

**‘Saying Sorry’:  
Pragmatics and the use of Positioning Theory  
in a Study of Apology Behaviour of Saudi  
and Australian Women**

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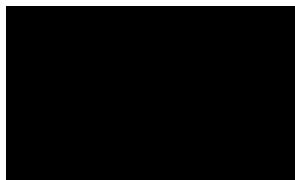
**Master of Applied Linguistics**  
University of Melbourne

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy, College of Arts and Education  
Victoria University Melbourne Australia

**2018**

## Declaration

I, Shatha Al Ali, declare that this thesis entitled, '*Saying Sorry*': *Pragmatics and the use of Positioning Theory in a Study of Apology Behaviour of Saudi and Australian Women* comprises only my original work towards the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and does not involve any material that has been already awarded for any degree or diploma in any university; nor does it involve any material that has previously been published or written by any other researcher, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. The total word count of this thesis disregarding tables, references and appendices is less than 100 000 words.



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Name

Friday, 8 June 2018

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Date

## **An Autobiographical Reflection**

When I was a child I used to be so active and full of life. I used to insist and cry for hours until my needs were granted. But, at the same time, I was a caring, helpful and exceptionally kind-hearted child. I made many sacrifices to make people around me happy. My dear mother taught me to be like a flower: though delicate can be so strong that no power on earth could stop it blooming anywhere.

My mother is my guiding star and the greatest role model ever. She got married when she was twelve years old. She sacrificed and endured long days of pain and sorrow just to make a better life for her children. According to her obligations as a married woman she missed a lot of classes but that did not affect her performance at school as a student and she was able to achieve positions such as the top of the class during her primary; intermediate and high school. However, she stopped her education after finishing the first year at Imam Mohammed Islamic University due to some private circumstances.

My mother, most importantly, instilled in me the real meaning of being a kind, tolerant and successful person whose faith would open all doors in front of her. I think that I am a unique copy of her character. Now it is my turn to try to pay her back for all her sacrifices by realising her wish for me to succeed in what she could not do, continuing my studies to the highest level and being a sophisticated Saudi woman-who has a high-class career.

I have always dreamt to be a teacher at a university level. I have been through many things waiting for my dreams. Magically and in a blink of an eye I could touch, smell and see my dreams laying softly in my hand shining like tiny fairies. Five years ago, I became a teaching assistant, a role that I was passionate about. I had been through a lot of obstacles waiting for my dreams to be fulfilled, but my

self-confidence led me to see that the realisation of my dreams lay in my own hands. I had never been as happy as I was when I knew that I had been chosen to be a teaching assistant at King Faisal University-College of Education for Girls. However, my happiness could not be compared to that of my mother, who, being unable to fulfil her wish of specialising in English language, does so now through me. She is, undoubtedly, the driving force behind my success. The whole world means nothing to me unless I see happiness shining in her beautiful eyes.

Today, I am a master's degree holder, from University of Melbourne, and a PhD candidate at Victoria University which makes me and my mother so proud. Though, she feels sad being away from her daughter, my dear mother always prays for me.

My life experience has taught me that life can be so tough and unrewarding if we live without paying attention to the importance of setting a goal. Achieving goals consolidates our intellectual maturity through challenge of personal responsibility for making hard life decisions. I feel satisfied that the goals I have set for myself over the past few years are pushing me to seize every single opportunity that presents itself, realising the real flavour of life.

Sometimes, we consider a lifetime-goal to be so difficult to attain; however, if we take a bird's eye view to visualise all its sides, it becomes manageable. Life is wonderful, full of opportunities and challenges; all we need is to understand it. My hopes and aspirations spring from my philosophy that '*nothing is impossible, everything is possible*' as long as we utilise all our abilities to realise our dreams.

Life is a precious gift where everything is possible. We have energies in here – in heart and mind – but we need to bring them to life. I will not say “to be or not to be” but rather “I will strongly be”. I believe that I have the ability to encounter rough winds, face-to-face like a wild flower, No one is able to bruise me.

Sometimes in life it just takes the influence of a single person to help one see oneself in a whole new light. For me this influence came from two very special college teachers and friends. A gorgeous teacher and friend, Mrs. Sumaiah

AlMubarak, was the first one. She was, and still is, a great source of support. She was the one who encouraged me to continue my study abroad and has been helpful in every unimaginable way. I told my brother, Mubarak, of the idea and he stood by me and gave me all kinds of support and accompanied me to an Australian universities exhibition in Saudi when I applied for my master program in Australia, as recommended by my second mentor, Ms Rania. I came to Australia accompanied by my dear brother, Mubarak, and my mother's prayers; although extremely sad, she did not prevent my departing. On completion of my MA strangely enough an even more impossible dream was realised: I was enrolled in a PhD program at Victoria University Melbourne.

My second inspirational teacher, Ms Rania, a PhD holder in English Literature from King Saud University, showed me the meaning of uniqueness and perfection. I work as a lecturer at King Faisal University. Since being enrolled there, as an undergraduate student majoring in English Language and Literature, I have had an interest in pragmatics; in particular, I have always been concerned with apologies in everyday interaction. The die was cast!

## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, I give thanks to Allah for granting me my Dream, completing my PhD thesis- this dream that is part of my heart and soul.

I feel such great gratitude to the following people for their assistance and support. First and foremost, I would like to give my sincere and heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr Ian Ling for his invaluable advice, extensive support, great help, thoughtfulness and mostly his unique kindness and great concern. He has not been only a supervisor but a beautiful and exceptional being. Thanks also go to my co-supervisor Dr Helen Borland for her valuable advice and feedback. Also, I am thankful to Johnny Ko at VU International for his help and great support. Moreover, I am grateful to the College of Education at Victoria University for the exceptional program and sophisticated staff who draw success lines for their students, and especially for their support in issuing the PhD offer in rapid time, as I requested.

My thanks also go to the Head of King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia, for his support and great concern for my studies. Also, I would like to thank the participants who took part in this study significantly; as well, I offer special thanks to all the Melbournians who have been helpful to me during my life in Melbourne.

Sincere thanks also go to my colleagues; specifically, I am very honoured to give special thanks to Dr Mohammed Al Ghamdi, PhD in Linguistics for his help and extensive support, and for recommending Dr Ian Ling to be my supervisor; this was a critical step towards achieving my dream. I am also deeply grateful to Mr Yaser Al Saif, MA in Applied Linguistics, for his extraordinary support, unique kindness, heartfelt prayers and encouragement: he was always there.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my dear friends and colleagues in Saudi. I notably include Mrs Sumaiah Al Mubarak, who encouraged me to study abroad, for being always there for me and for her diamond heart and incredible love; Dr Rania Bin Dohaish, PhD in English Literature, for her kindness and encouragement; Mrs Waffa Al Ja'aferi for her tender heart and sincere prayers, and Dr. Maha Al Majed for her great support.

Moreover, heart-felt thanks go to all my amazing friends in Saudi, my best friend Masha'el Al Otaibi, Dalal Al Otaibi, Reham Adnan, Reem Al Noutaifi, Huda Al Sonai'a and her little daughters (Leen, Haneen and Lujain) and Shatha Al Mahmood; and in Melbourne, Rim Nour, Ryana Al Gahtani and her little girl, Dana; Manal Al Shimmari, Wafa Al Gahtani and her little boy, Abdulrahman; Esraa Alhuwaydi and her little daughter, Haya; Amal Al Shammari, Mona Al Dossary, Sahar Al Khaibari, Nada Al Harbi and Mona Al Otaibi for their love and kindness.

Furthermore, and most importantly, I would like to thank the heart of my heart, Hessa, my mother, for her patience, being away from her daughter for almost seven years, and for her heartfelt prayers, sweetest love and exceptional care. I want to apologise to her for every single tear she shed every time she missed me, and for every second she worried about me.

I am incredibly thankful for my soul, the King of Kindness, my dearest (older) brother, Mubarak, who stood by me all through my studies in Australia, during my master's degree, for his unique love and exceptional kindness and support. Also, I am so grateful to my second brother for his sweet soul, love and support, Saad, who accompanied me during my PhD journey, who left his life behind in Saudi to help me reach my dream.

I am also thankful to my father who passed away in the middle of my PhD journey for his prayers and support and for choosing my mother as his wife: I am so lucky to be her daughter. Also, I would like to thank my dearest sisters (Malak, Fatimah, Muneera, Haya, Rehan), brothers (Hani, Hamad, Aseel), nieces

## *Frontispiece*

(Manayer, Joman, Siba) nephews (Salim, Hadi) and uncle (Abdullatif Al Salim) for their incredible love and tremendous support. I do not also forget to thank my dearest and greatest grandmother, Muneera, who passed away and who had loved me so profoundly, always prayed for me and wished me a beautiful life, and who consistently said, 'You'll reach your dreams, just wait for them and be patient'. I am telling her, 'Here I am, can you see me? Can you, my heart?'

Finally, I am delighted and so honoured to dedicate this thesis, this precious dream to the sweetest and most precious love of my heart, my mother, for her special love, with all my heart.



## **Abstract**

The act of expressing an apology is an essential part of interpersonal interaction: the need for an apology arises when everyday interaction results in a behavioural and communication breakdown. Pragmatic knowledge and competence aids in facilitating effective and smooth negotiation and repair of meaning as the need arises.

Apology acts vary across cultures; different cultures influence apology differently. My research investigates the distinctive differences between how Saudi and Australian women position themselves in performing the act of apologising in two distinctly different national cultural settings, Australia and Saudi Arabia. This research contributes to an understanding of how culture and power impact on saying sorry. My thesis is about social and cultural factors that influence the activity of saying sorry.

Applying the lens of positioning theory as expounded by Rom Harré and Luk Van Langenhove (Harré & Van Langenhove, 2001), I adopt a new conceptual and methodological perspective in investigating both the ‘saying sorry’ positionings employed by participating Saudi and Australian women and the contexts in which these positionings occurred. My perspective is designed to provide new insights into the pragmatics of saying sorry that are not accessible through the widely utilised, but constrictive approach of using Discourse Completion tasks and role plays that are so heavily adopted in linguistic cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics research.

Data collection involved the recruitment of six Saudi women (three living in Saudi and three living in Australia) and six Australian women (three living in Australia and three in Saudi) – a total of 12 participants. Each participant engaged

in an intensive semi-structured interview to capture their narratives and gain understandings their positionings in saying sorry.

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the Saudi and Australian women have both similarities with and differences from each other regarding ‘saying sorry’ contexts and positions. The results also reveal the influence of cultural variability and values, and of women’s power in influencing their choice of contexts and positions. Overall, culture played a major role in influencing the two groups’ behaviours in the act of apology in both contexts, Saudi and Australia. A key finding is a noticeable variation in the apology positionings within the same cultural group, indicating that individual variation occurs between participants from similar gender and cultural backgrounds.

As a result of the research, a new model is presented that brings together the sociocultural elements that have emerged as a result of the analysis. I have identified some New Socio-cultural positionings, that are related to, but which expand on and are distinctive from the original Harré positionings associated with speech acts, storylines and positions taken. The new positionings are connected to the pragmatics associated with speech acts involved in conversations and talks that are related to the society and culture of both Saudi and Australian women. As there has been no previous research investigation of apology behaviour comparing Saudi and Australian women through the lens of positioning theory, this study marks an initial step in filling a gap in the Saudi-Australian literature relating to cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics.

**Keywords:**

Linguistics, pragmatics, interlanguage, speech acts, apology, cross-cultural pragmatics, positioning theory.

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>CCSSARP</b>	Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns
<b>Cross-linguistics</b>	Refers to phenomena which occur in several different languages or in investigations which draw on data from diverse languages.
<b>DCT</b>	Discourse Completion Test
<b>IL (Interlanguage)</b>	Refers to the learner's representation of the L2 system.
<b>Illocutionary act</b>	The <i>performance</i> of an act in saying something (vs. the general act of saying something).
<b>ILP (Interlanguage Pragmatics)</b>	The area that is concerned with the learner's development of pragmatic knowledge of L2.
<b>L1 (First language)</b>	The language which is acquired initially by a child and which is his/her native language.
<b>L2 (Second language)</b>	The language which is acquired initially by a child and which is his/her second language.
<b>Linguistics</b>	The scientific study of human natural language and the processes of linguistic communication.
<b>Pragmatics</b>	The study of speech acts in social communication
<b>SLA</b>	Second Language Acquisition
<b>Speech acts</b>	Acts performed by utterances, such as giving orders or making promises

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction to the Study

### Introduction

It was as a student majoring in English Language and Literature that I developed my interest in pragmatics<sup>1</sup>. When I came to Melbourne to do my master's course, I fell in love with Melbourne and its people. It was at this time that I conceived of the idea of including Australian women, along with Saudi women, as the subjects of my planned research in the field of Pragmatics. The Australian women that I met were very amiable; they made me, as well as my fellow Saudi students, feel so welcome. By including Australians in my study, I thought that I might reward them, in some small way, for their kindness as well as also satisfying my interest in pragmatics. Subsequently, I engaged in the fields of cross-cultural and gender studies; this enabled me to explore the pragmatics of women 'saying sorry' across two cultures: a combination of gender and cultural issues and pragmatics.

The pragmatics of apology has been chosen to be my area of investigation to contribute to answering a hoard of questions that concerned:

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<sup>1</sup> **Definition of Pragmatics:**

1. a branch of semiotics that deals with the relation between signs or linguistic expressions and their users;
2. a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the relationship of sentences to the environment in which they occur. Accessed at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pragmatics>, 14/09/2017

- Why do people from different cultures have their particular norms of apology?
- Would women's apologies be different if they were from different cultural backgrounds? Would they change if living in a different cultural context to their native one?
- What is the panorama of the psychological process of apology?
- Is there potential to develop more efficient and effective ways of apologising internationally that would make intercultural communication a more transparent and straightforward experience?

I aspire to motivate my English as an Additional Language (EAL) students back in Saudi Arabia to have full mastery of the English language. In particular, I want to develop their pragmatic competence: being able to apologise in English and to convey to them how the multicultural composition of Australia – drawing its residents, as it does, from more than 200 countries – impacts on pragmatic strategies and negotiation of meanings. More specifically, I believe and hope that an enhanced understanding of different ways of 'saying sorry' amongst women might strengthen mutual understanding between Saudi and Australian cultures.

The irony here is that I am an 'apologiser'. When I first arrived in Melbourne in 2011, I immediately noticed a cultural difference regarding apology behaviour through my daily experiences of incidents of apology. For example, when I pushed someone by accident or stepped on someone's foot as a result of a crowded tram (not my mistake), I immediately performed sincere reparative apologies out of severe embarrassment. I felt more embarrassed as I was a foreigner; therefore, I needed to be as polite as is humanly possible; what is more, I was also reflecting and conveying the Saudi culture to Melbourne people.

Australians' reactions towards me, as a foreigner, have continued to surprise. They have always been more than kind and they do not consider my difference to be an issue. This has never failed to make me feel happy, relieved and grateful for such a kind, gentle reaction; it also has drawn my attention to the cultural

differences involved in recognising apology situations and in measuring the degree of severity of any offence.

I have encountered apology situations on a daily basis after starting my journey of apology discovery and analysis. What has been noticeable also is that through the process of data analysis, I did not only understand how Australian women apologise, but I have come to appreciate more about Australian cultural values around situations and difficulties, that I would never have thought to have been different from my culture. For example, one of the narratives revealed a swearing apology situation, the Australian participant, Britney, narrated a situation of her son who has a daughter, Anna, whom he has taught strict good manners. Once, the grandchild spent time with Britney, and the next day her son told his mother that that his daughter is swearing and accused his mother of this (Br.02):

My son said the little woman was swearing. This is Anna. She was swearing, and he presumed it was me teaching her to swear, which it quite possibly could have been.

Thus, in my research, I have endeavoured to fully explore the apology in terms of pragmatics: How do Saudi women compare with Australian women in taking ‘say sorry’ positions? How do positions at home compare with those taken abroad? What differences are apparent and what differences exist? My proposition is that by undertaking an exploration of apology positions and associated sociocultural influences within and between groups Saudi and Australian women, both in Saudi and Australia, I will be able to enunciate and define socio-psychological and sociocultural factors that influence the pragmatics of the speech act of apology.

Based on my review of the research literature there is very little research on apology expression by Saudi people – and women, in particular. Moreover, available and relevant Saudi studies use neither narrative analysis nor positioning theory in investigating the speech act of apology: they focus on apology strategies rather than contexts and positions. Thus, it is my intention to fill this gap in the body of pragmatics research by exploring the speech act of apology by Saudi

women using positioning theory and personal reflective narratives. Most importantly, my study will help to understand how Saudi women employ and perceive the apology in comparison with Australian women. As a consequence, my research has been designed to enhance and contribute to the understanding of apology through the innovation of using positioning theory as well as providing an insight into the women participants' personal and special qualities and behaviours; moreover, it will indicate the extent to which culture plays a role in their lives. This is proposition, i.e., 'my thesis'.

Overall, I believe that my study will assist in identifying unique features of pragmatic behaviour that the Saudi and Australian groups adopt when 'saying sorry'; as well, I expect that my study will provide an insight into:

- women's power in Saudi and Australian sociocultural contexts;
- the way language choice and competence interact with power: contrasting English as L1 (first language) with English as L2 (second – additional – language), as there will be expected differences, as well as a for pragmatic misunderstandings;
- how the 'home' and new cultural contexts influence their realisation of apology.

### **Importance of apology**

Discourse, as conversation, is the primary means of communication amongst people of the same linguistic and cultural background; it comes easily within such groups. Communication between people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is not so easy; it frequently leads to misunderstanding and communication breakdown which causes anxiety and discomfort. Investigating aspects of discourse is the key to conducting successful cross-cultural and

intercultural communication. Goffman (1971)<sup>2</sup> views apologies as ‘remedial acts used to regain harmony in a society after an offence has been committed’. According to Goffman’s definition, an apology arises as an outcome of behavior that, as a consequence, results in the need for an apology. An apology is performed when an offence is committed, with the nature of the behavior and offence spanning many possibilities, including offensive actions and communications.

An offence is a form of behavior that causes a negative effect on (an)other person/people, thereby causing the person/people to feel offended or to be presumed to have felt offended. It is not only speech within an interaction that may lead to offence and communication breakdown. The communication breakdown is a consequence of the inappropriate behavior or behavior that is perceived to be unacceptable. A spoken communication may be an everyday behavior that causes offence (e.g., swearing at someone); however, for it to warrant an apology it is not the speech act itself that matters foremost. An apology is crucial if the protagonists are to have an ongoing relationship; thus, the relationship has to be repaired through the offering of an apology.

The expression of apologies varies across cultures. The rationale behind selecting the speech act of apology as the main focus of the study relates to my observation that in the past two decades a number of studies have been conducted on speech act performance, in general, and apology, in particular, but these have paid limited attention to apology behaviour in Saudi Arabia, especially by Saudi women.

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<sup>2</sup> Accessed at [http://int.search.myway.com/search/GGmain.ihtml?p2=%5EC73%5Exdm012%5ETTAB02-%5Eau&ptb=5EBE0800-9DA1-4D7A-AC8A-605CA2E246E1&n=783a607b&ind=&cn=AU&ln=en&si=EAJaIQobChMIx4isi9Oq1gIVFx5oCh3ktAsQEAAAYASAAEgKJL\\_D\\_BwE&tpr=hpsb&trs=wtt&brwsid=1cd448b4-24d8-42ad-94d7-1b600ac216e4&searchfor=Goffman%20\(1971\)%20views%20%27-remedial%20acts%20used%20to%20regain%20harmony%20in%20a%20society%20after%20an%20-offence%20has%20been%20committed&st=tab](http://int.search.myway.com/search/GGmain.ihtml?p2=%5EC73%5Exdm012%5ETTAB02-%5Eau&ptb=5EBE0800-9DA1-4D7A-AC8A-605CA2E246E1&n=783a607b&ind=&cn=AU&ln=en&si=EAJaIQobChMIx4isi9Oq1gIVFx5oCh3ktAsQEAAAYASAAEgKJL_D_BwE&tpr=hpsb&trs=wtt&brwsid=1cd448b4-24d8-42ad-94d7-1b600ac216e4&searchfor=Goffman%20(1971)%20views%20%27-remedial%20acts%20used%20to%20regain%20harmony%20in%20a%20society%20after%20an%20-offence%20has%20been%20committed&st=tab), 17Oct17.



**Cultural issues in Australia and Saudi Arabia: ‘big picture’ issues**

As my study involves Saudi and Australian women, it is important to provide a brief overview of cultural aspects of the apology and of women’s experiences in Saudi and Australia. It is of some significance to note here prominent apology events in both Australian and Saudi cultures, thus providing a ‘big picture’ background.

There are some significant events and incidents related to ‘saying sorry’ in Australian history that reflect aspects of the national culture. One of these significant events is the ‘Sorry Day’ that is held every year as a remembrance of the life experiences relating to what are referred to as the ‘Stolen Generation’ – referring to Aboriginal and some Torres Strait Islander people who were separated by force from their indigenous families as children by Australian Federal, State and Territory government organisations, and church missions, from the late 1800s to the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.nsd.org.au/events-info/history-of-national-sorry-day>).

Linked to this concept of ‘sorry’, is a phrase – ‘Sorry Business’ – used by indigenous people in Australia to refer to their participation, according to traditional culture, in a sad occasion, such as the mourning time and ceremony associated with the death of a family or community member. It is a phrase that induces a feeling of sadness or empathy<sup>4</sup>. So, at a sociocultural level, there is a recognition of the importance of the descriptor of business as ‘sorry’ in expressing repentance and grief resulting from loss, and official mistreatment, and social injustices, as well as in apologising in more everyday contexts where more minor instances of offence has been caused.

‘To be polite’ is an essential expectation in the Arabic culture. Samarah (2010) emphasises the importance of politeness, through apology, within cultures in her

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<sup>3</sup> Accessed at (<http://www.nsd.org.au/events-info/history-of-national-sorry-day>)

<sup>4</sup> Accessed at <http://nqlc.com.au/index.php/people-and-culture/sorry-business/>.

study on apology. She gives some examples of politeness from Arabic culture. First, an Arabic customer going into a shop will habitually perform an ‘apology’ for bothering the shop assistant; secondly, when walking in the streets one can hardly escape pushing people – under which circumstances an Arabic speaker will always perform an apology in such a situation to avoid ‘being in trouble’. The traditional significance of apology is also shown in the Holy *Qur’an* where human beings are recommended to be prepared to perform apologies to their neighbour.

In the Arabic culture, where striving for harmony between people is valued, the apology has great importance. Samarah (2010) contends that the understanding of Arabic apologies has the potential to contribute to linguistics:

- To eliminate cultural misunderstandings and misconceptions which might arise in cultural communication.
- To clarify, deliberate, and question this linguistic incident in Arabic.
- To enrich the literature of linguistics, specifically in ‘pragmatics’ and speech acts by discussing ‘*apology* expressions’ in Arabic.

### **Status of women in Australia and Saudi Arabia: feminist theory**

As my study only recruited females only, it is essential to have a short overview of women status in Australia and Saudi. Men engage in many different professional fields and have other social involvements as well. An important question is: Does women’s power play a crucial role in their success? This issue has been researched in different studies of women’s influence, such as in politics (Bashevkin 2009), and in considering young women’s power to generate social change (Aapola, Gonick et al. 2005). Frank (2006) relates feminist theory – and its extension into feminism which evaluates the rightful place of women in the society – considers women’s agency in the context of ‘patriarchy’, ‘male domination’, ‘power’, and ‘culture; she considers these elements to have been of greatest importance in promoting dispute.

Women in Saudi Arabia nowadays are involved in different fields, such as in the education and government sectors. They are demonstrating their power and agency and ability to positively change the professional workplace environment. The same applies to Australian women, a number of whom hold senior positions in education, government and corporate sectors. (Qadoury Abed 2011).

Estes (2008) wrote a powerful novel, *Women who run with Wolves*, in which she shows the force of women's power that occurs across almost all cultures. She compares women with wolves and reveals how their power has helped them open future possibilities. The question to be considered in this context is whether cultures change when women have greater power and agency. Different cultural positionings may affect women's power and, what influence these cultural positionings, have had on their approaches to apologising.

Throughout my research, I have aimed to gain a clearer picture of the way the speech act of apology is perceived across cultures amongst women who speak English as either L1 or L2. Chapter 2 will discuss these studies and their methodologies in detail.

## **Aims and goals of this research**

Using my thesis, or proposal statement, presented earlier in this introduction (see page, v), I am able to formally spell out the aims and ultimate goals of my research, together with a set of specific objectives that I guide my investigation. These are discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The general aim of my study was to investigate Saudi and Australian women's apology behaviours to determine the extent to which cultural variability and values, and women's power and agency influence their choice of 'sorry saying' contexts and positions.

The specific objectives of my study were to determine:

1. the kind of apology scenarios/contexts emerge from the stories told by representatives of the two groups;
2. the emergent speech acts, story lines and positions that participants exhibit when giving examples of ‘saying sorry’;
3. the emergent cultural background and personal attributes that influence the participants’ speech acts and story lines when talking about ‘saying sorry’;
4. the types of positioning emerge from the participants’ speech acts and story lines when talking about ‘saying sorry’;
5. the sociocultural aspects of apology that the partisans exhibit while ‘saying sorry’;
6. the ‘selves’ that positioning theory is likely to reveal when representatives of the two groups are ‘saying sorry’;
7. the metaphors that are most useful in describing the selves likely to be revealed when representatives of the two groups are ‘saying sorry’;
8. the influence of women’s power and agency in the realisation and performance of their ‘saying sorry’.

## **Brief introduction to my methodology**

In my research investigation I adopted a qualitative methodology in which the methods of narrative analysis – that involved the recording and analysis of the personal narratives of the participants – and positioning theory were combined to identify positions taken, metaphors used, and the various selves that emerge in different linguistic and cultural settings.

Linguists are moving from using the traditional linguistic approach to the domain of narratives that enable exploration of identity construction and the negotiation of meaning – which are considered to be areas that offer new visions;

interaction and meaning are being conceptualised more dynamically and subjectively (As introduced above, this qualitative study employs narrative analysis and positioning theory – drawing upon the work of (Polkinghorne 1995) and (Harré & Van Langenhove 1991) – to achieve new understandings about the positions, motivations and strategies that underlie the act of ‘saying sorry’, as part of daily life, in different contexts.

In this a qualitative research, I used semi-structured interviews and then applied a process of inductive data reduction (IDR) to analyses the data to establish key themes and identify metaphors. I used narrative analysis to reduce the statements that the people have made as a result of my questions and gave me astonishing stories that I could not have possibly accessed.

Most of the studies on apology have utilised discourse-completion tests (DCTs) or role-plays only which limit potential the findings as the roles are typically static and not as dynamic as the approach based on the concept of positioning that I am utilising in my study. Also, these previous studies have been mainly quantitative, and this has limited their suitability to contribute to uncovering new models and insights into the act of apologising. I believe that there are as yet unrevealed features of the speech act of apology and that the employment of positioning theory and personal narratives will be valuable in detecting these.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

I have designed my research study to provide an insight into women’s power in their realisation of the apology. I make reference to the studies of feminist theory (Alcoff, Alcoff et al. 2013, Gunew 2013, McNay 2013, Stanley 2013) in relation to the impact of women’s power on their apology performance, in the two-contrasting national cultural contexts.

## **Apology research**

Based on the review of literature there is very little research on the apology behaviour of Saudi women, in particular, it is important for me to note that most comparative apology research to date is based on studies of populations, rather than comparing gender-specific cultural groups. Most of the research on apologies at current stage has been focused on defining the speech act of apology, investigating apology strategies, in addition to comparisons between the strategies used by participants from different languages (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, El-Khalil, 1998, Yang, 2002, Bataineh, 2005, Nureddeen, 2008, Salehi, 2014), rather than focusing on apology contexts and positions. The latter are considered to be new grounds of research that are worth investigating. The findings of these studies have shown the relationship between aspects of language universality and culture-specific aspects; the participants have integrated cultural and pragmatic norms that are most prominent in their cultures. They have revealed that there are many similarities in the employment patterns of apologies across languages, cultures and gender. Differences, too, have also been found:

- The choice of apology strategies is influenced by social and contextual factors.
- Pragmatic transfer from native socio-pragmatic strategies has been detected.
- The majority of such apology studies utilised Olsten & Cohen's framework of apology strategies. The employment of this approach limited the findings of those studies as it is restricted to a number of strategies and do not give a space for new strategies.

## **Pragmatics research and positioning theory**

It was my intention in this study to fill a prominent gap in the body of pragmatics research (see, for example, Blum-Kulka & Hamo 2011), by exploring the speech

act of apology comparing Saudi and Australian women using positioning theory and narratives.

From a pragmatics point of view, my study contributes a new perspective, positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990); most importantly, positioning theory is both a theory and an exploratory methodology. As a consequence, I am contributing theoretically and methodologically by applying positioning theory to explore cultural differences, the influence of cultural context as well as women's positionings in terms of their power and agency in the two very different socio-cultural contexts.

The field of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics has evolved in parallel with positioning theory: however, there are significant differences:

- Linguistic pragmatics has focused on micro-level realisation of speech acts and the associated strategies underpinning the linguistic choices.
- Positioning theory has focused on the broader sociocultural and personal dimensions of positioning and acting in specific contexts.

### **Cross-cultural and sociocultural pragmatics; positioning theory; methodology**

The contention underpinning my research is that applying theory and methodology from positioning theory will enrich the limited perspectives that have been able to be generated from the purely linguistically-derived analysis that has characterised cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics to date. While my research contributes to what is currently a limited body of work adopting positioning theory in pragmatic analysis (e.g., Jones 2006, articles in Fetzer 2013; Hirvonen 2016), its approach reflects a broader trend in applied linguistics of focusing on identity and the social and psychological underpinnings of the negotiation of meaning (see Pavlenko 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004).

In addition, my methodology, focused on personal reflection and narratives, contrasts with those commonly adopted in the intercultural pragmatics literature,

such as discourse completion tasks and role play, which attempt to simulate apology contexts and responses without the support of naturalistic data.

These simulation-based methods of data collection focus on the categorisation of what hypothetically is said in the simulated context, without being able to investigate the actual motivations for choices. A similar critique can be made of the commonly adopted approach of inferencing strategies from the discourse-completion task (DCT) or role play responses, drawing on Brown & Levinson's (1987) framework of negative and positive face without any evidence of actual motivations, for example (Garcia 1989). Such methods can only ever provide a limited, if controlled and thereby quantifiable, perspective on actual apologising behavior in real life interactional contexts.

## **Thesis structure**

My thesis consists of nine chapters. In Chapter 1, I provide the following: the contextual background for my study; the rationale for the thesis and its aims and goals; the overall structure of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature that underpins my study. I deal with notions of pragmatics, the speech act of apology and positioning theory. I also attentively inspect the development of research on the apology, reviewing both cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics studies. Finally, I reflect on the research questions of this study, indicating how these relate to the aims and objectives and to the broader context of my thesis.

In Chapter 3, I provide full details of the methodology and the methods, including the theories underpinning my methodology, the procedures and methods that I have applied, the data collection and the data analysis. I place considerable emphasis on my inductive data reduction (IDR) process and the derivation of metaphors and selves that arise from my application of positioning theory



In Chapters 4-7 I report my findings from the interviews and present a detailed analysis of the outcomes based on the two locations – Saudi Arabia and Australia – and the three narratives I have derived from each of the three participants in each of the two national contexts.

In Chapter 8, I focus on the distinction between the types of Harré and New Socio-cultural positionings that emerged, as well as the unique metaphors that identify each individual in the study.

In, Chapter 9, I summarise the key findings of this research and provides an overview of the limitation of this study, as well as discussing its possible implications.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Background and Literature Review**

The main focus of this study is on the speech act of apology by Saudi and Australian women in light of: pragmatics; cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics; speech acts, including the speech act of apology and its realisation, cross-culturally; apologies and gender; women's power and agency; positioning theory; and associated studies. I review each of these in this chapter.

#### **Linguistics and pragmatics**

Language is essential to function as a human being. Thus, to be able to understand humans, it is undoubtedly also important to understand the phenomenon of language. Noam Chomsky (2006:88), one of the most significant linguists of the twentieth century, claimed in 1972:

When we study human languages, we are approaching what some might call 'the human essence', the distinctive qualities of the mind, that are, as far as we know, unique to man.

Linguistics – the scientific study of natural human language and the processes of linguistic communication – has become an exciting and growing field of study. It has a notable influence on other areas: education, anthropology, sociology, language teaching, cognitive psychology, philosophy, computer science, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence (Akmajian, Demers et al. 2010). It adopts

an inclusive cross-linguistic perspective in the study of language (Baker & Hengeveld 2012).

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics developed in the late 1970s. It studies how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a speech situation – usually a conversation. It distinguishes two meanings in each utterance or verbal communication: firstly, the informative intent or the sentence meaning; secondly, the communicative intent or speaker meaning (Leech, 1983; Sperber and Wilson, 1986). According to Kasper (1997), ‘pragmatic competence’ is the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act which often includes one’s knowledge about the social distance and the status difference between the speakers involved, cultural knowledge such as politeness, and both explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge.

Realising the importance of intercultural communication has motivated researchers to concentrate on discovering the rules underpinning successful communication. Nowadays, investigation of intercultural problems and cross-cultural pragmatics has gained a great deal of attention.

Pragmatics has become a significant subfield of linguistics. Several studies have realised that a learner’s ability to use speech acts correctly is a chief element of pragmatic competence. Rintell (1979), who defines pragmatics as ‘the study of speech acts’, claims that the learner’s pragmatic ability in the target language is revealed in how individuals produce utterances to communicate ‘specific intentions’ and how one interprets other speakers’ intentions as carried by these utterances. Grice (1975), supported by Levinson (1983) and Leech (1983), suggests that pragmatics should occur mainly around the more realistic dimension of meaning.

Crystal (2004:301), defines pragmatics as

the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects of their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

Those aspects of language use that are crucial to an understanding of language as a system, and especially to an understanding of meaning, are the acknowledged concern of linguistic pragmatics (Levinson 1983). It uncovers features of ‘language in use’, such as ambiguity signs and metaphors (Kempson 1986, Nerlich and Clarke 2001, Langat, Onyango et al. 2017). These require a negotiation of meaning that otherwise might cause communication breakdown.

Pragmatics also assists in explaining how context contributes to meaning: meaning transfer depends on various elements – such as the context of the utterance, intent of the speaker, status of the interactants – and not only on the linguistic knowledge of the interactants (Bunt 2000, Nerlich and Clarke 2001, Barron 2003). A number of scholars who have investigated the field of pragmatics and who have realised its importance include the following: (Levinson 1983, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993, Yule 1996, Verschueren 1999, Thomas 2014, Leech 2016). In short, pragmatics aims at understanding what the speaker intends to say by studying ‘linguistic communication in context’ (Blum-Kulka & Hamo 2011:143).

### **Cross-cultural pragmatics**

The scope of pragmatics is to investigate the rules that control the use of language in a specific context. Cross-cultural pragmatics examines and compares native speakers’ pragmatic strategies and associated utterances in different languages. Thus, ‘cross-cultural pragmatics’ can be defined as ‘the study of the similarities and differences in language usage in a given context in different cultures’. Seminal research by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), *Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns* (CCSSARP), investigated the speech acts of apology and requests in different languages. Other researchers who have studied cross-cultural pragmatics include the following: (Thomas 1983, Hudson, Brown et al. 1995, Wierzbicka 2003, Stadler 2013).

One obvious challenge for cross-cultural pragmatics is universality: how to realise the phenomenon of linguistic communication in specific pragmatic contexts; how to determine how each language's realisation differs from one culture to another. Research on cross-cultural pragmatics has implications for pedagogy as well, given a tendency to transfer pragmatic rules from one language to another.

### **Pragmatic transfer**

Ellis (1997) defines pragmatic transfer as 'the process of transferring and applying speakers' L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 situations'. Ellis has proposed that second language learners tend to transfer the sociolinguistic norms of their native language when interacting with native speakers of the target language. Other researchers in the field of speech act realisation (see, for example, (Trosborg 1995, Pütz and Neff-van Aertselaer 2008) regard pragmatic transfer as the primary cause of cross-cultural communication breakdown. Significant other researchers to have engaged in investigations of pragmatic transfer include (Yang 2002, Chang 2009, Lutzky and Kehoe 2017).

An example of cross-cultural studies on speech acts is the study of Nguyen (2006). She investigated the speech act of refusals of requests (SARs) between Australian native speakers of English (AEs), and Vietnamese learners of English (VEs) – both males and females – using a modified version of the discourse completion task (DCT) developed by (Beebe, Takahashi et al. 1990). The study revealed that the frequency of use of refusals by AEs differs from that of VEs; however, they do share some similarities. While AEs share the same number of (SARs) when they interact with their interlocutors, VEs are more aware of the social status and distance of the requesters. As well, it was possible to attribute cultural differences to the ways AEs and VEs say NO to their conversational partners: VEs were apt to express refusals more elaborately.

Another example, focusing on apology, comes from Salehi (2014) who investigated apology strategies used by Iranian EFL learners and English native speakers through use of a discourse completion task (DCT). This research revealed different outcomes: quite specific similarities and few differences in terms of the frequency and the type of apology strategies employed by the participants.

Other recent studies on cross-cultural apologies include those by the following: Sugimoto 1998; Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu 2007; Chang 2010; Guan; Park, et al., 2009; (Park and Nakano 1999); (Takaku, Weiner et al. 2001). Studies on other speech acts include those by the following: (Nelson, El Bakary et al. 1993, Wieland 1995, Lubecka 2000, Allami and Naeimi 2011).

### **Interlanguage and intercultural pragmatics**

Reineke (1969) was the first to coin the term ‘interlanguage’ (IL). This term was then used by Selinker (Selinker 1969, Selinker 1972) in the area of second language acquisition (SLA). IL refers to the learner’s representation of the L2 system. A great deal of importance has been given to IL by SLA researchers. The term interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), according to Kasper (1992), is defined as the area that is concerned with the learner’s development of pragmatic knowledge of L2. Interlanguage pragmatics is a field concerned with ‘the study of non-native speakers’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge’, (Kasper & Rose 1999:81). Some key points that have emerged from the main body of research focused on ILP. They include: firstly, a tendency to transfer pragmatic strategies from L1 into L2; secondly, negative transfer of sociopragmatic norms from L1 or non-native perception of L2 sociopragmatic norms; thirdly, acquiring pragmatic routine; fourthly, pragmatic failure as a result of communicative effect such as grammar IL deviations from target language norms; and fifthly, developing pragmatic comprehension and competence (Thomas 1983, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993).

The use of pragmatic strategies as well as pragmatic realisation patterns has resulted in some ILP studies in English, French, and German. There appears to be no single study that has been conducted to investigate the speech act of apology among Saudi female learners. There are, however, some studies of pragmatic interlanguage studies of Arab learners learning English as a foreign language (Al-Adaileh, 2007, Jebahi, 2011, Salehi, 2014). One particular research in this field, conducted by Risk (1997), was an investigation of apology strategies used by 110 Egyptian, Saudi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, Lebanese, Syrian, Tunisian, Yemeni and Libyan learners of English. The results showed strong similarities between the apology strategies used by native and non-native speakers of English in all situations. There was one exception: the results also revealed that, unlike native speakers of English, Arabs do not apologise to children; instead, they try to make the child forgive them through sentences such as ‘Do not feel sad, baby’. So, it is considered to be an implied apology unlike native speakers of English who seem to be direct. I found this trait in my current study: Australian women are direct in their apology. In addition, Arabs are known to offer food as an apology device; this is acceptable, as offering food in some cultures is a common practice that would alleviate in the sense of making it ‘easier to endure ‘as in ‘alleviating pain’<sup>5</sup>.

During a conversation with my supervisor, I told him that sometimes when I apologise more than once using a variety of apologetic words that would mean that I am expressing my embarrassment about something, rather than being an actual apology. He replied, ‘Oh, I am sorry, I did not mean to embarrass you’. Actually, he did not embarrass me; I was telling him something about me. Here is an example of how intercultural pragmatic misunderstanding occurs. It may have happened due to cultural differences, or there might have been other factors at

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<sup>5</sup> Accessed at <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/alleviate> , 16/11/2017 4:36 PM.

play additional to ‘culture’ that led to the inability of the two of us to read each other’s pragmatic intentions.

The study of intercultural pragmatics has developed as a flourishing new field precisely because of such communication breakdowns (Murray, Sondhi et al. 1987, Chen, Starosta et al. 1998, Rocci 2006, Wolf and Polzenhagen 2006, Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey 2007, Wierzbicka 2008). As Romero-Trillo & Kecskés (2013) have recently contended, communication across languages and cultures has turned out to be the new challenge for research in the field of pragmatics in the twenty-first century. Kecskes (2014:14) argues that intercultural pragmatics explore how the language system functions in social confrontations between people of diverse cultures speaking some native languages, as they connect and attempt to communicate in a mutually common language.

As mentioned earlier, L2 learners and speakers may transfer pragmatic language strategies from their L1 in their attempts to communicate in their second language. Intercultural pragmatics, over the past twenty years, has contributed significantly in the expansion of linguistic models and the identification of the relations between language and culture, in addition to increasing the foundation for second language studies as well as language curriculum materials (Shardakova 2005). Moeschler (2004:50) argues that ‘intercultural misunderstandings’ are individual cases of pragmatic misunderstandings, explaining that:

intercultural pragmatics aims at understanding the extent to which non-shared knowledge affects and modifies the retrieval of intended meaning.

Two relatively recent studies on intercultural pragmatics (Shardakova 2005; and Shariati & Chamani 2010) have highlighted how the exposure to a second culture affects the speakers’ L1 apologies, inducing them to be closer to those of native speakers. Also, the results of both studies revealed that the preferences for employing apology strategies seemed to be culture-specific, emphasising the importance of culture in influencing the choice of these strategies. In two recent studies of ‘learners’ refusals’, the phenomenon of pragmatic transference appears



– an investigation of the speech act of refusal of Thai EFL learners’ realisation (Wannaruk 2008), and of Iraqi EFL learners (Qadoury Abed 2011).

Brown and Gullberg (2008) report speech act studies that compare L1 with L2 English usage. These involve the influence of the culture on their immediate context and cross-linguistic influence in the encoding of ‘manner’ in speech. The authors examined the domain of ‘manner of motion’ in which monolingual Japanese and English speakers differ both in speech and gesture. They also undertook a cross-cultural pragmatics study on refusal which investigated the similarities and differences of request refusals between Australian native speakers of English (AEs). Nguyen (2006) reports a similar study with Vietnamese learners of English (VEs) using a modified version of the discourse completion task (DCT).

