per 100 000 population during the 6-year period from 2000 to 2006. There was no change in mortality rates from TB in the UAE, Qatar and Oman during the 2000-2006 period (Table 5). Improvements in mortality are best assessed in the % change from 1990 to 2006. Kuwait experienced the highest decline in mortality of 60.0%, a very substantial decline. Bahrain recorded the next highest (55.6%), followed by Oman (50.0%) and the UAE (33.3%). Saudi Arabia experienced no change in TB caused mortality in the HIV-negative population while Qatar recorded an increase in mortality of almost 17.0%.

## TB Detection

To ensure continuous and sustained decline in mortality due to TB, it is crucial that infections are detected as quickly as they occur to reduce spreading and enhance treatment and control. The proportion of TB cases detected in the GCC for 2000 and 2006 are shown in Table 6, indicating wide variations in the degree or extent of detection among the 6 countries constituting the GCC. In 2000, only 17% of TB cases were detected in Bahrain, the lowest detection level in the GCC in that year. Kuwait recorded the highest detection proportion (65 %) followed by Saudi Arabia (36%), Qatar (29%) and the UAE (27 %). There was no reliable data for Oman. By 2006 changes in the proportion of TB cases detected emerged, with the UAE recording the lowest detection percentage in the GCC (only 17%).

Kuwait continued to witness the highest detection level of 95%, clearly very outstanding compared with the other countries (Table 5). The proportion of cases detected in Bahrain jumped dramatically from 17% in 2000 to a massive 72% in 2006, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in that year. Qatar and Saudi Arabia detected 52% and 40% of the TB cases respectively in 2006.

**Table 6 • TB Detection, GCC, 2000 – 2006 (%)**

Country	2000	2006	% Change 2000-2006
Bahrain	17	72	323.5
Kuwait	65	95	46.2
Oman	-	-	-
Qatar	29	52	79.3
Saudi Arabia	35	40	14.3
UAE	27	17	-37.0

Source: Computed from WHO data

According to Table 6, Bahrain recorded a massive 323.5% increase in TB detection between 2000 and 2006. Given that TB cases cannot be treated unless and until they are detected, this increase in Bahrain is a very positive, useful and healthy development. The 2<sup>nd</sup> highest increase in the level of TB detection was recorded in Qatar (79.3%), followed by Kuwait 46.2% and Saudi Arabia (14.3%), while the detection level declined in the UAE by 37.0%. Sight should not be lost of the fact that as recent as 2006, Kuwait detected 95% of all TB cases, one of the highest levels of detection in the world.

## **TB Treatment**

Throughout the world, it is often the practice to develop and implement curative therapy to control TB cases. The proportion of detected TB cases successfully treated in the GCC is found in Table 7. In 2000, Oman successfully treated 93% of all TB cases, the highest in the GCC in that year. Oman was followed by the UAE (74%), Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia (73% each) and Kuwait (69%). The lowest TB treatment success percentage was recorded in Qatar (66%).

In 2006, most of the countries recorded declining TB treatment success levels, but Bahrain recorded the highest TB treatment percentage of 93, followed by Oman (90%), Qatar (83%), and the UAE (73%). Apart from Bahrain and Qatar which recorded increases in TB treatment success levels,



**Table 7 • TB Treatment Success, GCC, 2000 – 2006 (%)**

Country	2000	2006	% Change 2000-2006
Bahrain	73	93	27.4
Kuwait	69	63	-8.6
Oman	93	90	-3.2
Qatar	66	83	25.8
Saudi Arabia	73	65	11.0
UAE	74	73	-1.4

Source: Computed from WHO data

all the other countries recorded lower TB treatment success levels in 2006 than they did in 2000 (Table 7). Not only did Bahrain record the highest TB treatment success percentage in 2006, the country also recorded the largest increase in treatment success between 2000 and 2006 (an increase of 27.4%). Qatar was closely behind with an increase of 25.8%. Saudi Arabia recorded the largest decline in TB treatment success of -11%, followed by Kuwait (-8.6%), Oman (-3.2%) and the UAE (-1.4%).

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to anecdotal evidence, the incidence and prevalence Rates of TB were found to be relatively low. The empirical data analysis in this study leads to the conclusion that the risk of acquiring TB as a resident of the GCC is very low despite anecdotal evidence and press reports suggesting otherwise. The steadily declining incidence and prevalence rates support the conclusion that preventive and curative measures put in place by the GCC Governments and relevant government and non government agencies might be working effectively. After all, as shown in Table 7, the proportion of TB cases that were successfully treated were relatively high in many countries during the study period, while the detection of TB also increased generally in the GCC. Three of the countries recorded increases in treatment rates between 2000 and 2006. The closeness of the Odds Ratio to the Absolute Risk means that the number of new cases is small and confirms further the conclusion that the risk of catching TB is very low in the Gulf.

Nonetheless, it is important to continue with the policies and programmes which individually and severally have worked to result in these low incidence, prevalence and risk levels, to avoid retrogressing to the high incidence and prevalence levels recorded decades ago. Policies such as quick isolation of TB sufferers must be continued unabated, and the humane policy of treating infected foreigners before they are deported is worthy of emulation and should be continued.

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