

PhD Thesis  
THE IMPACT OF FOUNDERS' MILITARY BACKGROUND ON  
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE  
By Moshe Margalit

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External Examiner's Review

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The thesis explores a rather complex question of the impact of the founder and leader's background, in this case military background, on the culture of the enterprise they establish. The question is posed through the lens of culture and follows the anthropological approach to investigate the chose filed of study. The specific focus of the study is start-ups in Israel set up by the ex-military founders coming from various areas of military service and structure.

The question and area of investigation is well justified and presented by a substantial literature review and further enriched by the author's personal experience.

#### Introduction

Discussion of the context for the investigation from a practical and theoretical perspective is well introduced and presented. The issue, problem and opportunity for the contribution to knowledge and practice is identified and its relationship with the context is clear. The author's personal objectives related to this dissertation are also clear and well linked to the methodology adopted.

The outline of the structure and key content is logical to the expectations of the PhD thesis.

#### Literature Review

The review of the literature is structured around these key themes:

1. Organisational culture,
2. The culture of military units and its diversity,
3. The influence of founders' backgrounds on the firms they establish,
4. Identity theory,
5. Total organisation theory,
6. Legitimacy theory.

In this chapter, the author argues that military service 'provides' servicemen with a set of values. And these servicemen carry these values with them once they become entrepreneurs and shape the culture of the organisations they set up. The imprinting of 'culture', both of the army on founders and founders on firms is presented as a sociological process by nature, and therefore studied it as such in this thesis.

The purpose of this research is to select one aspect/ dimension of cultural make up that is diversity and explore links between diversity in military culture and diversity in organisational culture through the founders' military service.

There is an articulate and in-depth evaluation and analysis of different theoretical views pertaining to each theme and key concepts that demonstrate excellent understanding of theoretical perspectives and their relationship to practice. There is also a wide-ranging selection of literature relevant to each theme and the research question presented in this chapter.

The chapter demonstrates the author's familiarity with key relevant literature in this field and the ability to conduct literature review appropriate for the doctoral level of study. While the breadth of the literature presented is impressive, the work could be improved by casting a more critical gaze on the issues raised and evaluating various concepts more closely. For example, the overview of literature on culture is quite detailed and presents a rather descriptive summary of ample perspectives on the topic. It would be helpful and indeed expected at this level of study to summarise and put together all these perspectives at some point and engage in a more critical evaluation of them. For example, what views and literature does the author find perhaps most appealing and wishes to enhance or extend in this research? While there is a list of questions other authors posed on the subject, the bullet point style of writing doesn't really reveal any heated debates that are present in this field (see for example Hofstede and Trompenaars exchanges).

Overall, the chapter would benefit from a synthesised section at the end which would also present the author's position in those debates. I would like to explore that aspect further during the viva and ask the author for his position in the field of all the literature reviewed.

#### Research Methodology

The chapter presents the context of this research in great detail and follows with the methodology and adopted research paradigm (interpretivism). The author demonstrates appropriate understanding of research design issues relating to the practical constraints and context of the research, which is justified by drawing on relevant methodology literature. The chapter demonstrates an excellent understanding of the key principles of research, evaluation and justification of the methods considered. There is a well developed approach to preparing and presenting the data that is appropriate to the methods used. The thesis adopted narrative research approach, based on interviews with companies' founders, which are veterans of substantial military service and the approach is well justified following an extensive discussion on the available research methods in the field.

There is evidence of a depth of analysis of the data presented that demonstrates critical interpretation appropriate to the focus of the investigation. The chapter also ends with the presentation and discussion around limitations of this research and the author's bias.

### Empirical results

Following a section on reliability and validity of this data (which would have been better placed in the research methodology section) the chapter presents the empirical results.

The results are presented in various sections, some following the theoretical models and perspectives adopted in this research and others by the aspect of the sample. The author also makes an attempt to identify commonalities and synthesise the data and some of the findings. The chapter is rich in quotes and reflections and presents a wealth of in-depth data for the reader. However, the key contribution or the answer to the research question is lost at times in the amount of data and detail. What could improve this chapter is a clearer introduction and more concise summary of the key themes and the logic the author used to present the findings. This is only presented at the end of the chapter as summary and key conclusions but some form of an introduction and a guide for the reader up front would improve the clarity of this chapter.

### Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

There is a well-developed, critical and analytical discussion that links key findings from the fieldwork to key theoretical views.

The recommendations and conclusions link to the investigation and are strongly supported by the analysis and findings. What could be improved is the distinction between contribution to knowledge and practice and the authors recommendations in these two spheres. At the moment they are both intertwined in one discussion however for the purposes of the thesis at this level of study, the contribution should be better fleshed out and presented with more clarity.

I consider the significance of this research to be appropriate for the doctoral level of study however what could be improved is the way it is presented and fleshed out more clearly to the reader. The contribution to knowledge and practice should be elaborated on ideally in separate paragraphs so that the significance of them is not lost on the reader. This is also an aspect I would like to discuss more closely with the author during the viva.

### Author's retrospective reflection

There is a coherent reflection of personal learning from the research process and personal learning.

### Presentation, structure and referencing

The written and visual presentation is very good overall with some sections having some small room for improvement in clarity of the structure.

### Expected topics and questions for discussion during the viva:

What is the author's position in the field of literature discussed in the thesis?

Closer inspection of the empirical data and identification of key themes and points that form the contribution of this research. What are the key takeaways that are truly novel and significant beyond this sample and context (generalisable findings)?

More succinct formulation of this research's contribution to knowledge: what theories and models does this research advance/ extend? What models/ theories does this work contradict/ argue against? What novel theoretical/ practical points is the author making which could be of publishable standard?

In my opinion, Moshe Margalit's doctoral thesis entitled "The impact of founders' military background on organisational culture" prepared under the scientific supervision of dr. hab. Maciej Lawrynowicz prof. nadzw. UEP at the Poznan University of Economics and Business fully complies with the legal requirements established for doctoral theses, specified in Article 13 of the Act of 14th March 2003 on academic degrees and academic title and degrees and title in art (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1789). The thesis offers an original contribution to knowledge and managerial implications pertaining to the subject of this work. The author demonstrates knowledge and understanding of relevant theories and literature appropriate for the doctoral level of study and the ability to conduct independent scientific research. In light of the above, I am requesting for the doctoral thesis of Moshe Margalit entitled "The impact of founders' military background on organisational culture" to be accepted and admitted for public defence/ PhD viva.

Dr Dorota Joanna Bourne

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

30 Sept 2020