Le (2011) investigated the linguistic variation of politeness employed by Vietnamese as an L1 learner in two settings, Australia and Vietnam; she found evidence of pragmatic transference of Australian culture/Australian English in the L1 Vietnamese in Australia. The data were naturalistic speech data collected in every day public contacts including shops and markets. Le considered the impact of variables such as national context, gender, role, and generation. The study showed that Vietnamese living in Australia were more linguistically polite than those living in Vietnam and used significantly more politeness markers. Two factors influenced their use of politeness: sociocultural change in Vietnam; language and intercultural contact in Australia.

### **Speech acts**

Speech acts, according to Austin (1962), are actions performed by utterances, such as giving orders or making promises. These might be performed directly or indirectly through a word, phrase, sentence or sentences, or gesture and body movement all of which serve to communicate an apology or to express gratitude (see, for example, (Hatch 1992). As well, speech acts involve real-life interactions

and need not only the knowledge of the language but also its appropriate use in a given culture to avoid communication breakdown (Hatch, 1992; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

The ‘speech act’ concept, emerging as a result of Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1969) research, is based totally on the principal that language is shaped, conducted, and governed by rules. In ‘How to do Things with Words’<sup>6</sup>, Austin (1962) proposes performative utterances, that is, utterances which entail the performance of a movement and whose utterance causes some outcome. Austin used contentment situations to indicate the situations of success for performatives that vary from the incredibly formal (e.g., ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’) to the informal conventions controlling expressions of gratitude or sympathy in the situations of everyday encounters. Searle (1969) assumed that speech acts involve the uttering of expressions that are coordinated by explicit constitutive instructions. He made a distinction between regulative rules (which control present forms of conduct) and constitutive rules (which no longer merely control but also produce or describe new types of conduct).

### **Speech act theory**

The study of performatives led to the hypothesis of Speech Act Theory that holds that a speech event represents three acts: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Searle classifies four essential categories of speech acts:

1. *A locutionary act*: saying something (the locution) with a certain meaning, in the traditional sense; this may or may not constitute a speech act.

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<sup>6</sup> Accessed at <https://www.scribd.com/doc/55377349/Austin-1962-How-to-Do-Things-With-Words>, 17/11/2017 10:37 AM.

2. An *illocutionary act*: the *performance* of an act in saying something (vs. the general act of saying something).
3. The *illocutionary force* is the *speaker's* intent. A true 'speech act', e.g., informing, ordering, warning, undertaking.
4. *Perlocutionary acts*: Speech acts that affect the feelings, thoughts or actions of either the speaker or the listener. In other words, they seek to change minds. Unlike locutionary acts, perlocutionary acts are external to the performance, e.g., inspiring, persuading or deterring.

Austin (1975:64)<sup>7</sup> 'focused on illocutionary acts such as offers, apologies and requests' that normal conversational conditions of politeness typically make it difficult to release flat imperative sentences (e.g., 'leave the room') or explicit performatives (e.g., 'I order you to leave the room'). Thus, people adopt indirect ways to their illocutionary endings (e.g., I wonder if you would mind leaving the room). More specifically, Searle (1979) asserted that speech acts enact five general purposes:

1. Declarations (e.g., I now pronounce you husband and wife);
2. Representatives (e.g., It was a warm sunny day);
3. Expressives (e.g., I'm really sorry);
4. Directives (e.g., Don't leave anything behind); and
5. Commissives (e.g., We'll not disturb you).

A number of studies have revealed that the expression of apology may lead to more merciful disciplining and punishment (see, for example, Goffman, 1971; Darby & Schlenker, 1982, 1989; Ohbuchi et al., 1989). Ohbuchi, Kameda et al. (1989) investigated the influence of apologies on aggression. When the offender performed 'an apology', the offended considered the offender as more honest, and

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<sup>7</sup> Accessed at <https://int.search.myway.com/search/GGmain.jhtml?searchfor=Austin+%281975%3A64-%29+sustains+that+normal+conversational+conditions+&n=783a607b&p2=%5EC4P%5Exdm159%5ETAB02%5Eau&ptb=22FB3CD0-9463-4849-AAC9-D6017FDD29DD&q=&si=flightlocator-l-s&ss=-sub&st=tab&trs=wt&tpr=sbt&ts=1510876054025>, 17/11/2017 10:54 AM.

responsible and careful, and much less unpleasant than an offender who did not express an apology. Ohbuchi, et al., (1989) also pointed out that expressions of apology brought about significantly less aggression by the offended toward the offender. Previously, Harrel (1980) had determined that offenders who had been remorseful were considered more sorrowful and eager on reparation than people who had been non-remorseful towards those whom aggression had been proven. Rosen and Adams (1974) found that when an offender showed remorse, they were seen to be less likely to repeat a violation.

### The speech act of apology

Every person makes mistakes that they might choose to correct with an apology to the participants. In Islamic theology, ‘apology’ traces back to Adam, the father of all humans. Prophet Adam performed an apology to Allah (God) when he disobeyed his order. The Qur’an cites the apologies of Adam and his wife, Eve, to Allah on many occasions (Ezzat 2010); Adam, for instance, apologised to Allah when he disobeyed Him:

When Adam and his wife Eve recalled their fault, as they approached the tree that Allah prevented them from doing so, they immediately apologised to Allah saying,

Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers. [Qur’an7:24]

Allah, accordingly, accepted Adam’s apology and repentance (Ezzat 2010)<sup>8</sup>.

The apology can also be traced back to 399 BC by Socrates. When he was trying to defend himself when accused of ‘corrupting the young, and by not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other *daimonia* that are novel’ (24b), (Socrates 2012). The English word ‘apologetics’ has its past

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<sup>8</sup> [https://int.search.tb.ask.com/search/GGmain.jhtml?searchfor=Allah%2C+accordingly%2C+accepted+-Adam%E2%80%99s+apology+and+repentance+\(Ezzat+2010\).&st=sb&tpr=omni&p2=%5EC4P%5Exdm159%5ETTAB02%5Eau&ptb=22FB3CD0-9463-4849-AAC9-D6017FDD29DD&n=783a607b&si=-flightlocator-1-s](https://int.search.tb.ask.com/search/GGmain.jhtml?searchfor=Allah%2C+accordingly%2C+accepted+-Adam%E2%80%99s+apology+and+repentance+(Ezzat+2010).&st=sb&tpr=omni&p2=%5EC4P%5Exdm159%5ETTAB02%5Eau&ptb=22FB3CD0-9463-4849-AAC9-D6017FDD29DD&n=783a607b&si=-flightlocator-1-s), 17/11/2017 11:20 AM

meaning (now typically conveyed by the word ‘apologia’ is derived from the Ancient Greek ἀπολογία) when it is used as a defence of ‘a cause or of one’s beliefs or actions’ (Dane 2007:7). Greek philosophers of the time wrote about this apology, including Plato who, in *The Apology*, portrays Socrates’ performing his apology.

An early apology from the Christian era (155-157 AD) is entitled *The First Apology* –an initial work of Christian apologetics spoken by Justin Martyr to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (Martyr 1948). In Western literature, *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, an essay written by de Montaigne in 1580 (see De Montaigne, 1965, 1987) which examines the beliefs of a 15th-century Spaniard, provides cynical insights on the uselessness of reason expressed as an apology is well known. Alexander Pope’s *an Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740), in which an eighteenth-century English actor-manager responds to his critic, provides what Cibber (2002) considers to be one of the best dramatic histories of the era (Glover 2002, Hume 2017).

Speech acts of apology have been recorded since the time of the Ancient Greeks to present-day novelists: a time range of more than 3000 years. The genre has a long history.

Márquez-Reiter (2000) defines the speech act of apology as a remedy or a compensation for an offence. Michael (2003:161) has identified five apology types; one of them is ‘Sorry’, explaining that:

“Sorry” derives from sore; has a similarity in use to German “es tut mir leid”, and to French “Je suis fache de” ...another type is “Apologise” (apo-logos, somewhat similar to Russian “prostit”) denotes speaking off, or a speech in defense.

Lazare (2005:23) claims that the apology is noticeably ‘complex’ but ‘simple and straightforward’ at the same moment.

### **Studies on the speech act of apology**

The speech act of apology differs across languages. Apologies, along with requests and refusals, have been investigated cross-linguistically in recent pragmatic studies. Comparisons with English have involved Hebrew (Olshtain 1985, Olshtain 1989), Hungarian and Italian (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998), Thai (Limmaneeprasert 1993), Danish (Trosborg 1995), English (Kondo 1997), Cantonese (Rose 2000), Spanish and French (Cohen & Shively 2007), South Korean and Australian English (Kim 2008), and Venezuelan Spanish (Garcia 2009). These studies on the speech act of apology reveal that the cross-cultural differences in the way the speech act of *apology* is perceived are of less importance than is the speech act of *request*. Thus, I aim to obtain a better understanding of the perception of the speech act of apology across two specific cultures – namely, Saudi Arabian and Australian. Trosborg (1995) claims that people from different languages will perceive the speech act of apology similarly in situations where the social factors (power, social distance, and imposition) are on the same level.

Goffman (1971) states that for an apology to be successful, the apologisee has to consider three factors: acknowledgment of an offence, taking responsibility for it, and offering compensation. Most studies on apology investigated apology strategies and utilised the framework of Olshtain and Cohen (1983), as a model for their analysis; they identify strategies that characterise ‘the speech act set of apology’ (Olshtain & Cohen 1983:22):

#### **1. An Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID).**

- Using the formulaic IFIDs expressions, the offender offers an explicit apology, e.g., ‘I’m sorry’, ‘I apologise’.

**2. An expression of the speaker taking responsibility for the offence.**

- The offender tries to show concern to the hearer by using some subcategories such as; expression of self-deficiency, e.g., ‘I was confused’, and explicit self-blame, e.g. ‘It’s my fault’.

**3. A statement or account of the cause which brought about the violation.**

- An action being taken by the offender to justify the offence by explaining the reason, e.g., ‘The bus was late’.

**4. An offer of repair.**

- When compensation for the damage is possible, the offender uses expressions such as: ‘I’ll pay for the damage’.

**5. A promise of forbearance.**

- When the offender feels so guilty, he/she needs to promise not to repeat the act, e.g. ‘It won’t happen again’.

When offenders intend to offer a verbal apology, they use one or a combination of these strategies. Offenders can intensify or downgrade their apology in addition to adopting the five main apology strategies. Olshtain (1989) suggests that the most commonly used intensifiers are, ‘very and ‘really’; the expression ‘I’m sorry’ is considered to be a common manifestation that the offender intends to downgrade the apology. Furthermore, this suggests that the words ‘I’m sorry’ have different meaning depending on the pragmatic intention behind their use.

A significant body of pragmatic research has investigated the speech act of apology in different languages; a variety of variables emerge. Politeness strategies may be utilised (see, for example, Brown & Levinson, 1978; Garcia, 1989; Ruzickova, 1998; Ma´rquez-Reiter, 2000). Cultural values may be reflected in the realisation of an apology (see Cordella, 1990; Suszczyńska, 1999). There may be a gender influence (see Cordella, 1990). Different factors may influence the usage or choice of a specific strategy (see Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Fraser, 1981;

Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). Different approaches may be employed depending on whether the speakers are native or non-native (see Garcia, 1989; Trosborg, 1987).

Olshtain (1983) investigated how English and Russian learners of Hebrew apologised in L2 compared with their respective L1s. Following the procedure of Cohen & Olshtain (1981), Olshtain (1983) examined realisation patterns of apologies by native speakers of Hebrew to compare native and non-native usage. She found that unlike the Russian group, who apologised more than did Hebrew speakers, the English group apologised considerably less in Hebrew although they apologised more often in their L1.

Olshtain (1989) compared strategy preferences of apologies by speakers of English, French, German, and Hebrew and found considerable similarities in selection of IFIDs and expression of responsibility. She concluded that ‘different languages will realise apologies in very similar ways’ (1989:171). In a similar study, Vollmer & Olshtain (1989) investigated apology realisation preferences of 200 speakers of German to determine the potential relationship between realisation patterns of apology and social/situational parameters such as social status, social distance, the offended person’s expectation of an apology, and severity of the offence. The findings revealed that the subjects used IFIDs and stressed responsibility in all situations in rather high percentages and that the use of intensification of apologies was strongly related to situational parameters. As my study involves recruiting participants from two different cultures, apologies and cultural differences, the studies cited above are significant.

The role of culture in influencing the act of apology is standard in the literature. Shariati and Chamani (2010) researched the speech act of apology regarding frequency, combination, and sequencing of apology strategies. They investigated 500 naturally-occurring apology exchanges in Persian. The findings of their ethnographic study showed that ‘explicit expression of apology’ with a ‘request for forgiveness’ was seen to be the most used apology strategies in Persian. The findings also revealed that these two strategies along with



‘acknowledgement of responsibility’ were the most occurring mixture of apology strategies. Overall, the study suggested that the same group of apology strategies utilised in other examined languages applied in Persian. Shariati and Chamani (2010), found that preferences for employing these apology strategies were culture-specific, claiming that the role of culture influences the choice of apology strategies.

Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu (2007) conducted a contrastive study of the speech act of apology in native and ‘nativised’ varieties of English and South African Setswana, adopting the CCSSARP’s framework and methodology; as well, they collected qualitative data through role plays. Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu argue that the outcomes of their study suggest a need for a clarification of ‘group- or community-based face’, rather than only the individually-focused concept of face. Finally, they claim that the findings of their study can be utilised to raise awareness about diverse socio-pragmatic aspects and pragma-linguistic ways and the possibility for pragmatic breakdown in communication between people having different cultures, even when communicating in the same language.

Subsequently, Guan, Park et al. (2009) investigated the influence of national culture (USA, China, and Korea) and interpersonal relationship kind (a stranger and a friend) on the speech act of apology. They found that participants from the three cultures varied regarding their tendencies in apology use (i.e., desire, obligation, and intention to apologise), as well as their perception of normative apology use. In spite of their different cultural backgrounds, the participants displayed more useful and clearer ‘obligation and intention’ to perform an apology to a stranger than to a friend. Regarding intention to apologise, both American and Korean groups revealed a larger inconsistency between themselves and their approximation of the majority of people in their culture than did the Chinese group. Despite this inconsistency, the participants from the three cultures did not vary in their tendencies in apology use for a friend, both American and Chinese groups displayed greater variance than did Korean group as they felt the necessity

to apologise to a stranger. The findings of the study show how culture plays a crucial role in participants' choice of apology strategies. I believe that the findings also direct researchers to be aware of the culture factor that would affect the aspects of participants' realisation of the examined topic in different and unexpected ways.

Al Ali's (2012) cross-cultural study of the speech act of apology by Saudis and Australians, using a DCT as the data collecting method, found that women highlighted some similarities as well as significant differences between the two cultural groups in their use of apology strategies. Also, Al Ali revealed that there were some idiosyncratic features that characterised the use of apology by Saudi and Australian women. The AU group used only one idiosyncratic feature whereas there were seven features used by the SA group, some of the used features are shown in Table 2.1. The function of the features used by the SA and AU groups was to lessen the level of offence. The Saudi group's adoption of specific features reflected aspects of their religion and cultural traditions and provided valuable insights into the Saudi daily practice of apology.

Al Ali (2012) observed that the Saudi group used other methods to show their concern within their apologies that reflect their cultural and religious values. These included the following: such as; use of 'sense of humour' to alleviate the offence; swearing to ensure the offender's satisfaction (in this sense, 'swearing' in the Arab culture is using Alla's name to assure the honesty of speech). Both groups used some feature that reflected their particular cultural ways of apology. Overall, the purpose was the same: to lessen the level of offence (Al Ali 2012).

Al-Sharari (2013) investigated the use of apology strategies among non-native academics (NNs) and native academics (Ns) English language use in eleven apology situations at universities in Saudi Arabia. He elected data from participants using a Discourse Situation Questionnaire. His study showed that the

**Table 2.1**      **Al Ali apology features**

Features	Examples
The Saudi females used the following features in their apology behaviour:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of humour</li> </ul>	بِس روقي المنجا al manga rougi bas the mango relaxes just = Just calm down your nerves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swearing</li> </ul>	والله ما تزعلي tisa'ali ma Wallah get upset don't I swear = I swear you don't get upset.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terms of endearment.</li> </ul>	معلش حبيبتي habibti m'alaish Darling it's ok = It's ok darling. معلش ما كان قصدي
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English expressions,</li> </ul>	اووبس qasdi kan ma m'alaish Oops, my intention was not it's ok Oops = <i>Oops</i> , it's ok, I didn't mean it.
The Australian females used the following features in their apology behaviour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of the word 'sure':</li> </ul>	1. Oh, sure! I didn't realise that it was so loud. 2. Sure, that's fine.

utilisation of cross-cultural apology strategies between native and non-native speakers of English were similar; on the other hand, there was more significant variation in the use of apology strategies among the non-Arab academics.

I have been able to locate only one study that compares apology strategies of Saudi women. Alsulayyi (2016) investigated the apology strategies employed by a mix of 30 male and female Saudi EFL teachers in Najran, Saudi Arabia. He considered variables such as social distance, power and offence severity. He also noted gender variations in the respondents' speech as opposed to studies that only examined speech act output by native and non-native speakers of English. He collected his data using DCT that included ten situations created to evaluate how

the respondents would respond if they imagined themselves belonging to different, distinctive kinds of social status. The results showed that gender had a significant effect on the use of apology techniques in participants' choice of apology strategies. For instance, the IFID strategy and the upgrader strategy were used by males to a greater extent than their female counterparts; females, on the other hand, used the downgrading responsibility (DR) strategy more than their male counterparts. Alsulayyi argues that a number of the respondents' answers to the test reflected distinctive elements of their mother tongue; this was consistent with earlier findings of previous research undertaken on apology strategies.

Concerning research on cross-cultural apologies, a considerable body of research in pragmatics has investigated the speech act of apology in different languages taking into consideration some variables employed such as the strategies used by native and non-native speakers (Trosborg 1987). The most cited work on speech acts is the empirical study of the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSSARP) (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984). This research involved the speech acts of requests and apologies, and its purpose was to investigate how native speakers realise these acts and to discover any similarities and differences between native speakers and non-native speakers in their realisation of these two acts. Data collection was done using a Discourse Completion Test. The investigation of this work focused on eight languages: Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian-French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian. The results showed that participants from different groups used similar strategies but cultural preferences influenced their use: that is, the culture changed their choice of apology strategies.

More recent studies on cross-cultural apologies (Sugimoto 1998) (Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu 2007); (Guan, Park et al. 2009); (Chang 2010) have sought to address a prior focus only on European-based cultures. For example, Sugimoto (1998) examined the different apology styles used by American and Japanese college students, of both genders, in an open-ended questionnaire. She discussed

some possible linguistic factors, such as the cultural conception of language, the obscurity of ‘sumimasen’ in Japanese, and explanation in American apology that may consolidate the concept that Japanese apologise more than Americans. Her study showed that the Japanese and American styles of apology are crucially affected by the cultural differences in perceptions and use of linguistic practices.

Chang (2010) examined the development of communicative competence in the second language (L2) apologies made by Chinese learners of English who varied in terms of their English proficiency levels, employing a DCT and cross-sectional design to collect data. He developed a coding framework to analyse data, based on taxonomies of other studies on the speech act of apology (see, for example, Olshtain & Cohen 1983; Trosborg 1987; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Bergman & Kasper 1993). His findings showed that there is pragmatic development in a variety of apology strategies and also revealed that there is a higher frequency of apology ‘adjuncts’ along with increasing proficiency. As he collected data through written discourse completion task data, and a number of studies have documented the impact of task variability on production of second learners of English, Chang recommends utilising a variety of elicitation tasks to gain a more comprehensive understanding of interlanguage pragmatic development of second language L2 learners. Use of a variety of elicitation tasks is consistent with studies in which researchers have documented the impact of task variability on the production of second learners of English (see, for example, Billmyer & Varghese 2000, Fukuya & Martínez-Flor 2008, Gablasova, Brezina, et al. 2017).

Most of the past investigations of apologies have examined participants’ responses to unreal misbehaviours or minor wrongdoings against strangers (Afghari and Kaviani 2005, Thijittang 2010, Farashaiyan and Amirkhiz 2011, Tajeddin and Pirhoseinloo 2012, Bagheri and Hamrang 2013, Banikalef and Maros 2013, Khorshidi 2013, Salehi 2014, Derakhshan and Eslami 2015, Ahmed 2017).

Schumann (2012) investigated whether ‘relationship satisfaction’ weakened the connotation between apologies and forgiveness in romantic relationships by affecting understandings of apology genuineness. The results propose that comparative to less satisfied people, satisfied people are more forgiving succeeding apologies, for the reason that they consider their partners’ apologies as genuine ‘sincere’ expressions of regret ‘remorse’.

To sum up, previous research on realisation of the speech act of apology has uncovered the following:

1. There are many similarities of realisation patterns of apologies across languages, cultures, and gender although several differences are also detected, for example, similarities in selection of IFIDs and expression of responsibility
2. The choice of apology strategies is often closely related to social/situational parameters that affect one’s choice of these strategies.
3. L2 learners tend to transfer their native socio-pragmatic strategies to apologies in L2.
4. L2 learners tend to apologise differently in L2 from L1.

A majority of these studies used Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) taxonomy of apology strategies. The use of this approach imposed a limitation on the findings of these studies; hence, with a fixed number of strategies, they were unable to account for an extension into new strategies.

### **Language universality and cultural specificity**

The findings of these studies reveal a balance between aspects of language universality and culture-specific elements. In specific choices, the participants provided insights into the prevailing cultural and pragmatic norms that prevailed supreme in their cultures. For example, the Kenyan hierarchical social status notion imposed the choice of apology strategies. Here, most responses to people of ‘high status involved longer and more polite apologies than those given to

people lower 'status (Langat, Onyango et al. 2017). The choice of apologies in specific contexts confirmed the influence of social status: this agrees with the notion of the universality of apology strategies proposed by researchers such as Austin (1962), Olshtain (1983) and Blum-Kulka, House et al. (1989).

The choice of specific apology strategies supports the aspect of culture-specificity of language presented by many researchers (see, for example, Faraishayan & Amirkhis, 2011: and Thijittang, 2010). There are other researchers (see, for example, Demeter, 2006; Muhammed & Al Busairi, 2006) who agree with the concept that apologies are a case of situation specificity.

A comparison of multiple and stand-alone apology strategies reveals conflicting findings. Higher use of complex apology strategies emerges from studies by Obeng (1999) and Vollmer & Olshtain (1989). On the other hand, higher use of stand-alone procedure, generally, occurred more widely (see, for example, Holmes, 1990; Bergman and Kasper 1993; Al-Sobh 2013). In their study of the apology strategies employed by Pakistani university students, Saleem, Azam et al. (2014) established that, in a majority of apologetic situations, stand-alone apologies were used. The use of individual apology strategies as a preferred method has been confirmed by Jebahi (2011) who determined that Tunisian university students employed explanation and offer of apology strategies as their most preferred apology expressions. My conclusion is that there is a preference for the use of stand-alone apology strategies.

### **Apology in Arabic**

Arabic initially emerged as the language of the Hejaz (the western region of Saudi Arabia) and Najed (Riyadh) people (Dictionary 2003). There is little research on apologies by Arab learners of English or Arab native-speakers. Although Arabic is now spoken widely throughout regions of South-east Asia and North Africa, it is significant that reports of investigations of apology acts amongst Saudi people, in general, are few; they are even fewer amongst Saudi women.

A small number of studies have investigated the use of the speech act of apology by speakers of different Arabic dialects (Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Al-Zumor, 2011; Soliman, 2003). Hussein and Hammouri (1998), for example, conducted a comparative study on strategies of apology in Jordanian Arabic and American English. The sample of the study included 50 Jordanian male students, 50 Jordanian female students, and 40 Americans; they collected their data through a discourse completion test (DCT). Their analysis of data indicated that there was a difference in the use of the apology strategies between the Jordanian and American participants. The strategies used by the Jordanian participants seemed to be more varied than the American ones. While there were only seven strategies of apologies in the American data, there were 12 strategies of apology that characterised the Jordanian responses. The Jordanians were less direct and elaborated more complex strategies than the Americans, who preferred strategies that were less elaborate. Among the strategies used by both groups were:

- explicit acknowledgment of responsibility;
- explanation or account;
- an offer of repair;
- a promise of forbearance;
- minimising the degree of offence;
- praising Allah.

Strategies occurring only in the Arabic data were:

- proverbial expressions;
- attacking.

According to the researchers, these latter two strategies may be explained by the Jordanian culture: the religious orientation; ways of thinking. Interjections employed by both groups in the Jordanian data were either applied separately or combined with other strategies, whereas in the American data they were always used in combination. From this analysis, it is apparent that apology strategies in



Arabic and English generally will be dissimilar. A limitation of the Hussein and Hammouri (1998) study was the failure to include gender in the data analysis, despite the data their gathering data from male and female participants.

El-Khalil (1998) also conducted a study on apology strategies of Jordanians; he found that, in the case of apologising to friends, Jordanians used an explicit apology to appease the listener. He collected his data through a questionnaire that consists of two sections: the first section included demographic details such as gender and age for the participants to complete; the second involved three stereotypical offences listed as three prototypical offences. Participants employed expressions such as 'I am sorry' and 'Please forgive me', often accompanied with an account of the offence with expressions such as, 'Sorry I wasn't able to buy you a present'. Furthermore, Jordanians used strategies to justify the offence, such as giving excuses; statements, such as 'I could not come because I got unexpected company' were frequently used. The author also reported that verses from the Holy Qu'ran, together with proverbs, were used in an attempt to alleviate the offence, a strategy attributed to the influence of the Islamic instructions and tradition on the performance of speech acts. The author also reported that the majority of the female participants used implicit rather than explicit apology strategies. Unlike females, Jordanian males seemed to prefer using specific apology strategies, and there were only a few females who used the strategy of the promise of forbearance.

Nureddeen (2008) conducted a study on apology strategies of 110 Sudanese Arabic college-educated adults in Khartoum using a written DCT; she received 1082 responses. Nureddeen attempted to determine the type and extent of use of apology strategies in Sudanese Arabic and focused attention on the sociocultural values and attitudes of the Sudanese community; she found ten different social situations in which the severity of the offence and the distance and power between the interlocutors were varied. The findings of the study revealed that the

participants, in order ‘to save face’, apologised more often by use of IFIDs and explanations in situations that involved offence.

Earlier, Tannen (1994:46) had argued that IFIDs were used to achieve balance in the conversation – that is to say, when dealing with an event that required an apology, the participants were aware that it might affect ‘their positive face’. This loss of face changed and explained their choice of apology strategy.

Although this series of results supports earlier findings suggesting a universality of apology strategies, the selection of apology strategies endorses the culture-specific aspect of language use; however, the fact that the participants were all college students restricts the generalisability of the results of these studies. As a consequence, there is a need for more extensive research employing participants from a broader range of social groups.

Al-Zumor (2011), in his interlanguage, and cross-cultural study on apologies in Arabic and English, investigated English apology strategies used by Arab learners of English in India via a discourse completion test. His study consisted of three groups: an American group (16); a British group (16); an Arab group (70 students). The latter group of Arab students came from five Arab countries: Yemen (38), Palestine (8), Jordan (7), Sudan (9), and Oman (8). All of the students had enrolled at different Indian universities; they studied in different programs; they took a wide range of subjects; on arrival in India, most of the Arab students demonstrated a very low proficiency in English. The findings of the study showed that both English and Arabic speakers assigned varying degrees of severity to the same situation; the variance was attributed to cultural differences. Also, the data revealed that admitting one’s deficiency to set things right caused less embarrassment in the Arab culture than in the Anglo-Saxon culture. The study also revealed that immunity of one’s private self is much less an element of the Arab culture as its people are more publicly available to each other. This assertion also supports the sensible offers of help in the situation of ‘bumping into a lady and hurting her’. Al-Zumor concluded that religious beliefs, and values played an

important role in the many deviations in the Arab learners' language from that of the native speakers. Also, Arabs employing English were keener to take-on responsibility, while the English native speakers were keener to provide formulaic offers of repair or verbal redress. Remarkable similarities in the selection of arrangement patterns of the major apology strategies that emerged in the responses of both Arab learners of English and Indian English speakers; this similarity accorded with the cultural similarities between the Indian and Arabic speaking groups.

Jebahi (2011) studied the use of apology strategies in Tunisian Arabic employed by 100 Arabic-speaking university students who completed a DCT used to elicit an apology. He found that the participants tended to use a statement of remorse in three main situations: when the person being offended was older; was a close friend; had power that might affect the future of the person who committed the offence. Jebahi also found that there was a significant number of participants who did not admit responsibility for the offence and used accounts to shift responsibility to other issues. The findings of this study supported a claim to universality of the speech act of apology and to a particularity of how the apology strategies operate in different cultures: for example, an apology to children is made neither in Tunisia (this study) nor Egypt (Soliman 2003).

The studies considered above – Nureddeen (2008); Al-Zumor (2011); Jebahi (2011) – used the DCT methodological approach; Arabic speakers also shared many similarities about Arabic apologies. It is possible that the DCT had a narrowing effect on responses which diminished the ability to discriminate, at a fine-grained level, between the different Arabic-speaking nationals. In terms of the employment of apology there were some similarities between Arabs and native speakers of English; on the other hand, there were differences in apology strategies. Arabs using English, for example, were keener to take on responsibility, whereas the English native speakers were keener on offers of repair. Thus, these findings support the concept of *universality of apology strategies*. The influence

of Islamic cultural orientation was obvious in the many deviations in the Arab learners' apology performance compared with that of the native English speakers. Therefore, in teaching apology forms in English, it is imperative to address not only the language forms through which apologies can be expressed but also to consider culture-specific insights and patterns of thought to support learners in developing pragmatic competence in English. The fact that most of the participants of the previous studies belong to one social group, and that data was elicited by using DCTs, limits the potential significance of these results of the studies. Furthermore, as the focus of the studies was on obtaining quantitative conclusions of the use of apology strategies, this limits capacity to disclose new insights into the speech act of apology.

### **Apologies and gender**

My study focused on women and apology; therefore, it was important that I refer to apology studies that linked to gender; I address these links in the following section. Fortunately, there is a considerable amount of literature available that discusses the relationship between language and gender in the context of speech acts.

There are empirical results that imply gender variations revolve around in politeness – to an extent that women are considered to be politer, less critical, and likely to utilise more softening tools than do men (see, for example, Lakoff, 1973; Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 1995). Holmes (1995:2) claims that women are usually politer than men. She indicates that a majority of women appreciate talk and consider talking as an essential device for keeping in touch, particularly with friends and intimates: women use language to make, cherish and extend personal relationships. Generally, men tend to perceive language more as a device for attaining and conveying facts.

Generally, such assertions agree with the claims made by Lakoff (1973) and Tannen (1990) regarding co-operative and competitive strategies. Holmes

(1995:6), however, disputes that women are more likely to utilise positive politeness than men, which she considers ‘evidence of concern for the feelings of the people they are talking to’.

Holmes (1995) provides a comprehensive analysis of linguistic politeness and gender, drawing on her own and other influential language and gender research such as that of Fishman (1980), West and Zimmerman (1987) and Tannen (1984, 1999). Holmes examined gender differences in the speech act of apology and discovered both similarities and differences between both genders. Other scholars (for example, Cameron, 1995, 1997; Cameron, Bergvall et al. 1996) have interrogated these declarations, arguing that observing men and women in a divisive way not only disregards the variety of speech within groups of women and groups of men but also disregards cultural variances and those that may arise from other social variables such as class, age, and ethnicity. This disregard, according to Freed (1995:55), helps to preserve stereotypes about male and female discourse. Holmes (1995), on the other hand, argues that difference in the use of the speech act of apology between males and females is distinct.

The apologies corpus includes 183 remedial interchanges, and the data collection method was a refinement of Austin’s (1956, 1961) – according to Holmes (1990) an ethnographic approach. Holmes’ analysis showed that the women participants used more apologies than men and offered apology mostly to those of the same power, whereas male participants apologised to women without considering their status. While women mostly apologised to their female friends, men mostly apologised to women with whom their social distance was not as close.

Bataineh (2006) found differences in apologies between Jordanian male and female participants. Although male and female participants utilised the various expressions of the statement of remorse, it was clear that female participants managed to utilise this strategy more, opting for different expressions of the statement of remorse in 65.4% of the situations contrasted to the male participants’

60.6%. As well, female participants managed to assign responsibility to themselves or others more frequently than their male counterparts. This may be because female participants tend to explain the situation more than male participants to ensure the offended person's understanding of the situation. Unexpectedly, only male participants invoked Allah's name when they apologised; the researchers had anticipated that female participants would also employ this strategy as this is an integral part of Jordanians' everyday speech. The researchers observed that such expressions have become formulaic for some people who have come to utilise them out of habit instead of genuinely meaning them. Overall, females focused more on brushing off incidents as not being crucial, thus avoiding any personal discussion; on the other hand, male participants turned more towards offending or blaming the victim. While both males and females undertook expressions of apology, women were much less audacious than their male counterparts: women avoided conflict; men took an offensive rather than a defensive position in their apology strategies.

In a later study, Bataineh (2008) researched the differences in the realisation of apology strategies among native speakers of American English and Jordanian Arabic. The results showed similar differences to the earlier study in respect of differences between males and females; however, the extent of the differences between Jordanian males and females were more pronounced than those between the American males and females. Gender issues associated with how men and women differ in the use apology strategies are discussed in detail by Brown (1980), Holmes (1989, 1990, 1995) and Meyerhoff (1999, 2000, 2003). These differences, however, lie outside the scope of my research.

To conclude, the results of these previously mentioned studies reveal that the apology strategies used are associated with the way women and men are raised in different cultures. The findings, however, confirm that females usually employ more apology strategies with higher frequency than do males, indicating that 'females are trained from childhood to apologise more for their mistakes not only

to females but also to males (see, for example, Brown & Attardo, 2005; Holmes, 1995). Such findings confirm the results of studies that show gender is an essential factor in people's use of speech acts in general, and apologies in particular (Lukasik 2000). Religious and cultural norms integrate into the use of apology.

The differences in the use of apology strategies are found not only between cultures but also between both genders of the same culture. Such results suggest that apologies may be problematic for ESL/EFL learners as strategy use in one's culture may be different from that in the target culture. Furthermore, generalising the findings to most of the studies are constrained by the fact that DCT was used to collect the data. Overall, the findings of the research reviewed above provide empirical evidence gender has an impact on language use, both within and between cultures.

## **Speech acts and social variables**

### **Politeness**

To most researchers, politeness is employed to avoid conflict. Lakoff (1973:45) defines it as forms of behavior that have been 'developed in societies to reduce friction in personal interaction'. Fraser and Nolen (1981) define *politeness* as a set of restraints of verbal behavior whereas Leech (1983) perceives it as forms of behaviour geared toward developing and retaining harmonious communication. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), politeness as a form of behavior permits verbal exchange to happen between potentially aggressive companions. According social theories, many scholars have given emphasis to the disputed nature of politeness norms across cultures (for example, Watts, 1989; Mills, 2003, Watts, Idle et al., 2005; Eelen, 2014). In the introduction to their book, *Politeness in language: Studies in its history, theory, and practice*, Watts, Ide et al., (2005:2) reveal the book's purpose as being the following:

to deepen the research perspectives within this field by questioning more profoundly what polite linguistic behavior actually is and what grounds there might be for claims of universality ... [and] to broaden research perspectives by demonstrating the need for more interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness assumes that interactants have, and consider the importance of 'face', i.e., presenting a desirable image in front of people (Salmon 2016, Goffman 2017).

Brown and Levinson (1987) consider all speech acts as face threatening for both the hearer and the speaker and divide face into two types; positive face and negative face. They interpret positive face as a person's need to be accepted by others and negative face as a person's need to be unimpeded by others. Any acts that collide with such needs may cause a threat to the speaker's or the hearer's face. When a speaker intends to select a strategy for any face-threatening acts, they need to consider the degree of any ensuing face-threat according to social variables that might influence the language that they use.

There are social variables that affect the speaker's use of strategies. Firstly, the degree of the imposition of the act (e.g., asking for a pen is less imposing than 'asking for a loan of \$10,000). Secondly, the degree of power the hearer has over the speaker (e.g., a teacher has a considerable degree of 'power over a student). Thirdly, the degree of social distance between the two interactants (i.e., whether they have a close or distant relationship).

The literature of social variable emphasises the variation and influence of those variables on individuals' choice of speech acts. (Banikalef and Maros 2013) claim that the choice of apology is influenced more by social status than social distance. Among the significant findings of a study by Hussein and Hammouri (1998) concerning social power, responses from Jordanian respondents indicated that whenever the recipient was higher in rank, the apology strategies involved honorific addresses. A study by Lee (1999) on apology-complaints of Korean and native English speakers showed that the participants differed on how the variables



such as power relation and social distance defined their choice of employing specific strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), all these variables contribute to the evaluation of the degree of threat to face involved in the act.

The theoretical framework that I will be using to investigate Saudi and Australian females' realisation of the speech act of apology and the impact of those women's power and agency on such realisation is positioning theory.

## **Positioning Theory**

Considering positions rather than 'roles' relates to a relatively recent social-psychological framework called 'positioning theory'. While Rom Harré and Bronwyn Davies, together with sociologist Luk Van Langenhove, are recognised as the founders of positioning theory, it was Davies and Harré who pioneered this notion (Davies and Harré 1990, Harré 1999, Van Langenhove and Harré 1999, Harré, Moghaddam et al. 2009). Together, they provide a social-constructionist approach which reveals how communication forms identity (Kroløkke, 2009: 765).

With the use of positioning theory, my study intends to uncover alternative ways of understanding the dynamics of human relationships when engaging in conversation within a social paradigm through the dynamic construct of 'position' rather than through a static designation of a person's 'role'. To be more specific, positioning is defined by Harré and Van Langenhove (1991:395), about selves and conversations, as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have a specific location.

Positioning cannot necessarily be regarded as intentional all the time whether it is self-ruled or forced. For instance, Tan and Moghaddam (1995:43) claim that culture determines this concept of positioning. Positioning consists of three main elements: story-lines, speech acts, and the position that is employed by a person

in a given discourse. Davies and Harré (1990:59) propose that a person, through both textual and lived narratives, learns to be ‘a particular non-contradictory person with a consistent story line’.

Harré and Van Langenhove (1991) consider social acts, involving speech acts, are the ‘matter’ of social reality. Social acts happen between people in a social realm with the realm consisting of four components: conversations, symbolic exchanges, institutional practices and use of rhetoric, all of which are forms of discursive practices. The basic component of the social realm are conversations: they are the linguistic practices that constitute the social world. Social acts and societal icons emerge within conversations; they involve two discursive practices – ‘positioning’ and ‘speech acts (rhetorical disposition)’. Speech acts, in this perspective, are the number of stories about institutional and macro-social activities that show them as salient societal icons (Harré 1975); ‘positioning’ is the positioning and situating of selves in dialogues that occur in combined generated story lines (Davis & Harré, 1990:37). The conversations that appear in social contexts consist of three main elements: position, story lines, and speech acts. This triad can reveal the episodic structure of discourse while analysing the examples of positions taken. How individuals position themselves related to the discursive positions offered for them is seen to count for their new reality. Davies and Harré (1990:46) claim:

Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive action in which they are positioned.

Discursive positioning in story lines and speech acts reveal each other mutually (Lyons 1995). That is to say, the social meaning of the discourse depends on the positions taken by the conversants, which are generated from the force of the social acts.

Most recently, Harré (2012:193) describes positioning theory as being:

based on the principle that not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions at that moment and with those people. In many interesting cases, the rights and duties determine who can use a certain discourse mode...A cluster of short-term disputable rights, obligations and duties is called a 'position'.

Moghaddam and Harré (2010:2-3) affirm that positioning theory is about 'how people use words (and discourse of all types) to locate themselves and others', and that 'it is with words that we ascribe rights and claim them for ourselves and place duties on others'. Positioning has direct moral inferences, such as a specific person or a group emerging as 'trusted' or 'distrusted', 'with us' or 'against us', 'saved' or 'wiped out'. Slocum-Bradley (2010:81) contends that 'if we understand how we construct social reality, we can construct it more consciously to sustain norms that promote the ends we profess to desire'.

From this introduction to the basic premises of positioning theory, it is evident that the concept of positioning can provide a deep and thorough comprehension of the different aspects and dimensions of the 'saying sorry' act that is even beyond the speaker's lips. It will enable exploration of the intentions, implied meanings, and unexpected realisation of each speaker's positioning.

### **Modes of positioning**

Harré and Van Langenhove (1991) identify five modes of positioning that occur within discourses: first and second order positioning; performative and accountative positioning; moral and personal positioning; self and other; tacit and intentional positioning. The modes of positioning are outlined in detail below.

#### **First order positioning**

First-order positioning refers to location in a moral space using some categories and story lines. A mother may say to her two older daughters: 'Please, try to clean

the house while I am away and look after your baby sister'. In this case of positioning two responses are expected. The first daughter may respond without any questioning by saying: 'of course, mom'. But the second daughter may complain and reject, saying: 'Why should I do that again since I had already cleaned the house and looked after our baby sister when you were out last weekend, it is my sister's turn this time? After all, it is your job as a mom!' In this case, the daughter shows a challenge and second order positioning has taken place.

### **Performative and accountative positioning**

First and second order positioning lead to performative positioning as the acts are subject to challenge or revision. As the first order positioning can be questioned within one conversation or in a second conversation that relates to the first, it can be seen as a form of accountative positioning, comprising 'talk about talk', (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991)

### **Moral and personal positioning**

The positioning of people occurs according to the 'moral orders' in which they practice social interactions. For example, if William asked Linda to close the window, then this first order positioning can be understood easily, especially given we already knew that William is a patient and Linda is a nurse. But if we regard a second order positioning where William asks Linda why she has not closed the window yet, then the scenario 'story line' here is likely to change from moral to personal positioning. To respond to William's question, Linda can no longer reply by referring to her position as a nurse, which requires moral obligations on her. She will need to insert a story that explains the deviation of what was foretold from her in her role as a nurse. Van Langenhove and Harré (1999:21-22) state:

such a story is likely to contain references to individual particularities, for example: 'I am sorry I forgot to make your bed, but I am a bit confused today as I just received this

letter in which...” Thus, people are not only positioned morally, but they can also be positioned regarding their attributes and particularities.

### **Self- and other- positioning**

Positioning is a discursive action. As mentioned above, during a conversation each of the interlocutors positions the other while, at the same time, positioning themselves. It is a discursive practice in which it implies positioning of the initiator and others and allows for negotiating new positions as well as in each discursive practice.

As an example, here in Melbourne, almost two years ago, I went to a coffee shop to have my breakfast. The shop was in an open area in a mall and my seating area was considered to be next to the exit, so, when I left to go out, I could not see the counter. I stayed there for a long time and they cleaned the table, and one of my friends came in. I had a long chat with her. Then we went out, and I said goodbye to her. I returned to the same area and took the escalator to go up; then I saw the waiter and remembered that I had not paid. I rushed immediately down to the coffee counter and made sincere reparative apologies out of embarrassment. Happily, the waiter said. “I knew that you would return”. I am a regular customer there; he was pleasant to me. I was pleased to have this response for it relieved me and alleviated the severity of the situation. Previously, I had put myself in similar situations as, in Saudi, men always pay at the counter. So, in such a situation I had engaged in both self- and other-positioning as I had performed sincere apologies to the waiter for my unintended mistake; importantly, for me, I had ‘saved face’.

### **Tacit and intentional positioning**

Most first order positionings are considered to be tacit. People involved in a conversation will not usually position themselves or others intentionally or consciously. But when a person is trying to tease somebody else, for example, acting in a ‘Machiavellian’ way, the first order positioning is regarded as

intentional. For example, Sara can say to Sally ‘clean my shirt’, not necessarily because it is dirty, but to see how she dominates Sally. Second and third positionings are always intentional. But if an intentional second order positioning is taking place, a tacit first order positioning will have risen as well. It is necessary to shed light on intentional positioning, in particular, as I will use its four encompassing types in this study.

### **Intentional positioning**

Intentional positioning includes a test of dominance that has two concerns: whether or not the positioning is deliberative or forced; whether or not the positioning involves self or other. The result is four different positionings that encompass intentional positioning:

1. Deliberative self-positioning (the adjective, *deliberative*, as per Ling 1998; not the adjective, *deliberate* as per Davies & Harré<sup>9</sup>;
2. Deliberative other-positioning;
3. Forced self-positioning;
4. Forced other-positioning.

#### **1.1.1.1.1.1 Deliberative self-positioning**

When individuals engage in deliberate self-positioning, they have a tacit goal in mind. Harré and Van Langenhove (1991:401) consider this to represent ‘strategic positioning’. They point out that a component of deliberate intention is considered

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<sup>9</sup> **Deliberate** (adj):

1. done consciously and intentionally, as in ‘a deliberate attempt to provoke conflict’.

*Synonyms:* intentional · calculated · conscious · done on purpose

2. careful and unhurried, as in ‘a conscientious and deliberate worker’.

*Synonyms:* careful · cautious · unhurried · measured · regular ·

**Deliberative** (adj): relating to or intended for consideration or discussion, as in ‘a deliberative assembly’

*Synonyms:* contemplative · prayerful · reflective · musings · pensive · cogitative · thinking · thoughtful · studious · rapt · introspective · brooding · philosophical ·

in each element of the tri-polar structure of speech: positions, story-line and speech act. I use the adjective, ‘deliberative’ to indicate that an individual has given consideration or thought to issues of ‘saying sorry’ and can respond tacitly, i.e., in a way that is understood or implied without being directly stated.

#### **1.1.1.1.1.2 Deliberative other-positioning**

Deliberative other-positioning may occur in the absence or the presence of the positioned person. I use the adjective ‘deliberative’ to indicate that a second person is involved, but that the resulting positioning comes about through discourse that results in change that appears to be a first order, tacit change.

#### **1.1.1.1.1.3 Forced self-positioning**

Forced self-positioning is similar to deliberate self-positioning, but it differs in the point that it assigns the initiative for the positioning to a second person. I use the adjective ‘forced’ to indicate that the first person sees that it is reasonable to accept the positioning of the second person (hence ‘second order positioning’). The first person rethinks their position and tacitly agrees, i.e., in a way that reflects a first-order change.

#### **1.1.1.1.1.4 Forced other-positioning**

Forced positioning of others is similar to deliberate positioning of others, may happen in the absence or presence of the person concerned. Power is what distinguishes this type of positioning. I use the adjective ‘forced’ to indicate that deliberative positioning of others has been unsuccessful and that power has been exerted by a second positioning person, without consideration of the impact on the first person; thus, this is a second-order change.

I have adapted the model of ‘intentional positioning’, consisting of the four specific types described above, for use in my study as a most suitable model, as it consists of explicit expressive as well as profound positionings that I anticipated

would benefit in expressing the types of positioning in which my participants would engage in their apology narratives. I reiterate that while Harré and his associates use the adjective ‘deliberate’ in their positing model, I adopt the term ‘deliberative’, as the preferred adjective used by Ling (1998:60): it is more accurate and expressive of the apology positioning taken by my participants.

### **Studies involving positioning theory**

Positioning theory has proved to be a sophisticated and successful device for interpreting discourse. Researchers from different disciplines have employed positioning theory; they have obtained both exciting and valuable outcomes. Positioning theory appears in a wide-range of studies such as adult literacy in both economics and business (Begoray, Higgins, et al. 2013). It features in teaching (Watson, Bayliss, et al. 2011) and discourse in education (Dennen 2011). It appears in studies of mentors and university supervisors in higher education (Bullough Jr & Draper 2004), and in discursive positioning in organisational members’ identity (Bisel & Barge 2011) .

Begoray, Higgins et al. (2013) examined the use of positioning theory on advertisements, building on Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional approach, to provide a theoretical framework for the improvement of reading. They developed a pedagogy to assist young people in developing a critical eye when dealing with texts such as advertisements – particularly those including messages of an aggressive nature. As Van Langenhove and Harré (1994:363) point out:

one can position oneself **or** be positioned as for example, powerful **or** powerless, confident **or** apologetic, dominant **or** submissive, definite **or** tentative and so on.

In the light of positioning theory, this study showed that there are three main themes concerning adolescent positioning coming from transactions with advertising texts occurred in the data: critical thinking, adolescents accept positioning, and adolescents refuse positioning. Moreover, it interestingly shown,



that first-order (accept) and second-order (resist) positions, as well as intermediate positions seemed to overlap both positions which support the idea that critical thinking is a precursor to the positioning decision.

Watson, Bayliss et al. (2013) investigated the experiences of teaching and learning support assistants (TLSA) through positioning theory. The participants of their study were all British white women except for one man. Positioning theory, according to Davies and Harré (1999:37), describes the

discursive practice whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines.

The theory suggests that we all employ positions created from some personal attributes and moods that offer chances for interpersonal action within the context and the limit of the position, all along with the duties that it encloses. The use of positioning theory as an analytical framework has helped in providing numerous stories and readings that allowed for accessing several identities of the participants of this study. Positioning theory also assisted the researchers in observing the significance of discursive practices and the correlation between positions, acts and discursive contexts in creating subject position that seems to be complicated and situated.

The story lines helped in understanding the multiplicity of the TLSA identities, in addition to the accounts of teachers and managers in schools. The women who participated in the study managed demanding and professional lives, and they constituted their style, as Watson, Bayliss et al., 2013:115) note, of

professionalism in a far more subjective manner based upon relationships, rapport, support, empathy and a genuine concern for children.

Watson, Bayliss et al. (2013) further claim that positioning theory was of great help in providing an understanding of the ‘complexities and situatedness’ of the women’ in their work environments and the relevant contexts of their homes and families.

Recent discoveries in positioning theory have further supported the value of postures and story lines and indicate how narratives are at the core of current political discourse. Harré, Moghaddam, et al. (2009:5) point out that the recent uses of positioning theory range from simple interpersonal encounters, through positioning in a public but limited legal struggle, to the positioning techniques used to justify civilian casualties in warfare. Included, is the analysis of examples of the discourses by which large-scale social entities position themselves in relation to others. They have examined the extent to which positioning theory could be applicable in a diversity of contexts and areas of discourse, including unexpected ones, such as studying. Further, Barrault-Méthy (2012) states that language policy could be one of its applications.

Positioning theory seamlessly unites with discourse-historical linguistic analysis, which reinforces embodied postures. The notion of story line is likely close to that of ‘grand narrative’ in critical discourse analysis (Pennycook 2006), even though, positioning theory is descriptive and does not reflect a specific ideological stance. In understanding organisational development, Bisel and Barge (2011) utilised discursive positioning theory to investigate how ‘planned change messages’ affect ‘organisational members’ identity and the way they went through ‘organisational change’ using an in-depth case study as the data collection method. They specifically examined ‘how change messages position organisational members to make sense’ in specific ways and to engage in particular relationships and identities that impact the way they practice change. Also, the results revealed that planned change messages (re)position organisational members in distinctive manners and create concerns for the individual and collective regarding ‘sense making’ and emotions. Moreover, they found that discursive positioning helps in discovering the social features of ‘sense making’ in the course of ‘change initiatives’ by ‘addressing the processes of articulation, resistance, and reflection’ at once. They also found that discursive positioning makes us aware of the connections between ‘emotion, positioning, and resistance’. They, further, claim

that discursive positioning approach underlines key issues for further research into ‘emotion, positioning, and resistance’. Discursive positioning particularly offers a valuable framework for showing the way that organisational members move resources for authorising ‘resistance’ management through ‘discourse and agency’. Harré and Van Langenhove (1999), claim that the findings of the studies that employed positioning theory showed that this theory explains how daily discourse bring identity and subject positions into life, and how those positions can be started with small sign or disputed aggressiveness.

Overall, only a small number of studies on positioning theory are related to linguistics. These include the following: positioning and culture (Hermans 2011); applying positioning theory to the analysis of classroom interactions (Anderson 2009); examining the role of positioning in the development of L2 learner interactional competencies in the content classroom (Pinnow & Chval 2015); and positioning theory and linguistic constructions of identity in the discourse of international students (Warren 2012).

By employing these various concepts and analytical techniques of positioning theory, it is likely that the theory will play a crucial role in assisting me in interpreting, analysing and classifying ‘saying sorry’ positions that the participants of this study employed in their apology responses.

## **Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided a detailed overview of the notion of apology and its development, cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics and I have reviewed selected studies that have looked at these areas.

In the next chapter, I provide full details of the methodology and the methods that I have applied in my data collection and data analysis. I give substantial emphasis to my inductive data reduction (IDR) process and the derivation of metaphors and selves that arise from my application of positioning theory.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology and Methods**

#### **Introduction**

In my qualitative study, I used in-depth interviewing as a data collection method, and then adopted narrative analysis and inductive data reduction to detect emergent positionings and selves as my participants reflected on ‘saying sorry’. In my study design, I chose to undertake individual semi-structured interviews of four groups of women with each group consisting of three individuals:

1. Saudis who are living in Saudi Arabia and who were interviewed in Saudi Arabia (hereafter defined as ‘Saudis in Saudi’).
2. Saudis who are living in Australia and who were interviewed in Australia (‘Saudis in Australia’).
3. Australians who are living in Saudi Arabia and who were interviewed in Saudi Arabia (‘Australians in Saudi’).
4. Australians who are living who are in Australia and who were interviewed in Australia (‘Australians in Australia’).

In this chapter I provide a summary of my methodology and methods, as well as reflecting more broadly on methodological stances and options.

As I have employed a qualitative methodology it is important for me to first include an overview of this research approach.

## **Qualitative and quantitative research methodology**

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that while qualitative research is concerned with finding answers to a given social phenomenon and how to make meaning of its processes, the focus of quantitative research is measurement and the relationship between variables. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches co-occur in a united domain of question. A qualitative, naturalistic method is employed to observe and clarify reality with the purpose of developing a theory that will expound on the experience. Qualitative methods are required when an individual starts with a theory or hypothesis; the research results in the validation of that hypothesis (Newman & Benz 1998, Steckler, McLeroy et al. 1992, Creswell 1994, Lazaraton 1995, Neuman 2002, Dornyei 2007, Bernard & Bernard 2012).

## **Qualitative research methods**

The importance of qualitative research lies in its focus on studying lives of humans and human groups in context. The discipline of sociology was the first to use qualitative methods; subsequently, such practices were extended first to include other social science disciplines: education, communications and social work (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). Qualitative research is a subject of inquiry in itself.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out that qualitative research is multi-method in focus; it requires an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the subject matter. As a consequence, qualitative research is concerned investigations in their natural contexts and encompasses a range of approaches to data collection, including observation, visual methods, and interviews. Denzin & Lincoln (1994:2) describe a cluster of methodologies of qualitative research as a 'bricolage':

a pieced together close-knit set of practices that provide a solution to a problem in a concrete situation.

Nelson, et al., (1992:2), describing the qualitative methods used in cultural studies, characterise its choice of practice as ‘pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive’.

Many methods are shared across qualitative paradigms<sup>10</sup>; each paradigm and discipline focus on analysis within its specific framework of reference; the history of these shows the multiple meanings that are attached to each practice. For example, analysis of texts in literary studies always deal with them as a self-reliant pattern; on the other hand, a researcher using a cultural study or a feminist view would see the text consider its location in a historical moment indicated by a specific gender, race and a social class (see, for example, Denzin 1994, Jankowski & Jensen 2002, Thomas 2006, Chang 2016).

### **Data collection**

There has been much discussion in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research concerning data collection methods, for example, (Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993, Kasper 2000, Yuan 2001, Kasper 2010). Each data collection method has its advantages and disadvantages.

### **Authentic discourse**

Authentic discourse is a data source that involves the collection of naturalistic data; as such, linguists differentiate between everyday conversation and institutional communication (Kasper 2000, Yuan 2001, Cummings & Clark 2006). For many areas of linguistic analysis, it is critical to identify patterns and to draw inferences to have sufficient instances of a particular aspect of the communication. Given that many features of language usage are dispersed and do not occur regularly in naturalistic data, its value as a data source, despite its robustness and

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<sup>10</sup> A paradigm is ‘a model for something which explains it or shows how it can be produced’. Accessed at <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/paradigm>, Thursday, 26 April 2018.

authenticity in context, is limited. It is common in cross-cultural, intercultural and interlanguage pragmatics research to elicit data from simulated tasks. Role-plays are one of most preferred elicitation instruments in pragmatics. Participants are provided with a defined scenario and asked to role play how they would speak and interact.

### **Discourse completion tasks and role-plays**

A second very widely used elicitation technique in comparative pragmatics research is the discourse completion task (DCT). The DCT is a written questionnaire that consists of a number of designed situations used to elicit specific speech acts: each contains a prompt to make it easy for the participants to respond to the situation in writing. The classic DCT format has a rejoinder that finishes the conversation. In this latter approach, as it is usually administered in a written format, thereby enabling elicitation of a lot of instances of language choices and usage from a large number of participants comparatively easily. According to Kasper and Dahl (1991), the DCT, along with role-play, are considered to be the chief data collection methods in pragmatics

From a methodological perspective, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) original work using DCTs, conducted over 30 years ago, is considered to be an empirical work in speech act realisation, pragmatics studies have continued to use DCT as a data collection method. DCTs have, however, been strongly criticised (Kasper 2000, Golato 2003, Cummings 2006). While DCTs are a straightforward way to elicit targeted linguistic responses from a reasonable number of participants, Cummings (2006) argues that they do not provide real linguistic reactions, and he sees them as being incapable of depicting authentic interaction. Golato comes to a similar conclusion finding that DCTs do not give a picture of real language use (Golato 2003). Kasper (2000) notes that DCTs cannot reflect the dynamic aspects of conversation, such as turn-taking. The researchers cited above also observe that DCTs fail to capture all the formulas in spoken discourse and

that the elicited responses tend to be shorter than the spoken responses. Despite such criticisms, most of the studies on the apology, including those that I have discussed in detail in Chapter 2, have used DCTs or role-plays only.

It can be argued that role-plays limit the potential findings even more than the use of DCTs, especially given that roles are typically static as well as being simplistic and artificial in their description of the context for the performance of the relevant speech act/s. In comparison to the more dynamic and contextualised approach based on the concept of positioning that I am using in my study, the elicitation methods of DCTs and role plays, are not well grounded in a contextualised perspective on naturalistic communication. Another criticism is that these previous elicited data studies have tended to focus primarily on drawing quantitative conclusions about the relative frequencies of strategy use, an orientation to the data that limits capacity to uncover new insights into the act of apologising. I contend that, as yet, there are unrevealed aspects of apologising, and that the use of positioning theory and personal narratives will be valuable in uncovering these. So, I intend to investigate apology and the positions people take in such contexts, with the data collected through in-depth interviewing.

### **In-depth interviewing**

In-depth interviewing is a data collection method suitable for qualitative research. Berry (1999) investigated in-depth interviewing as a data collection method and concluded that it is a ‘powerful’ method for qualitative data in particular. This widely used method helps in fostering learning about individual experiences and perspectives on a certain topic. It also assists in understanding complex social issues (discourses) that are relevant to the apology. Berry advises researchers to follow the techniques found in the literature in conducting in depth-interviewing and to try to be flexible during the interview and should be ‘sensitive’ to ‘individual situations’ to reach ‘success’. Maykut and Morehouse (2002) also advocate for qualitative investigation of people’s words and actions, stating that:



The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) claim that these interviews result in changing the research questions after getting data as the researchers know more about the topic. As a consequence, the researcher discovers new aspects of the investigation during the interview and there is flexibility in exploring the interview data to change the research questions to explore emergent themes.

Given this nature of the qualitative data resulting from in-depth interviews and the flexibility it affords to explore themes as they emerge, it is important here to give a brief overview of the approach I have adopted to the data analysis.

### **Inductive data analysis**

Inductive reasoning involves utilizing current knowledge or observations to produce predictions about new occurrences.

Thomas (2006:238) outlines the aims of utilising an inductive approach as follows:

- to reduce raw textual data to a summarised structure;
- to create explicit connections between the research purposes and the summarised results resulting from the raw data;
- to create a specific framework depending on the occurred process and experiences in the raw data.

Thomas (2006) claims that the general inductive approach provides a well organised group of techniques that are simple to use for analysing qualitative data and can produce valid and reliable results. Thomas (2006) confirms that the gathering of qualitative data in the process of assessment is known to be familiar, but information about strategies for effective and invulnerable techniques for qualitative data analysis is seemed to be less frequent.

Most are related to the implementation of particular approaches, such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998), narrative analysis (e.g., Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach et al. 1998) discourse analysis (e.g., Potter & Wetherell 1994), and phenomenology (e.g., Van Manen 1990). Strauss and Corbin's (1998:12) account of inductive approach points out that: 'The researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data'. Thomas (2006) further asserts that the essential aim of the inductive approach is to let research discoveries arise from the repeated, overriding, or important topics acquired from raw data, deprived of the restrictions forced by managed methodologies. Thomas (2006) declares that the result of an inductive analysis is to develop a model or a framework from the 'categories' which sum up the raw data that provides main processes and themes. The resultant categories from the coding are considered to be the heart of inductive analysis. He also presented the purposes that inspired the growth of the general inductive approach as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1**      **Purposes inspiring the growth of the general inductive analysis approach**

Number	Purpose
1	To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format.
2	To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research).
3	To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.

Source: Thomas, 2006, p. 238

**Table 1.2 A brief comparison of four analytical approaches**

	General Inductive Approach	Grounded theory	Discourse analysis	Phenomenology
<b>Analytic strategies and questions</b>	What are the core meanings evident in the text, relevant to evaluation or research objectives?	To generate or discover theory using open and axial coding and theoretical sampling	Concerned with talk and texts as social practices and their rhetorical or argumentative organization	Seeks to uncover the meaning that lives within experience and to convey felt understanding in words
<b>Outcome of analysis</b>	Themes or categories most relevant to research objectives identified	A theory that includes themes or categories	Multiple meanings of language and text identified and described	A description of lived experiences
<b>Presentation of findings</b>	Description of most important themes	Description of theory that includes core themes	Descriptive account of multiple meanings in text	A coherent story or narrative about the experience

Source: Thomas, 2006, 238

Thomas (2006) compares the general inductive approach to other commonly used qualitative analysis strategies: grounded theory, discourse analysis, and phenomenology. A comparison of these strategies, as outlined by Thomas (2006), is contained in Table 1.2.

Thomas (2006) summarises by stating that the inductive approach is similar to grounded theory, though it does not completely isolate the coding procedure into ‘open and axial coding’.<sup>11</sup> He further argues that researchers employing a general inductive approach restrain their construction of theory to the reporting and explanation of the ‘categories’ of great importance. He concludes with saying that discourse analysis normally gives a thorough explanation of the standpoints and ‘rhetorical devices’ obvious in a ‘set of text’.

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Axial coding may be used to develop categories, seeking relationships that will expose a category. Open coding is about identification and naming, axial coding is about links and relationships’. Accessed at <https://www.bing.com/search?q=open+coding%2C+axial+coding&qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=-1&pq=open+coding%2C+axial+coding&sc=1-25&sk=&cvid=EFA0A6B9705E45B0985903722BF05245>, Friday, 27 April 2018.

Thomas (2006) provides five procedural steps for the inductive analysis of qualitative data, as follows:

- Arrangement of raw data records (data cleaning);
- Careful reading of script;
- Formation of categories;
- ‘Overlapping’ coded scripts and uncoded scripts;
- Carrying on modification and improvement of categories.

Thomas (2006) further asserts that the essential aim of an inductive approach is to let research discoveries arise from the repeated, overriding, or significant topics acquired from raw data, deprived of the restrictions forced by coordinated methodologies.

I have chosen to use an inductive approach in the analysis of my interview data as it will enable me to identify key themes and metaphors that arise. As I will be dealing with narratives of apology, narratives also require further discussion.

## **Narratives**

Narratives and their application within the human and social sciences have received a great deal of attention in the past twenty years (Hooton 1990, Somers 1994, Mishler 1995). A narrative is a series of events that relate one story and the significance of each to the entire story; Hinchman and Hinchman (1997: xvi) write:

narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people’s experiences of it.

More recently, Pavlenko (2007) has argued that narratives provide the focus for the developing interdisciplinary area of narrative study (Pavlenko 2007). Narrative studies are used to distinguish between three interrelated categories of

information an individual may collect from life accounts. Drawing on Denzin (1989) and Nekvapil (2003), Pavlenko (2009:322-323) enunciates these as :

- subject reality (i.e., findings on how ‘things’ or events were experienced by the respondents),
- life reality (i.e., findings on how ‘things’ are or were),
- and text reality (i.e., ways in which ‘things’ or events are narrated by the respondents).

Elliott (2005) contends that the level of interest in narratives amongst researchers in the last two decades has been rising and suggests that the importance of narratives lies in their multiple-uses in data collection, data production and as a centre of enquiry in itself.

Polkinghorne (1988) indicates that the purpose behind studying narrative meaning is to make clear the processes that create its specific meaning, and to define the implications this meaning has to offer for recognizing human existence. To conclude, narratives provide valuable tools to interpret human interaction and to enable fuller interpretation of their experience.

A range of studies across many fields exemplify the potential of narrative analysis to provide new and valuable insights. For example, in Education, Ling (1998) used narrative analysis to investigate the ‘discursive practice of curriculum coordinators’ – and, in particular, the positions they employed – and completed the analysis of data using positioning theory to help identify metaphors associated with their roles.

In Applied Linguistics, Pavlenko (2007) investigated autobiographic narratives with the aim of providing a critical account of ‘second language users’ narratives’. Firstly, she concluded that autobiographic narratives have several features that make them a sophisticated and attractive emphasis of applied linguistics investigation. Secondly, that they have an appealing aesthetic quality for readers and that they can connect with a broad range of audiences. Thirdly,

that they textually reflect how their authors experience 'being in the world', as well as being 'transformative' in their transfer of the power relationship between researchers and contributors thereby giving the topic 'agency and voice'.

Finally, as a consequence of these reflections on the beneficial uses of narratives, I have adopted narrative analysis in my research to be able to delve more deeply into the data, especially given that my participants were asked to share their personal stories of making apologies.

In this study I am investigating the metaphors and selves that have emerged in the participants' 'apology' positionings; it is important, therefore, that I provide an overview of metaphors and selves as elements in positioning.

## **Metaphors and selves**

Davies and Harré (1990:48) refer to such metaphors as detecting the 'positioning' of selves 'in conversations of observable and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines'. Using inductive data reduction to 'make meaning' of the data that I had collected, there emerged a set of metaphors that I could use to describe each woman. From these metaphors, different 'selves' arose.

## **Positioning theory**

Davies & Harré (1990:62) claim that, by focusing on the person, positioning concentrates on:

the way in which the discursive actions constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is a resource through which speakers and hearer can negotiate new positions. A subject position is a possibility in known forms of talk; position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons. This way of thinking explains discontinuities in the production of self with reference to the fact of multiple and contradictory discursive actions and interpretations of those practices that can be brought into being by speakers and hearers as they engage in conversations.

Harré and Van Langenhove (1991) point out that positioning theory provides an understanding of selfhood: each participant will have a personal identity accompanied by a multiplicity of selves which emerge from any given narrative.

These selves are detected in the narrative, which consists of positions, story-lines and ‘relatively determinate speech acts’.

As a consequence, I used positioning theory extensively in the analysis of my data – with ultimate emphasis on the distinctive selves that my participants revealed in their narratives.

## **Procedures**

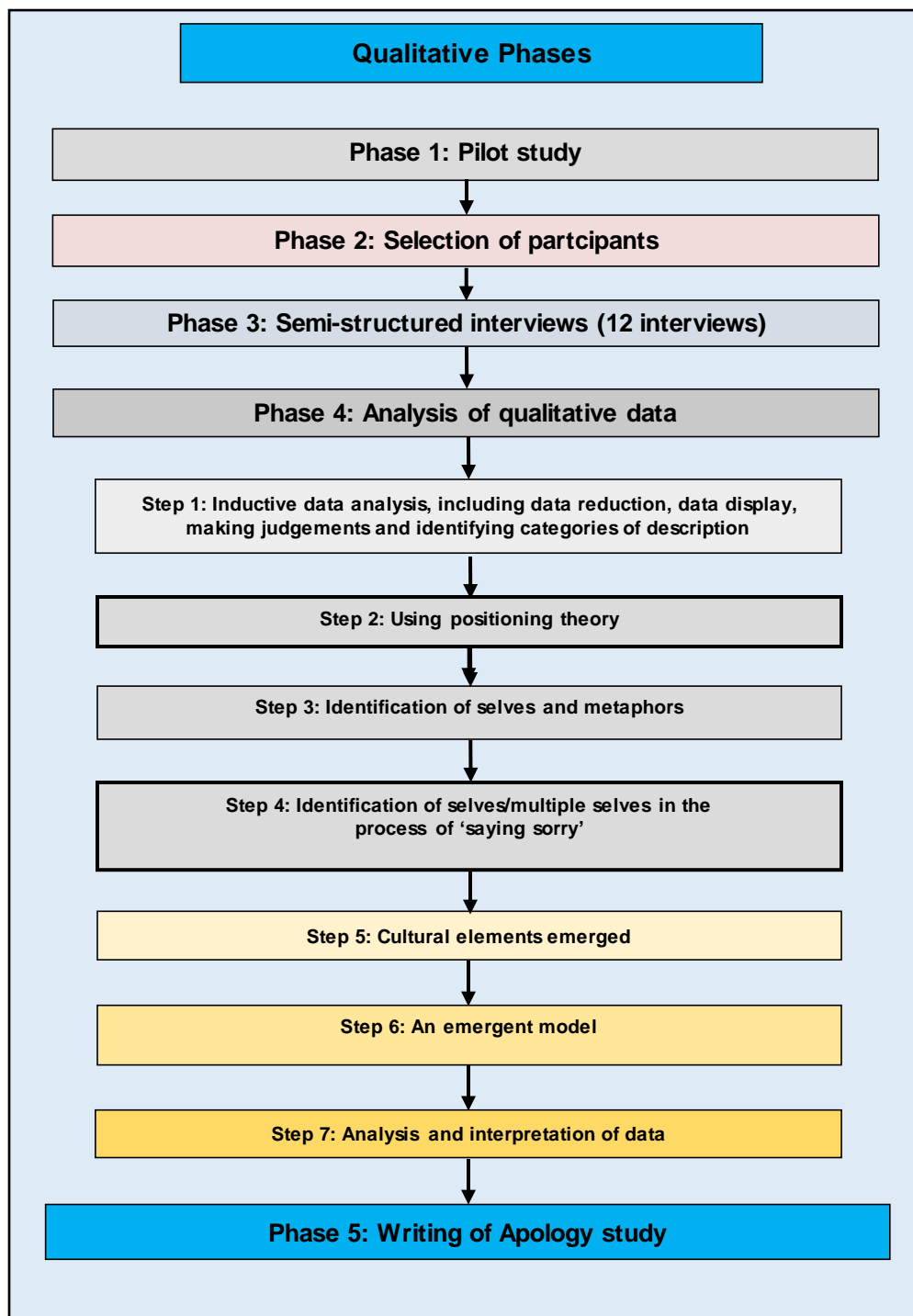
A summary of the methods and procedures that I employed in my qualitative study is contained in Figure 3.1. In the following sections I have provided a detailed explanation of the phases and steps that I took.

### **Pilot Study**

I conducted an initial interview with a faculty member at Victoria University, great thanks to her, who has expertise in the field, to ensure that the interview protocol functioned well in eliciting personal reflections and stories.

The interview was successful and went smoothly. However, she gave some recommendations, such as rephrasing the questions as some seemed unclear and suggested adding some more further items such as: What are other ways of ‘saying sorry’? Can you tell a story in which somebody ‘said sorry’ to you?

Figure 3.1 Summary of methodology and methods





**Table 3.2      Group Division (3X4 Matrix)**

Location	Nationality of Women	
	Australian Number	Saudi Arabian Number
Australia	Three	Three
Saudi Arabia	Three	Three

### Selection of participants

The study recruited 12 participants and all of them were females living either in Saudi Arabia or in Melbourne, Australia. The Saudi group was fluent English speakers. The participants varied in terms of age and education level. Participants had been divided into four groups as can be seen in Table 3.2.

The approach taken to recruitment of participants was purposive sampling. I am familiar with many Saudi women who live in Melbourne, and who are fluent in English, as a result of my master's study at The University of Melbourne in 2013. Similarly, I am familiar with some Australian women who live in Saudi Arabia. Conversely, I have female Saudi colleagues in Saudi Arabia and female Australian friends whom I approached as potential participants. All the participants were tertiary educated women. The recruitment of representatives of these groups of speakers had enabled consideration of the influence of being an L1 vs. L2 English speaker and of cultural background and context in positioning.

### Backgrounds of participants

In my study design, I had chosen to undertake individual semi-structured interviews of four groups of women with each group consisting of three individuals:

1. Saudis who are living in Saudi Arabia and who were interviewed in Saudi Arabia (hereafter defined as ‘Saudis in Saudi’).
2. Saudis who are living in Australia and who were interviewed in Australia (‘Saudis in Australia’).
3. Australians who are living in Saudi Arabia and who were interviewed in Saudi Arabia (‘Australians in Saudi’).
4. Australians who are living who are in Australia and who were interviewed in Australia (‘Australians in Australia’).

Details of the location, and the given names<sup>12</sup> of the Saudi and Australian participants, are in Table 3.3.

### **Data collection**

I chose in-depth interviewing as a suitable data collection method for this study: I only used semi-structured interviews; I held two interviews with each participant. The first interview approximately lasted 45 minutes to an hour and the second interview lasted half an hour. I scheduled a second interview so that I might question respondents further in relation to their first responses. English was the language used in all of the semi-structured interviews; digital audio recording took place. Some of the Saudi participants used Arabic in some parts of their narratives. All the Arabic parts were translated into English. I undertook a transcription of the data after which each participant was sent a copy of the transcription of her interview to make any amendments deemed necessary, such as additions, corrections, and clarifications. I approached participants via emails and personal contact.

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<sup>12</sup>All names are pseudonyms, consistent with the ethical requirements of this research.

**Table 3.3**      **Details of participants**

Country	Saudi participants	Australian participants
<b>In Saudi</b>	Yamam	Laura
	Malak	Becky
	Shaikah	Kaity
<b>In Australia</b>	Alya	Britney
	Zahra	Kara
	Renad	Zilda

I chose to interview both Saudi Australian women, living in Saudi and Australia, to make comparisons between these two groups coming from different cultures and speaking different L1 languages. I sought to differentiate, regarding culture and L1 language, the impact of exposure to a different culture and different language on their perception of the act of ‘saying sorry’. My belief was that this would lead to valuable results and discoveries of the speech act of apology that would enhance the pragmatics literature.

The interviews took place in my workplace at Victoria University – six participants in Australia and six at King Faisal University, my employing university, for participants in Saudi. In some cases, I chose a private place that was mutually acceptable and safe for the participant and me. The questions that I asked the participants in the first interview were as follows:

1. I would like you to think of a recent memorable experience in which you have felt the need to say ‘Sorry’. Tell me the whole story associated with your saying ‘Sorry’ – describe the situation in which it arose; what was said; how it was resolved.
2. What was the nature of the resolution to this episode? Describe what happened in detail: tell me about the occasion or occasions on which this occurred; what was said; what the consequences were?

3. What were the personal tensions and dilemmas that you experienced during the time that you were ‘saying sorry’? Tell me about these tensions and dilemmas: what caused them; what happened; describe your personal feelings in detail.
4. I would like you to think about the influences that might have led you to behave in the overall way that you said ‘sorry’ in the story that you recounted earlier. Tell me, in detail, about one influence on your behaviour that stands out: who was involved; what did they say; how did this influence you?
5. I would like you to think about the reaction of friends to whom you might have recounted this story of ‘saying sorry’. Give me, in some detail, a typical response: who were they; what did they say; how did this influence you?

As indicated previously, I adopted an inductive approach – Inductive Data Reduction (IDR). In this process, in which I used Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets, I first deconstructed the original construct to detect an emergent theme. Secondly, I identified common themes and synthesised them as reconstructed overall themes as proposed by Ling (2014a, 2014b). An example of the process is available as Appendix 3. Once the data had been analysed, I matched the emergent themes with the model of the Harré positioning elements – the positioning theory framework outlined by Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) and modified subsequently by Ling (1998). This modified model comprises Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**      **Modified Harré positioning elements**

	<b>Deliberative positioning</b>	<b>Forced positioning</b>
<b>Self positioning</b>	<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>
<b>Other positioning</b>	<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>

Source: Ling IM, 1998, p. 60.

I took the elements that had emerged in the inductive data analysis and adapted them by applying positioning theory. The elements were:

- Using positioning theory.
- Identification of selves/multiple selves in the process of ‘saying sorry’.
- Metaphors relating to the multiple selves.
- Cultural elements emerging.
- An emergent model

It was expected that a model would be created from analysis and evaluation of the emergent data accordingly and the expectation was realised. I subsequently used the model to answer the specific research questions.

## **Ethics approval**

I applied for an ethics approval at VU so I could start collecting data. I provided the required forms to the committee for the application to be processed. The approval details are as follows: Ethics Application ID: HRE14-114; Date of Approval: 29/07/2014. The participants were provided with a plain language statement and an informed consent form and it was emphasised as part of the recruitment process that their participation is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time (see Appendices 1 & 2).

The participants might have felt upset or anxious during the interview or that they were under social or psychological pressure as they were revealing personal stories; thus, I exerted no influence of any kind over them during the interview. Immediate cancellation would have been the outcome should I have noticed that any participant had started to feel upset or uncomfortable.

Privacy and confidentiality of data were two essential ethical issues of which I was particularly aware. I knew that I must manage these two elements, as some cultures are more private and sensitive than others on the topic of making apologies. As well, some of the information that the participants were expected to

divulge during the interview might have been particularly sensitive to some. As a consequence, I avoided leading with any sensitive questions. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality: a guarantee was given about the use of pseudonyms as was the assurance that no personally identifying material would not be revealed.

### **Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided full details of the methodology and the methods that I have applied in my data collection and data analysis. Next, I report my findings from the interviews with a detailed analysis of the outcomes based on the three narratives I have derived from each of the three Saudi participants in Australia.

## Chapter 4

### Emerging Themes, Positionings and Metaphors: Saudis in Australia

The following stories were told to me by three Saudi women living in Melbourne, Australia, when I interviewed them in Melbourne in 2014. In each story, which consists of at least three sub-stories, I have engaged in inductive data reduction (IDR) of the original narratives to determine the contexts, the concepts and the themes associated with each sub-story. At appropriate points within each story, I have analysed the types of positioning that occurred. I have then summarised the categories of Harré positioning evident and have drawn conclusions about the new socio-cultural positionings<sup>13</sup> that I have identified in each story. A summary of the Harré types of positioning and the New Socio-cultural positioning elements used by Saudis in Australia is contained in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, respectively.

#### Alya's narrative

Alya is a Saudi woman studying in Australia. Alya has a Bachelor's degree from Saudi Arabia in microbiology; she has completed a master's degree in clinical microbiology at RMIT, Melbourne, Australia, and a post-graduate diploma at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia in bio-medical science. Alya is married

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<sup>13</sup> Hitherto, I shall refer to new socio-cultural positioning/s as 'New Socio-cultural positioning/s' to distinguish them from Harré positioning/s.

**Table 4.1** Harré types of positioning

	Deliberative positioning	Forced positioning
Self positioning	<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>
Other positioning	<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>

Source: Ling IM, 1998, p. 60.

**Table 4.2** New Socio-cultural positioning elements

Type of positioning	Key feature	Ethical	Moral
		What could or should be done	What is good or bad?
<b>Ethical</b>	To act according to ethical principles	X	
<b>Moral</b>	To act according to moral principles of goodness and worth		X
<b>Reflective</b>	To act following a period of reflection	X	
<b>Redemptive</b>	To act to save or be saved from sin, error, or evil		X
<b>Repair</b>	To act to redress a mistake or error	X	
<b>Emotional</b>	To act predominantly on emotional impulse		X
<b>Self-interest</b>	To act in one's interest/saving face		X

**Table 4.3** Emergent metaphors and selves

Participant		Metaphor	Self/Selves
<b>Alya</b>		The Fragile Woman	The sensitive woman
<b>Zahra</b>		The Super-Strong Woman	The emotional woman The stubborn woman The sensitive woman
<b>Renad</b>		The Moral Woman	The patient woman



and has one child; when I interviewed her in 2014, she was awaiting the arrival of her second baby. Alya loves life in Australia and feels very good about that.

Alya seemed relaxed and excited before starting the interview; I anticipated that this would be an excellent interview. I commenced with this question: 'I would like you to think of a recent experience in which you have felt the need to say sorry. Tell me the whole situation associated with you saying sorry, describe the whole situation, what did happen, what did you do, what did you say and how did you solve it?' In her narrative, Alya recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. A car accident
2. A teacher's bullying act
3. Making her mother worried

### **Episode one: A car accident**

Alya commenced her first story by describing an incident that occurred as she was driving home (A.03):

It's a funny story because at the beginning of this year I was in my car driving from the north to home, it's a long way, and the weather was very sunny, and my blood pressure usually is low, so, when I tried to return home, I just had a car accident.

Alya crashed into a neighbour's wall when her blood pressure suddenly lowered. It was quite a severe accident although she was not injured; the crash destroyed the common wall between the two houses. Alya continued with her story (A.04):

When the Police came, I just felt sorry, sorry I said, "Very sorry", they were very, very gentle with me. They told me, "Don't be sorry because, thank God, you are alive!"

Because it was a massive car accident, but I didn't lose any part of my body.

Alya was aware that the broken wall, as well as a water pipe and a disposal bin, would involve costly repairs.

Alya's accident had knocked down a wall and broken some plumbing fittings; it destroyed the neighbour's disposal bin. Alya felt the responsibility; however, she was disarmed by the neighbour's sensitivity; (A.06):

They were very gentle with me because of the wall that I broke: it might have cost more than \$6,000.

Accordingly, Alya apologised extensively (A.07):

I remember I repeated, "sorry, sorry, sorry", because it was such a big accident.

I asked Alya, 'Why did you feel that you had to say sorry?', and Alya said (A.08):

I just felt I had to say sorry because I had broken everything in the front yard. It was my mistake; I felt very guilty.

I then asked Al'a: 'And what did you feel after saying sorry?'; she replied (A.09):

Just nervous because, in Saudi, I would have had to pay for all of the damage; however, in Australia, we have insurance companies... Also, at this time, I was new to driving.

The neighbour explained that she did not have to apologise as everybody can encounter such a situation.

Subsequently, Alya's husband arrived home while she was tense and crying; he told her that she should not drive again. The neighbour attempted appeasement, pointing out that this indeed 'was an accident'. Alya's husband was firm: no further driving. Alya was nervous; she was shocked by this first experience. The kindness and humanity shown to Alya by both the neighbour and the police disarmed her: and entirely new experience for her, and she was nervous about the consequences; Alya said (A.13):

I was nervous because of everything; I was surprised because this was the first experience for me to handle a car accident.

The lady had directly supported her by saying the road is 'like a jungle' in Melbourne: there was no blame levelled. The police, too, were comforting in their response.

Alya reflected on the incident. She reported that the police had cancelled her driver's licence; subsequently, she had to take a new test which she passed. The testers gave her some advice for driving in future: once you feel tired, stop the car. Alya stopped driving as her husband asked her to do so, primarily as she was pregnant; he had allowed her to recommence after giving birth.

In this episode, Alya had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she felt personally sorry for what happened, despite the circumstances of her accident being out of her control. There were, however, examples of forced other-positioning and socio-cultural positionings that I discuss in the following sub-sections.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Alya apologised to the policewoman and the neighbour lady; however, they were so gentle with her and told her no need for the apology: "Thank God you're alive," they said. She understood their point and felt good that she was safe. Nevertheless, Al'a persisted with her apology because of the severity of the event; it was declined out of their concern for her safety. The neighbour told her that she did not have to apologise as anyone can experience such a situation. Alya had engaged in deliberative self-positioning; she was nervous as she had to pay for the damage but calmed down as she had adequate insurance to cover the costs. The lady's kindness supported her position. On reflection, Alya had said sorry as she felt entirely responsible for damage caused; she felt guilty as it was her mistake. Alya had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she said sorry out of both guilt and sorrow out of both guilt and sorrow for the inconvenience which, unwittingly, she felt responsible.

**Forced other-positioning: Power**

Alya's husband arrived while she was tense and crying and told her that he would not allow her to drive again. This announcement, most likely occasioned by shock and dismay, had a most detrimental effect on Alya. The neighbour responded angrily in her defence, saying that anybody might have been in the same situation.

Alya's husband had engaged in forced other-positioning: his spontaneous, ill-timed response in respect of placing blame on Alya's had upset the neighbour leading to a confrontational situation.

The outcome was a clash between parity and power. The neighbour had been present when Alya's husband arrived and told her that he would not allow her to drive again; Ail'a had been tense and crying. As a consequence, the neighbour became angry and said that anybody could find themselves caught in a similar situation. Alya's husband remained defiant; the neighbour attempted appeasement, emphasising that this truly 'was an accident...she said not to be sorry because this is very normal' (A.12).

Alya's neighbour had engaged in deliberative other-positioning in her role of being a kindly neighbour: she had tried to mediate the situation; meanwhile, Alya's husband took part in forced other-positioning mixed with concerned positioning as he responded according to his ethical and cultural norms and was concerned with Alya's well-being.

**New Socio-cultural positionings****'Concerned' positioning**

When Alya told her story, people present gave thanks: 'Everyone said, "Thank God you are alive" '. (A.16). People around Alya had engaged in concerned positioning as everybody's main concern had been for her safety: they had acted according to humanitarian principles of compassion and kindness. As a result of

her accident, police officers took Alya's driver's licence, and she had to undertake a new driving test which subsequently she passed.

Following the accident, Alya, obeying her husband's wishes, stopped driving as she was pregnant; he allowed her to drive after giving birth. Initially, immediately after the accident, he was forceful: 'He said, "You have to stop" (A.18). While this might have been a case of Alya's husband forcing her using concerned positioning, it was – ultimately – more likely to have been his greater concern for his wife and their unborn child: concern for their safety.

### **Episode Two: A supervisor's bullying act**

Alya started her next story, by reporting that once she was 20 minutes late for a practical class at her university as she was tired. Her supervisor was uncompromising; Alya said (A.19):

She was very angry with me, "Why are you late for 20 minutes?" and shouted at my face in front of all people.

Alya's supervisor had shouted at her and insulted her for being irresponsible and for not realising the importance of punctual attendance; she was aggressive with Alya and did not give her a chance to offer any explanation or defence: her supervisor saw Alya as being irresponsible (A.20):

"It's up to you, you don't have the responsibility, you don't care", and that I am careless...

I tried to explain everything. and she said, "No, I don't want any excuse for this".

Alya proceeded, with the account, explaining that a second supervisor had been very kind to her (A.21):

He said to me, "I know it's not a very big deal, but she was pregnant, and her feeling is not very good, and she is worried about you, and she wants you to be always on time".

Alya continued (A.22):

I was crying because I am a very compassionate person, she was yelling at my face in front of all those people, but I learned a lot from this situation; as I hadn't been late since.

However, Alya apologised to her supervisor, although, she felt she was not mistaken: it was a reasonable excuse, as she explained it (A.23):

Yes, at the same time I said sorry I knew it was my fault, but I had an excuse.

Eventually, Alya was able to explain her situation: she had been extremely weary as she stayed awake most of the night taking care of her sick son. The young Australian female supervisor did not accept Alya's apology and told her that it was entirely her fault; Alya said (A.25):

She didn't excuse me. She emailed me, "This is your fault". She said, "A huge big deal for a research student".

Alya responded that she had done her best to arrive at the class on time but that it was out of her hands as the care and protection of her child was her priority; she spent the whole day crying as a result of the supervisor's action.

Alya had recounted the situation to a classmate who had responded that what happened was wrong and that the supervisor had over-reacted. Alya realised that the supervisor, being pregnant, might have exacerbated the situation; it did seem likely; however, this situation might well arise for others: it appeared to be 'a normal thing'.

In this episode, Alya had been subjected to forced other-positioning by the female supervisor: she felt obliged to apologise to the teacher out of respect, all the while believing that she had had a reasonable excuse.

### **Types of Harré positioning**

#### **Self-positioning: Deliberative intent**

Alya cried as she is a sensitive person; it was embarrassing for her to be abused in front of the whole class by her teacher; when she arrived late; the consequences had been severe. To avoid further confrontation, she was never late again. Alya had engaged in deliberative self-positioning to prevent further embarrassment and

‘face losing’: she ensured that she was always punctual from that time on to avoid further embarrassment.

**Deliberative other-positioning: Parity**

Alya’s second supervisor supported her out of mercy, to lessen the severity of the first supervisor’s action. He also tried to justify the first supervisor’s attitude. Alya’s second supervisor had engaged in deliberative other-positioning as he tried to support Alya to lessen the painful situation: he had pointed out that the first supervisor was pregnant and had been feeling unwell. He had exercised reconciliatory positioning. Furthermore, this supervisor showed a high level of sensitivity and caring as he tried to alleviate her stress and to support her after the incident. He told Alya that he understood that she had come from a different culture but, despite that, needed to try to be punctual; Alya said (A.28):

I know you, and you are a mom, and you are a wife, and you are a student... but you have to learn from this situation and try not to be late any time.

As well as exercising deliberative other-positioning, Alya’s second supervisor had applied humanitarian principles of compassion and kindness.

**Forced other-positioning: Power**

Alya was late 20 minutes for a practical class at an Australian university as she was tired. The supervisor was harassing Alya: she bullied and insulted her; she described her as being irresponsible and careless about being punctual. Alya was late because of meeting a family commitment with her sick child. Alya’s supervisor had engaged in forced other-positioning as she exercised power over her in the course of which she bullied Alya in an unethical and inhumane manner.

Alya had attempted an apology – to ‘say sorry’ to her supervisor – wishing to point at that she had a reasonable excuse. Alya had become engaged in forced self-positioning as she apologised out of respect, although she was confident that she

had a valid excuse. The supervisor did not accept Alya's apology and told her that it was her fault. Alya had experienced forced other-positioning by her supervisor: she was subject to harassment. Alya's research supervisor accepted neither her apology nor her excuse; Al'a experienced a strong feeling of injustice.

Subsequently, a classmate confided with Alya that what happened was wrong and that the supervisor over reacted. She told Alya that she, too, had experienced a similar misuse of power and that the supervisor displayed a lack of empathy. In Alya's case, the action appeared to be inhumane in that it lacked any sense of justice: a classic abuse of power.

### **Episode Three: Making her mother worried**

Alya commenced her final episode by recounting a school experience that also involves her brother (A.33):

When I was in secondary school, I changed my school to another and got out of school early with my brother, and he took me to the old school, after finishing the exam, to say hello to my old friends and I didn't tell my mom.

Alya mother was anxious about them; when they arrived home; she showed her displeasure and punished them both. Furthermore, she imposed a sanction that prevented Alya from attending a celebratory class party (A.34):

When I came, she hit my brother and me. She punished me, after an exam I had a party at night with my friends and cousins, and she didn't let me go out.

I then asked Alya if she had said she was sorry. She responded immediately; (A.35):

Of course. I spent the whole week saying sorry, she didn't talk with me and didn't let me do anything that I like.

Alya reflected on this that she would not do anything without taking her mother's permission first.



Alya's mother accepted her apology soon after; nevertheless, Alya still considered that what she had done was not wrong: she felt that her mother had been unfair. Alya completed her account by saying that she told her story to some teenage friends. They responded by saying to Alya she did not do anything wrong and that her mother should not have punished her.

In this episode, Alya's mother had engaged in forced other-positioning because Alya had stayed out late without informing her mother of her whereabouts, thus causing her mother undue worry.

### **Types of Harré positioning**

#### **Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Alya's mother finally accepted her apology. First, however, her mother instilled the principle that Alya had to first seek permission before acting in ways that might hurt her future life. In making the initial decision to ignore her mother, Alya had engaged in forced self-positioning, exercising a right to make a decision that her mother might have thought would have unexpected adverse outcomes.

#### **Forced other-positioning: Power**

Alya's mother had applied sanctions to Alya that prevented her from attending a class party with friends and relations. In exercising her parental power, Alya's mother had engaged in forced other-positioning. In doing this she made Alya aware that she should continue accepting their mother's position. Alya apologised ('said sorry') to her mother, but her mother maintained her stance: the consequence was that Alya was excluded, for a time, from participating in her favourite social activities.

**Types of emergent Ali socio-cultural positionings****Emotional and redemptive positioning**

When Alya was in high school, she got out of school early and went to her old school, with her brother, to say hello to her old friends without telling her mother. Her mother was so worried about them. Alya had engaged, perhaps unwittingly, in emotional positioning: this action caused her mother undue worry; that is to say, it was a retributive action – a payback situation. Her mother had responded most strongly to this action. As such, this had been an immature response by Alya; I believe that in recounting this story from the past she was involved in redemptive positioning: she was seeking to redemption from an action that had caused her mother grief. She had done something that she now knew to be wrong.

**Summary of Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Alya used all types of Harré positionings through her narrative: self, other, forced and deliberative that led to the identification of deliberative and forced intent, and situations of involving parity and power. Alya, on some occasions, used two types of Harré positionings together. She also employed some socio-cultural positioning through her narrative: concerned, redemptive and emotional positioning.

In her first episode, Alya had crashed into a wall due to a sudden lowering of her blood pressure; thus, she was dramatically involved in deliberative self-positioning. She had apologised to the neighbour and the police, who compassionately engaged in humanitarian positioning as they told Alya' that she had no need not to apologise to them. Alya experienced forced other-positioning that I believe was part of cultural positioning by her husband as he stopped her from driving immediately after the accident; later, however, her husband engaged in deliberative other-positioning, demonstrating a situation of parity. The police

had exercised judicial power in a power positioning as they seized Alya's driving licence.

In her second episode, Alya experienced forced self-positioning by her supervisor; this led Alya to apologise, out of respect to her supervisor despite knowing that she had an excuse and that the supervisor had overreacted.

In her third episode, Alya had engaged in forced other-positioning by her mother, who took the opportunity to exert maternal power over her. Accordingly, Alya had been involved in redemptive positioning as she caused her mother subsequent worry. She had reflected, then acted in response to her mother exercising unwarranted power over her and her brother.

### **Metaphors and selves**

The metaphor that, for me, emerged from Alya's narrative is the *Fragile Woman*. Her fragility recurred throughout her story: when she felt so embarrassed for the accident and thus apologised more than once; that she did not discuss her husband's decision when he banned her from driving; when she could neither explain nor defend herself when her supervisor humiliated her in public.

In her second story, a secondary 'self' emerges: it is Alya the *Sensitive Woman*. This self was evident when she describes herself crying as a result of being harassed by her supervisor.

## **Renad's narrative**

Renad is a Saudi woman studying in Australia, Melbourne. She finished her master's degree in Business Management in 2014; before this she had completed her bachelor degree, in Saudi, majoring in Nutrition and Food Science. Renad is married and has a baby boy.

After having a brief, friendly chat with Renad, I commenced my interview. I expected this to be an exciting interview and I was thrilled by her compelling responses throughout; Renad seemed calm, interested and enthusiastic during the meeting. I asked Renad: 'Try to tell me some situations that you said sorry in and what were the consequences? To whom did you say sorry? What did you feel before and after saying sorry?' In her narrative, Renad recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. Asking a foreign teacher to dance
2. Unfair accusation of cheating
3. Regretting apology to an old Australian woman

### **Episode 1: Asking a Foreign teacher to dance**

At Renad's school, they had a party and activities; one of the activities was dancing; so, Renad asked her foreign teacher to dance with her; and then she thought it was impolite to ask her this according to the teacher's culture; the shock was (R.03):

She shouted at me and told me, "You are rude", in front of lots of people. It was very embarrassing for me. I could not talk. Suddenly I started to cry, and then I went away.

Renad then went to the teacher after an hour and said sorry to her; the teacher responded that it was all right, but Renad felt she did not accept her apology. Renad learned that she should not ask people to dance especially when those were from other cultures. Accordingly, I said to Renad: 'And why did you say sorry?' (R.06):

I apologised to her because she is my teacher. So, I thought it is polite to apologise even though I felt I shouldn't because she is the one who misunderstood me and shouted at me in front of so many people.

I then wondered what would have been Renad's response had this not been her teacher. Renad responded that, regardless, she would apologise if she did something wrong. I asked Renad if she had felt sorry; she said (R.08):

I wasn't feeling okay; I was embarrassed because of the shouting and the bad, strong words she used. It suggested that she was disappointed in me.

Renad realised that she and the teacher, who was foreign, did not understand each other's culture. She had assumed that her teacher would have had a background of the Saudi culture as she had been teaching in Saudi for a time; this was not the first foreign she had had as a teacher in her school. Renad concluded her story by revealing that she had not previously recounted this incident to anyone as it had been embarrassing for her and she had felt ashamed.

In this episode, Renad had engaged in forced other-positioning as her teacher had exerted power over her incorrectly assuming that she had been rude by asking her to dance.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Initially, Renad had recounted a slightly different story about the orientation day incident where students and staff had engaged in party-activities. One of the activities was dancing, so, she had asked her foreign teacher to dance with her, 'I went to her and asked her "Will you dance with us?" I thought it was normal' (R.02). Renad had engaged in deliberative self-positioning by asking her teacher to dance and subsequently, she had realised it had been an impolite proposition – it was counter the foreign teacher's culture.

**Forced other-positioning: Power**

While Renad had acted in what she believed to be in the spirit of the occasion, she had unwittingly engaged in forced other-positioning in asking her teacher to dance and to have fun; it had been a quite innocent act on Renad's part. The teacher, at first caught unawares, realised that she had to counter this by exerting the power of her position of being a teacher. She had assumed, incorrectly; that Renad had been rude and disrespectful.

**Emergent New Socio-cultural positioning****Repair Positioning**

The simple act of asking her teacher to dance at a social event had a flow-on effect as I have outlined above. A second socio-cultural positioning event emerged later in this episode when Renad approached the teacher whom she asked to dance in order say sorry. While the teacher accepted this apology, Renad had doubts about the teacher's sincerity (R.04):

I went back to her and apologised. I told her that, "I did not know that was rude". She tried to pretend that she was okay but I felt that she did not accept my apologies.

Renad had engaged in repair positioning as she had felt ethically bound to apologise to the teacher to repair her unintended mistake. It was likely that the teacher had been unaware, at the time, of the profound impact that the event had had on Renad.

**Reflective and ethical positioning**

On later reflection, Renad realised that her actions had been misunderstood; she said (R.05):

I learned that I should not ask people to dance especially from other cultures because it might be impolite.

She realised that she had made a socio-cultural error in approaching the teacher without ascertaining a related ethical question: what should she have done? Renad realised, too, that her reflective and ethical positioning had saved her from further public embarrassment; she would be careful to avoid similar situations in the future.

As a result of this episode, Renad realised that she needed to reconcile the situation – both for herself and for the teacher. She continued to be polite and to show respect for her teacher: ‘I apologised to her because she was my teacher. So, I thought it was polite to apologise even though I felt I shouldn’t [have to]’, (R.06). Renad had engaged in both reflective and ethical positioning; in doing so, both Renad’s respect for her teacher and her code of ethics had led her to apologise.

### **Moral self-positioning**

Renad indicated that there had been no involvement on the part of her teacher: only she was responsible. She affirmed that if she realised that any behavior on her part was inappropriate, in any way, that she would apologise regardless of whom it involved: ‘If I told her something that was inappropriate I would apologise as well’, (R.07). Renad’s moral code would lead her to apologise if she did something she believed to be wrong – regardless of whether or not it had involved her teacher. Renad was able to emerge unscathed from this painful personal experience; she had engaged in self-positioning; she had acted honourably, according to her strong personal moral code.

### **Episode 2. An accusation of cheating**

Renad’s second episode story involved interactions with an Australian teacher at an English Learning Institute in Melbourne, Australia. Renad had been set an essay assignment and had returned it twice to the teacher for correction it; each time, on completion, the teacher delivered the copy back to Renad. During the

drafting, the teacher recognised that many students in the class who had been cheating. The teacher believed, without having undertaken a full inquiry, that everybody was cheating. Incorrectly, the teacher had concluded that Renad had also been cheating and, in front of the class, had told her not to cheat again. Renad, who was not a cheat, was deeply offended (R.12):

When I corrected it the second time she gave it to me, she told me in front of all the students, 'Don't cheat another time'. I was shocked because I had never cheated before.

Renad was so perturbed that she neither talked nor responded to the teacher; her classmates suggested that she should disagree with her. Renad did not, as she was too polite: she held a firm religious belief that she should respect older people. Renad was unhappy for the whole weekend because the teacher had underestimated her (R.13):

But also, because of my religion, as a Muslim, we should not fight with people who are older than us and with our teachers. So, I tried to be polite and to follow my religion as well. I did not tell her anything.

The following week, the teacher, in front of the class, told Renad that she did not mean what she had said. Renad suggested that they might go outside, but the teacher refused; Renad challenged the teacher to not talk in front of the class; as a consequence, the teacher agreed to this request – a situation that pleased Renad (R.14):

I became quite angry. I threw down my pen. I told her, "Okay, tell me what you want? You want to talk in front of everyone. Okay, talk", and suddenly she said, "Okay, let us talk outside".

Renad and the teacher talked outside. In private Renad told her that, as a Muslim, she would not cheat. Renad then apologised to her teacher for being angry, for shouting and for throwing her pen after which her teacher performed a sincere apology. The teacher said that she regretted what she did to her and did not realise that Renad was a hard-working student. I then asked Renad, 'How



could she know that you did not cheat and came to apologise?’ Renad responded (R.19):

I don’t know actually. She told me that she felt sad because of the way I had reacted when she called me a cheat. I told her, ” I swear to God that I did not cheat”.

The teacher recognised that Renad had not cheated; she felt sad when she saw Renad’s reaction and realised that she had falsely accused her. When I then exclaimed, ‘She did not get angry when you threw the pen!’, Renad reported that the teacher had remained calm as she knew herself to be mistaken.

I then sought an answer to the question, ‘Why did you not want to talk in front of the class? That you would regain the confidence of the class?’ Renad reported that she insisted on talking in private to avoid the teacher being embarrassed; however, Renad also wanted to maintain a right personal image of herself in front of the class: she was trying to avoid the class then to see her while she was angry.

I then asked Renad for whose ‘face’ she was most concerned: hers, or the teachers? Renad replied, ‘First of all mine; then hers’ (R.23). I then questioned whether she was more concerned with her image or that of the teacher; whether the teacher might negatively treat Renad resulting in her perhaps receiving lower grades; or was this her character?

Renad reported that it might be both reasons; that it might be different with others such as friends, but not with her parents. She said (R.25):

For sure that will be different from liking students or friends. But my parents? They raised me in the way that I have to be polite with other people especially those older than I. On the other hand, when I became angry or fed up with other people, I don’t care; I lose control.

Her response to her being polite and respectful towards teachers was related to her feelings and avoiding embarrassing confrontations; she said: ‘Yes...’ (R.27)

Because you know something, she might become angry – for example; you don’t know what she is going to tell you. She might become angry and embarrass you in front of other

people. Some people they don't care. Some teachers, they don't care about your feelings.

What if she makes me embarrassed in front of all of them?

When Renad recounted the story to others, they suggested that the teacher was mistaken; there was an affirmation of Renad's ethical position.

In this episode, Renad had engaged in ethical positioning: her personal and religious principles had guided her not to be rude to the teacher even when falsely accused of cheating. In this episode, Renad had engaged in ethical positioning: her personal and religious principles had guided her to not be rude to the teacher when she had been falsely accused of cheating.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced other-positioning: Power**

Renad had twice given an essay assignment for correction to her teacher; on completion of that task, the teacher returned the corrected assignment. The teacher had become aware that students had been cheating; mistakenly, the teacher believed that everybody was cheating and so, she told Renad, in front of the whole class, not to cheat again. Renad was shocked as she had never cheated before: 'She told me in front of all people and students, "Don't cheat another time". I was shocked because I have never cheated before' (R.12). Renad was appalled as she acted according to moral principles of goodness and worth.

The teacher had engaged in forced other-positioning: she had exerted her power over Renad in a rash and thoughtless way by accusing her of cheating; the teacher had behaved in an intimidating manner.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: Forced intent**

Renad had a friend of ten-years standing who often made mistakes and then spent much time apologising for them. The last time they disagreed Renad was appalled as she acted according to moral principles of goodness and worth.

The teacher had engaged in forced other-positioning: she had exerted her power over Renad in a rash and thoughtless way by accusing her of cheating; the teacher had behaved in an intimidating manner. A disagreement Renad, out of frustration, told her that they are not going to talk anymore, 'I didn't care and I told her, "It's over"' (R.26). Renad had engaged in deliberative self-positioning to protect herself from unwanted involvement: she broke off the friendship – a decision in which she exerted forced intent.

### **Emergent New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Moral and repair positioning**

In this episode, Renad had engaged in good, moral socio-cultural positioning. She sought to maintain a positive personal self-image in front of the class: 'I wanted my picture to be the good girl, like the calm woman. I didn't want them to see me when I was angry' (R.22). To do this Renad ensured that she discussed sensitive issues in private. This situation also applied in her dealings with her teacher where Renad gave priority to protecting her image: 'First of all, mine, then hers' (R.23).

Renad showed moral strength in the discussion that ensued when the teacher apologised to Renad for forcing the situation that led her to become angry and hence throwing down her pen; as a consequence, this led to the teacher discussing the issue outside the classroom. Renad had feared that her fellow students might misjudge her motives; the teacher, realising this was the situation, agreed to discuss the matter in private. Renad told the teacher that she was not a cheater and, as a Muslim, she would not do that.

This moral strength was displayed in the discussion that ensued when the teacher apologised to Renad for forcing the position that led her to becoming angry, throwing down her pen and forcing the teacher to discuss the issue outside the classroom. Renad's fear had been that her fellow students might misjudge her motives; the teacher, realising this was the situation, agreed to discuss the matter

in private. Renad told her that she is not a cheater and as a Muslim she would not do that (R.15):

She was like apologising to me that she made a mistake. And I also told her that, “I am not a cheater. My religion does not allow me to cheat”.

Renad also apologised to her teacher for her shouting and throwing down of the pen: ‘I apologised to her as well because I shouted at her a little bit because she made me angry’ (R.16).

The teacher had realised her mistake and apologised, and Renad had asserted a high moral position of goodness and worth. Both Renad and the teacher had engaged in repair positioning to redress the mistaken apprehension that cheating had occurred.

### **Redemptive positioning**

Ultimately, the teacher performed a sincere apology to Renad: ‘She said, “I am sorry” (R.17). The teacher had expressed regret over the incident: ‘She said “I regret I have done that to you, I did not know that you are very hard working” (R.18). The teacher had engaged in redemptive positioning to seek redemption of a wrong that she had done to Renad.

### **Moral and ethical positioning**

Later, I had inquired about Renad’s motives concerning the teacher and the cheating incident: was it concern over a possible loss of marks, or had it been her character? Renad had replied, ‘Maybe both’, (R.24). Renad had joined in moral positioning as she said sorry to her teacher because she was self-confident and morally aware. She held to her ethical principle of remaining calm, being polite, respecting teachers and elders and following Islamic teachings: (R.13):

Because of my religion, as a Muslim, we should not fight with people who are older than us and with our teachers. So, I tried to be polite and to follow my religion as well.

Renad was unhappy about having being underestimated by her teacher; she spent the weekend upset out of suppression and disappointment.

Renad had engaged in moral and ethical positioning; her Islamic and personal values stopped her from acting impolitely. Renad's parents had instilled in her the importance of respecting people; Renad had shown herself to be a moral and ethical woman who had been careful to maintain a sound image in front of her teacher and classmates. This positioning had led to the redemptive positioning of both Renad and her teacher.

### **Episode 3. Regretting apology to an old Australian woman**

Renad started her last story and reported that after having a baby; she became dizzy and was bumping people with the pram unintentionally; and was apologising all the time; and people were friendly towards her. On one occasion, however, she bumped into an older Australian woman who made a considerable fuss and had a fight with Renad; Renad apologised but then regretted it (R.30):

She was fighting like I bumped her or something, like I killed her or injured her legs or...  
And I said, "Okay, sorry, I did not see you". She said, "Open your eyes, blah, blah, blah".  
I do not know what she said. I just went away. And do you know? I felt such regret that  
I apologised.

Renad reported that had she known that the old lady would be rude, she would not have acted politely but rather rudely. According to Renad's last response, I had wondered how she would respond to this question (R.33):

If you were in Saudi and you bumped a Saudi woman, would you react the same way?  
She may have got angry with you the same? And Renad reported that she would have felt  
the same way even if she had been in Saudi.

In this episode, Renad had engaged in sound, moral socio-cultural positioning as she apologised to the old Australian woman despite her having behaved towards Renad in an unaccepted manner.

**Types of Harré positioning that emerged****Deliberative self-positioning**

Renad had engaged in a deliberative self-positioning as she regretted her apology to the Australian woman who had a fight with Renad (R.30).

**Emergent New Socio-cultural positioning****Moral positioning**

After having a baby, Renad became dizzy and was bumping people with the pram unintentionally, and was frequently apologizing; despite this, people were kind towards her. Once Renad collided with an older Australian woman who made a considerable fuss and forcefully argued with her; Renad apologised but then regretted it (R.30):

I said, "Okay, sorry, I did not see you". She said, "Open your eyes, blah, blah, blah". I do not know what she said. I just went away. And do you 'know something? I felt like I regretted that I had apologised.

Renad regretted the apology as she believed the older woman had behaved unfairly.

Renad had engaged in a moral positioning as she apologised to the woman despite her having behaved unacceptably. This initial positioning had changed to being redemptive: she had regretted the apology as a reflex action to the woman's rudeness. Renad apologised to the old Australian woman, whom she bumped with her pram, because the apology was a normal response to her: 'It is like any situation when you hit somebody: you apologise. That is it' (R.31). Renad's apology was made out of courtesy and respect. Renad had engaged in moral positioning as it was an appropriate response in such a situation.

**Self-interest positioning**

On reflection, Renad said that if she knew that the old Australian woman would be rude, she would not have acted politely but rather rudely, 'If I knew that she would shout at me even if I apologise, I would not have apologised. I would have been rude', (R.32). Renad had engaged in a self-interest positioning, as she tried to avoid a loss-of-face situation.

**Ethical positioning**

When I asked Renad, 'If you were in Saudi and you bumped a Saudi woman, would you react the same way? Might she just have got equally angry with you?' And she said (R.33):

Like I told you, if I hit anyone, I always apologise if I have hurt someone. But, wait, like if I knew they are going to shout, even though I apologise, I will feel sorry that I apologise.

Renad had engaged in ethical positioning; she has always been moved by her ethics, not by the situation.

**Summary of the Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Renad used three types of Harré positionings through her story: self, other and forced. Renad also employed a wide range of new, emergent socio-cultural positioning: reflective, repair, self-interest, moral, ethical and redemptive. On some occasions, Renad used two types of positioning together: self- and moral-positioning.

In her first episode, Renad had shifted dramatically from forced self-positioning to both repair- and moral-positioning. When the teacher shouted at her on being asked her to dance, Renad had to apologise immediately to repair her unintended mistake. Despite that the teacher had embarrassed her in public, Renad did apologise; as her morals were her controller. As a result, Renad had engaged in reflective-positioning for public embarrassment had taught her a harsh lesson:

she should refrain from asking people from a different culture to dance. Clearly, Renad and her teacher had not understood each other's culture.

In her final episode, Renad had engaged in moral and ethical positioning: she did not respond to the teacher when she accused Renad of cheating; Renad was a person who holds strong moral and ethical values. Inadvertently, the teacher had engaged in forced other-positioning as well as redemptive positioning. On realising her mistake, the teacher apologised to Renad.

### **Metaphor**

The metaphor that emerged from Renad's narrative is that of the *Moral Woman*. Her strong moral code directed her behavior to apologise – even when being misunderstood. The *Moral Woman* is a self that is represented by the responses to the positionings to which she was subject. Throughout the narrative, I also see Renad as the *Patient One*: despite the unfairness that she experienced, she maintained her patience throughout these episodes.

### **Zahra's narrative**

Zahra is a Saudi woman who is undertaking a master's degree at Monash University. She lives in Dandenong and has been in Melbourne since 2011. She is married, but does not have any children; in Saudi, she has a large extended family that consists of her parents and some siblings. Zahra originates from Taif in Saudi Arabia where most recently she was employed as a supervisor. While Zahra loves her country and misses her parents, job and some of her family, she also loves being in Australia: this is assisted by her having both a brother and sister living in Australia. She feels that everything is familiar to her as she remains close to her family. Zahra recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. Breaking up with a close friend
2. Leaving to Adelaide



### 3. The Korean incident

#### **Episode 1: Breaking up with a close friend**

I met with Zahra at Monash University in the afternoon. Zahra was a kind, tranquil, peaceful Saudi woman. She was so happy and excited to do the interview; she welcomed me warmly with her lovely face; after a brief welcoming chat, I commenced the formalities. As she recounted the first of her very personal, sensitive and confidential stories I realised that Zahra had complete trust in me: I felt honoured.

Zahra commenced with a touching statement that showed the delicate yearning that this Saudi woman had for her homeland. She told me ‘I love my country; everything is there – my parents, my family, my job and I miss everything there’ (Za.07); she then continued in this personal vein talking about a problem that had arisen with a person who had been her closest friend (Za.08):

The most emotional situation for me was a few years ago, 2006, or 2007 when I was with a particular friend. When we were studying at university, I had been her best friend. In her final year, she had many problems at home, and sometimes she called me at home. We were spending long hours together, causing problems between my family and me.

Zahra had been forced to tell her friend that if this situation continued she would have to break up the friendship. Zahra’s friend promised she would stop the late-night calls; however, she did not. Consequently, Zahra ended the friendship.

After ten years of separation, Zahra dreamt of her former friend. She felt guilty to the extent that, in an attempt to assuage her guilt, she called her and apologised to her for ending the close friendship (Za.10):

I called her home, and her mother told me, “She’s married now, and she has some children”. She gave me her number. I rang and told her I saw her many times in my dreams. I said that I did not know if it was like guilt, or something else: I did not understand. I said I was sorry.

Soon after Zahra felt disquieted (Za:12):

I did not feel I should have said sorry that moment. I did not feel I had to say sorry, but because, it was like a commitment...to feel relieved after these years – because maybe I [had] hurt her...So I said, “Sorry, and I hope that I didn’t hurt you too much”.

Zahra thought that she needed to say sorry at the time of the incident; however, she felt that somehow, a feeling of disquiet. She said: (Za.14):

I felt like she wasn’t concentrating on me at that time. I don’t know why...she was so different that time. When I said sorry she accepted it immediately, and she was so happy.

Perhaps her friend had forgotten the whole issue; appeasement of Zahra’s guilty concern was all that was required.

Zahra then realised that she wished to stop feeling angry, for essentially, she was a ‘happy person’ who she wished to leave behind a person who seemed to ‘interrupt the peace of others’. Zahra did not renew the friendship; she was relieved when she took the final break-up step.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

After ten years of separation, Zahra dreamt about her former friend. She felt guilty and took steps to renew the friendship; however, on making contact, she realised that she had taken this step not to re-connect but to assuage her guilt; there was a feeling that she might have been too harsh in her earlier decision to break the friendship. In this act, Zahra had engaged in deliberative self-positioning to relieve her guilt and to reassure herself that her previous step had been in her best interests.

Zahra realised, on reflection, that she had not wished to re-establish a friendship that had lapsed for ten years. She felt guilty and remorseful over her earlier actions; she wanted to regain control of the situation, to be vindicated in re-exerting the power that had motivated her ten years’ earlier. Zahra knew that

forced other-positioning had subjected her and her family to undesirable power control by a friend. In particular, late night telephone calls were deemed inappropriate by Zahra's family for they had been very disruptive. Zahra's friend promised her she would stop the late-night calls – but she did not. Zahra could not stand this pressure; consequently, she broke up with her (Za.09):

I told her, "Look, I don't want this relationship anymore. So, stop it"

On reflection, Zahra believed that her friend had forgotten the whole issue and it was only Zahra who had remembered out of guilt for an act she would not usually have committed. Zahra broke up with her friend as she believed that this friend had had an adverse influence on her: the friend had caused Zahra to have many conflicts with her parents; (Za.17):

Maybe because I was so angry at that time...actually, she made lots of '*me-sads*' (feelings of sadness) in my life.

This situation occasioned three actions on the part of Zahra. The first was a reconciliatory gesture to check that there had been forgiveness by both parties. The second was an act of redemption that no wrong had occurred – Zahra had been able to rid herself of the guilt and sadness that had suddenly emerged after an extended period. The third was atonement for Zahra at two levels; the first, for an action about which she felt guilty; the second, for the moral and ethical debt owed to her parents. Zahra believed she had caused her parents to suffer anger and psychological pressure as a result of the friends' dependence on Zahra during the many episodes that had occurred a decade before. In reality, her friend had been a monster who had haunted Zahra for many years: now, Zahra was free.

Ultimately, Zahra had engaged in self- and other-deliberative positioning to finally close down the disruptive friendship. In this episode, I was reminded of an Arabic proverb: 'The door that brings wind. Close it and relax'.

**Emergent New Socio-cultural positionings****Self-interest positioning**

Zahra apologised only to atone for a fault, for a mistake: ‘to get rid of that guilt forever (Za.13). Zahra had engaged in a self-interest positioning, she felt it necessary to apologise out of feeling of guilt. It was an act of conscious relief – to amend a wrong that she felt she had done – despite it being likely that her friend had entirely forgotten about the whole issue.

**Episode 2: Leaving her husband**

When Zahra finished her first story, I had the opportunity to ask her, ‘Do you remember any other story? Maybe here in Australia? If, with any Australians or so? it is here?’ Her response, for a Saudi woman, was quite surprising (Za.28):

It was with my husband, actually. It was a big fight. It was 2011 when I came here, and it was a personal problem, and I went to Adelaide, and I spent six months with my brother there. It was my fault from the beginning.

Zahra reported that she had a quarrel with her husband and thus had decided to leave for Adelaide without informing him.

Zahra, as a second wife, had arrived fresh from Saudi to Melbourne and lived with her husband and his children by his first wife. In Melbourne, there were two elements that impacted on Zahra’s behaviour. Firstly, her husband’s children did not accept her; they did not want her to be involved in their lives. Secondly, her mother-in-law also did not accept her; she said: ‘She tried to involve in everything in our home, she didn’t accept that I was her daughter in law. She didn’t like me at that time’ (Za.47). Zahra, however, accepted all this pressure and was patient; she said (Za.47):

I couldn’t say, “I don’t want your mom at home”, So, I accepted that. I lived with his children in a small house. He has two teenage girls and one boy. They have lived here since 2005, so, they had set-up a specific system in the house.

The real problem for Zahra, however, was her brother-in-law living with them in her house. With Zahra's brother-in-law in her house, she had to wear hijab at home as well. She could not do household chores in comfort with him being around as, for cultural reasons, she had chosen not to mix freely with men; consequently, she asked her husband to rent a bigger house. Zahra's husband was unable, financially, to meet his wife's request to move to a bigger house; furthermore, he did not want to ask his brother to leave as he was new to Melbourne. As a result of this, Zahra left her husband to travel to Adelaide where she stayed with her brother. There, she sought advice from him regarding the difficulties she was facing with her changed living conditions.

Zahra's decision, as a Saudi woman, to leave without her husband's permission, was both a necessary and sensitive decision that defied Saudi religious and cultural norms. Zahra appeared to be both happy and upset while narrating this story; 'happy,' as it was a decision she did not regret; 'upset,' as her reaction was affecting her husband, a gentle person and one for whom she had the greatest respect. Despite these conflicting feelings, Zahra took the position that the main reason for her reaction was her husband's intransigence. From this response, I could see that Zahra was a strong and determined woman. I deduced that she came from a Saudi family who, since childhood, would have taught their girls to be strong and independent. After six months, Zahra's brother interceded: either Zahra should return to her husband in Melbourne, or she should return to Saudi. Zahra returned to Melbourne and 'said sorry' to her husband. It was an emotional moment; fortunately, it bridged the distance between them. Zahra felt guilty on beholding how great was her husband's love; she reflected: 'I felt sorry for him because I thought that time I hurt him so much'. As she spoke, Zahra was very emotional; she cried as she narrated this story.

Zahra thought that her husband was so kind and patient; she realised that if he had been a Saudi man in Saudi, he would at least divorce her. Personally, I was amazed when she first narrated her story because I would have expected divorce

to have been the result in Saudi society. Zahra had taken an enormous risk for such behaviour is considered to be most disrespectful. I asked Zahra if she recounted this story to anyone before this meeting. Zahra had told it to her sister who responded, scathingly, that Zahra was undeserving of this kind man as a husband: Zahra said (Za.44):

She said, “You are so mean. You don’t deserve him. You don’t deserve this man”. Yeah.

I interpreted Zahra’s sister response to be a typical reaction of someone who is called ‘a Saudi woman’. I suggested to Zahra that her sister might have acted out of anger. Zahra replied that she was backing her judgment: this was the only way to get her husband to recognise and accept her needs.

Zahra paused; then she reflected that the real problem for her was the physical presence of her brother-in-law in her house: she could not undertake household duties in comfort while he was present. As a Saudi woman, wearing Hijab so that men cannot see her, the existence of her brother-in-law restricted her freedom in her own home. Zahra insisted on moving to a bigger house as she was a new bride and wanted to enjoy herself and satisfy her husband but the existence of her brother-in-law ruined that. As with existence of Zahra’s brother-in-law in her house, she had to wear hijab at home as well, so she asked her husband to rent bigger house; initially, Zahra’s husband had refused all her solutions as he did not want to exclude his brother, a newcomer to Melbourne, from his home. Zahra did not accept what her husband offered and told him that she would go back to Saudi – this despite the ‘loss of face’ that returning to Saudi would have caused her. Instead, she had departed for Adelaide. In completing this story, Zahra reported that she thought that her husband understood the situation – probably because he acknowledged his role in what had happened. Zahra is a remarkable Saudi woman who endured significant social and cultural pressure to achieve her goals; despite this, she had succeeded. Her story is so revealing of Saudi culture and norms.

Zahra engaged in a range of Harré positioning and socio-cultural positioning – in both this dramatic second episode and in the first. Both narratives are particularly revealing of Saudi socio-cultural life.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced-positioning of others (Power)**

The threat of her having to return to Saudi together with intercession by Zahra's brother led her to return to her husband in Melbourne (Za.30):

He said "Okay, you want to stay here in Australia? You have to go back to Melbourne, or you have to go back to Saudi". So, I thought, "Hmm. Okay. I have to", because it would ruin everything.

Zahra was subject to forced other-positioning by her brother: if she did not return to her husband, she would lose her scholarship; consequently, she returned to Melbourne. Once there, she realised that her husband had changed his position; she said: 'He did everything I asked' (Za.31). Zahra's dramatic action created a situation that created forced other-positioning of her husband leading him to meet all of her demands.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning**

Zahra said sorry to her husband; it was an emotional moment as it bridged the distance between them; she said (Za.32):

I thought at that time: "Okay, I have to say sorry". And, when I said sorry it was a very emotional moment for me'.

Zahra had engaged in deliberative self-positioning; in apologising to her husband; she had sought redemption from her husband – she had 'said sorry' to him both to make amends for the wrong she had done him and to recognise the error of her actions.

I asked Zahra, ‘Were you open with each other that time?’, and Zahra said that they were not; however, she was confident about her decision to return (Za.40): ‘I trusted that this was the right decision’. Zahra had engaged in deliberative self-positioning; she was admirably self-confident.

**Forced self-positioning: Forced intent**

When she first arrived in Melbourne, Zahra had lived with her husband’s children; in this situation, two elements were influencing her behaviour. Firstly, the children did not accept her and did not want her to be involved in their lives. Secondly, her mother-in-law also did not accept her. Initially, Zahra accepted these pressures; she remained patient (Za.47):

They said, “We don’t want you, as a step-mother, to be involved in our life”, and I accepted that. It was okay with me; I didn’t want to involve myself in their lives. But, my husband’s mother tried to involve herself in everything in our home. She didn’t accept me as her daughter-in-law. She didn’t like me, at that time. It was okay; she was his mother, and I accepted that.

Zahra had engaged in forced self-positioning as she endured all the pressure and acted wisely for her husband’s sake and to protect her married life.

The real problem for Zahra was, however, the existence of her brother-in-law in her house as she could not do household in comfort with him being around: she confided (Za.48):

But the biggest problem was when one of his brother came to Australia. He was at home all the time.



**Emergent New Socio-cultural positionings****Moral and ethical positioning**

Zahra insisted on moving to a bigger house as she was a new bride who wanted to enjoy herself and to support and satisfy her husband; the constant presentness of her husband's brother prevented that (Za.49):

I said, 'I can't stay with your brother in the same place. I'm a new bride, I won't enjoy my life' And we don't mix with men, so that was another problem.

In deciding she needed to change houses, Zahra had engaged in moral and ethical positioning. The live-in brother-in-law in their current home restricted her freedom; she wanted to enjoy herself as a new bride and could not do that; as a Saudi Muslim woman, she could not mingle with men; she wanted to enjoy herself as a new bride and could not do that. With Zahra's brother-in-law living in her house, she had to wear hijab at home as well, so she asked her husband to rent a bigger house (Za.50): 'I can't accept your brother here as I accepted your mother and accepted your children. You have to rent a bigger house'.

Zahra had engaged in moral and ethical positioning together with an element of relief positioning, insisting on moving to a bigger house, as the existence of her brother-in-law in her house affected her privacy to a huge extent. She was unable to bear this restricted existence; she offered her husband a solution which he accepted.

**Reflective positioning**

Initially, Zahra's husband refused all her solutions as he did not want his newly-arrived brother to move out of his house; he said (Za.51): 'I can't afford a bigger house, and I cannot send my brother outside the home. Zahra had engaged, in part, in reflective positioning; during this time, she had also engaged in deliberative other-positioning in attempting to convince her husband of the seriousness of her situation. She had been patient and had offered him alternative solutions; in a mix

of gender and cultural politics, he had refused them all. By using forced other-positioning, he had exerted his power over Zahra. Zahra rejected her husband's position; she told him that she would go back to Saudi; she said (Za.52): 'I told him, "I will go to Saudi Arabia". But, I couldn't face my parents with this problem, so I went to Adelaide'.

Zahra had engaged in an elaborate mix of reflective, forced, and self-positioning as she tried to change her husband's mind by warning him that she would return to Saudi. At the same time, Zahra was afraid of her parents' reaction: she found herself in a state of confusion. Zahra faced with a compromise solution to her problem; to reduce her 'loss of face', Zahra departed for Adelaide to stay with her brother.

#### **Emotional positioning**

Zahra left for Adelaide without informing her husband of her whereabouts; she reported (Za.28): 'I left home without saying anything to him. He had to know where I had gone'. By leaving home without informing her husband, Zahra engaged in emotional positioning – partly self-, partly other-. The main reason for Zahra's emotional positioning was her husband's forced other-positioning, in which he exerted power over Zahra about their marital problems; she reported (Za.29): 'I spent one month, I accepted everything from him. At the end of the month, I said, "I cannot handle this anymore"'.

#### **Repair positioning**

Zahra had engaged in socio-cultural repair positioning as well as a mix of self- and other-deliberative positioning; patiently, she had been trying to save their marriage. Zahra, however, was also strong-willed, headstrong and self-centred selfish. She was not averse to using forced other-positioning: she too could exert power – and she did.

**Redemptive positioning**

Zahra's apology to her husband was made out of personal feelings of repentance and embarrassment; ultimately, it was made out of love for her husband. On reflection, Zahra felt guilty after seeing her husband's great love (Za.33): 'I felt guilty for six months. Why didn't I think about that from the beginning?'. Zahra felt sorry for her husband as she had left home without telling him (Za.34): 'I felt sorry for him because I thought that time I hurt him so much'. Zahra had engaged in redemptive positioning after saying sorry out of guilt and repentance. Zahra recognised that she had behaved appallingly in oppressing her husband; she said (ZA.35): 'I was so like a monster'. She was remorseful; Zahra thought that had her husband been anyone else he would 'have at least have divorced me' (Za.36).

Zahra was aware that her husband's kindness and patience had saved their marriage. Moreover, Zahra thought that her husband understood the situation probably because he knew that he was part-way responsible for what had happened: 'But he was so kind, and he understood the situation from the beginning. Maybe he felt that he caused this situation' (Za.37). Zahra had been positioned in many ways: by both her husband's deliberative other-positioning, and by her deliberative self-positioning all of which had led to her seeking redemptive positioning and personal atonement. She knew that her husband's wise reaction had been due to his being an understanding and humane man.

Zahra reported that she felt guilty that she might have harmed her husband (Za.42): 'I felt that I did very harmful things to him'. Fortunately, these steps had resolved the situation. There were two significant outcomes: Zahra had experienced a deeply emotional feeling of guilt; she had experienced a deeply emotional reconciliation. Ultimately, Zahra believed that what she did was related to power, not anger; she was backing her judgement as that was the only way to have her husband fully realise her personal, physical, and emotional needs (Za.46): 'It was not about anger. I trusted my judgement'.

**Episode 3: The Korean incident**

When Zahra finished relating the story about her husband, I asked: ‘Zahra, do you have other situations with Australians, with people here? With any foreign people? Here, outside home?’ She reported that when she was in Adelaide, she was living in a homestay; a Korean woman shared the same house. The Korean woman bought some food and had placed it in the refrigerator. Later, Zahra, feeling hungry, took food from the refrigerator, thinking that her house-mother had been the supplier. When she realised that it was the Korean woman’s food, she felt embarrassed and immediately said sorry to her and compensated her.

In response, the Korean woman was kind and accepted Zahra’s apology. She said (Za.54): ‘That’s okay. I didn’t mind, but I want you to know that this is my stuff’. Zahra was laughing as she recounted this story.

**New Socio-cultural positioning****Moral and ethical positioning**

At one stage of her life, Zahra was in Adelaide and living in a homestay; there was a Korean woman in the same house; the Korean woman bought some food and put it in the refrigerator. Zahra chose some food from the refrigerator as she mistakenly had thought that her house mother had purchased. When she realised that it was the Korean woman’s food she felt embarrassed and immediately said sorry to her and compensated her, ‘I was so embarrassed at that time. So, I had to say sorry to her, and I bought the same stuff I used’ (Za.53). Zahra had engaged in moral and ethical self-positioning as she felt embarrassed when she realised her mistake and offered an apology at once; later she compensated by replacing the food taken in error. She did this, knowing that this was both right and good.

**Summary of Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Zahra used the four types of Harré positionings through her narratives, namely: self, other, deliberative and forced. She also employed a wide range of emergent socio-cultural positionings: redemptive, repair, moral, ethical, reflective emotional, and self-interest positionings. A summary of these is contained in Tables 4.1 & 4.2 (p 78).

In her first episode, Zahra had engaged in deliberative and redemptive positioning with repair positioning as well. Zahra had exercised these two socio-cultural elements when she decided to find her old friend, and had apologised to her for a past incident to get rid of overwhelming emotions of guilt and remorse that Zahra felt might have been unfair to her. Ultimately, Zahra had engaged in personal moral and ethical positioning arising from transgressions that had occurred many years prior.

In the second episode, Zahra, being a sensitive woman, was dramatically seized by her emotions. When she had decided to leave for Adelaide to draw her husband's attention to a worrying domestic issue, she had engaged in self and emotional positioning that underpinned her repair positioning as well as forced other-positioning. She resolved problems associated with her dramatic decision to leave her husband by returning after six months and applying redemptive positioning. At the conclusion of this second narrative, Zahra, in redemption, had described herself as a 'monster,' believing that her over-reacting had harmed her 'kind' husband.

In the third episode, Zahra interestingly had moved to an ethical and moral positioning as she made a redemptive apology to her Korean friend out of embarrassment for eating her food by mistake.

**Metaphors for Zahra and her relatives****Zahra, the Super Strong Woman**

The metaphor that, for me, emerged from Zahra's narrative is the *Super Strong Woman*: she risked everything to find freedom and peace in her married life when she decided to leave for Adelaide, figuratively, 'leaving everything behind her'.

Unexpectedly, Zahra had been affected by the power exerted by two significant males' in her life. The first was her husband, whose refusal to ask his brother to leave their home had triggered her flight. He appeared to be cruel, but actually, he acted reasonably as the 'responsible' male for his extended Saudi family in Australia: his brother, his children by a previous marriage, and his new wife. He was the 'pillar of the house,' as described in an Arabic proverb. The second was her brother, a realist, who brought her back to reality when he told her to go back to Saudi if she did not return to her husband. Both the husband and the brother acted as 'protectors' of this woman; they appear as typical Saudi males who protect their women; they may seem strict, even cruel but, in fact, they have kind hearts.

The *Super Strong Woman* has many selves and that these are depicted in the positionings that occurred. Through the narrative, I can see different selves of Zahra: Zahra the *Emotional*, the *Stubborn*, and the *Sensitive*. This was apparent when she took an emotional position on deciding to leave, when she regretted this action, and when she saw that her husband had changed his position to satisfy her wishes.

The *Super Strong Woman* has different selves; each appears in three positionings revealed in the narratives: Zahra the *Emotional*, Zahra the *Stubborn*, and Zahra the *Sensitive*. The first was apparent when she took an emotional position on deciding to leave, the second when she regretted this action, and the third when she saw that her husband had changed his position sufficiently to satisfy her wishes.

**Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided my findings and a detailed analysis of the outcomes from the three narratives narrated by the Saudi participants in Australia. In the next chapter, I report my findings from the interviews and include a detailed analysis of the outcomes based on the three narratives I have derived from each of the three Australian participants in Australia.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Emerging Themes, Positionings and Metaphors: Australians in Australia**

The following narratives were told to me by three Australian women living in Melbourne, Australia, when I interviewed them in Melbourne in 2014. In each story, which consists of at least three sub-narratives, I engaged in inductive data reduction (IDR) of the original narratives to determine the contexts, the concepts and the themes associated with each sub-story. At appropriate points within the story, I have analysed the types of positioning that occurred. I have then summarised the Harré positionings evident and have drawn conclusions about the New Socio-cultural positionings that I have identified in each story. A summary of both the Harré and the New Socio-cultural positioning elements used by Australians in Australia, and the emergent metaphors and selves, are shown in Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3.

#### **Britney's narrative**

Britney is an Australian mid-life lady who is nearly 60. She was born outside Ballarat in the state of Victoria. Britney has two children and one grand-daughter, Anna; Anna's father is 30 years old. Britney had worked for many years in the



Table 5.1 Harré positioning elements

	Deliberative positioning	Forced positioning
Self-positioning	<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>
Other-positioning	<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>

Source: Ling IM, 1998, p. 60.

Table 5.2 New Socio-cultural positioning elements

Type	Key feature	Ethical	Moral
		What could or should be done	What is good or bad?
<b>Reflective</b>	To act following a period of reflection	X	
<b>Repair</b>	To act to redress a mistake or error	X	
<b>Relief</b>	To release from distress, discomfort or guilt	X	
<b>Concern</b>	To act for concern of self or others/showing care	X	
<b>Self-interest</b>	To act in one's interest/save face		X
<b>Ethical</b>	To act according to ethical principles	X	
<b>Moral</b>	To act according to moral principles of goodness and worth		X

Table 5.3 Emergent metaphors and selves

Participant	Metaphor	Self/Selves
Britney	The Disempowered Woman	The sympathetic woman The grateful woman
Kara	The Apologiser	The tolerant woman The kind-hearted woman
Zilda	The Moral Woman	The delicate woman

public health sector as a nurse and an administrator in government hospitals. Recently, she had determined to undertake further study. In her narrative, Britney recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. Introducing 'swear words' to a grand-daughter
2. Expressing sorrow on the occasion of the death of her partner's friend
3. Sibling rivalry over the care of an elderly mother

Britney was a pleasant, lovely Australian woman; I enjoyed my interview with her. When she told me a little bit about herself, she commented, 'I'm very boring, I think'; I disagreed, saying, 'No, you're not very boring. You're interesting'. Her calm demeanour amazed me. I commenced my interview with her after she had given me some background information. Britney trusted me in revealing personal stories, and this is evident in her narratives.

I asked Britney, 'Tell me a situation in which you felt the need to say sorry to somebody. Tell me the whole situation'; she responded (Br.02): 'Okay, my first situation then is about my son and his daughter'.

### **Episode 1: Introducing 'swear words'**

Britney's son, who is aged 30, has a daughter whom he and his partner have raised very strictly. Once, the woman was with Britney one night, and the next day her son told her that the woman is swearing and that she is the one who taught her so. Britney felt sorry for the woman and herself, being in this unsatisfactory situation with her son and his partner. Her son assumed that Britney was teaching the granddaughter to swear which was something that the family was utterly opposed to (Br.02):

My son said the little girl, Anna, was swearing. He presumed it was me teaching her to swear, which is quite possible.

Britney was embarrassed; this accusation, possibly true, would have been inadvertent. Britney had allowed her granddaughter to be present when a group of

friends, in casual conversation, had been using occasional swear words. Britney had been aware of the seriousness of the consequences; it might well have led to a breakdown in their family's relationship (Br.02):

I was very sorry about that because I felt that it disadvantaged Anna; but it also left me in poor standing with my son and his partner. My son and his partner are very strict parents – they're much stricter than I was.

Her granddaughter, Anna, was only five. The night she stayed over with Britney was an occasion when her daughter and some friends were also visiting. The next day, on hearing Anna using 'swear words', her son presumed it was Britney teaching her to swear. Britney was very sorry about that: she felt that she had disadvantaged Anna. Britney realised that there was a problem with swearing as this did not correspond with the parents wish that their daughter should have 'impeccable' manners; Britney said (Br.04):

They're very strict in the way that they're bringing her up. They don't swear or use slang language or anything like that, and they make sure her manners are impeccable: they don't want her saying bad or careless words.

I asked Britney, 'Why did you say sorry? What did you feel?'. Britney replied (Br.05):

I felt very sorry that I had disadvantaged my granddaughter by teaching her to behave in a way that might cause her to come in conflict with her parents; I also felt that it might damage my relationship with my son.

Britney fully recognised that what happened was 'serious and that if she did not apologise, it was likely that she would be 'relegated to being an outsider' given that Anna had maternal grandparents and other relatives who could provide support. To avoid being cast as an outsider, Britney had engaged in forced self-positioning; she said (Br.06):

Yes, in this situation it could've been serious for me because I would've been relegated to an outsider. She has plenty of grandparents and relatives that they can use to do

babysitting and have social outings, that sort of stuff. I don't want to be the outsider so, yes, I thought that was really quite important.

I then asked Britney, 'If she was your daughter, would you be okay with the swearing issue?'; Britney said (Br.07):

I'd say if it were my daughter being brought up in the 1980s – a different time all together – I'd say, yes: language has to be used, all words, big words, small words, yes.

I asked Britney, 'What did you feel after saying sorry?'; she responded (Br.08):

I think I was probably relieved actually because I think there was an opportunity [for it] to become a fight, you know, a family fight. So, by saying sorry, it disarmed my son so he couldn't continue the fight. He just said, "Oh well, you know, it's done. We'll go on". In the end, he said, "Oh, that's okay. Well, try not to do it again".

So, Britney's son readily accepted the apology and everything ended peacefully; Britney said (Br.09):

He accepted it. Fairly easily, yes. I'm not so much sure how well his partner accepted it because I haven't seen her yet, but he accepted it, yes.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

Two types of Harré positioning emerged from this episode: firstly, forced self-positioning; secondly, forced other-positioning.

#### **Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Through her possible use of swear words, Britney had been responsible for creating an unsuitable environment for her granddaughter and one that was unacceptable to her son and his partner. Britney's son assumed that she was teaching the granddaughter to swear which was something that the family was strongly opposed to; Britney was embarrassed. Britney had engaged in forced self-positioning, as she was very sorry that perhaps she had 'taught her grand-daughter to swear, and that would have led to a breakdown in their family relationship.

Britney, then, felt that she ‘disadvantaged’ her granddaughter, Anna, by teaching her things that might lead to conflicts with her parents. Britney also felt that what happened might damage the relationship between her and her son that she might be denied access for the rest of Anna’s life; as a consequence, she apologised. Britney had been subject to forced self-positioning as she said sorry to her son because she did not want to ruin their relationship and to save the little woman a conflict with her parents. There was a forced intent in her behaviour; thus, there was avoidance of a clash of values.

#### **Forced other-positioning: power**

Britney recognised that what happened was serious: if she had not apologised she would have been excluded from her husband’s family: this was a strong ‘power play’. Britney had responded to both forced self- and other-positioning as she realised how critical the situation was, so, she apologised for fear of awful consequences: denial of access to her granddaughter, Anna.

Britney had realised that there was a problem with swearing as this did not correspond with the parents’ wishes that their daughter should have ‘impeccable’ manners, and that she should not use ‘slovenly words’. Britney was subject to forced-other positioning by her son and (indirectly) by his partner: they maintained high standards of behavior that Britney had been unable to sustain. Thus, Britney had been subjected to an explicit show of power by her granddaughter’s parents: the use of ‘swear words’ conflicted with their parental standards. They had looked for someone to blame and, regardless of whether or not she was the source, had used Britney as a scapegoat<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> A ‘scapegoat’ is a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency (Source: Oxford Dictionary at <https://www.bing.com/search?q=scapegoat-&form=EDGHPC&q=SC&cvid=5ec7d8393acc4b3f8e85ba49011316dd&pq=scapegoat&elv=AJ1xW0Yc omUsJscEewSqlIp5bTZPsKg7WJazP5twAI6P> )

Britney had not recounted this story to anyone before my interview with her – neither Anna nor her son. Britney had engaged in significant self-positioning; her concern for family solidarity had been of prime importance.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Relief positioning**

Britney felt ‘relieved’ after saying sorry to her son as she had stopped a possible family fight by doing so- she had averted a damaging situation. So, she stopped her son from involving in a fight with her by apologising. Britney had involved in relief positioning, after apologising, as she apologised to save her unsatisfying consequences and felt relieved accordingly. Britney’s son was comfortable in accepting her apology. The position with her daughter-in-law was unclear; therefore, to avoid further family conflict, Britney had engaged in relief positioning: her apology accepted and thus further conflict avoided.

### **Episode 2: Expressing sorrow**

Britney then commenced her second episode; she said (Br.11):

My second situation is when a friend of my partner died. My partner was grieving, and So, I said, ‘I’m sorry for your loss’, okay? So, I didn’t do it. I didn’t kill his friend, but I’m sorry that he feels sad.

Britney apologised to her partner for the loss of his friend, as he was so sad; while not responsible for the friend’s death; Britney empathised with her current partner over his loss and thus said sorry to him. Britney reported that she said sorry to her partner because she empathised with him and felt sorry for him as it was a very sad situation: it was not the first of his friends who had died; Britney elaborated (Br.12):

Because I think it’s a custom that you say, ‘I’m sorry,’ not meaning that you’re orchestrating the situation but meaning that you empathise with the other person. You

appreciate that they're feeling a certain way so, you say, "I'm sorry", meaning that you're a comrade, you're in sympathy with them.

Britney felt sorry for her partner as it is not easy to get this old without having friends around.

I did feel sorry for him. I thought it was poignant as it's not the first of his friends he's lost. So, that's why I wasn't just saying it for social convention. I did feel sorry that it had happened.

After saying sorry, Britney felt comfortable and that she was supporting him; it also made her partner feel pleased and relieved.

I felt comfortable, yes that I was supporting him and it made him more comfortable because I think it gave him an opportunity to talk about his friend. If I hadn't said I'm sorry, then I think there would've been less of a bridge for him to get over and share those confidences.

Britney finished her story by affirming that her partner felt more comfortable after opening his heart; he felt that she was open to hear as a result of her apology.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative other-positioning: parity**

While Britney was not responsible for the friend's death, she empathised with her current partner over his loss. Britney had engaged in deliberative other-positioning, trying to soothe the death tragedy, through empathising with her partner and thus establishing parity with him. Britney's partner felt more comfortable after opening his heart, as she demonstrated that she was open to his feelings. Britney had supported her partner and had shown her compassion: soothing him in his difficult time.

**New Socio-cultural positionings****Concern positioning**

Britney felt sorry for her partner after saying sorry as it was an unfortunate situation; it was not the first of his friends who had died. She felt sorry for him as it was not easy to get this old without having friends around. Britney had engaged in concern positioning, being sorry for her partner and showing sensitivity to and understanding of her partner's needs. She demonstrated that she was sincerely caring for him.

**Relief positioning**

After saying sorry, Britney felt comfortable and relieved that she was supporting her partner; it also made him more comfortable, allowing him to open his heart. Britney had engaged in relief positioning as her apology was a comfort to both her and her partner. Britney had supported her partner and had shown her compassion: soothing and calming him in his difficult time.

**Episode 3: Sibling rivalry**

Britney commenced her third story; she said (Br.17):

My sister is a little bit older than I; we have an elderly mother who is most cantankerous. My mother stayed on our family farm, and she remained on the farm a lot longer than she should have. My father, by that stage, had been dead for about ten years; however, she stayed on the farm because she was stubborn. My sister [nevertheless] bought a house and put my mother in it.

Britney has an older sister and an elderly mother who had become challenging to manage; their mother had stubbornly resisted attempts to move her. To break this impasse, Britney's sister, independently, had bought a house for her mother and had arranged her placement there. Britney had disagreed with this rather drastic step (Br.18):



This was not a decision I agreed with. I felt that if she moved off the farm, she should've gone into supportive accommodation. My sister had organised everything. She got her off the farm, she put her in the house, and she visits her a lot.

Britney appreciated all that her sister was doing despite not having agreed with her sister's actions: Britney believed that supportive accommodation would have provided a better option for her mother. On the other hand, Britney felt guilty that she had shown insufficient support for her sister; consequently, she apologised to her sister about not participating in the issue as much as she might have (Br.18):

I said, 'Look, I'm very sorry that you've had to put in so much with mom and I'll 'pick up my socks'. I'll help you out a bit more'.

I asked Britney why she had 'said sorry'; she responded (Br.19):

I said sorry because I wanted to open a bridge, so that we could discuss how we were going to look after my mother. So, we could both look after her, but it ended up into a huge fight.

It ended up, however, as a significant disagreement for her sister, being the older, thought she should be the main carer; consequently, she wanted to make a schedule for everybody looking after their mother. Britney reflected (Br.20):

So, this was not a bridge; my sister still thinks she's the primary carer—she's the older sister—and she wants to timetable everybody. So, we're not all equal; she's still the senior surgeon.

As well, the sister complained to Britney about being forced to put too much work into her mother's care; in response, Britney told her sister that she should not have bought the house. The apology had not been an ice breaker after all, nor was there any attempt by Britney to make a second apology: she believed that this would have made her appear 'weaker'; Britney commented (Br.21):

It made it worse. I think it made me weaker in her eyes.

Britney pointed out that her sister would never say sorry; she explained (Br.24):

She'll never say sorry. She likes always to be the senior surgeon.

How did Britney feel? She responded (Br.25):

Probably devastated, I think, because already I had recognised that she was putting in a lot for my mother. But at the same time, she's not open to sharing so, by saying to her, "I'm sorry", it made me weaker. It allowed her then to vent and she wasn't very helpful.

When pressed on the matter, Britney felt regretful that she had said sorry; she admitted (Br.28):

Probably I did regret it, yes.

Britney had thought that they should have behaved as adults. She reported that, in future, she would be inclined to be stronger by setting a schedule of dates that suited her, so that she would be on an equal footing with her sister. By not doing this in the first place she had made herself vulnerable; she explained (Br.29):

Oh, dear, if I did it again perhaps I wouldn't. I'd simply say, "Look, I'm going to come up on these particular days. You know, you don't need to come on those days", and then we would be equal. In this situation, I made myself vulnerable.

Britney ended by reflecting that she saw that by being easily positioned into saying sorry – to her son, to her partner, and to her older sister – she had made herself vulnerable to their control; she said (Br.30):

So, if we go back over the three situations, I made myself vulnerable to my son, okay, by saying I'm sorry but that worked, okay. And by saying I'm sorry to my partner, that allowed us to have a bridge, okay. But saying I was sorry to my sister, that was not a bridge, and that was not a good position in which to be.

It seemed that her inherent kindness led Britney always to expect helpful responses; in the 'saying sorry' situations addressed in this interview, she had misjudged each of the respondents; this occurred because of the private nature of the events, and the personal embarrassment she had felt. Britney reported that she had not shared her experience with any others; she said (Br.33):

With the other two situations, I wouldn't tell because they 'were resolved: I don't want to talk about my partner's grief; that would be very sad; I don't want to talk about my son

just in case he gets cross at me again. So, about my sister, no; I feel it's not an appropriate situation. Truly, I feel a bit foolish about this.

When I had asked Britney if she recounted these episodes, I had suggested that this might hurt her personally; Britney laughed, and said 'No'. She explained (Br.32):

Isn't that interesting. Would it hurt me? I think I'd feel a bit embarrassed. Maybe I would, but it's not something I would readily share because I think I feel stupid, you know, because I made the wrong judgment call.

At this point, Britney ended her interview.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

In her three narratives, Britney had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she made herself 'vulnerable' by saying sorry to her son, her partner and her sister. Saying sorry to her son and partner helped her solve the problems with them; however, it had not helped her with issues relating to her sister.

Britney appreciated all that her sister was doing but, despite that, she did not agree with her sister's decision and believed that a supportive accommodation was better for her mother; so, she apologised to her sister that she was not participating in the issue as much as she might have. Britney had engaged in deliberative self-positioning by apologising to her sister for misunderstanding a sensitive situation. Britney said sorry to her sister to 'open a bridge' that would enable them to discuss, openly, how they would look after their mother. Britney had deliberative intent in apologising to her sister: she wished to share responsibility for her mother's care.

On reflection, Britney saw that by being easily positioned into saying sorry – to her son, her partner and her older sister – she had made herself vulnerable to their control. In the first two instances, nevertheless, her deliberative intent had

been successful. In the third episode, however, it had been unsuccessful; as a result, she felt even more vulnerable to being under the power control of an ‘other’ – her older sister.

**Forced Positioning: Forced intent**

Britney said sorry to her sister to open a bridge, so they could discuss how they would care for their mother; however, it had ended up in a dispute. Britney’s sister, being older, took the role of carer’ without any discussion; as a consequence, for instance, she attempted the drawing up of a schedule for everybody regarding looking after their mother.

Unwittingly, Britney had been subject to pernicious forced other-positioning: her sister’s response to her apology had confirmed her older sister’s power position. Britney realised that the apology to her older sister had not worked; unfortunately, it had made her appear ‘weaker’.

**Deliberative other-positioning: Parity**

Britney had realised that her elderly mother was ‘cantankerous’. Her mother stayed on their farm even after the death of her father of 10 years, as she was stubborn. So, Britney’s sister bought a house and moved her mother there.

Britney had intended to engage in deliberative other-positioning: recognising, on the one hand – with her sister – that her mother was ‘stubborn’; seeking recognition, on the other hand, that her sister had made a unilateral decision. The latter strategy had backfired: Britney came to the realisation that her sister would never say sorry as she liked to be the senior surgeon. Thus, an attempt at parity had flipped into a display of power: Britney had failed in this positioning exercise.

**Self- and other-positioning: deliberative intent and power**

After the apology, Britney's sister told Britney that she put too much effort into her mother's care; in reply, Britney told her that she should not have bought the house (Br.22):

She said, "Oh, that's all very well, but you don't realise how much work I've put into this, and I've had to buy the house," and I said, "Well, you shouldn't have bought the house in the first place".

Britney had attempted to engage in both self- and other-positioning: she had taken a position of deliberative intent when she had disagreed with her sister's decision to move her mother to a new house – she and her sister had shown different perceptions of their mother's situation. An aggressive response from her sister, however, meant that Britney was subject to forced other-positioning in a show of power from the sister. An attempt at parity had failed. Britney felt both devastated and after saying sorry to her sister: it made her appear weaker. This scenario shows just how much Britney's good intention had backfired on her.

Britney believed that her ageing sister had become more challenging to work with: 'I think she's gotten worse as she's gotten older' (Br.26). She had acted with deliberative intent to achieve parity. Britney had hoped for a positive response from her sister: 'We're older now. We should be able to talk like adults'. (Br.27). When the approach failed, Britney realised that, despite their being siblings, her ageing sister had become more difficult to deal with.

Britney regretted her apology to her older sister. Her failure to exercise both deliberative intent and to achieve parity had left her feeling weak and embarrassed; she would be more assertive in the future. Britney realised that to be more faithful to herself and stronger in positioning she needed to establish a schedule of dates that suited her, so that she would be on an equal footing with her sister; by not doing this she had made herself vulnerable.

In seeking a kind reaction to her saying sorry, she had misjudged both her deliberative intent and the power exerted by sister in expecting a reciprocal response; she reflected (Br.31): ‘I’d expected a kind reaction in that stage, but I misjudged it’.

Britney realised that while it had not hurt her, she had made a ‘wrong judgement call’; she had not shared her experience with others. While attempting to engage in a complex deliberative positioning exercise with her sister, Britney had avoided recounting this particular story. She felt diminished as she had made a wrong judgement; fear of failure and embarrassment had reduced her capacity to share ‘saying sorry’ incidents.

### **New Socio-cultural positionings**

#### **Reflective positioning**

Britney did not apologise another time to her older sister as it would make her ‘weaker’; she said (Br.23): ‘No, I think it makes me weaker’. Britney had engaged in reflective positioning as she avoided apologising again to her older sister, as she would appear vulnerable.

#### **Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

Throughout her narrative, Britney used the four types of Harré positioning: self, other, forced and deliberative; some were independent of each other; others were paired; she had, on occasions, combined both Harré self- and other-positionings. She had employed some New Socio-cultural positionings through her narrative: relief, concern, and reflective positioning; I have provided a summary of these in Table 5.2. In the first episode, Britney had experienced stress and tension due to forced self-positioning linked to the ‘forced’ intent of her son; she apologised to maintain her link with her granddaughter, Anna; it also reduced the possibility of Anna encountering subsequent problems with her parents.

In the second episode involving her partner's sadness, Britney had shown deliberative intent to relieve some of her partner's distress and to express to him her concern at the passing of his friend.

For Britney, the third episode represented the most difficult and complex experience of positioning: deliberative self-positioning when apologising to her sister to open a bridge that morphed into forced other-positioning in a show of sisterly power which dramatically ended up in reflective positioning in which she realised that the apology made her weaker; as a result, she decided not to apologise again in an act of forced self-positioning taken with the intent to make herself feel stronger and personally more in charge. Finally, the narrative showed that, in an act of deliberative self-positioning, Britney had taken a step forward to ensure that she would be less prone to make herself vulnerable in interpersonal interactions with her close family members.

### **Metaphors and selves for Britney**

The dominant metaphor that I had noticed in Britney's narrative was the *Disempowered Woman*, apparent when Britney was forced to apologise to her son for teaching her granddaughter some swearing words. It was also evident when Britney had to apologise to her 'senior surgeon' older sister and that she had felt weaker and vulnerable after the apology.

Britney also displayed different selves represented in the positionings to which she was subject. The first of these selves, the *Sympathetic Woman* was seen when she said sorry to her partner for the loss of his friend – she supported him in a time of need; also, this self was evident when she apologised to her son for the greater good of her granddaughter.

Another self that had emerged is Britney the *Grateful Woman*. This self was evident when Britney told her older sister that she appreciated all that she had done to support their mother despite that her sister was acting in a 'senior surgeon' manner.

## **Kara's Narrative**

I conducted this interview with Kara who lives in Melbourne. Kara has a mother and a younger sister, Eva; they all were born in Melbourne; first, they lived in the country when Kara was a teenager; after that, they moved back to Melbourne where Kara now lives with her partner. Kara has a Laboratory Medicine degree from RMIT; before completing the degree, she worked as a researcher in the private sector for about ten years; she also did a master's in statistics; her first degree was an honours degree in Behavioral Science; she is currently a PhD candidate. Kara recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. A man tripped over her chair
2. Left alone at a wedding
3. Kara's ill mother and selfish sister, Eva

### **Episode 1: A man who tripped over her chair**

I met Kara at my office at Victoria University; I offered her a seat and then commenced my interview with her after a little welcoming chat. Kara appeared as a quiet and sensitive woman; she was so soft and sad while narrating her stories; she trembled during the narrative. She was a woman with a calm and beautiful face; however, her eyes were full of tragedy.

After introducing herself, I asked Kara, 'Tell me a situation in which you felt the need to say sorry to somebody. Tell me the whole thing associated with the saying sorry, to whom did you say sorry. What did you feel before, and after, saying sorry?'; Kara responded (K.02):

A recent example of saying sorry occurred when I was sitting down on a chair in front of a table. A person approached me. A stranger, someone I didn't know, tripped over my chair because he was not looking in front of him.

The man did not hurt himself, but Kara felt obliged to say sorry; she felt responsible because it was her chair; she said (K.03):



He didn't hurt himself, but I felt compelled to say, "Oh look I'm so sorry that you've tripped and fallen over". I felt responsible because it was a chair I was sitting on that caused him to trip and fall.

Even though it was not Kara's fault, as the person was texting on his mobile, Kara felt that apology was the right thing to do; she felt that she was a part of what happened and assisted him. She described her feelings (K.04):

It was technically the other person's fault. He was texting on his mobile phone while walking. I felt that to apologise was the right thing to do, both because of the chair and how I felt: I had contributed to that accident. So, I offered an apology. I said, "Look, I'm so sorry that happened. Are you okay?".

The incident happened at Kara's friend's house at a social gathering. The man was older than she, which made her worry about him that she might cause him break a bone or so; these were her immediate thoughts.

Kara proceeded and said that the man smiled when she apologised; he told her that it was his fault for being careless (K.05):

He just laughed and said, "Oh. It's okay. Don't you apologise. I was careless. I was not looking where I was going".

Kara said sorry again; this helped her in smoothing over the situation while, at the same time, ensuring that the man was unharmed. She considered apology in this situation was important to show her as a responsible and caring person who could be responsible for another person's injury; she explained (K.06):

I then said sorry again. And that made me feel as though I smoothed over the situation and that he was okay. So, "saying sorry" in that instance represented me acknowledging that something that I was in a position for could have caused an injury or an accident to another person and feeling personally accountable and responsible for that accident and injury.

Kara often used to say sorry even if it was not her fault; she reflected (K.08):

Probably, it wasn't my fault but I usually say sorry even when I'm not the immediate cause of something that happens.

That was not the end of the story, Kara also felt embarrassed and sorry for the man, as she did not know if he was hurt or whether or not he was hurt. It turned out that he was unharmed; she continued (K.09):

I felt embarrassed for the other person. I felt concerned, embarrassed and just sorry for him I felt sorry for this person who tripped over. Initially, I didn't know if he was injured. I didn't know if he was hurt. He wasn't hurt, which was great.

Kara had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning moved by her sense of moral agency<sup>15</sup>. Kara had surprised me with the extent of her kindness and sensitivity towards people's feeling: she was a symbol of compassion and delicacy.

When Kara had finished her story, I was keen to know more about her feelings, asking her: 'If he were a friend, would you do the same? Would you feel that embarrassed?' She responded that she would be even more sorry for a friend (K.13):

Yes. I would, absolutely; probably, sorrier because my friends are even more of an extension of myself and I feel very caring and protective of them even more so than a stranger. I generally do feel protective of everyone but probably people in my inner circle more so.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Self- and other-positioning: Deliberative intent and parity**

Kara was sitting on a chair, and a person passed by her and tripped over, he tripped because he was not looking in front of him: this accident might or might not have occurred because of Kara's carelessness. Kara has engaged in self-positioning as she supposed herself mistaken. The man did not hurt himself, but Kara felt obliged

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<sup>15</sup> 'Moral agency is an individual's ability to make moral judgments based on some commonly held notion of right and wrong and to be held accountable for these actions. A moral agent is "a being who is capable of acting with reference to right and wrong". Accessed at <https://philosophy.stackexchange.com/questions/-8388/what-does-moral-agent-and-moral-agency-mean-respectively>, Friday, May 5, 2017.

to say sorry; she felt responsible because it was her chair. Kara was involved in self-positioning; her sense of responsibility, care and tactfulness had led her to apologise. It was not Kara's fault, as the person was texting on his mobile; she felt that apology was appropriate; she felt that she was partly responsible for what had happened and, accordingly, offered him assistance. Kara had immersed herself in self-positioning, apologising to the man and hence showing a sense of responsibility. I asked Kara about the man's reaction after she had offered him an apology; she reported that the man just laughed and told her not to apologise.

Kara had engaged in self- and other- positioning of the man as part of an ethical response<sup>16</sup>. The attitude of both Kara and the man showed courtesy and politeness towards each other. Kara said sorry again to the man to 'smooth over the situation' and to ensure that the man was unharmed; she considered apology in this situation was important to show that she was responsible and caring: she could have been responsible for another person's injury. Kara had engaged in self-positioning as she apologised again to the man to show her courtesy, concern, and accountability; however, on reflection, she realised that the man had contributed to his situation; she said (K.12):

I just felt personally responsible and accountable, but now that we are talking about it,  
I'm thinking he should have been paying attention.

While Kara had engaged in self- and other-positioning, she nevertheless realised it was the man's mistake: he had been careless.

Ultimately, this situation had revealed the boundaries of responsibility and had made apparent the carelessness of others. Kara had confirmed here that it was the man's mistake and not hers' – despite, at first, having first blamed herself. Kara would do the same, or even more, for her friends; she realised that her friends were close to her and that she felt very caring and protective of them. Kara had engaged

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<sup>16</sup> An 'ethical response' deals with right or wrong behaviour 'pertaining to or dealing with morals or the principles of morality'. Accessed at <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ethical>, Friday, May 5, 2017.

in self- and other-positioning; in reflecting on her caring priorities, she had realised the importance of friends.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Moral positioning**

Despite it not being the result of any action by Kara, she nevertheless felt that she had to say sorry to the man who fell: she often did this, even when it was not her mistake. Kara regularly engaged in moral self-positioning: whether mistaken or not, in socio-cultural terms relating to the need to say sorry, she was guided by her moral agency to do what she believed to be right.

#### **Concerned positioning**

Not only did Kara say sorry to the man who fell; she also worried about his personal welfare that she might cause him break a bone or so. She thought of all this in a flask; she said (K.11):

Part of me thought: “I might have caused him to break a bone. He might not ever recover”.

Kara had engaged in ‘concerned’ positioning: being concerned for the welfare of an elderly man; for her, it was right to show concern for elders under all circumstances.

### **Episode 2: Left alone at a wedding**

Kara commenced her second story; it concerned an episode relating to her partner’s involvement in a wedding ceremony; she said (K.14):

My partner and I travelled to Adelaide for a wedding. My partner was one of the bridal party: he was the groom’s best man. He was required to take part in a lot of ceremonies on the day of the wedding.

Kara had been left alone by her partner – both before and during the actual event. Kara’s partner’s parents had realised that she would likely be left alone all day as

she knew none of the younger participants; consequently, they decided to take her to the wedding and accompanied her until her partner was free to join. This situation greatly embarrassed Kara; she felt that the parents were unnecessarily forced to spend time with; as a consequence, she continually apologised to her partner's parents for the inconvenience she was causing them. Kara's parents-in-law kept company with Kara until her partner returned; in doing so, they displayed considerable care and thoughtfulness: an attitude not necessarily expected of parents-in-law.

Although, Kara's parents-in-law continued to be kind and supportive, Kara remained ill-at-ease. Kara, instead, felt embarrassed that she had obligated her husband's parents; she apologised profusely and told that she could manage the situation alone (K.16):

Look I'm so sorry that you have to waste your whole day, essentially, babysitting me. I feel really like terrible that I'm wasting your time. I know I'm your future daughter in law, but I still feel awful that your whole Saturday is going to be spent looking after me.

Despite the fact that Kara told her parents-in-law that she could manage the situation, surprisingly, Kara's parents-in-law insisted on taking care of her; and yet, Kara continued to apologise profusely at the inconvenience that she felt she had imposed; Kara said (K.17):

They insisted on looking after me. They made me food all throughout the day. Every time they made me a cup of tea or coffee or food. I apologised because I was such an inconvenience. I was taking up their leisure time. Gosh, I probably apologised thirty times during the day. I just felt so sorry.

Kara's story engaged my considerable interest; I encouraged her to continue the narrative. Kara told me that her parents-in-law suggested there was no need for her to apologise; they showed great concern for the situation in which Kara had found herself and encouraged her to cease; they said (K.18):

'No. Why are you apologising? You shouldn't be the one apologising. It's just an awful situation that you have been forced to come to an interstate wedding, which you have had

to spend hundreds of dollars on the airfares and accommodation and so forth. We feel terrible that you had to spend that money and you didn't even get to see your partner".

Despite this expression of sympathy for the situation in which Kara found herself, she experienced on-going feelings of guilt at the inconvenience she was causing; she told me (K.19):

Even though they were showing me great kindness – I acknowledge what they did was thoughtful and considerate – I felt so guilty throughout that entire day. The only way I could stop feeling guilty, momentarily, was for me to keep saying sorry. "Look I'm so sorry that you have to get me a cup of tea". I just felt so inadequate.

To clarify the confusion that I felt at this point, I asked her to explain by asking: 'Did you know of his plans to engage in these activities?'; Kara reported that her partner had failed to disclose the reality of his wedding commitment. Kara was frustrated that she had only been made aware of this situation days before the wedding.

Kara was further upset with having had to share equal cost of attending the wedding: this, the result of a shared economic relationship that left her disadvantaged; she told me (K.21):

We both pay 50/50 in our arrangement. So, that's how we do things. I'm not quite entirely happy to do that, but when I found out just a few days before the wedding that was going to happen, I was agitated.

Kara's false expectations of an enjoyable, different and satisfying holiday had led to her feeling sorry for herself; Kara said (K.22):

I was thinking pleasant holiday; it didn't end up like that. I think that's, probably, an instance of where I have said sorry like, more so, than I have ever said in my life. That was close to thirty cases of saying sorry during the day.

Kara not only felt 'guilty' of causing inconvenience to the parents. She was feeling deep-seated personal disappointment and sorrow about the whole arrangement. The frustration had caused her further grief and had added to her dismay and ultimately, to considerable personal disappointment and sadness; she said (K.23):

After saying sorry, I just felt constantly guilty that whole day.

These feelings of guilt were tempered, in part, by the growing respect that she felt for her aged and ill future in-laws – as a consequence of her repeatedly saying sorry; she reflected (K.24):

I felt a little less guilt. I felt sad for my future mother- and father-in-law because there are elderly as well: the father has Parkinson's disease. He's quite frail, and he has the shakes. I just felt I was such an inconvenience. Every time I said sorry, just for a split second, I felt a little less guilty.

Kara acknowledged that she had a heightened awareness of being aware of the feelings of others as a result of her upbringing; slowly this imposed itself on her consciousness (K.25):

I'm always conscious of how other people feel. I have had that engrained into me from childhood. I'm still really conscious about it, probably, to the degree that most other people may not be.

Later, when her partner joined Kara at the end of the day, she told him the story of the profuse apology situation with his parents; she explained her feelings of guilt at having imposed herself, inconveniently, on them; she reported (K.26):

At the end of the day I said, "Look, I just felt awful the whole day. I felt, really, [that] I didn't want to be there. 'Like nothing against your mum and dad but I just continually said sorry to your mum and dad because I felt really guilty for being there [and] wasting their time.

Throughout this narrative, Kara had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning, together with forced self-positioning. She had also sought relief positioning and had experienced remorse positioning: new positioning elements that I have identified in this particular interview for the first time in this research; I tentatively label the two – relief and remorse positioning – as 'New Socio-cultural positioning' elements.

**Types of Harré positioning that emerged****Forced positioning: Forced intent**

Kara had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning, being conscious of others since childhood, through heightened awareness of the feelings of others. Kara's apology behaviour reveals a knowledge of others instilled in her since childhood, which would force her to be what she is now.

**Self- and other-positioning: Deliberative intent and parity**

In preparing for a wedding, Kara had been left alone before and during the actual event. She was faced with these scenarios:

- Kara was involved in self- and other-positioning, being left alone by her partner, as the obligation of her partner meant a sense of isolation for her.
- Kara felt embarrassed that she had obligated her husband's parents; she apologised profusely and told that she could manage the situation alone.
- Kara was involved in self-positioning as she said sorry out of embarrassment at being a burden to her parents-in-law.
- Kara's parents-in-law insisted on taking care of her when they knew that she would be left alone at the wedding. Kara continued to apologise profusely for the inconvenience she felt she had incurred.
- Kara was engaged self- and other-positioning, feeling embarrassed and that she had been inconveniencing parents-in-law while they showed patience and understanding. This particular scenario demonstrates that Kara has lost a great deal of face.

Kara's false expectations of an enjoyable, different and satisfying holiday had led to her feeling sorry for herself. Kara's expressed her disappointment and sorrow in an outburst of saying sorry to others; these involved her in a further succession of scenarios



- Kara was involved in self-positioning as she felt sorry for herself. This scenario shows how feeling sorry for one's self led to an inflated level of apology to others.
- Kara kept apologising to her parents-in-law, suggesting that she caused them trouble and inconvenience. She was engaged in self-positioning as she kept apologising to her parents-in-law for the inconvenience she caused to them. Respect for Kara's aged, ill future in-laws was increased by her repeatedly saying sorry. This scenario shows how saying sorry was a mark of respect for ageing, sick future parents-in-law.

At the end of the wedding day, Kara told her partner the story of the profuse apology situation with his parents and explained that she had felt guilty at having imposed herself on them. Through starting an open and honest accounting to a partner of an unhappy episode had profound consequences for her: a day of feeling guilty of imposing herself on others.

### **Episode 3: Kara's ill mother and selfish sister, Eva**

Kara had commenced her third episode which was with her mother, saying (K.27):

She has terminal cancer So, she's very ill. She is dying, and she doesn't have much longer to go. Last week, she stood up, and all of a sudden collapsed. Her leg just stopped working. She also needs someone to care for her. [It happened] on the day of my birthday... [so] I rushed to go and see her.

Kara has an ill mother, and on her birthday her mother collapsed, and she took her to hospital. Her younger sister, Eva, was about to move to her mother's house but when she discovered what had happened, she changed her mind as she did not wish to take care of her ill mother. Kara was bothered by Eva's selfish behavior, which upset her mother. As a consequence, Kara's love and her concern for her mother made her apologise to her mother on her sister's behalf.

These earlier reflections revived a recent memory of a situation with her terminally-ill mother that occurred on Kara's most recent birthday. As a result of

tearing knee ligaments, Kara's mother had to be hospitalised. As a consequence, instead of having a personal day off from caring for her mother, she rushed to see her in hospital. At this time, Kara's younger sister was supposed to move to her mother's house on the day of the knee injury. When the sister was told that her mother was injured, she changed her mind, saying that she did not want to move in with her mother; (K.28):

On that day she said, "I don't want to live with mum because now mum can't move; mum can't walk. So, if I move in with her, I'm going to be responsible for looking after her, and I don't want to do that".

Accordingly, Kara immediately apologised to her mother on behalf of her younger sister which considerably upset their mother. Consequently, Kara volunteered to take care of her; (K.30):

I found myself apologising, saying sorry to my mum, saying, "I'm so sorry mum that my sister, Eva, can't come and look after you". My mum was crying. I felt that I had to try and calm her down. She said, "I don't know who is going to look after me". I said, "I'm so sorry that is not the case. I will look after you".

Kara also cancelled personal private plans, and her younger sister showed no remorse that this was the consequence. Kara was upset with Eva's selfishness.

Kara apologised to her mother on behalf of her sister; however, she felt she should not have to apologise for her sister's selfish behaviour; (K.33):

I was apologising on behalf of my sister, and also to my mum in regards to my sister's appallingly bad behavior. I felt as though I had to apologise for that when I should not have to because it was the result of her selfish act.

Kara felt that saying sorry would soothe her mother and it did: (K.34):

Seeing my mum crying, distressed and wondering what was going to happen to her, I just felt the use of the word sorry was something that was going to make my mum feel better. It seemed as though it did. Even though I didn't need to say sorry, it calmed my mum a little bit. "I'm so sorry that Eva is being like this and not being helpful and thoughtful". To my mum, I think that acknowledged the badness of the situation.

Kara felt ‘a little bit better’, but only for ‘a split second’ after saying sorry. She felt upset all day long. She always used to apologise on behalf of her sister being an unthoughtful person; (K.35):

I felt a little bit better, personally, but only again for a split second. So, not for the rest of the day. I felt quite upset that day because of other circumstances. I often apologise on behalf of my sister because she is a very thoughtless person. It’s something I’ve done throughout my life.

Kara lives with her partner and her sister Eva is younger and just broke up with her boyfriend. So, Kara had to take care of her mother as Eva did not move to look after her mother. When Kara told the story to her friends they were ‘disgusted’ by Eva’s lousy behaviour; they said, ‘Your sister is a really bad person’ (K.43). Kara had refrained from telling her friends that she had also apologised to her mother on behalf of her sister; this was because she felt embarrassed as so often, before she had to act in the position of a de facto parent (K.44):

Well, I think I probably felt a bit embarrassed that I’m apologising on behalf of my sister. I’ve always been like a parental figure to my sister; I have had to intervene because she has been in so much trouble. Throughout her life, she has not paid bills on time; she has lost things; lost valuable items.

Kara was distraught; she seemed so anxious when talking about her sister. She continued providing more of the background of her sister. She said that her sister, Eva, had dropped out of university; she was blaming the world for this while it had been the result of her faulty decision making. Kara concluded that her sister was an irresponsible person.

In showing her concern for her ill mother, Kara had engaged in self- and other-positioning throughout the narrative. She kept apologising to her mother to soothe her pain and comfort her: she had been involved in repair positioning. Kara is an excellent example of the good daughter who would do anything for the sake of her mother’s comfort.

**Types of Harré positioning that emerged****Forced other-positioning: Power**

Kara's younger sister, Eva, had previously decided to move to her mother's house. Following her mother's accident, and despite having moved her effects, including a dog, into her mother's house, Eva, had then categorically declared that was no longer moving in (K.29):

I said, 'Look. You have already moved in with her... You can't expect mum to look after your little dog when she can't move'.

Kara had engaged in forced other-positioning by using power: she suggested that Eva should not expect her mother to take care of her dog; changed circumstance had led to a certain change of conditions. Kara's mother lives alone and thought that Eva would live with her but when she found out that Eva would not live with her, she cried and felt really upset. That made Kara upset as well. The mother also felt upset for Kara living far away from her home. Kara has engaged in other-positioning as her mother confused because of the attitude of Eva: the self-centred sister. This scenario focuses on three shaping elements: parental concern, older daughter's anxiety, and younger daughter's selfishness.

**Self- and other-positioning: deliberative intent and power**

Kara revived a situation of her terminally-ill mother that occurred on her most recent birthday. As a result of tearing knee ligaments, Kara's mother had been admitted to hospital. As a consequence, instead of having a personal day off from caring for her mother, she rushed to see her in hospital. This emergency situation led to Kara experiencing a loss of a day of being free of commitments. Kara had experienced deliberative intent and power, as she was concerned for her ill mother.

At this time, Eva was supposed to move to her mother's house on the day of the knee injury. When told that her mother was injured, she changed her mind, saying that she no longer wished to move in with her mother. Kara engaged in

self- and other- positioning: she surmised that her younger sister should have taken care of her ill mother. This scenario shows how a dramatic change of circumstance had led to a change of conditions of concern. When Kara cancelled her personal private plans, Eva showed no concern that this had considerable consequences for Kara (K.31):

I had plans for my birthday which ended up getting cancelled. My sister said, "I don't care if it's your birthday. I don't want to look after mum. That's your job".

Kara had immersed herself in self- and other-positioning, showing a responsible action of love rather than the opposite: an expression of self-interest. Kara was upset that she could only enjoy her birthday for two or so hours.

On the other hand, Eva's selfishness was evident: initially, she had volunteered to take care of their mother. Eva had used her power, engaging in forced-other positioning.

Kara said that she felt 'a little bit better' only for 'a split second' after speaking to her mother: saying sorry relieved Kara, but only temporarily. What happened could not quickly be smoothed over. Again, Eva had been successful in exerting power over Kara. Eva, the selfish sister had engaged in forced other-positioning of Kara.

When Kara recounted this story to her friends, they expressed their dismay, compounding Kara's recognition of Eva's selfishness. Her friends confirmed Kara's forced other-positioning by Eva. At the same time, Kara had successfully undertaken self-positioning of her friends, thus retaining parity with them.

Notwithstanding this, Kara did not tell her friends that she had apologised to her mother on behalf of her sister. To have done this she would have had to reveal the power that Eva held over her. Forced other-positioning by Eva left Kara feeling embarrassed as she had so often been forced into the position of acting as an ineffective *de facto* parent of her sister. Kara was, yet again, embarrassed by her irresponsible sister.

**Self- and other-positioning: Deliberative intent and parity**

Kara immediately apologised to her mother on behalf of her younger sister which considerably upset their mother. Consequently, Kara volunteered to take care of her. Kara has involved in self and other positioning, being apologising to her mother on behalf of her younger sister, through showing responsible action of love.

Kara immediately apologised to her mother on behalf of her younger sister when Eva declared that she would not care for her mother. This caused their mother much upset; consequently, Kara volunteered to take care of her mother. Kara was involved in self- and other-positioning that was both deliberative and which sought parity. Therefore, on behalf of her younger sister, Kara apologised to their mother; Kara was activated by the responsible emotion of love.

**New Socio-cultural positioning****Repair positioning**

Kara apologised to her mother on behalf of her sister, despite feeling she did not have to apologise, because of her sister's selfish behaviour. Kara had involved herself in repair positioning, as her mercy, sincere love and concern for her mother's feelings led Kara to apologise to her mother, to repair what her self-centred sister had damaged.

**Concerned positioning**

Kara apologised to her mother as she saw her so upset – crying and wondering who would look after her; Kara felt that saying sorry would soothe her mother and it did.

Kara had engaged in concerned positioning, to calm her mother, by a soothing apology. Saying sorry was used here to comfort a relation.

**Self-interest**

Kara related part of this story to her friends but did not tell them that she had apologised on her sister's behalf; she said 'I didn't tell anyone that I apologised', (K.42).

Kara had engaged in self-interest positioning; she chose not to lose face in front of her friends.

**Relief positioning**

Kara was embarrassed of her own sister and that she had to apologise on her behalf every time (K.45).

She was not responsible at all, dropping out of university and just blaming the world for being hard when it's really her making bad decisions. I've always been like a mum to her. I feel like I have to apologise continually. I do it so often that I don't even realise that I'm doing it. It's just second nature.

Kara had engaged in relief positioning out of embarrassment; she was embarrassed by her irresponsible sister.

**Summary of the Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Kara used all types of Harré positionings through her narrative: self-, other-, forced and deliberative. Kara, on some occasions, used two types of Harré positionings together such as self- and other-positioning. She also employed some New Socio-cultural positioning through her narrative: repair, relief, concerned, moral, and self-interest positioning, a summary of which is contained in Table 5.n. p.

In the first episode, a moral agency was evident in Kara's behavior. She had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning, as she felt guilty and sorry for the man involved: she said sorry, as she thought that apology was appropriate.

Ultimately, she may be seen as a responsible and caring person, for she might have been responsible for the man's injury.

In the second episode, awareness of other's feelings was clear in Kara's attitude. She engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning; she experienced on-going feelings of guilt at the inconvenience she was causing her parents-in-law. Finally, she expressed her embarrassment, disappointment, and sorrow in an outburst of 'saying sorry' to them both.

In the third episode, Kara's unconditional love to her mother was evident in her narrative. She had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning, as she apologised to her mother, on behalf of her younger sister, who had upset her mother. She had unconditionally volunteered to take care of her instead of her 'selfish' sister. Her sister regularly troubled Kara as she resolutely engaged in forced self- and other-positioning.

### **Metaphors and selves for Kara**

The dominant metaphor that I had noticed in Kara's narrative is that of *The Apologiser*: she performed apologies to her mother on behalf of her sister, in addition to the outburst of apologies that she performed to her parents-in-law for the inconvenience she caused them: expressing guilt and embarrassment.

Kara, *The Apologiser* also has some selves that are represented in the positionings to which she was subjected. One obvious self in her narrative is Kara, *The Tolerant Woman* who used to act like a mother for her irresponsible sister; apologising on her behalf and coercing her continuous mistakes. Another noteworthy and appropriate metaphor is Kara, *The Kind-hearted Woman*. This can be seen when she abandoned her birthday plans for the sake of her ill mother; and that she would look after her on behalf of her 'selfish' younger sister.



## **Zilda's Narrative**

Zilda is an Australian woman living in Melbourne; she was born in Melbourne in the nineteen-fifties and has only lived in Melbourne. She has a son and a partner whom she was with since the late 1970s; her son is 21 years old. Zilda is currently working at the College of Surgeons in Education, where she manages the education, training, education, research development department for medical practitioners seeking advancement in their profession as surgeons. Zilda recounted four episodes, as follows:

1. A conflict with her senior surgeon
2. A passing apology
3. Coming late to dinner
4. The most powerful apology

I had met with Zilda at her office at the College of Surgeons in Melbourne; Zilda was feeling well and had prepared for the interview. Zilda is a pleasant and respectful and woman whom I had enjoyed interviewing. Zilda was interested and enthusiastic during our meeting. Zilda had commenced the interview with the following story.

### **Episode 1: Conflict with her senior surgeon**

There is one particular time that I have said sorry to someone who is of great importance and who has a great deal of meaning for me. I was working with a senior surgeon who was coordinating a workshop. I wanted to write up the notes about the actions, so that they would be ready for the next day while they were fresh in my mind (Z.06):

There is one particular time that I have said sorry to someone who is of great importance and who has a great deal of meaning for me. I was working with a surgeon who was coordinating [a workshop]. I wanted to write up the notes about the actions so that they [would be] ready for the next day while [they were] fresh in my mind.

She sent him an email informing him that she had taken the papers to write her notes. Unexpectedly, the senior surgeon was angry that Zilda had entered his office while he was away and that the documents were confidential; he had demanded that she should return them immediately. Zilda was shocked for she did not think that she had done anything out of the ordinary; she described the situation, thus (Z.07):

He came storming in to say that I shouldn't have gone into his office while he wasn't there and I indeed shouldn't have taken those papers because there were slightly sensitive like things written on them and I should give them back to him immediately.

It was apparent to her that he felt that she had encroached on his privacy; she said (Z.08):

So, I was surprised because I hadn't considered that I had done anything out of the ordinary. I left and went home with my tail between my legs feeling very chastened; I was surprised as well because I didn't think I had done anything out of the ordinary. He thought that I had imposed on his domain.

Accordingly, Zilda sent an email to her senior surgeon the next day, expressing her apology; she explained (Z.09):

So, the next day I sent him, by email, a formal apology and I said: 'I am very sorry that I entered your office when you weren't there and that I took the papers and it won't happen again'. He sent me back an email saying, 'I can't remember': it was acknowledging my apology.

Zilda respected the senior surgeon's keeping it formal, so she thought an apology was the right thing to do. He accepted it, and they had a good relation afterward; (Z.10):

He liked to keep communications quite formal, so I thought the best thing I could do was to send him a written apology. It was the right thing to do because he accepted my apology and we continued to have a good working relationship after that until he left.

I asked Zilda, 'What did you feel before saying sorry, what made you say sorry to him?', and Zilda reflected (Z.11):

I was surprised and chastened because I had received a reprimand. I thought that he had over-reacted; however, we needed to keep a professional working relationship and the best way I could do that was to acknowledge that I had made a mistake and to apologise.

Zilda then reflected on the situation, pointing out that there was an ‘imbalance of power’ evident; she said (Z.12):

He [the senior surgeon] was not my direct senior surgeon but more or less my senior surgeon’s senior surgeon. So, there was an imbalance of power there.

I then could not resist asking Zilda if she felt comfortable after saying sorry, Zilda reflected that she felt relieved but, on the other hand, annoyed that the senior surgeon had overreacted; she explained (Z.15):

I hoped that he would accept the apology in the spirit in which I had given it and that he would act professionally, which he did. I hoped that my apology would clear the air and let him know that I was aware that I had made a mistake. I was cautious to say that it would not happen again - for him to realise that I had learned a lesson.

Zilda had recounted this story to her female supervisor: she supported her reaction believing that Zilda had done nothing that was inappropriate. On the other hand, the supervisor thought that the senior surgeon had overreacted; Zilda said (Z.18):

She was supportive of me and said; “Well you know he doesn’t deserve it because I don’t think you did anything wrong but good on you for doing it”.

In this episode, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she apologised to the senior surgeon for her mistake. On the other hand, the surgeon had engaged – for a brief moment – in a forced other-positioning power play.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self- and other-positioning versus forced other-positioning**

Zilda had engaged in deliberative self-positioning in determining to write her notes while they were fresh; she had then informed the senior surgeon, by email,

what she had done, and why. The senior surgeon had responded verbally, angrily and forcefully, asserting his position of power and claiming a breach of security and confidentiality. The following day, Zilda sent an email to the senior surgeon, formally expressing her apology for the mistake she had made; he just acknowledged the email.

As the result of the verbal rebuke, Zilda had engaged in both deliberative self- and other-positioning, followed by forced self-positioning: her sense of responsibility and mistake realisation had led her formally to say sorry to the senior surgeon. The senior surgeon's initial verbal rebuke had involved him in forced other-positioning; the next day this was followed by deliberative other-positioning. In this two-part interchange, there was a complex interplay of self- and other-positioning and deliberative and forced positioning. Firstly, Zilda (1) had exhibited both *deliberative* intent and *parity* behaviour – to both tell what she had done and then explain, in a collegial sense, why she had done it. Senior Surgeon (1) had responded by an exertion of *power* behaviour by means of an accusative verbal message of reprimand. Secondly, Zilda (2), on reflection, demonstrated *forced intent* behaviour using a verbal apology made directly to the senior surgeon. Senior Surgeon (2) returned to parity behaviour by taking Zilda's apology and then engaging in deliberative other-positioning. He left his *power*-play to replace it with *parity*. Thus, Harré's four positioning elements – deliberative and forced; parity and power – were involved in this fundamentally simple example of 'saying sorry'.

After saying sorry, Zilda hoped that her immediate senior surgeon might accept it, recognising that she realised her mistake, that she would repeat it, that she would not repeat it; and that her apology would 'clear the air'. Zilda had engaged in deliberative and forced self- and other-positioning as thoughtfulness, embarrassment, and mistake acceptance led her to hope that her apology would repair the situation. Zilda felt relieved after saying sorry to her senior surgeon: she

had apologised to her senior surgeon, who had exercised his power over her; her deliberative intent to apologise had made her feel comfortable.

Overall, Zilda felt relieved after saying sorry; however, she was still annoyed that her senior surgeon had overreacted – Zilda resented his power-play.

#### **Forced other-positioning: power**

The senior surgeon, reacted angrily towards Zilda's going to his office when he was absent and had removed papers that he saw were 'confidential'; he demanded that she immediately return them to his office. Zilda was subject to forced other-positioning/power by the senior surgeon. His power position, combined with his sense of ethical propriety explained his angry, storming attitude towards Zilda.

#### **New Socio-cultural positionings**

##### **Reflective positioning**

Zilda was shocked with the senior surgeon's reaction. She did not think that she had done something 'out of the ordinary'. The senior surgeon felt that she 'imposed in his domain'. Zilda had involved in a reflective positioning as the severity of her indirect senior surgeon's reaction left her astonished as she thought herself right; after all, her work involved using these confidential reports to produce a summary for her office.

##### **Moral positioning**

Zilda thought it 'right' to offer the senior surgeon an informal verbal notification of what she thought was an appropriate action in recovering confidential papers without direct permission; his forced-other power response, delivered verbally, to her informal explanation surprised her. As a consequence, she realised that the better way to apologise was to offer a formal apology using email; his immediate verbal acceptance confirmed her moral position: it was the 'right' attitude, for the

apology was accepted with the restoration of good relations. The senior surgeon accepted Zilda's apology and they continued to have a good working relationship. Zilda had engaged in moral positioning: thoughtfulness and respect had led her to take this position throughout the apology episode.

Zilda, however, felt 'surprised' and 'chastened' before saying sorry as she felt he over-reacted, but though she wanted to keep the situation formal and offered an apology to her senior surgeon to protect their relationship future and hers as well-being with her senior surgeon. Zilda had involved in a moral positioning as she acknowledged her mistake and apologised, out of morals, even though she thought he overreacted.

### **Concern positioning**

Zilda reflected that her reaction, to a similar incident, to a friend, depends on its nature and to the extent a person is emotionally damaged. Zilda had engaged in a concern positioning as her thoughtfulness and concern for others' feelings are part of her culture.

### **Episode 2: An interlude – passing apology**

Before commencing the second episode, Zilda reflected on the type of apology situations she usually encounters; she reflected (Zilda.19):

My second apology event lies at the other end of the scale. I think there are many times throughout the day that I say sorry to people: walking down the street; if you bump into someone; if you need to step aside, you say, "Oh sorry!". They are much more fleeting; they happen many times a week.

Zilda continued with her interlude (Z.20):

When I was going down to make a cup of coffee yesterday, another person was coming up the other way, the aisle way here is not quite wide enough for two people to pass and you are sort of say "Oh sorry", as you shuffle by.

Zilda said sorry to this man because she thinks it is polite and it smooths relationships; it is etiquette, mainly if it is no-one's fault (Z.21):

I guess it's polite, it's accepted kind of behaviour, it smooths the way, it smooths relationships between people... if that happens to me you sort of think oh it's jarring, whereas if you go "Oh sorry", it's a little bit awkward, I will take some responsibility for smoothing that. It's just, its etiquette and it just helps to smooth relationships between people.

In this episode, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she apologised because it was a matter of politeness.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged in the interlude**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Zilda reflected on her behaviour concerning 'saying sorry' incidents and said that there are many times throughout the day that she says sorry to people, and that might happen ten times a week, bumping into them while walking in the street for example. Zilda gave an example for such incidents and said that once she was walking down the aisle to make coffee and there was a man coming up, and the aisle was not wide enough, so she said sorry.

Zilda had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she said sorry because she felt it was polite.

#### **New Socio-cultural positioning: interlude**

##### **Moral positioning: interlude**

Zilda reflected on her conceptualisation of apology and told me that she said sorry because she thinks it is polite to recognise someone's fault; it 'smooths' the situation and is simply 'etiquette'; moreover, it is 'right'. Zilda had engaged in moral positioning as her good manners and politeness led her to consider apology important even for small incidents, whether or not if they were her fault.

**Episode 3: Coming late to dinner**

Zilda has a husband and a son in his early twenties. The two of them usually check on each other when they go out; as a teenager, it had been difficult to control their son, particularly with regard to being home in time for dinner; they had arranged for him to ring home if he was to be later than 6:30PM or to tell them he would not be home at all. On a particular occasion, Zilda was working late until 6:45PM after which she was on her way home; as a joke, her husband sent her a message suggesting that he should have heard from her; Zilda said (Z.22):

When our son was in his late teens, and we were trying to get him to tell us where he was going to go and what he was going to do – it was impossible. One time earlier this year I was on my way home, and it was about 6:45 PM. I received a text on my phone from my husband: “Shouldn’t I have heard from you by now?”

Immediately, Zilda sent her husband an apology, saying that she should have informed him and that she acknowledged her mistake; she said (Z.23):

So, I texted back and said: “Oops, sorry! I should have let you know, I am on my way”. Why did I say sorry? It was because, again, it was an acknowledgement that I was in the wrong.

Zilda’s husband sent the text to her and her son as both were late for dinner, so she apologised to him to set a good example for her son (Z.24):

He sent the text out to both my son and me because neither of us was home; however, my husband was. I knew that if I sent a text back saying sorry, it would be a good example of how to behave to our son, because he would get it too.

Zilda then reported her short apology message; it was (Z.25):

Sorry I should have called by now.

Zilda felt happy after sending the apology text as she considered that what her husband had done showed he had a pleasant attitude to the family situation; she commented (Z.26):



Happy, yes, [I was] just happy and I was well on the way home and I thought, “I think I know what you are doing: it was kind of nice”.

In this episode, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning; also, she demonstrated ethical positioning as she apologised to her husband: she believed that by being a good role-model for her son, she had behaved appropriately.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Zilda’s son was late for dinner and she and her husband had told him to be home at 6:30 for dinner. What happened was that Zilda was the one who was late so her husband sent her a message joking that he should have heard from her. Zilda’s husband was hinting to her that she was late so he would not embarrass her and to make her aware that she has to be a good example for her son also. Zilda sent her husband back an apology that she should have informed him; she took this step to acknowledge her mistake. Zilda had involved in deliberative positioning as she realised her mistake and apologised.

When Zilda was late outside home, her husband began a good-natured bantering with just a hint of real concern, and thus she had to apologise. Zilda had engaged in deliberative positioning of self as she masked a concern for welfare and had to apologise to her husband.

### **Emergent New Socio cultural-positioning**

#### **Ethical positioning**

Zilda’s husband sent the text to her and her son as both were late for dinner, so she apologised to him to be a good example for her son. Zilda had engaged in ethical positioning: she was concerned that her son would accept what should be done in relation to behaving appropriately to confirm with the family’s best interests; she and her husband had acted as ethical role models for their son.

**Episode 4: A most powerful apology**

Up to this point, Zilda recalled three different incidents of saying sorry that moved her deeply: personal one-to-one apologies; a professional situation involving a person in a commanding position; apologies that 'smooth things over with someone'; she reflected (Z.28):

These are personal one-to-one apologies that I have been talking about so far. The professional incident with the senior surgeon, to me, has been the most serious one. Then there are all those small times that you want to smooth things over with someone. You are never going to see them again, possibly, or, you might. Then there was a most personal one.

Zilda then referred to a most potent apology; she recounted, with tears flowing, a national apology (Z.29):

I was moved considerably by an apology that Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia, made to indigenous Australians in Parliament in 2008. I was sitting at my desk looking at my computer in real time, and I was weeping to hear that apology. I think it was a compelling thing to do.

In this episode, Zilda was involved in deliberative self- and other-positioning by a national leader, the Prime Minister of Australia.

**Types of Harré positioning that emerged****Deliberative self- and other-positioning: deliberative intent and parity**

One significant apology that had deeply affected Zilda, as well as many Australians at the time, which was the apology made by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, when he apologised to indigenous Australians in 2008 concerning the Stolen Generations. Zilda wept as Prime Minister Rudd made this apology in the Australian Parliament; it was reported directly to the people of Australia in national television coverage. The prime minister had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning, displaying deliberative intent

and reflecting the parity of all people in Australia. The Stolen Generations speech deeply affected Zilda.

### **A summary of the Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

Zilda referred, specifically, only to Harré's deliberative positioning throughout her narrative: deliberative self- and other-positioning. She also employed three types of socio-cultural positioning through her narrative: reflective, moral and ethical positioning.

In the first episode, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning as her sense of responsibility and mistake realisation led her to say sorry to her big senior surgeon who, on consideration, was thoughtful and accepting despite, at first, being engaged in an outburst of power positioning. In the second interlude, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning as she said sorry, to the man as the aisle was not wide enough, as she felt it was polite. In the third episode, Zilda had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning as she apologised to her husband that she should have informed him; she did so to acknowledge her mistake, to act as a good role model to her teenage son.

Zilda had concluded her narrative by responding to the deliberative self- and other-positioning of the Prime Minister of Australia, when he apologised to the indigenous Australians in regard to the Stolen Generations: she had wept when she heard it.

### **Metaphors for Zilda**

I found that the dominant metaphor to emerge in Zilda's narrative was that of *The Moral Woman*. Her moral values guided her in an interaction with a senior surgeon: she apologised to him despite her realising that she transgressed the usual professional standards of the Australian College of Surgeons. At a family level,

this metaphor was apparent when Zilda apologised to her husband so that they could share and model appropriate responsible behaviour with their teenage son.

*The Moral Woman* has a self that is represented in a positioning to which she was subjected: namely, Zilda the *Delicate Woman* who was deeply affected by the Prime Minister's apology to the indigenous Australians and the Stolen Generations.

## **Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided my findings and a detailed analysis of the outcomes from the three narratives narrated by the three Australian participants in Australia.

In the next chapter, I report my findings from the interviews and include a detailed analysis of the outcomes based on the three narratives I have derived from each of the three Australian participants in Saudi.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Emerging Themes and Positionings: Australians in Saudi**

The following stories were told to me by three Australian women living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; each story consists of a number of sub-stories. I have outlined the constructs and concept, together with the emerging positioning themes and elements, identified in each narrative. At appropriate points within the sub-stories, I have analysed the types of positioning apparent. I have then summarised the types of Harré positioning evident and have concluded the New Socio-cultural positionings that I have found that emerge in each story. A summary of the Harré and the New Socio-cultural positioning elements used by Saudis in Saudi Arabia are located in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. Finally, in Table 6.3, I have identified metaphors that most strongly characterise the dominant ‘self’ revealed in each interview.

#### **Laura’s narrative**

Laura is an Australian woman living in Saudi Arabia. Her husband works there, and she accompanied him as he wanted them to be together. Laura is not working in Saudi; she is at her home in the compound, and she volunteers in town. In Laura’s interview, she recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. A ‘negative’ and ‘smothering’ neighbour
2. Apology for a change of mind
3. Apology and getting old

**Table 6.1 Harré positioning elements**

	Deliberative positioning	Forced positioning
Self positioning	<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>
Other positioning	<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>

Source: Ling IM, 1998, p. 60.

**Table 6.2 New Socio-cultural positioning elements**

Type	Key feature	Ethical	Moral
		What could or should be done	What is good or bad?
<b>Concerned</b>	To act for concern of self or others/showing care	X	
<b>Emotional</b>	To act predominantly on emotional impulse		X
<b>Ethical</b>	To act according to ethical principles	X	
<b>Reflective</b>	To act following a period of reflection	X	
<b>Relief</b>	To release from distress, discomfort or guilt	X	
<b>Repair</b>	To act to redress a mistake or error	X	

**Table 6.3 Emergent New Socio-cultural metaphors and selves**

Participant	Metaphor	Self/Selves
<b>Laura</b>	The Peace Seeker	The sensitive woman The delicate woman The powerful woman
<b>Becky</b>	The Moral Woman	The empathetic woman The emotional woman
<b>Kaity</b>	Peace Seeker	The wise woman

### **Episode 1: A 'negative' and 'smothering' neighbour**

Laura was relaxed and excited about the interview so I anticipated that we would have an interesting interview with her. I commenced the interview after a short talk about Laura's background. I asked Laura:

I would like you to think of a recent experience in which you need to say sorry. Tell me the whole story associated with your saying sorry. Describe the situation; why did that happen, what did you do? what did you say? and how did you solve it?

Laura reported that while she was living in a compound in SA, she had encountered a woman who had tried to befriend her over a period of two years; Laura said (L.03):

She is a very possessive and a very needy person. So, she clung on to me all the time. She would constantly ring me to come over or ask me where I was going, or what I was doing. I was friendly, but I told her I don't like being smothered.

Laura was experiencing a growing sense of annoyance at the intensity of the attention that her neighbour was demanding; (L.04):

She was starting to annoy me and I was thinking, 'How can I tell her to back off. She was being too intense; she was being very possessive.

So, Laura first considered evading her neighbour: Laura tried to avoid her but found that inconvenient. Above all, she was a kind person. She did not want to end up as unkind or rude; Laura said (L.06):

I didn't want to be unkind because she is a lovely person. She has done a lot of kind things to help other people; she is lovely.

Subsequently, when the neighbour approached her, Laura sat her down and gently introduced her to the problem (L.07):

I know this will be upsetting, but you need to understand how I am feeling. Then I said, "As you know I am a very private person. You have been kind to me, and I do not want to be unkind to you".

Laura pointed out to her neighbour that constant enquiries about her whereabouts disturbed her privacy; Laura said (L.09):

You know that you were ringing on the phone, asking me where am I going, what am I doing, who am I seeing, I feel that is none of your business. I am not saying to you, what are you doing. Where are you going? Why are you doing that? I said that is your business, not my business.

Despite these negative feelings, Laura apologised to her neighbour for avoiding her; she explained this; she said (L.10):

I am sorry I have been avoiding you. I don't wish to be mean and nasty because you are so kind a person. And you do some beautiful things.

Laura added that she had been bothered by having her neighbour continually checking on her daily activities; Laura said (L.11):

I cannot handle someone continually knocking on my door, checking on me, and asking me to do this and asking me to do that. I said, "I am my person. I do not need a mother or someone to tell me what to do". So, she understood, and I understood.

Despite the foregoing, Laura told her neighbour that she loved her and that she still wanted to see her, so that they might carry out some daily functions together. The neighbour came to understand that it would not be the friendship that she had desired. Laura made her neighbour understand that they would not be close friends and that she preferred another close friend whom she could understand better and who gave her space when it was required; Laura emphasised that she would not have the same respectful and understanding relationship with her neighbour that she had with her close friend. Ultimately, Laura's neighbour realised that she could have Laura as a friend without possessing her; Laura said (L.15):

We still are friends, but now but she keeps more to herself. We continue to do things on the compound and we continue to talk to each other; however, she realises it cannot be the type of relationship that she wants.

At first, Laura's neighbour was embarrassed in her presence; later, as understanding grew, she reached acceptance with the situation. When I asked



Laura how she felt when explaining this situation to her neighbour Laura reported that she felt 'sick' (L.20):

We still are friends, but now she keeps more to herself. We continue to do things on the compound, and we even talk to each other; however, she realises it cannot be the type of relationship that she wants.

By way of explanation, Laura pointed out that her neighbour came from Africa; Laura thought that she was very negative and that the negativity had started to impose itself on her; Laura said (L.21):

She is a very negative person. I told her that her negativity was getting to me. I said I could not handle people who continuously are negative about everything negative, negative, negative.

Laura then reported how she felt after apologising to her neighbour (L.22):

When I was saying sorry I felt for her because it's not nice when someone directly tells you something like that...you have to throw it and then listen to what they are saying. I did it. My neighbour took it very well which made me feel a lot better.

She was relieved after she had confronted her neighbour – a situation that she had been dreading (L.23):

I was glad I said something. I was dreading it. I did not want to do it. But I did it, and I was relieved that I had.

Laura believed that apology was painful; she said (L.24):

Saying sorry is not easy if it is not accepted. I did not wish to make an angry scene in which she would not listen to me, not want to take on board what I was saying. Yes, she took it very well.

In this episode, Laura had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning; she had taken these positions to overcome her guilt about the avoidance of her next-door-neighbour. Laura acted with deliberative intent: essentially, she was the kind person who needed to show that she was sorry. In so doing, she was, in fact, responding to a show of power: she had been subject to forced other-positioning

by her neighbour; she had countered the show of power by engaging in deliberative other-positioning, thus demonstrating that she wanted to achieve parity. This episode reveals three of the four Harré positioning elements.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning; Deliberative intent, parity**

Laura tried to avoid her neighbour but, as a kind person; she did not want to end up appearing ‘unkind’. Laura had engaged in deliberative self-positioning to overcome her guilt over her avoidance behaviour, which had resulted in making her appear unfriendly. Laura, in a series of interchanges, told her neighbour the reason for ignoring her in recent times: she was caring for herself and her need for greater privacy.

Laura had engaged in deliberative other-positioning: taking a conciliatory, rather than an avoidance approach, she had sought to achieve parity with her neighbour – a position that she saw to be good. Finally, however, Laura pointed out that constant enquiries from her neighbour relating to her whereabouts, personal contacts and activities were creating a ‘smothering’ atmosphere. Laura had engaged in deliberative other-positioning as she talked to her neighbour about the invasion of personal space that she was practicing on her. In so doing, Laura had sought parity with her neighbour in a way that would not normally be followed by a Saudi: in Saudi society using the phrase ‘none of your business’ is regarded as rudeness or arrogance, and is likely to break relationships.

#### **Forced self- and other-positioning; forced intent, power**

In a conflicted set of interchanges, Laura apologised to her neighbour for avoiding her; consequentially, Laura also told her neighbour that she could not stand her constant disturbances. Laura had directly engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning (deliberative intent, parity) as she made a declaration of personal

feelings, a personal affirmation of the other. Indirectly, she had also engaged in both forced self- and other-positioning (forced intent, power). She had countered forced other-positioning in overcoming the power that her neighbour had tried to exert over her in the name of friendship. Laura, unambiguously, told her neighbour that she did not need a 'mother', and her neighbour had understood this. An understanding had appeared between the two. It is significant that, in Saudi, the strong statement, 'I do not need a mother' would indicate arrogance and rudeness; it is a non-preferred expression.

Laura told her neighbour that she still wanted to see her and do some daily functions and she came to understand that it would not be the friendship that she wished for. Laura had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she clarified the kind of relationship that she wanted to have with her neighbour. She had been very direct in discussing these matters with her neighbour.

**Forced other-positioning: power and deliberative intent**

While living in a compound in Saudi, Laura had encountered a woman who had tried to befriend her over a period of two years. The woman was possessive and her attention disconcerted Laura, a very private person. While being friendly, she did not want to feel 'smothered'; these unwanted attentions had begun with excessive unsolicited attempts at friendship from the neighbour who was attempting to exercise required power over her.

The would-be friend came from Africa; to Laura, she seemed very 'negative' in attitude and Laura was particularly bothered by this. In this sense, Laura had engaged in forced other-positioning, as she called her neighbour 'negative' and attributed that to the influence of her background. Laura is a life lover who was bothered by her neighbour's negativity; Laura's response had involved both deliberative and forced other-positioning intent, that is, she was exerting deliberative intent and power over her neighbour.

**Deliberative self- and forced self- and other-positioning:  
deliberative intent and power**

The unwanted attention that Laura experienced from her neighbour worried her considerably in this early phase of living in Saudi. Laura did not want to confront her neighbour as she did not want to seem mean because she was unused to finding herself in such an embarrassing and irritating situation.

Laura was experiencing a growing sense of annoyance at the intensity of the being annoyed by her neighbour, due to her power play and the possessiveness that her neighbour was practising on her. Laura considered avoidance behaviour; in doing so, she had engaged in deliberative self-positioning.

**Forced self and other-positioning: forced intent and power**

On one particular day, Laura's neighbour visited, so Laura sat her down and gently introduced her to the problem. Laura forced her neighbour to understand that they would not be close friends. Laura explained that she preferred to retain her particularly close friend (L.16):

I said, "I cannot because I am already friends with the lady here". I know her well, and we are very close; also, we give each other space.

Laura had engaged in forced self- and other. In so doing, she distinguished between her inner-circle of friends and those, including her neighbour, who constituted the outer-circle; thus, she allowed herself to exhibit forced intent (forced self-positioning) by displaying to her neighbour her position of power (forced other-positioning).

## **New Socio-cultural positionings**

### **Emotional positioning**

Laura felt sorry for her neighbour while saying sorry and confronting her as it was an embarrassing situation for anyone, but she felt relieved that her neighbour took it well. Laura had engaged in emotional positioning as her kindness and values made her feel sorry for her neighbour: predominantly, she had acted on an emotional impulse.

### **Repair positioning**

Laura and her neighbour adjusted their relationship. The neighbour began to understand that she could have Laura as a friend without possessing her (L.18):

Two days ago, we went out with her and her husband and so this been in Jeddah, and we had a lovely time. So, she understands that she can have me as a friend, but not possess me.

Laura had engaged in reparative positioning as she spent time with her neighbour, which showed that there was an understanding between them, namely, that the neighbour was within Laura's outer circle of friends. Laura had acted to redress a major misunderstanding on the part of her neighbour; the neighbour had shown she understood what had happened.

### **Reflective positioning**

Laura was glad that she did confront her neighbour: she had been dreading the confrontation. Laura, too, had engaged in reflective positioning – but, in her case, she had given the issue considerable thought. Laura's concerns were complex: she believed that apology was painful; her neighbour might not accept it; it might make her angry; it could affect her feelings and upset her (L.24). Laura had engaged in self- and reflective positioning: she feared loss of face and emotional disturbance; she consider apology to be a challenging, and a necessary mission.

## Episode 2: Apology for a change of mind

Laura commenced her second story (L.27) this way:

There is a new lady on the compound; she has a dog and needed someone to look after it. One person offered. When they took the dog there, it didn't work out; I said, "OK, we will have your dog, my husband and I, for three days".

Laura went to her neighbour's house and saw that the dog was active to the extent she thought it would scare her cat; therefore, she decided to apologise and excused herself from looking after it. Consequently, Laura's neighbour became angry when Laura told her that she could not look after her dog, Laura said (L.29):

She started to become angry, but I didn't want this situation to happen; I had to because that we might lose the cat.

In this episode, Laura had engaged in deliberative self- and reflective positioning as a result of withdrawing her offer to look after her neighbour's dog because her cat's safety might be compromised. Accordingly, Laura and her husband had 'said sorry' and withdrew their offer of assistance; Laura explained (L.28):

My husband said, "What if he gets scared and runs off and doesn't come back". And I said, "I don't know. I have been thinking the same thing". So, I said, "I am going to have to ring her and say I am very sorry that we are concerned about our cat, so, I don't want to do it".

I realised that here there was a close link between deliberative self- and reflective positioning – between Harré and an element of New Socio-cultural positioning.

### Types of Harré positioning that emerged

#### Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent

A new lady in Laura's compound was looking for a person to look after her dog and she found someone, but it did not work out; so, Laura offered to look after it

with her husband. Laura had engaged in deliberative self-positioning: she made a deliberate intent to act as a courteous, helpful neighbour.

#### **Forced other-positioning: power**

Laura's quick change-of-mind, in deciding that she could not accept looking after the neighbour's cat had irritated her neighbour. Laura had engaged in forced other-positioning of her neighbour: she had to make a firm decision, following discussion with her husband; consequently, she exerted her power without taking the time to engage in deliberative positioning. Laura knew that she could take a risk with the safety of her cat; the adverse consequence was that the neighbour was disappointed and momentarily angry.

#### **New Socio-cultural positionings**

##### **Reflective positioning**

Laura went to her neighbour's house expecting to agree to looking after the dog; however, she saw that her dog was extremely active to the extent that she was afraid it would scare her cat. So, she decided to withdraw her offer to look after it. Laura had engaged, with her husband, in reflective positioning; this led her to change her mind out of consideration for her cat's safety. This reflective positioning also contained an ethical component: she was concerned for the welfare of her cat.

#### **Episode 3: Apology and aging**

I asked Laura, 'Do you have any other stories concerned with people from outside the compound?' She reflected on her conceptualisation of apology and said that if she did something wrong, she normally would immediately say 'Sorry' (L.30):

If I do something wrong, I say sorry right away. I tend to be a person who would rather be the one to say sorry than not sorry. And sometimes someone needs to say sorry to me but I will go and say sorry to them because I like peace; I don't like having bad feelings.

Laura further explained that, with age, she had become more cautious about getting involved in friendships with people who were not her type: she preferred honest relations; she tried to avoid problems, Laura said (L.31):

When I started getting older, I tended to be more cautious about who I took on as close friends. So, if someone I spend time with, such as the lady from UK [her current closest friend] we'll go on together and understood each other. We knew about boundaries and about not expecting too much.

Laura stated that she preferred honest relationships; she explained, (L.32):

Because if they are not honest with me, I may not know what's going on with their mind. I much prefer someone to be honest and say I don't like that and I do like that which is what Caroline and I would probably like each other. I could not do that with Mandy.

This had been the situation with her current close friend: Laura could not have such a relationship with the neighbour involved in Episode 1; Laura said (L.33):

She is a bully. So, that is why I cannot have a relationship with her.

Laura believed that her immediate apology behavior had arisen because she cared about other people's feelings; no longer did she delay saying sorry to avoid a hard time later; (L.34):

Usually, my sorries are said pretty much straight away. If I hit someone accidentally, or step on a lady, I am very sorry I am sorry you know I am very sorry about that I would not do usually. Or if I suspect someone is upset, I ask did I upset you? Are you ok?

In this reflection, Laura had identified deliberative self-positioning as her preferred type of interaction with friends; this meant that she had become more cautious about making friends as she got older: fear of emotional damage had made her cautious of hastily making new friends. To avoid problematic situations, Laura preferred honest relationships such as one she had with her current close friend from the UK. As a consequence, Laura preferred engaging in deliberative



other-positioning, resulting in parity; she needed to have an honest friend as she loved peace and wanted to avoid any emotional hurt.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self- and other-positioning: deliberative intent and parity**

Laura had indicated that as she had got older, she had become more cautious about getting involved in friendships with people who were not her type; she preferred honest relationships. Laura preferred to engage in deliberative self- and other-positioning in developing interpersonal relationships; fear of emotional damage had made her careful of making new friendships too hastily. For her, choosing friends was done only after careful deliberation and reflection.

To avoid problematic situations, Laura preferred honest relationships such as she had with her current close friend from the UK. As a consequence, Laura had engaged in deliberative other-positioning, resulting in parity; she preferred having an honest friend as she loved peace and wanted to avoid any emotional hurt.

#### **Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Laura could not have a relationship with her neighbour, Mary, as Mary was a 'bully'. Laura had engaged in forced self-positioning; her forced intent was driven by her need to maintain peace and privacy; hence she decided to avoid this friendship.

### **New Socio-cultural positionings**

#### **Ethical positioning**

Laura said that if she did something wrong, she used to say sorry right away. She tended to be a person she would rather be the one to say sorry than not sorry; sometimes, if someone needed to say sorry to her, she would go and say sorry to

them because she likes peace and does not like having bad feelings. Laura had engaged in ethical positioning: she used to say sorry right away when she did something wrong to avoid an unpleasant situation: this had almost become an automatic reflex action as her values and ethics directed her.

### **Concerned positioning**

Laura's apologies used to be straight away as she cared about other people's feelings and she did not defer her sorry, so that later she did not suffer from feelings of guilt Laura had engaged in concerned positioning as her apologies were essential to avoid inconvenient consequences. In some ways, this is a lesser form of concerned positioning.

### **Harré and emergent socio-cultural positionings**

Laura used all of Harré's positionings throughout her narrative: self, other, forced and deliberative – often in quite complex combinations. She also employed some New Socio-cultural positioning elements throughout her narratives: repair, ethical, reflective, emotional and concerned positioning.

In the first episode, Laura had engaged in deliberative as well as repair positioning as she offered her neighbour a profuse apology, telling her that she loved her and did want to hurt her, and thus both had become friends after the peaceful apology. Emotional positioning had also emerged as Laura felt sorry for her neighbour while confronting her as it was embarrassing for her, although Laura felt relieved that her neighbour had survived the experience.

In the second episode, Laura had engaged in both deliberative and forced positioning when she apologised to her neighbour for changing her mind to look after the neighbour's dog. She felt obliged to use forced other-positioning/power to overcome the bullying attitude of this neighbour.

In the final episode, concern and ethical positioning were dominant in Laura's attitude, when she said that as she got older, she became more cautious about getting involved in friendships with people who were not her type, out of fear of emotion injury. These positionings also were obvious when Laura reported that her apologies used to be almost reflexive as she was concerned about other people's feelings.

### **Metaphors and selves**

For me, the dominant metaphor that emerged in Laura's narrative was that of the *Peace Seeker* who went to almost extreme ends to avoid conflict – sometimes to her detriment, as seen when she was almost ineffectively avoiding her 'negative' neighbour who was intruding into her private life.

The *Peace Seeker* had other selves that are derivative in the positionings to which she was subjected. One of those selves is Laura the *Delicate Woman*; this self can be observed when, initially, she went to great ends to avoid conflict with her neighbour: she acted consciously to avoid unpleasant situations; she avoided being seen as mean or unkind. In a related self, Laura the *Sensitive Woman* is seen when, in maturity, she became more cautious about getting involved in friendships with people who were not her type, as she preferred honest relations.

These calm, gentle, peace-seeking selves contrasted with the late emergent self of Laura the *Powerful Woman* this self may be observed when she told her neighbour that she did not need a 'mother'; after all, she was able to fend for herself. Eventually, she was no longer afraid of hurting the feelings of others when she realised the outcome was to the advantage of both *her* and the *other*.

## Becky's Narrative

Becky is an Australian woman, 49 years old, living in Saudi Arabia alone; she originally resided in Perth, Australia. Becky had been in Saudi for more than two years. She was teaching high school students and her students come from diverse backgrounds; some of them are Saudis. Becky recounted four episodes, as follows:

1. Posting the wrong homework
2. Playing badminton
3. Birthday of Becky's uncle
4. Going for the fireworks

Becky emerged as a pleasant, social Australian woman. Becky was lying on the sofa while narrating her stories and was laughing. Her cat had distracted her a little during the interview. After having introduced ourselves nicely, I started my interview with her with this question, 'I would like you to think of recent experience in which you have felt the need to say sorry. Tell me the whole story associated with your saying sorry, describe the situation, what did happen, what did you do, what did you say and how did you solve it?', and thus Becky commenced her story.

### Episode 1: Posting the wrong homework

The first episode that Becky narrated was a situation at school. She confused the names of one of her two Year 12 classes; that resulted in her posting the wrong homework for one of these classes; Becky said (B.02):

I posted some homework for my Grade 12 class on a website, a Google Classroom website, and I confused the two classes and I put the wrong homework for the wrong class. I didn't realise until they brought it up in class the next day.

Becky then apologised for posting the wrong homework to one class; this occurred because she was using a new website. She resolved the situation by reposting the correct homework and giving the class extended time to complete it. Becky

accepted that consequences of apologising were not challenging; Becky said (B.06):

The outcome wasn't very challenging for me to apologise. It wasn't like I lost a lot of face.

Nevertheless, she openly apologised for her mistake.; Becky said (B.03):

I said, 'I apologise for my mistake. I put the homework for the other class on yours and you were not ready for the homework that I posted for you guys'.

Becky thought that apology in such situations is fruitful; Becky said (B.07):

In fact, SheSh.25s feel that if you apologise for errors like that in front of students, it has a positive effect. Because they see you as fairer, I guess, as willing to acknowledge mistakes.

I asked Becky, 'What made you apologise? What did you feel then after you just posted the wrong homework?', and she reported that her main concern about this mistake was specifically for a Saudi student, who grew up in US, this student needed to get high marks to study in UK. I then asked Becky this basic question, 'What did you feel exactly after you said sorry?', and she said (B.10):

Actually, I felt it was quite positive, because I see those as quite positive situations: they allow students to see you as human and as taking responsibility for your mistakes. In actual fact, instead of feeling really bad I usually feel good.

In this episode, Becky had engaged in a deliberative self-positioning as she admitted her mistake ethical apologised for her mistake.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Becky confused the number of her classes and accordingly posted the wrong homework for her students as she was using a new website class. Becky initially had been unaware that she had posted the incorrect HW responses on a website. Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she admitted her mistake,

posting the wrong homework. Becky was unexpectedly slow to realise a mistake that had been made. She apologised for posting the wrong homework to the class; she solved the situation by reposting the correct homework; she gave the class extra time to complete the task. In so doing, Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning: she apologised to the class; she corrected her mistake. Her values and sense of fairness led Becky to apologise and compensate her students.

Becky thought that apology in such situations would make a person seem more just and able to admit mistakes. Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning by apologising to her students, as she thought that apology to students would make a person look 'fairer'. In reposting the correct homework, she had acknowledged a male student who wished to create a good impression: he had felt thwarted, as he was attempting an early admission at a UK university (B.08):

He wanted to do well. He also wanted to create a good impression because he was going for early acceptance at a UK university...That's why I felt it was important that I acknowledge it.

Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning by reposting the homework to help her student; in so doing, she indicated that she was an empathetic teacher. I claim that Becky's internal kindness and values were the main factors that made her take this attitude. Becky also felt positive after saying sorry: it showed that she was caring, humane and responsible; she felt positive after saying sorry. Becky supported apology as she believed it displayed inherently good teacher qualities; these, I suspect, contributed to an internal positivity that helped to keep her satisfied and positive; at no stage did she consider apology had resulted in her 'losing face' act.

## **Episode 2: Playing badminton**

Becky then commenced her second story: she was playing badminton with some younger students and because they were quite young; Becky said (B.11):

I was playing badminton on Thursday night with some younger students and because they were quite young I didn't know them very well. If I hit a shot that they couldn't get to, I said, "Oh sorry".

Becky was trying to encourage a 'non-competitive atmosphere' at the expense of developing game skills, (B.12):

I think that was just about encouraging a non-competitive atmosphere.

Becky aimed at building self-confidence of individuals, (B.13):

I think, felt a bit more confident to play. That it wasn't always their fault that even the teacher was making mistakes.

In this episode, Becky had engaged in deliberative positioning associated with deliberative intent as she performed an apology while playing with her students to encourage them build new skills.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Becky was playing badminton with some younger students and because they were quite young she did not know them very well and apologised them to consolidate their skills in the game. Becky had attended to deliberative self-positioning, as she apologised to her students to display social courtesies and build self-confidence in them.

### Episode 3: Birthday of Becky's uncle

Becky then commenced her second story; she said (B.14):

The only other time, and I didn't actually say sorry, it was my uncle's birthday this week. It was his 75th birthday and my sister reminded me yesterday that I had forgotten to send him a birthday wish and she had said that she thought he felt quite bad because our parents hadn't taken him somewhere.

Thus, she sent him a sorry card, 'a sort of 'sorry I forgot your birthday'', which helped her avoiding a face to face apology. Her uncle called her on SKYPE but though she did not acknowledge the mistake as she sent him a card; Becky said (B.15):

I sent him a card, a sort of 'sorry I forgot your birthday' card which I guess sort of allowed me to avoid saying sorry face-to-face. Then he Skype called me afterwards, but I still didn't really have to acknowledge that I'd forgotten because I sent him a card. I didn't have to really deal with any consequences in that way. In fact, I came up looking quite good.

Depending on her response, I asked her, 'Why didn't you want to say sorry face-to-face to him?', and she said (B.16):

If he Skype calls me he can take a lot of time out of my day. I love him very much but he's a little bit socially awkward, sometimes I try to avoid face-to-face encounters, but in fact we did Skype yesterday anyway. So, it was good in the end.

However, Becky did not regret contacting her uncle face-to-face in the end. Becky wanted to avoid the 'lengthy communication' not the apology. Though, she is overseas and not expected to be into all that is happening in the family; Becky said (B.17):

It wasn't really about conceding my forgetfulness, because I was okay with that. I live faraway, I'm not expected to be as into with what's happening in the family. I get a bit of a free path on that because I live overseas. It wasn't really the apology that I was trying to avoid; it was just the actual lengthy communication.



Although Becky was avoiding contact with her uncle, the result of the SKYPE contact was fruitful; Becky said (B.18):

I felt good because I'd made him happy. He was really happy to talk to me and get the card. I felt glad that my sister had reminded me and that he would feel good about getting the card.

In this episode, Becky had engaged in deliberative positioning, as she finally had to communicate via SKYPE with her uncle despite she was avoiding it. She avoided face-to-face interaction as it wastes her time and mainly wanted peace of mind.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Becky had forgotten her uncle's birthday. Thus, Becky had taken part in forced positioning that was ignored, as she forgot this family anniversary, and that caused her family to indirectly express disapproval.

Accordingly, Becky sent her uncle a sorry card which helped her avoiding a face to face apology. He called her on SKYPE but though she did not admit the mistake as she sent him a card. Becky had engaged inserting her forced self-positioning as she had to send a sorry card to her uncle. Despite that Becky sent her uncle a card but still did not feel she was guilty.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Becky wanted to avoid the 'lengthy communication', with her uncle, not the apology. Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she was worried about conservation time with her uncle and thus avoided this communication.

However, Becky and her uncle finally did Skype. Although Becky was avoiding SKYPE with him, she felt good in the end as that call in addition to the card made him happy. Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning, as she felt good

as the situation ended up with a happy resolution. Her deliberative intent had turned forced positioning into a successful self-positioning event.

#### **Episode 4: Going for the fireworks**

Becky started her last story and said that she had a five-year celebration at her work place and she asked a friend if they could go together but her friend told her that she had plans and then ended up alone without a company and that made Becky upset, though she tried her best to find her company. Becky called her friend to accompany her to the fireworks but she was engaged then she could arrange with another friend; Becky said (B.21):

She said, “No don’t worry”. And I said, “You’ll be able to find other people”. I did feel a bit bad because I didn’t want her to go alone, on the other hand she suggested that she already had plans...

Then, Becky’s first friend called back to accompany her as her plans had changed but Becky was already there. Becky did not apologise because she thought she did not do anything wrong; Becky said (B.19):

I ended up not apologising because I felt like I hadn’t done something wrong really, I just felt bad that she then didn’t have someone to walk down with.

Although, Becky insisted to help her friend meeting other people because she felt bad for her and did not want her to be left alone. Her friend told her that she had plans but though Becky was still feeling bad for her as she had not had company yet. Becky’s Canadian friend told her that she had other plans but she was left alone at the end and Becky felt sad for her.

In this episode, Becky had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she did not say sorry to her friend for being left alone as it was not her mistake.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Becky's Canadian friend told her that she had other plans but she ended up alone and Becky felt sorry for her. Apparently, her friend did not have any plans but she was feeling embarrassed and could not ask her to wait for her. Becky had joined in positioning-forced by independence, as she tried not to leave her friend alone. This scenario reveals complexity of interpersonal arrangements due to poor communication, which caused leaving a friend alone.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Becky called her friend to join her to the fireworks but she was not available, then Becky could arrange with another friend. Then, Becky's first friend called back to accompany Becky as her plans had changed but Becky had already arrived there. Becky did not perform an apology to her friend because she did not feel that she was mistaken. Becky had attended to deliberative self-positioning as she did not apologise because as what happened to her friend was not her fault.

### **A summary of the Harré & New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Becky used three types of Harré positionings through her narrative: deliberative, self and forced. Becky did not use any of New Socio-cultural positionings.

Generally, Becky's narrative had degraded at the beginning to minor concerns and then dramatically elevated to more personal matters. As she suddenly opened up to me, trusted me in providing such personal situations. Intensity is what made her narrative distinctive. There was a growing in intensity of the themes growing from low intensity to strong intensity as it was a story that was deeply personal. In the homework episode, the intensity was low being a minor issue but then it became more intense in her uncle's episode, as she went through a personal issue.

In the fireworks episode, intensity became more significant as the issue was more deeply personal and that Becky felt really bad about what happened. All through her story, it was obvious that Becky was deliberating, and thus had engaged in deliberative positioning.

I claim that intensity of feeling is coming through because Becky is a single woman in Saudi and so it affected her behaviour, as it is not quite easy to go through all of this alone. Women are delicate and fragile in nature regardless of any strength or stubbornness they may show.

How amazing that Becky was able to bear all that pressure especially given she is away from home and conversely needs to be taken care of rather than showing care for others in her home setting. Thus, it is clear that Becky can be described not only as sensitive woman but also as a woman who is strong and resilient.

### **Metaphor and selves**

The dominant metaphor that I had noticed in Becky's narrative was the *Moral Woman*, as she kept her ethics despite of all the tension she went through the whole narrative. This can be seen when she apologised to her students for posting the wrong homework. This metaphor is also obvious when she sent a 'sorry' card for her uncle although she was overseas and not expected to be into all that was happening in the family.

Moreover, the *Moral Woman* has some selves that are represented in the positionings to which she was subjected. One of those selves was Becky the *Empathetic Woman*, and this self can be seen when Becky reposted the homework especially for the sake of one of her students who wished to create a good impression, who felt thwarted, as he was attempting for an early admission at a UK university. And, again, the *Resilient Woman*.

Another emergent self was Becky the *Emotional Woman*, and this self can be observed when Becky felt bad for her friend as she did not want her to be left alone and thus wanted to help her friend meeting other people.

## **Kaity's narrative**

Kaity is an Australian woman living in Saudi Arabia; she has been there for four years and four months -at the time of the interview. Kaity had lived overseas for a long time, in Thailand and London- each for four years, before coming to Saudi. She is a coordinator at a Christian school. Kaity recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. A power-clash between teachers
2. Appearing ungrateful for her American friend
3. Forgetfulness caused embarrassment with students

After a brief but pleasant chat with Kaity, I commenced the interview; Kaity told her first story.

### **Episode 1: Power role interwoven in a student-teacher problem**

Kaity, a coordinator in her school, had spoken to a learning-support teacher to assist in helping a student in need. In so doing, she by-passed the student's regular teacher in the belief that the support teacher was the best choice in this case. The parents complained as they wanted to involve the boy's regular teacher he was getting good results with her. There was a clash between the two teachers; Kaity said (Ka.05):

So, there was a power contest between the two teachers.

Kaity, primarily concerned with coordinating the boy's welfare, spoke with the regular teacher in an attempt to end the battle; the regular teacher was angry as

she felt insecure, believing that she should have been the first to be consulted. Karina apologised to the regular teacher to lessen the stress

I said, “Sorry, I should have done it the right way – talking to you first”. I said sorry, I was trying to ease the stress of the situation.

Kaity, however, remained displeased with the attitude of the regular teacher towards the specialist. Sincerely and humbly, she spoke with both teachers, explaining (Ka.11):

There is a new system, and I had forgotten about the systems’ approach involving the support department. So, I said “Sorry”. I believed the support teacher was upset because the regular teacher did not respect her.

Kaity recognised that she should manage the situation, and so she blamed herself for the situation (Ka.13):

I thought I just needed to calm them down. It was the regular teacher who was angry; so, I put the blame back on myself rather than on the two staff members.

Kaity had explained to the support teacher that the student and his parents wanted his regular teacher’s intervention. She tried to calm the support teacher and manage the situation. Kaity had suspected that the main reason for the regular teacher’s anger was an inflated ego; accordingly, Kaity explained to her that the boy was happy with the regular teacher, and that next time she would contact her first before referring any student to support staff.

Kaity was happy with the apology; by blaming herself, she had managed to settle the position existing between the two teachers; Kaity said (Ka.17):

I realised, at the end of the day, I was happy with the results. I feel that it was easier for me to do that than to argue with them.

Accordingly, Kaity promised that next time she would follow the new procedures rather than endure disappointment and anger between staff (Ka.20):

It was like an ego thing, so, I guess the regular teacher was angry about that because some of the teachers all had success stories, and she felt challenged – despite other regular

teachers bringing children to her for help. For this boy, it was the same thing; she calmed down after I said, "Sorry".

On reflection, Kaity said that she used to 'saying sorry' when she made a mistake; Kaity said (Ka.22):

I say sorry quite a lot if I've done something wrong, or I've done something incorrectly or I want to be upfront about something.

In this episode, Kaity had engaged in deliberative and repair positioning as she used her power role as a coordinator to solve the child's problem. She chose to put the blame on herself and apologise to the teachers to stop the argument between them.

### **Types of Harré positioning**

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Kaity said something to a teacher because she could not solve a student's problem, as he needed help. Kaity had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as the inability for a regular teacher to self-manage their problems led her to speak to the teacher. Kaity acted with deliberative intent.

#### **Deliberative other positioning: parity**

The regular teacher whom Kaity had counselled was angry as she felt insecure. Kaity had engaged in deliberative other-positioning thus seeking parity with the teacher to make her feel less upset and more secure. Kaity thought that the main reason for the teacher's anger was her ego (Ka.15):

It's ego, I guess.

Kaity had engaged in deliberative other-positioning of the regular teacher as she thought that ego lay behind the teacher's anger.

**Forced self-positioning: forced intent**

Kaity apologised to the teacher. Kaity had engaged in forced self-positioning as she apologised to the teacher to lessen the stress. The problem was solved; Kaity forced herself to act with humility.

Kaity, realizing that resolution of the situation was achieved, had, through forced intent, said sorry to the teacher sincerely and humbly – in spite of her not being happy with the teacher's egotistical attitude. Kaity explained to the support teacher that the boy was pleased with the regular teacher; then, Kaity forced herself to calm the teacher down as 'her ego was hurt'. By taking on the blame for the situation, Kaity had engaged in forced self-positioning; consequently, she was able to maintain the teacher's dignity and, overall, to lower the stress originally evident in the situation.

**Forced other positioning: power**

To bring the whole issue to a satisfactory conclusion, Kaity ultimately explained the reality of the boy's situation to the regular teacher: he and his parents wanted his regular teacher's participation in the special support. To reinforce this reality, Kaity needed to manage the situation by taking control. Kaity had engaged in forced other-positioning by using the power associated with her coordination management role; she had used her wisdom to calm the regular teacher, thus resolving the issue.

**New Socio-cultural positioning**

**Repair positioning**

Kaity was concerned more for the boy's welfare than she did for the teacher who feared losing face; thus, she engaged with the support teacher to end the battle. In so doing, Kaity had engaged in repair positioning: notably, to end the struggle, she gave the highest priority to the wishes of the boy and his parents.



### **Relief positioning**

Kaity was happy that her initial apology had ended any further argument with the teacher. Kaity had engaged in relief positioning: her love for peace had finally relieved a tense situation.

### **Ethical positioning**

Kaity had said that she was sorry when she had made a mistake. Kaity engaged in ethical positioning: her values and respect had led her to apologise for her initial mistake.

## **Episode 2: Appearing ungrateful towards her American friend**

Because of her commitments, Kaity had failed to thank a friend for giving her unsolicited support. Kaity may have appeared indifferent to this friend. Suddenly, Kaity realised that her friend felt aggrieved; Kaity said (Ka.23):

I didn't appreciate her. She was doing lots of things for me, and there were this couple of days where she was doing everything. I didn't thank her. I didn't get in touch with her. I could feel she was getting irritated with me.

So, Kaity apologised to her friend; Kaity said (Ka.24):

I apologised. I said I was sorry. "I didn't mean to be rude these last couple of days – I've been so busy". She did a lot of things at work for me – she appreciated my saying sorry.

I asked Kaity, 'What made you feel sorry?' She replied that she apologised to her best friend because she felt that she had hurt her friend who was aggrieved. Therefore, Kaity needed to change her behavior towards her friend: she had appeared cold. Kaity realised that she had made a grave mistake (Ka.25):

I thought she was hurt. I know she was stand-offish to me. She was a bit cold towards me. I missed phone calls; when she tried to contact me, I brushed her off. I realised then that she was getting a bit mad at me for not appreciating her.

Kaity explained everything to her friend and tried to make it up for her (Ka.26):

I didn't mean to be rude or ignore you, but I've just been busy.

I asked Kaity, 'What did she feel? After you said sorry to her?' She replied (Ka.27):

She's not very emotional or anything, not cold, but she brushed it off, 'It's okay, it meant nothing'. But I know it made her feel better because our relationship improved after that. She was warmer towards me. But, I actually said sorry for not listening to her; for not being there.

I then dug deeper: 'Because you trust her as a friend, right? That's why you apologised. If it was another person, a strange person, would you have done the same?', and she said (Ka.28):

I think if she was just someone I knew in passing, for sure. If she were coming to me and asking me for advice, sharing things with me, even if she wasn't a close friend, I would have done the same.

I went further: 'Was saying sorry hard to you or it was a simple thing?', and she confirmed that saying sorry was easy.

In this episode, Kaity by apologizing to her friend had engaged in deliberative self-positioning; to repair her mistake, she participated in repair positioning.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative positioning: deliberative intent**

Kaity did not thank a friend of hers for doing lots of things for her, as she was so busy; at the same time, she did not intend to seem indifferent. Then, she noticed that her friend started to be mad at her. Kaity had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as work pressure led her to appear ungrateful for her friend.

Accordingly, Kaity apologised to her friend for not appreciating her help and she accepted the apology. Kaity had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as mistake realisation, remorse and guilt made her say sorry. This scenario was a face loss situation. Kaity confirmed that saying sorry to her friend was easy; (Ka.29):

That was quite easy to do.

Kaity had engaged in deliberative self-positioning as she felt that apology was natural to her.

**Deliberative self and other positioning: deliberative intent and parity**

Kaity apologised to her friend her friend who was happy with that; their relation improved for the better. Kaity had engaged in deliberative self and other-positioning in saying she said sorry to her friend: saying sorry for causing embarrassment and for the loss of pride made her friend react coldly to the apology.

**New Socio-cultural positionings**

**Repair positioning**

Kaity apologised to her friend because she felt that she was hurt and had changed her behavior towards her: she had become cold. Kaity knew that she had made a big mistake.

Kaity explained everything to her friend and tried to compensate her for the mistakes she had made. Kaity had engaged in repair positioning, in an effort to maintain her friendship with her friend. The effort might just have been too late.

**Ethical positioning**

Reflecting on Kaity's incident with her friend, Kaity said that she would apologise to anyone else if she was in the same situation, even if he/she was not a friend. Kaity had engaged in ethical positioning as values led her to apology whoever the person was.

### **Episode 3: Forgetfulness caused embarrassment with students**

In her third narrative: Kaity gave her students an excuse to go and see another teacher but when they came late to her class she asked them why were they late? She had forgotten that she had already given them an excuse; consequently, she had apologised (Ka.30):

Of course, they came to the class late, everyone else was feeling down. I said, “Why are you late again?”, and then immediately, “Oh, sorry!”

I asked Kaity, ‘What did you feel after that? After saying sorry?’, and she said (Ka.31):

I felt okay, because they were sincere and they smiled.

She felt good because she was mistaken and that the students’ reaction to apology was good. I then exclaimed, ‘So you have no problem saying sorry to students?’, and she said (Ka.32):

No. I always say sorry if they call me on something or if I do something incorrectly, then I’ll have no problems with apologizing.

Saying sorry was not a problem to Kaity.

In this episode, Kaity had engaged in repair positioning as she apologised to her students to repair her mistake.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Repair positioning**

Kaity gave her students an excuse to go and see another teacher but when they came late to her class she asked them why were they late? Thus, she apologised as she forgot that she already gave them an excuse. Kaity had attended to a repair positioning as she realised her mistake and felt embarrassed, so she said sorry.

### **Relief positioning**

Kaity redeemed herself after ‘saying sorry’: her students deserved this apology for being so sincere and for reacting gently to the situation. Kaity had engaged in relief positioning; she felt content after saying sorry because she was mistaken; the students’ reaction to the apology was positive.

### **Ethical Positioning**

Kaity always apologised to students if she made a mistake; saying sorry presented her with no difficulties to her. Kaity had engaged in ethical positioning: her values and fairness had led this particular apology.

### **Harré and socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Kaity used all types of Harré positionings through her narrative: self, other, forced and deliberative. She also employed some New Socio-cultural positioning elements throughout her story: relief, repair and ethical positioning, a summary of which is contained in Table 6.n. p.

In the first episode, Kaity had engaged in forced self-positioning as she apologised to the regular teacher, taking the blame, and then solving the problem despite disapproving with the regular teacher’s attitude.

In the second episode, Kaity had engaged in deliberative self-positioning, as well as repair positioning, as she apologised to her friend for not appreciating her help and changed her behavior towards her as she had hurt her feelings.

In the third episode, Kaity had engaged in repair as well as relief positioning as she apologised to her students for mistakes and oversights; all parties felt relieved after that. She had concluded her narrative by engaging in ethical positioning as she used an apology to students if she made a mistake and saying sorry was not a problem for her.

### **Metaphors and selves**

The dominant metaphor that I had noticed in Kaity's narrative is *The Peace Seeker*; this was evident when she blamed herself for causing the argument between the teachers, thus solving a student's problem.

*The Peace Seeker* was a self who presented in all of the positionings in which she had been involved in the episodes reported here. A related self was Kaity *The Wise Woman*; this self was observed in the second episode when she was able to calm down a conflict between a colleague's teacher: she managed the situation ably and well.

### **Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided findings and a detailed analysis of the outcomes of the narratives I gathered from the three Australian participants in Saudi.

In the next chapter, I report my findings from the interviews and include a detailed analysis of the outcomes based on the three narratives I have derived from each of the three Saudi participants in Saudi.

## CHAPTER 7

### Emerging Themes, Positionings and Metaphors: Saudis in Saudi

The following stories were told to me by three Saudi women living in AlAhsa – a city in the eastern region in Saudi Arabia; each story consists of some sub-stories. I have outlined the constructs and concept, together with the emerging positioning themes and elements, identified in each narrative. I have summarised the types of Harré positioning evident and have drawn conclusions about the New Socio-cultural positionings that I have found that emerge in each story. Finally, I have identified metaphors that most strongly characterise the dominant ‘self’ revealed in each interview. A summary of the Harré and the emergent socio-cultural positioning elements are contained in Tables 7.1 and 7.2. A listing of all of the metaphors and the distinctive selves identified are summarised in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.1**      **Harré positioning elements**

	Deliberative positioning	Forced positioning
Self positioning	<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>
Other positioning	<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>

Source: Ling IM, 1998, p. 60.

**Table 7.2** Emergent New Socio-cultural positioning elements

Type	Key feature	Moral	Ethical
		What is good or bad?	What could or should be done?
<b>Concerned</b>	To act for concern of self or others/showing care		X
<b>Ethical</b>	To act according to ethical principles		X
<b>Love</b>	To act out of strong feeling of affection		X
<b>Moral</b>	To act according to moral principles of goodness and worth	X	
<b>Reflective</b>	To act following a period of reflection		X
<b>Redemptive</b>	To act to save or be saved from sin, error, or evil	X	
<b>Relief</b>	To release from distress, discomfort or guilt		X
<b>Repair</b>	To act to redress a mistake or error		X

**Table 7.3** Emergent metaphors and selves

Participant	Metaphor	Self/Selves
Yamam	The proud orphan	The fragile 'orphan child' The maturing young woman The repentant woman
Malak	The virtuous daughter	A young woman who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upholds high values</li> <li>• subscribes to high ethical standards.</li> </ul> These values and standards are underpinned by her Islamic heritage
Shaikah	The apologise	The kind-hearted woman



## **Yamam's narrative**

Yamam is a 20-year-old I woman in her third year at college majoring in English language. AlAhsa, where she studies, is a distant and different city from her home city. During the interview, Yamam was calm and happy; she laughed a great deal. Yamam is a very strong Saudi woman. Throughout the two episodes in her narrative she amazed me; at times, she shocked me quite deeply. The episodes she recounted were as follows:

1. Ill-mannered behaviour with a teacher.
2. A power clash concerning a hair-cut.

### **Episode 1 – Ill-mannered behaviour with a teacher**

I asked Yamam to think of a recent experience in which she has felt the need to say sorry; in response, she commenced her first story (Y.01):

I was in my first year in high school; I came from the Moms [orphanage] so, I studied here in AlAhsa. It was unfamiliar to me – the places were different and people were different as well.

Yamam had to leave her familiar orphanage in Dammam to study in AlAhsa; she covered some of the early difficulties that she encountered with exhibitions of rude behaviour; she said (Y.02):

So, I was kind of rude. When anybody asked me something or [told] me something and I was too lazy in my classes.

One difficult event occurred in the first week of enrolment in her new school. Yamam was being inattentive in class and the teacher asked her to answer a question and to pay attention to the class. Yamam refused to listen to the teacher as the class was 'boring' for her. The teacher was annoyed and threatened Yamam by asking her to leave the room; Yamam said (Y.03):

One time, I was sleeping; putting my head on the table to rest. The teacher requires me to raise my head and talk to her: to answer questions and pay attention in class. I said "I

don't have to. The class is so boring". She became angry because I said that. She told me to leave the room if I didn't want to pay attention.

To the teacher's surprise, Yamam promptly acceded to this request: she left the room and did not return; Yamam said (Y.04):

I was so happy that she had told me to go, so, I did. I was happy to be out of the class.

The next day the teacher refused to allow Yamam to come into her class. The teacher regarded Yamam as having been 'lazy' and 'rude' the previous day (Y.05, Y.06):

The next day, I came to the class and she wouldn't let me in. She said, "You are the lazy one and you were too rude with me last day". She didn't let me in.

As a consequence, Yamam independently arranged a meeting with the principal to seek a way to defuse the situation. The principal asked Yamam to explain what she had done; Yamam's response told only part of the story:

"It was inconvenient. I had to go to the principal to talk to her about this problem. I told her about all that had happened and that the Miss didn't let me in".

The principal supported the teacher in the confrontation between the teacher and Yamam. The principal told Yamam that she must return to class and that she must apologise to the teacher. Yamam returned to class but did not apologise; Yamam said (Y.08):

She told me that I must apologise; however, apologising is something I wouldn't ever do.

I was stubborn; I wouldn't go and tell her sorry. So, I told the principal, "It's okay", and went to the class. I didn't care.

Yamam would have lost her 'orphan's pride'<sup>17</sup> and its associated power status if she had apologised. The refusal led the teacher to call Yamam's foster mother and together they elicited a public apology from her; Yamam said (Y.09, Y.10):

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<sup>17</sup> 'Orphan's pride' an orphan in Saudi culture usually tries to protect their pride so they do not reveal their inner weakness.

She was mad. so mad that she had to call someone responsible for me, so I did it without feeling like I wanted to. Just they told me I had to. I apologised in front of whole the class, and it was inconvenient for me. If I could have apologised to her in person without anyone around, maybe I would have felt a little more comfortable, but it wasn't right for me. So, I wasn't happy apologising. It was wrong. I wasn't pleased.

Yamam further reflected on her feeling towards the apology; she said (Y.12):

Everyone was telling me you have to, you have to. It's a class; she won't let me in unless I apologise to her. I got back to the class with the girls inside. I had to apologise. I said, "I'm sorry".

Once Yamam apologised, the teacher allowed her to attend the class; Yamam said (Y.15):

I told her I'm sorry. And she said okay. Get in. It's like so simple for her but not simple for me.

Yamam was unhappy making this public apology; emotionally, she was hurt; Yamam said (Y.18):

I felt upset. Like I humiliated myself in front of the whole class.

Yamam told me that she regarded a public apology as a humiliating event – she felt exposed; on the other hand, she would have had no difficulty with apologising in private. Yamam considered apology to be difficult; she said (Y.20):

Saying sorry is never easy.

Yamam said that, at that stage in her life, she would never say sorry: she thought 'she was always right' and that 'she did not make mistakes'. I asked Yamam if she would apologise if this situation happens again; Yamam said (Y.23):

I'll probably say sorry, but I won't be happy with it.

In response to the accusation that she had been rude, Yamam explained that this had been unintentional: it was the effect of the dislocation that regularly she had experienced as an orphan. As a consequence, Yamam believed that once she was settled in to her new environment her rude behaviour would not persist. She

realised, however, that she needed to say sorry to ensure good consequences in the future concerning her study results; Yamam said (Y.29):

If I say sorry in a respectful way then maybe she will like me; she'll change her mind about me. She'll find me a good person if I say sorry efficiently and respectfully.

Reflecting on the 'rude' behaviour, I exclaimed, 'You said that people think that you're rude. But if you see somebody else, doing the same thing that you did!'. Yamam interrupted and surprised me with her reply; she said (Y.35):

'I'll think it's rude'.

In concluding her narrative, Yamam told me that she had realised that it was 'foolish' of her to behave in this way and she felt sorry that similar situations had arisen in which she behaved as a 'naughty girl'.

From the socio-psychological aspect, Yamam had been subject to forced other-positioning through this episode: in a show of power, she had been 'forced to apologise' to the teacher in front of the whole class as well as her foster mother; both the teacher and her foster mother had described her as having behaved rudely.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced other-positioning: student power**

As a consequence of moving to a new school, Yamam was rude. Yamam, in a remarkable show of personal resolve, had engaged in forced other-positioning of both her teacher and the principal. She demonstrated an emotional power that she held over her teacher and the principal. Regular exposure to feeling disrupted had resulted in Yamam exhibiting rude, inattentive behaviour as a means of protecting herself in unfamiliar circumstances. It was an expression of what I describe as 'orphan pride': a self-protective, face-saving survival device that requires a power-play (Power-play 1).

**Forced other positioning: teacher power**

Yamam was inattentive in class, and the teacher asked her to answer a question and to pay attention, Yamam, demonstrating her ‘orphan’s pride’, had rudely responded that the class is so ‘boring’. The teacher was annoyed and threatened Yamam, suggesting that she would have to leave the room. The teacher had engaged in forced other-positioning: the exertion of ‘teacher power’. In response, Yamam had unexpectedly exerted her ‘orphan’s child’ power: a further example of forced-other positioning. There was a stand-off between two people – one an adult, one a child – each taking a confrontational power stand against the other.

The following day, Yamam’s teacher had not allowed Yamam to enter the class: the teacher regarded Yamam as having being ‘lazy’ and ‘rude’ (Y.05). In this instance, Yamam had been *subjected* to forced other-positioning by the teacher’s show of power (Power-play2) in not allowing Yamam to return to class. The teacher’s action could be seen as ‘a power payback’ for Yamam’s apparently rude and ill-mannered behaviour.

**Forced other-positioning: a three-way power-play**

When the teacher asked Yamam to leave the class for having behaved badly (by challenging the teacher’s authority), Yamam went directly to the principal and told her part of the story. Yamam, from the point of view of self-interest, had engaged in a double power-play between herself, the teacher and the principal: this involved her telling a partial truth in a power play to preserve her orphan’s pride and to retain an element of self-esteem.

Following the incident in which Yamam had conflicted with her teacher, Yamam personally arranged a meeting with the principal to seek a resolution of the situation; however, when the principal asked her what had happened Yamam had merely explained that she was ‘unhappy’. In supporting the teacher, the principal had unwittingly entered into a third example of forced other-positioning

(Power-play 3); the principal had suggested that Yamam had been wrong and that she should immediately return to class and apologise – something that she felt unwilling to do. On her return to class Yamam did not apologise as, at that stage in her life, she would never consider making an apology.

The principal had engaged in forced other-positioning, trying to make Yamam correct her mistake through a power play (Power-play 4); however, Yamam's stubbornness led her to ignore the principal's instruction. Yamam had counter-engaged in deliberative self-positioning via a 'reverse' power play (power play 5); in a determined fashion, Yamam had confronted the principal's and the teacher's power positions. When the principal realised that Yamam ignored her instruction in not apologising to the teacher, the principal became angry and contacted her foster mother; consequently, Yamam had been forced to apologise. The principal had engaged in forced other-positioning. In forcing Yamam to apologise by calling her foster mother, the principal had used a strong power play (Power-play 6).

Yamam did not want to apologise publicly to the teacher; however, she was forced to do so, – under pressure from the principal and her foster mother. The teacher, however, would not allow her in the class until she undertook to make a class apology. The teacher had engaged in a further example of forced other-positioning (Power-play 7) over Yamam, as she told me (Y.13):

I got back to the class with the girls inside. I had to apologise too; I said, "I'm sorry".

The teacher responded in a simple manner, as Yamam explained (Y.14):

I told her, "I'm sorry" and she said, "Okay. Get in!".

While it seemed a simple act for the teacher, it was not seen that way for Yamam: by having been forced to apologise most unwillingly, Yamam had when she apologised to the teacher, experienced disempowerment in having to make an apology; in the process, she was subject to humiliation. In summing up the situation, she said that she felt 'upset' and 'humiliated'.

After apologising to the teacher in public, Yamam reflected on what had happened and told me how she defined ‘apology in public’; she commented (Y.17):

[It was a] kind of humiliation. If there’s all people around, I feel like I’m exposed. But when no one is there I can take you by yourself and I apologise.

During this complex power-play involving herself and two adult school officials Yamam felt she had been subjected to group humiliation and mocking forced other-positioning; as well, she felt that she had been humiliated in front of her peers. She believed that she had not been intentionally rude. The event had occurred during her first week in her new high school (Year 10); she said (Y.22):

I was not reacting like rude. Everybody said I was rude but I didn’t do anything wrong.

In a complex series of transactions, Yamam had engaged in both deliberative *self*-positioning – she had acted with self-forced intent – and forced *other*-positioning – in which she had exerted power of independence and self-preservation over two of the school staff members: a combination of dislocation and isolation, together with self-protection, had influenced her behaviour to a large extent. I have addressed the issue of forced self-positioning/forced intent in more detail in the next sub-section.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

In the episode under consideration, Yamam had engaged in deliberative self-positioning: her strong sense of self-belief had prevented her from saying sorry; she said that she never felt that she was ‘wrong’. Yamam explained this behaviour with her teacher; she reported that if she was happy she would not behave in an unacceptable manner. She added that if she had been more ‘settled’ and ‘happier’ she would have ‘said sorry, without any regret’. Yamam had recognised that she could entertain forced self-positioning: this type of forced intent, initiated internally was the type of positioning about which she would have had no regrets

in accepting had she been sufficiently happy with her school and personally proud to show this happiness to her student cohort and her teachers.

At the end of her story, Yamam said that it had been ‘foolish’ and ‘stupid’ of her to have been so stubborn in refusing to offer an apology. Yamam had engaged in deliberative self-positioning that was *redemptive* in nature: in agreeing that she had been foolish and stupid she acknowledged a level of immature behaviour attributable to her youthfulness and her personal situation as an orphan.

**Deliberative self-positioning: redemptive intent**

After the embarrassment of the public apology, Yamam had second thoughts about her personal decision making; she reflected that if she apologised to the teacher in private that would be more convenient for her. Later, Yamam had realised that she had made a mistake; she had engaged in deliberative self-positioning with the intent of correcting her mistake. In deciding that she had been wrong, Yamam had engaged in deliberative self-positioning that was linked to a strong personal admission that apology is never ‘easy’. She had realised that, had she apologised, it might have been easier for her to have avoided further confrontation; still, as she pointed out (Y.29):

It wouldn’t have been easy at that time.

It appeared to me that Yamam had engaged in deliberative self-positioning out of concern for herself to avoid immediate further suffering; also, she had believed that there would have been no further consequences. On further reflection, Yamam had engaged in deeper deliberative self-positioning, that led her to realise that she needed to say sorry. Furthermore, Yamam realised that she would not again be caught in such a situation; she told me that she would not act this way again (Y.33):

I wouldn’t put myself in the situation in the first place...I would think it rude.



In the past, Yamam might have responded in a similar way; now, she would not put herself in such a situation. Yamam had engaged in deliberative self-positioning with the *redemptive* intent. A redemptive intent was evident in her attitude: she had realised her behaviour was unacceptable.

This entire episode had been a ‘youthful indiscretion’ for which she did indeed feel sorry.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Concerned positioning**

When I had asked Yamam if she would she say sorry to the teacher if a similar confrontation occurred she had responded contritely that she would probably say sorry but that she would not have been happy with it. Yamam had, at the time, engaged in a self-concerned type of socio-cultural positioning resulting from fear of disempowerment, exposure and embarrassment; later, this painful experience had led her to believe that saying sorry, while difficult, was in her best interest.

#### **Redemptive positioning**

In this reflection, Yamam had realised that she had to say sorry to the teacher and thus she had engaged in redemptive positioning to ensure that she would not make a similar error in the future. She believed that the teacher would think more highly of her in the future and that the teacher would regard her as a ‘good person’; she had said (Y.27):

If I say sorry in a nice way maybe she likes me. She’ll change her mind about me. She’ll find me a good person if I say sorry easily and in a respectful way.

Yamam said that everybody remembered her confrontation with the teacher in class; she commented (Y.37):

They laugh at it, sometimes, asking, “Why did you do this?” I didn’t know.

While unsure how to express herself, Yamam had indicated to me that she had sought redemption, feeling that she should have said sorry and saved herself public embarrassment: this had, she understood, been an error that she would not make in the future. At this point in our interview, I had asked Yamam to recount any other situation that involved an apology; she was embarrassed as she replied in generalities (Y.39):

It was foolish of me: it was full of stuff, actually. It was [about] all the sorry things that happened in the school because I behaved like a “naughty girl”.

Once again, Yamam had engaged in redemptive socio-cultural positioning: she had acknowledged that she had acted foolishly; Yamam had been in error to have behaved as a ‘naughty girl’ and she had resolved not continue with this behaviour.

## **Episode 2 – A power clash concerning a hair-cut**

Yamam then commenced her second story. She had cut her hair very short and a passing teacher, who was unfamiliar with Yamam’s situation, hit her with a booklet. As a result, Yamam had told the teacher that it was something that did not concern her; Yamam said (Y.42):

I cut my hair at school. I cut my hair like a boy. My hair was curly. With time, after I had cut my hair, it got taller – it was like “awful hair”. So, with it taller, I think she was a just being officious; that was why she hit me with a booklet and said: “Why did you do this with your hair? It’s not allowed here in school”. Once again, I was rude. I told her: “It’s not your problem. The principal didn’t talk to me; why did you talk to me?”. She got mad.

Yamam thought that neither the teacher nor, for that matter, even the principal, had the right to do this to her. The teacher took offence at what she regarded as Yamam’s rude behaviour; Yamam said (Y.43):

I think she’s just a teacher. She was not the principal or someone responsible at school. So, she talked to me in front of the whole school this time. So, I was rude. I hate someone talking to me in front of anyone, and who gets mad at me in front of the whole school. I

get embarrassed. So, that's why I become rude. So, this one: I'd not apologise to her. She came to me and she humiliated me in front of the whole school.

Unlike the previous incident, on this occasion the event took place very publicly in front of the whole school; consequently, Yamam had been extremely embarrassed; again, she had reacted rudely; again, she would not apologise to the teacher because she had humiliated her – but this time, in front of everyone.

The situation became more complicated when the teacher – somewhat frustrated – spoke to Yamam's foster mother (also a teacher at the school) explaining the situation that she had encountered and pointing out that Yamam's behaviour was unsatisfactory. As a consequence, her foster mother spoke to Yamam, pointing out that what Yamam had done was wrong and that she had to say sorry; Yamam noted (Y.44):

She got mad and talked to my mother. My mother told her, "I will talk to my daughter".  
She came to me and told me, "You shouldn't have done this in front of the whole school".  
I told her, "She came to me. I won't apologise, ever".

Yamam refused to apologise to the teacher as she thought the teacher had unfairly embarrassed her in public; Yamam told me (Y.45):

I didn't care if she gets mad at me or anyone about this problem, because I didn't do anything wrong. So, I wouldn't apologise, and I didn't.

Once again, Yamam had responded negatively to authority figures: she 'went against the flow'. Yamam had not apologised as she felt that it was unfair: she believed that she had not done anything wrong. Yamam's peers had seen her being publicly humiliated; Yamam said (Y.47):

Everybody saw me. So, I hated that she did something that no one else has ever done to me before.

Yamam was subjected to a second episode of forced other-positioning through this episode: her foster mother forced her to apologise to the teacher – despite the teacher having embarrassed her publicly concerning her short hair.

**Types of Harré positioning that emerged****Forced other-positioning: power**

Yamam cut her hair very short. When her hair grew longer it looked ‘awful’: it was in disarray. A passing teacher saw this, publicly admonished her, and hit her with a book. Yamam reacted strongly, telling the teacher that this was none of her concern; as a result, the teacher became angry. The teacher took offence at what she regarded was Yamam’s rude behavior. The teacher and Yamam had, separately, engaged in forced other-positioning: the teacher exerting ‘teacher power’ over Yamam; Yamam defending her ‘orphan-child’ self and, in the process, unexpectedly surprising her teacher by responding negatively. Briefly, the principal had also been involved in a forced power-play as she supported her staff member.

Yamam’s foster mother had asked Yamam to apologise for having acted inappropriately. Yamam sometimes listened and responded positively; at other times, she did not; consequently, Yamam and her foster mother had engaged in both forced other-positioning as well as deliberative self-positioning in trying to adjust Yamam’s behaviour. The overall outcome, however, was a four-way power-play that had involved Yamam, her teacher and the principal, and her foster mother.

In the hair incident, Yamam had regarded the teacher as being a person of lesser responsibility, compared with the principal: she had not shown respect. This event, however, had taken place in front of the whole school; consequently, Yamam was seen as being rude, a situation about which she was most embarrassed. On the other hand, Yamam had refused to apologise to the teacher; Yamam asserted that she hates being humiliated in public as it embarrasses her; consequently, she would not apologise. So, because of public humiliation and feeling embarrassed, Yamam was rude to the teacher; also, she had been rude to

the principal. Yamam and the teacher had publicly engaged in a strong power-play of forced-other positioning; moreover, the principal was involved.

Yamam had been engaged in forced other-positioning that led to disharmony; the forced positioning over such an issue had appeared to be unjust. As a result, Yamam had engaged in power positioning: once again, she had refused to apologise.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Reflective positioning**

When I asked Yamam if she apologised to the teacher, Yamam said that she did not and said (Y.44):

Never. I didn't feel bad about it. Because she came to me.

In justifying her refusal, Yamam had engaged in socio-cultural reflective positioning.

### **Harré and New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Yamam experienced three types of Harré positioning through her narrative: deliberative intent, forced intent, and self and other power positioning. At no stage had she engaged in deliberative other-positioning, thus emphasising the extent of her 'orphan pride'. She also employed some New Socio-cultural positioning through her narrative: concerned, reflective, self-interest and redemptive positioning (see Table 7.2).

In the first episode, Yamam had, in the main, been subject to forced-other positioning – mainly through power-plays involving authority figures – her teacher, her principal and her foster mother; eventually, she had realised, as a result of self positioning with deliberative intent, that her opposition to authority was counter-productive. Eventually, Yamam had engaged in socio-cultural redemptive positioning, as she realised, with growing maturity, that her behaviour

was unacceptable; it had been a case of ‘youthful indiscretion’ for which she did indeed feel sorry. Yamam had adapted her behaviour with her growing maturity and self-other awareness.

In the second episode, Yamam had engaged in a power-play with a teacher, the principal and her foster mother (also, a teacher at the school). Yamam displayed concern-for- self-positioning as she refused to apologise to the teacher, who interfered in a matter that did not concern her: Yamam wanted to protect her sense of self as an ‘orphan-child’. At the same time, Yamam had engaged in forced other-positioning of teacher and her foster mother, the latter of whom had led Yamam, through a mix of power and parity positioning, ultimately to apologise. At this point, Yamam had realised that her power-play, in which she had ignored her foster mother’s and teacher’s feelings, had been a failure; it was detrimental to her well-being and for developing a positive sense of self-esteem. Ultimately, Yamam had realised that she was causing damage by sustaining her ‘orphan’s pride’ image: at this point, she capitulated and accepted that she was damaging her new, emerging personal image.

### **Metaphor and selves**

The dominant metaphor that I derived from Yamam’s narrative was that of *The Proud Orphan*. Throughout her narratives, she was attempting to prove herself as a strong woman whose independent spirit was unbreakable. At the same time, on the inside, she was extremely fragile; she was displaying ‘orphan’s pride’. As she had pointed out (Y.01 & Y.02):

I came from the Moms [orphanage]. So, I studied here in AlAhsa. It was unfamiliar to me – the places were different; the people were different. So, I was rather rude whenever I was asked or told to do something.

The Proud Orphan had at least three other emerging selves each of which was evident in this second episode. The first of these is Yamam, *The Fragile Orphan*

*Child*, visible when she was calling herself ‘foolish’, ‘stupid’, and ‘rude’; these self-reflections indicate a profound inner fragility.

In the second episode, Yamam revealed two emerging selves: that of a *Maturing Young Woman* and a *Repentant Young Woman*. In particular, these can be seen when Yamam had expressed regret at the behaviour she exhibited in her early days at her new school. This narrative, in a remarkable two-part sequence, reveals the emergence of a maturing adolescent who, at last, had re-positioned herself towards becoming a worthy member of the school community.

### **Malak’s narrative**

Malak is a Saudi woman: 23 years old, studying for a Bachelor degree, majoring in English language and literature at a university in Saudi. It was her fourth year, at the time of the interview, and so she was nearing graduation. Malak intended pursuing graduate studies. I had met with Malak at a private office at my workplace in Saudi Arabia. During the interview, Malak was relaxed and confident. She spoke in a firm tone when she was narrating her brother’s episode despite appearing to be somewhat upset. I commenced my interview with Malak, by asking her to recount, in detail, some apology situations. Malak recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. Cheating in an exam
2. Appearance vs. reality (judging a schoolfellow)
3. Dealing with cultural sensitivities.

#### **Episode 1 – Cheating in an exam**

When Malak was in high school she cheated during a test; this involved comparing and contrasting her work with that of another student to confirm that her answers were correct; Malak said (M.03):

I did something that was bad for me because that was my first time doing it - I cheated on an exam. It was just this one question that I answered it, but I was not sure of. So, I looked at my friend's paper to make sure. I changed the answer to her answer, and then I got the full score.

Malak then felt guilty; subsequently, she told the teacher the whole truth. Unexpectedly, the teacher surprised Malak by praising her for telling the truth. What is more, she awarded Malak full marks. Malak proceeded and said that the reason for her feeling guilty was that it was not her sustained effort alone (M.04):

After gaining full marks, I felt guilty inside building up, and I said to myself, "You didn't deserve the total score". So, I went to my teacher, and I told her that I looked into my friend's paper and then she said well, because you told me first I'm not going to take out a mark from you, I'm going to give you the full score, and I'm going to provide you with an extra mark because you told the truth".

In particular, she felt that she had broken her teacher's trust; Malak told me. Following her admission of guilt, Malak was both forgiven and rewarded by her teacher; as she explained (M.05):

That is why I told her because I felt guilty and that I didn't deserve the full mark; I thought that I was getting something that's not mine, because I took the efforts of my friends and that I broke the trust of my teacher. But after that, see: telling the truth, had many. I got full marks and I got an extra mark for what I did. So, everything worked out perfectly for me.

Malak had realised her mistake because she thought that fraud was wrong, and thus she apologised to her teacher; she explained (M.07):

Cheating for me is not an easy thing to do: I think cheating is not that smart. So, I felt I did something wrong to my teacher and that's why I went and apologised.

Malak then reflected on the issue; she explained that if she cheated on any members of her family, she would tell them immediately. Malak would take the right action at once; she had reflected (M.09):



First of all, that's what Islam says. Second of all, that's what my mother has taught me to do. When I do something wrong, and I know it is wrong, I have to apologise.

Before closing her narrative, Munera recounted her mother's and teacher's reactions towards her moral attitude (M.10):

[The teacher] said "You did the right thing. I am proud of you". And I talked to my teacher. And my teacher told my mother that she had done well in raising me – that she was proud of me.

Malak also reflected on her apology attitude; she had said (M.12):

I apologise for everything. If I took something that was not mine, I should apologise.

In this episode, Malak had engaged in deliberative self- and other-positioning. She followed an impulse and had taken an action that she had never before considered; it was one that she regretted. She had deceived her teacher and had dishonoured herself. Subsequently, she had taken redemptive steps to recover the moral position that she had, until this event, always honoured.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative positioning: deliberative intent**

As a result of her cheating, Malak had engaged in deliberative self-positioning in taking the moral position of distinguishing between right and wrong actions; she had taken an action that she recognised as being wrong. She had violated her value position because of a fear of losing marks.

#### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

##### **Moral positioning**

Malak confirmed that if she cheated on any members of her family, she would tell them immediately. Malak had engaged in proper moral positioning as she had strong values: 'truth revealing' was a fundamental principle in her family.

Furthermore, Malak would follow what is ‘right action’ as she adheres to her Islamic values. She had absorbed the values of Islam and her mother’s teachings very well: these were the source of her moral guidance; these values were an expression of the golden value of ‘saying sorry’.

Malak had reflected on her apology behaviour. She reported that she tried to apologise for every single mistake. She had engaged in moral socio-cultural positioning.

### **Moral and redemptive positioning**

Malak had felt guilty after copying her classmate’s response; subsequently, she told her teacher the whole truth. The teacher surprised her by praising her for telling the truth. What was more, she awarded Malak full marks. Malak felt that what she did was so wrong as it was her first time doing it. She dared to cheat for the sake of full marks; she said (M.06):

I answered them but just one question that kept playing in my mind: “Was it right? Was it wrong? I didn’t know”. I didn’t want to lose marks [yet] I had to face these questions.

Malak had engaged in a redemptive positioning, feeling guilty because of what she did; as a consequence, she had admitted to herself, and to her teacher, that it had been wrong and that she now very much regretted her action. Malak realised her mistake, acknowledging that cheating was not a smart action and that she cheated on both herself and her teacher. Malak had engaged in moral- and redemptive-type positioning as she had realised her mistake, because she had values, to conclude that cheating was not a smart action.

Malak’s inner goodness had directed her to make a morally ‘good’ decision. She had personally redeemed herself; Malak had been rewarded by her teacher for her honesty.

**Ethical positioning**

Malak reflected on her teacher's reaction after the cheating incident, that she was raised well, telling Malak's mother, and that she was so proud of her. Malak's positioning reinforced the high ethical stances established and maintained by Malak's mother and by her teacher. Malak had engaged in ethical socio-cultural positioning: she had exhibited high moral and robust ethical behaviour showing moral principles of goodness and worth.

**Episode 2 – Wrongly judging a schoolmate**

In a second story, Malak reported; (M.13):

I am a little bit judgmental of people. I used to judge people by appearance or about what I heard about them. I was naive and young; I was a bit stupid.

Malak had heard gossip about a young girl; as a consequence, Malak had started talking about her before suddenly realising that she had been unfair to her; she told me (M.14):

I heard something about a particular girl, and I started talking about her behind her back with other girls in the school. In the second year she was in my class; so, day by day, I got to know her, and I found out really what she was like on the inside. [After this] I didn't know if a lot of the things that I had said about her were true or false.

Malak had originated rumours about the girl in the belief that they were right. On reflection, she felt ashamed of her behaviour and wished to seek forgiveness. She went to the girl and told her the whole story (M.15):

I asked, "Who was I to say that?" And then after I knew her better, I was able to say, "Listen I was talking about you and I made up some rumours about you".

Malak made a heartfelt apology to the girl and revealed to her how mistaken and repentant she was. She referred quite explicitly to a 'Hadith' (= saying of the Prophet) on the incident (M.16):

“[I’m] sorry, I know you’re mad at me. I know that what I said was very wrong, and I should not do that to anyone, because as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: Like for your brother what you like for yourself”.

Malak apologised again to the girl, and she also offered her friendship. Malak told the girl that she would understand if she refused her as a friend; she had said, most contritely (M.17):

I’m really sorry. I hope that you can forgive me and I really want to be a friend of yours.

The girl replied that she was aware of what Malak had said about her; however, since Malak had apologised she accepted Malak’s friendship – a friendship that, in fact, had been continuing; the girl had explained the situation from her viewpoint; Malak recalled (M.18):

[The woman said] “Since you told the truth and apologised, I would love to be your friend”.

After her sincere apology to the girl, Malak confided that their friendship continued (M.20):

We’ve remained friends till now; apologising is the best thing ever. Sometimes people say that when you apologise you appear weak. I don’t think so: I think apologising proves that you’re strong. Apologising is difficult when you do something wrong, and you realise it’s wrong. Apologising to the person you did something wrong to is very brave.

Malak said sorry at two levels: she recognised that the rumours were incorrect; she accepted the woman as a nice person, one whom she wanted to be an on-going friend. In this episode, Malak had once again engaged in redemptive positioning; as a consequence, she had found a new friend.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative other-positioning: parity**

The young girl told Malak that she knew what had been said about her; since Malak had both told the truth and had apologized, she accepted her friendship.

Malak had engaged in deliberative other-positioning: the woman had most gracefully accepted Malak's apology and had offered sincere on-going friendship.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Moral and ethical positioning**

In middle school (years 12-14), Malak had made hasty judgements of others based on appearance and hearsay; she self-revealed something of herself; she said something about a girl; Malak then realised that she had been unfair to the girl; subsequently, she had felt repentant. Malak had engaged in moral and ethical positioning brought about by her inexperience. Inexperience led to her to make hasty and improper moral and ethical judgements; the realisation that she had been morally and ethically wrong and that wished to right that wrong had revealed a forward step in her moral code development.

#### **Redemptive positioning**

Malak had repeated rumours, before discovering that they were incorrect. She confessed her error to the person concerned; she recounted what she had said to the woman. Accordingly, Malak had made a heartfelt apology to the young woman assuring her how mistaken she had been; she was most repentant. She referred to her Islamic background by repeating a saying of the Prophet Mohammed that is known as the 'Golden Rule' in Christian culture, 'Like for your brother what you like for yourself'. Malak had engaged in personal redemptive positioning by explaining to the woman the Muslim moral and ethical religious codes that she had personally invoked: she had realised an element of personal moral and ethical development that she was willing to share with an 'other'. Malak had apologised and had asked the girl for forgiveness; moreover, Malak had also offered friendship, admitting her understanding that if she refused her as a friend.

Malak had engaged in redemptive and reconciliatory positioning, accepting that she had made a moral and ethical mistake which she wished to correct.

A long-standing friendship developed as the result of bold action on the part of Malak: she had been made aware of the benefit of apology. Malak had shown herself to be a brave, redemptive, reconciliatory Saudi woman: she had developed as ‘a woman with strong values’.

### **Episode 3 – Dealing with cultural sensitivities**

In the past, Malak’s brother had blamed her for spilling juice in the family car – something which she had not, in fact, done; Malak said (M.25):

Sometimes my big sister or brothers ask me to do something wrong and put the blame on me. Malak did this, and I didn’t do that. Once my brother accused me of spilling juice in a family car he drives, as there was a stain on the seat. He said, “She spilled the juice”. But I didn’t spill the juice; I wasn’t even in the car at that time.

It so happened that one of Malak’s brother’s friends had spilled the juice; Malak did not apologise as she was not involved; her parents punished her brother for wrongly accusing her. As a result, her brother apologised because his friends spilled the juice; she said (M.31):

I didn’t apologise. I said. “No, I didn’t do anything”. So, they punished him by taking the car keys. And then he apologised to my father and my mother because his friends spilled the juice. He didn’t apologise to me. He apologised to our mother and father to regain the car keys.

Malak’s brother had apologised to his parents on behalf of his friend. Malak’s mother, subsequently, had apologised to Malak for her brother’s mistake. Malak did not consider this to be appropriate: she maintained that it was her brother, not her mother, who should have apologised; she told me (M.33):

My mom apologised to me because my brother told a lie. You know brothers they don’t say sorry. So, my mom apologised for him. Ok [my mother] said, he said, “Sorry”. I said, “He said sorry to you! Not to me!”

Malak insisted that her brother should apologise; however, he did not. In this episode, Malak had engaged in both deliberative and forced other-positioning – seeking parity with her mother; seeking to exert power over her brother. Malak had been unsuccessful in both attempts at positioning.

A second event involved Malak's family-maid who was not a Muslim. Malak had seen the maid dragging food along the floor in a bag; Malak had raised her voice at her; she explained (M.26):

My father bought groceries for home; on arrival, the maid was dragging the goods along the floor, and kicking the fruit. I corrected her, telling her that she had to pick up the food because it was disrespectful to Allah to drag food along a floor or to kick it

Malak's father heard her shouting. As a consequence, Malak's father shouted at her; she reported (M.27):

I wasn't shouting, but I was angry. My father came in, saw me shouting at her, and so shouted at me. He said, "She's older than you, she is working hard, and you just don't do anything".

Once her father had calmed, Malak explained the situation to him. Accordingly, he apologised to Malak, they reconciled and Malak's father took her shopping; Munera said (M.28):

I told him the story; he understood, and said, "I'm sorry". He kissed my forehead. "I didn't mean it. I was tired and coming from work". I said, "You didn't upset me. I wasn't angry with you. I just wanted to make sure that you weren't angry me because I was shouting at her". He apologised and took me shopping.

Malak asked her father not to shout at her in front of the maid as it led to her losing respect. Malak told her mother the story; she praised Malak for her approach, agreeing that she had chosen the right time and tone to talk with her father thus avoiding further unpleasant consequences; Munera said (M.32):

[My mother said] "You did the right thing".

In this episode, Malak had engaged in forced other-positioning: she had corrected the maid because of the maid's disrespect shown to the food which is regarded as a blessing from Allah. She had exerted power over the maid; she had also engaged in deliberative other-positioning with her father in describing the cause of her dealing with the maid; he had observed the parity of the situation and had responded favourably.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

**Forced positioning: power; deliberative other-positioning:  
parity**

Malak's siblings frequently blamed her for things she did not do; her brother once blamed her for spilling juice in the family car; however, she had not done this. Malak had been subjected to forced other-positioning with negative consequences due to the wrongful application of power.

In an appropriate application of power, however, Malak had corrected a maid who had acted in ignorance of Islamic religious teachings: she was disrespectful to the food. Unexpectedly, Malak's father had interrupted and admonished Malak for being disrespectful towards the servant who was older than her. Malak had been subjected to forced other-positioning when her father exerted power over her for treating the maid in a heartless manner.

When, however, the situation was respectfully explained, using deliberative other-positioning, Malak's father accepted that she had behaved appropriately by checking the maid for unwittingly acting in a way that was disrespectful towards the religious values held by the family. Malak had realised, intuitively, that deliberative other positioning was appropriate when dealing with issues of virtues, values, and ethics such as those entertained by an Islamic family. Malak Indeed, showed herself to be a virtuous daughter.



**New Socio-cultural positioning****Moral positioning**

Malak had refused to apologise to her brother as she did not spill the juice. As a consequence, Malak's parents punished her brother for falsely accusing her; her brother apologised because his friends had spilled the juice. Malak had pointed out the unfairness of the treatment she had received from her brother: she felt that morally, her brother should have apologised to her as well as to his parents. Malak felt hurt; she reported that she had protested to her mother that her brother's apology was for her mother not for her. As a result of Malak's moral position, her mother had apologised to her for her brother's mistake. Malak had thought that this was unethical and therefore had pointed out that she was owed an apology from her brother. On this occasion, Malak showed her ethical self.

**Repair positioning**

Malak waited for her father to calm down after which she related the full story. As a consequence, her father apologised and compensated her by taking her shopping. In admitting his mistake, Malak's father had engaged in repair positioning by performing a 'repair apology'. At the same time, he had modelled virtuous behaviour. This model of listening and apologising by a father is not common in Saudi society. Malak had trusted her father, whom she knew to be thoughtful and kind; he had indicated that he was an admirable role model, modelling that had been very much appreciated by his virtuous daughter.

**Moral positioning**

Malak gave her mother an account of the confrontation with the maid, and how she avoided a conflict with her father. Malak's mother had engaged in strong moral positioning as she supported Malak's for taking the right action

**Harré and New Socio-cultural positionings**

In these episodes, Malak demonstrated the use of the four types of Harré positionings through her narrative: self, other, forced and deliberative. She also employed New Socio-cultural positionings throughout her narratives: redemptive, moral, ethical and a repair positioning, a summary of which is contained in Table 7.2.

In the first episode, Malak had firstly engaged in deliberative self-intent as well as redemptive positioning out of feelings of guilt and remorse as by cheating; she felt she had not only cheated herself but also broke her teacher's trust. Malak had engaged in further redemptive positioning in her second episode but this time for her an emerging friend whom she had judged unfairly.

In the third episode, Malak had engaged in power positioning as she stood for her attitude, mostly pride, by refusing to apologise to her brother.

In the final episode, Malak had been offended by the maid's disrespectful behaviour toward Allah's blessing (food). She had engaged in both forced and deliberative other-positioning to make the maid, as well as her parents, aware that she was emerging as a young woman who was virtuous, and who subscribed to the religious and social values and ethics held by her parents.

**Metaphors and selves**

The dominant metaphor that I observed in Malak's narrative is *The Virtuous Daughter*. Malak is a Saudi woman who is virtuous; she upholds the high values and ethics demonstrated by her parents. Throughout the narratives, Malak's morals had directed her behavior whenever she committed a mistake, (M.09):

First of all, that's what Islam says. Second of all, that's what my mother has taught me to do. When I do something wrong, and I know it is wrong, I have to apologize.

The Virtuous Daughter has two significant selves. The first was Malak *The Moral Young Woman*, who subscribes to high ethical standards underpinned by

her Islamic belief. Malak felt guilty in narratives in which she reported she had made a mistake: the first, when feeling guilty for gossiping about a classmate who subsequently became a friend; the second when behaving as both a moral and ethical woman when confessing to her teacher that she had cheated. Impressively, Malak was able to defend herself and emerged as a *Strong Young Woman* when she stood for herself, refusing to apologise to her brother in front of their parents when he accused her of an action in which she played no part (M.31):

I didn't apologise. I said, "No, I didn't do anything".

### **Shaikah's narrative**

Shaikah was 23 years old at the time of interview. She was studying at a university in Saudi, located in a different and distant city from her home city. Shaikah was in her fourth year of a bachelor degree, majoring in English language at the College of Arts; she recounted three episodes, as follows:

1. Losing her best friend
2. Effect of work pressure
3. Treating her mother as a friend

Shaikah had revealed to me at the beginning of the interview that she felt nervous when she speaks English. I noticed that Shaikah had experienced a mixture of feelings while narrating her apology stories that involved redemption, longing, and love.

#### **Episode 1. Losing her best friend**

Shaikah's travelling time and the work requirements at her university, and her changing interests meant she had paid less attention to Haifa, one of her old friends. Shaikah was popular, quite social, and had many friends; Haifa saw Shaikah as her only friend; Haifa wanted to see more of Shaikah and felt that Shaikah was unfair to her; she said (Sh.01):

I have to travel every day. I get too busy I have no time to care about my friends or asking about them; what they are doing if good or not, So, she felt bored. [Haifa said] “Shaikah, I always care about you! But you don’t do anything to me, ask about me, help me, I need a friend”. I have a lot of friends, but a little bit social. But She’s not. She’s not social, she’s always alone. So, out of all her friends, I’m the only one available right now. She said, “Not fair”.

As a consequence, Shaikah tried to manage her time more effectively but had found that this was not possible Haifa made Shaikah understand that she was breaking up with her. Accordingly, Shaikah apologised more than once to her friend and told her that she wanted to be the best friend she needs; she confided (Sh.02):

I try to manage my time but I can’t. So, I always tried to apologise. [I said] “I’m sorry Haifa, I wish I can be the best friend that you always need”.

Shaikah indicated that she might take a time management workshop, so Haifa would not feel unfair towards her (Sh.03):

Sometimes I tell her I wish if I could take a workshop to learn how to control my time So, I don’t feel I’m unfair with her. She’s the best.

Shaikah apologised to Haifa because she considers Haifa to part of her family and cannot imagine losing her (Sh.04):

No one in the world cares about me like her, except for mom of course.

That was the reason behind Shaikah’s apology to Haifa, Shaikah commented (Sh.05):

I had to apologise because I don’t want to lose her and she’s like my sister. We are all sisters. She and my sisters: we all are sisters, [She is] like a family member, so, you can’t imagine when you lose one of your family how’s it going to be? A disaster!

Shaikah doubted that her friend, Haifa, would accept the apology and her doubt was correct. Shaikah understood Haifa’s position and supported it herself; nevertheless, she had not given up, and she was hoping Haifa would forgive her in the future (Sh.06):

I felt aware that she's going to accept my apology. If I put myself in her shoes, I'd feel that it's difficult to accept the apology. Before I apologise, I imagine myself if I was in the same situation. What would I do? She's InshAllah [hopefully-if God says to be] going to give me another chance InshAllah. I will try to be a better person, but it hasn't happened yet. So, that's why. She hasn't accepted my apology yet.

Shaikah was trying hard to satisfy her friend for whom she felt great affection; she hoped that the power of love would provide a solution. Haifa is a dear friend to Shaikah.

Shaikah continued to be driven by love positioning: she continued to consider Haifa to be a member of her family. After the first, rejected apology Shaikah insisted on repeating her apology; she reflected on her feeling after the apology refusal when I asked her how she felt about it; Shaikah said (Sh.07):

I felt I'm going to try again; always, because I'm going to prove my love and keep apologising all the time. It's been four months since I first apologised.

Shaikah was being positioned by love in her endeavours to win back Haifa's friendship. Apology refusal made Shaikah sad but did not affect her determination to show her love and loyalty to Haifa: these were strongly determining features of Shaikah's perception of the relationship.

Shaikah reflected on her feelings after breaking her friendship with Haifa; she said (Sh.08):

I'm broken, really. I miss her, and I'm going through a tough time. It can't be selfish to ask Haifa, "Please be with me", just because I wasn't with her when she needed me.

Shaikah admitted that she should take full blame for the ensuing situation; she commented (Sh.09):

That's my mistake because I made her get used to that: "I'm always going to be with you".

Shaikah confided with me that she did not think that it was harsh of Haifa not to accept her apology; she reflected (Sh.10):

I guess if I were in her place, I'd do worse than her. I'd put myself in her situation before I did anything.

Shaikah ended her story by confessing that she had not told this story to anyone up to this time; had she so, she would have cried.

In this episode, Shaikah had engaged in deliberative other- and forced other-positioning: she had acted unfairly towards her friend; thus, had been forced to apologise to repair the mistake.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Deliberative and forced other-positioning**

Shaikah studied at a university to which she travelled every day; this, the work requirements, and changing interests meant she paid less attention to Haifa, one of her long-established friends. Shaikah was popular, quite social, and had many friends; on the other hand, Haifa saw Shaikah as her only friend – Haifa wanted to see more of Shaikah and felt that Shaikah was being unfair to her. Shaikah had engaged in deliberative and forced other-positioning; she realised she had been unjust to her friend; at the same time, she realised that her friend expected more of Shaikah.

This confusion was the outcome of combined forced intent and the exertion of power over a previously close friend; this had arisen because of a re-positioning of a friendship between two people as changing circumstances and interests had resulted in changing the nature of the communication between them.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Shaikah realised that Haifa was the only person, apart from her mother, who cared for her; according to Shaikah. Shaikah had engaged in deliberative self-positioning to save herself from Haifa's extreme care dependence: it was a case of weaning Haifa's need of Shaikah's care, a requirement that had led to Haifa's

oppressive over-dependence. Shaikah felt the need to take this quite radical step to regain her freedom.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Repair positioning**

Shaikah tried hard to manage her time but she could not. She apologised more than once to Haifa. Shaikah had engaged in social repair positioning, working hard to please her friend through reparative apology and better managing of time to save their friendship while retaining a necessary level of gained freedom.

#### **Concerned positioning**

Shaikah told her friend that she ought to take a time management workshop so that she would not feel so unfairly towards her. Shaikah had engaged in concerned positioning, trying her best to please her friend through reparative apology. Guilt and love led Shaikah to think of a time management workshop. Shaikah had taken the blame for the resultant situation; she considered that, had the situations been reversed, she would have behaved more strongly than Haifa. Shaikah pointed out that she always sees herself in the reverse situation before reacting.

Shaikah had engaged in concerned positioning showing that she supported her friend's reaction not to receive her apology.

#### **Redemptive and moral positioning**

Shaikah felt 'broken' after the separation from Haifa. Shaikah had blamed herself for allowing Haifa to become dependent upon her presence and caring at all times. Shaikah had directed herself towards redemptive and moral positioning to redeem the error she had made in rejecting Haifa; had taken moral responsibility for the position and was blaming herself entirely for the outcomes. She was responding to the moral principles of goodness and worth.

**Redemptive positioning**

Shaikah continued excusing her friend and was adamant that the responsibility lay with her for the situation that followed. Haifa had not accepted her apology either reconciled with Shaikah. In taking the position of blame, she accepted full responsibility for redemption of the situation: she engaged in redemptive positioning.

**Episode 2: Effect of work pressure**

Before starting her second story, Shaikah reflected on her behaviour when she is in a terrible mood; Shaikah said (Sh.12):

When I get in a very bad mood I lose control; I mean by the way I choose words and the way I treat people around me. I'm personal all the time. I feel in that time I'm in a dream, I can't control myself. When I get home, I wake up the next day and say "Oh, really, is that what I did?".

Shaikah then reported that she once was experiencing too much pressure at work after interviewing around 45 students. At this time, she was not treating her students with her usual respect; typically, they saw her as friendly and cooperative all the time; regarding this occasion, she said (Sh.13):

I wasn't responding in a right way if anyone talked to me, they weren't used to see me this way: I always try to smile; talk all the time; make jokes. I mean, suddenly, they saw me in this mood, so, they reacted by moving away from me, indicating, "She isn't safe".

Accordingly, once Shaikah arrived home, she wrote a text to the group in which she said she was sorry. Shaikah explained that she had been experiencing work pressure for the first time; she said (Sh.14):

I apologised. I didn't feel if it was a right way or not. When I got home, I wrote a text to the group saying: "I'm not normally like this. I'm sorry".

Some of her students accepted her apology while others refuted it; (Sh.15):



I just apologised to them and those who didn't reply I understood that they didn't recognise it; some of them said: "We accept anything from you".

Nevertheless, she felt comfortable after performing her apology: she was following the principle of 'do unto others what you would have them do unto you'; Shaikah said (Sh.16):

If I were in their place, I'd not like to have someone treating me this way. So, I guess this was the only reason that I wanted to apologise. Whether they deserved an apology or not, I put myself in their place.

Shaikah reported on her feelings before apologising to her fellow students; she said (Sh.17):

I felt ashamed.

After performing the apology, Shaikah said (Sh.18):

I felt comfortable really, I can sleep now.

In this episode, Shaikah had engaged in forced self-positioning; she had formulated a deliberative intent to explain, personally, her unacceptable behaviour. When Shaikah had recounted the story to her younger sister, she reported a favourable response (Sh.19):

I just told my sister because she's more mature than I. To be honest, I wanted her to judge me – to say to me whether what I had done was right or not; she said, "Good Shaikah, well done".

Shaikah's sister had commended her apology; nevertheless, she strongly advised Shaikah not to behave like this in future, indicating that she might react more strongly if there were further reports of unruly behaviour, but not in such a serious manner as Shahd had told her; Shahd said (Sh.20):

[She] said, "Don't do this again! I'm going to hit you if you do it".

Reflecting on this episode, Shaikah reported that she had worn her sister's t-shirts without permission; she had not apologised as they were sister's; she implied there was no need to say 'sorry' (Sh.22):

No, we are sisters; we have to help each other, you know. I had no time to [prepare to] go shopping, I just took the t-short and ran off.

Subsequently, Shaikah's mother had advised her to return home; wise advice was awaiting her (Sh.23):

"Ok don't do this again, just come home".

In this episode, Shaikah had engaged in deliberative self-positioning; she did not apologise as she believed that there was no need for any apology; after all, they were sisters.

### **Harré positionings that emerged**

#### **Forced self- positioning: Forced intent**

When Shaikah is in a bad mood she could not control her behaviour, she mocked everything and thus made people around her upset. Then, the next day, she realised her mistake and regretted it. Shaikah had engaged in forced self-positioning, making people upset as her temper controlled her.

Shaikah was responding to pressure at work. She was treating her students inconsistently whereas, previously, she invariably had been pleasant. The students felt anxious and tried to avoid her. Shaikah had attempted forced self-positioning, acting unlike her usual self; work pressure had affected her mood and created a wall between her and her students.

#### **Forced other positioning: Power**

Shaikah's mother called her and was angry with her; she warned Shaikah not to steal her sister's t-shirt again and was waiting till Shaikah arrived home. Shaikah

had engaged in forced other-positioning (exertion of power) of others through awaiting punishment of her mother.

#### **Deliberative self-positioning: deliberative intent**

Shaikah had been involved in deliberative self-positioning, as she knew the reason for the threat; she had acted spontaneously in ‘borrowing’, without permission, her sister’s t-shirt; Shaikah did not say sorry to her sister for stealing her t-shirt, as she believed that an apology was unnecessary between sisters. Shaikah had engaged in deliberative self-positioning and had acted with de facto deliberative intent – neglecting to apologise as she expected her sisters to take similar action in sharing clothing; hence, she had applied an unwritten rule, namely, that there was no need for apology between sisters concerning familial situations.

#### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

##### **Repair positioning**

When Shaikah arrived home, she apologised to her students. Shaikah had engaged in repair positioning, as she intended to correct her mistake by saying sorry. Shaikah apologised to her students because she is an ethical person: she behaved according to ethical rules associated with at least three major world religions. It is interesting that her attempt to apologise to her group of students had not received universal acceptance; this suggests that the students did not comprehend this particular ethical behaviour

##### **Concerned positioning**

Shaikah apologised to her friends and justified her mistake when she experienced work pressure for the first time; some of her friends accepted her apology while others refused it. Shaikah had been subjected to concerned positioning by those of her friends who had accepted her apology out of concern for her welfare; others

showed less concern for their friend's situation. Shaikah's sister showed similar concern regarding Shaikah's handling of the apology to the fellow-student group.

There was a thinly-veiled hint of power in her sister's threat that she might 'beat' Shaikah. Shaikah knew the reason for the threat as she had, in the past, made the mistake of borrowing her sister's clothes without first seeking permission. Shaikah's sister had engaged in concerned positioning regarding her situation and property; at the same time, by insisting that Shaikah should take greater concern for her sibling's welfare, the sister had taken the high moral ground on what was right and proper.

### **Redemptive positioning**

Shaikah felt 'ashamed' of her behaviour before apologising to her fellow students. She was blaming herself having realised that what she did was inappropriate. Shaikah had engaged in redemptive positioning: she was remorseful and shamed. Her written apology was an attempt to redeem her self-esteem and to regain her self-respect.

### **Relief positioning**

Shaikah felt 'comfortable' after saying sorry to her students. Shaikah had engaged in relief positioning, feeling relief that she had effectively repaired her mistake; however, she was to discover that this relief positioning had not been entirely successful.

### **Moral positioning**

Malak confirmed that if she cheated on any members of her family, she would tell them immediately. Malak had engaged in a proper positioning as she had values. In other words, truth revealing was a basic principle in her family. Besides, Malak would do what is right action as she follows her Islamic values. Malak had

engaged in a moral positioning as he had shown values which were from a cultural source because she had values. She had absorbed the values of Islam and her mother's teachings very well; which were the source of her moral guidance. Those values were an expression of the golden value of an apology. Besides, Malak had reflected on her apology behaviour and reported that she used to apologise for every single mistake. She had engaged in moral socio-cultural positioning.

### **Episode 3. Treating her mother as a friend**

Shaikah's mother acted as Shaikah's close friend; as a consequence, Shaikah shared all aspects of her life with her mother. Shaikah, however, shared with me that she did not think this was always appropriate; she said (Sh.25):

My mom always tried to be my friend. This was a mistake because sometimes I forgot she was my mother and I treated her as I would a friend.

Shaikah revealed that sometimes she had lost the approval of her mother; (Sh.26):

Sometimes I lose control, my mother doesn't say anything, but she gives me that look [which said] "Shaikah there's a limit".

Shaikah admitted to occasionally displaying inappropriate language and behaviours with her mother; this including what she described as 'losing control'. On occasions, therefore, her mother had responded negatively when this occurred Shaikah had always tried to apologise; she commented (Sh.27):

So, I always try to apologize. I don't know what happens at night; perhaps, all people become kinder. So, at night, I go to her and say "Mama, I'm sorry".

Furthermore, Shaikah reflected more on her behaviour when she became excited; she said (Sh.29):

Sometimes, I used words that I only used with my friends. I got excited in the discussion, and I said words that were inappropriate when speaking with a mother; I felt free with her; sometimes, I may have hit her shoulder. I forget myself sometimes.

Shaikah reported some of the most frequent situations that she had with her mother; she said (Sh.30):

There is screaming and shouting. "Shaikah." Yeeeeeees.?What? Of course, mom doesn't reply. "Mama I'm sorry, I didn't mean it". I forgot. "Shaikah, your father said so", and I reply, "Swear! You are a liar".

Shaikah explained the reason behind making her apology to her mother; she said (Sh.33):

Because if I was a mom, I don't want my daughter to talk to me with such a manner even if I'm dealing with her freely. The same rules I use for an apology.

Shaikah reflected on her apology attitude when she was a teenager, she said (Sh.34):

I didn't get used to apologising to mom, because I was always shy, because it's free; imagine I apologise? Really! (mocking) But when I got older, no Shaikah, no. I became shy, ashamed and too embarrassed, hesitant while I'm on my way to her to apologise and I always try to choose that funny way as I want to lessen embarrassment. So, I jump into her room suddenly, I kiss her, "Mom, I'm sorry!"

Shaikah realised that often her mother showed no reaction, but it did not mean she agreed with Shaikah's position: Shaikah was aware that she had to be careful as often the consequences happened to be negative. Shaikah reflected on her mother's attitude towards her inappropriate behaviour; she said (Sh.35):

If she gives that smile, I feel comfortable – Thanks to Allah, it means she accepted it. But if it was her final loss of temper; if she gives you that angry look, I'll let it pass this time, but next time, be careful!

Inappropriate, loud language was a case in point; when Shaikah yelled, her mother would not reply; when she disagreed strongly with her mother, Shaikah would remonstrate, inappropriately; then, invariably, Shaikah apologised.

Just as she was graduating from high school Shaikah had seen some advantages in regularly apologising; it was a change in behaviour that she shared with her friends in the hope that they might learn and benefit. One particular

friend, Nada, had observed, however, that apology to her mother had not always acted in Shaikah's favour. Nada warned Shaikah to be aware of her behaviour with her mother, as the consequences might not turn out well every time. Nada recounted a memorable moment when Nada's mother had slapped her: Nada had reacted gracefully; Nada, Shatha reported, had said (Sh.38):

If your mom treated you this way, it doesn't mean that it is alright, you have to be careful. Sometimes I tried to come to my mom and kiss her and tell her, "Mom I love you", but she slapped me on the face.

Shaikah confirmed that Nada's mother would have felt so much pain after the slap. Nada's 'slap story' resonated with Shaikah; she recounted her feelings of gratitude towards Nada, saying (Sh.40):

[Nada] is the person who changed me the most and I pray to her until this day because she was the reason for the turning point in my life, in my relationship with mom.

While Shaikah was narrating this episode, she was nervous; she was about to cry as she completed it. Shaikah was particularly touched when Nada had told her that she had kissed her mother's hand after she had slapped her.

In this episode, Shaikah had engaged in repair and ethical positioning as she continued apologising to her mother to repair her disrespectful behaviour and that she wanted to be a good example to any daughters that she might have in the future.

### **Types of Harré positioning that emerged**

#### **Forced positioning of others: Power**

Shaikah reflected on her mother's reaction towards her irrational behavior; her mother ignored her mistakes, but that did not mean it was appropriate. Shaikah had, tentatively and carelessly, engaged in forced other-positioning; at heart, she was seeking her mother's approval. Her mother, in refusing to accept an apology, had made Shaikah feel nervous.

This response was a subtle use of forced other-positioning of Shaikah: she was subject to her mother's power. Shaikah's mother applied controlled forced other-positioning by exercising power on an irregular basis, and by not accepting an apology every time.

### **Forced self-positioning: Forced intent**

Shaikah had engaged, regularly, in forced self-positioning following the occasions when she had failed to control her spoken- and body-language; her mother, on the other hand, had countered with deliberative self-positioning with the deliberative intent of remaining patient. This clash between Shaikah and her mother represents the comparative notions of mistaken attempts of exerting power: her mother had succeeded by demonstrating patience; overall, these exchanges had provided Shaikah with a life-lesson.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning**

#### **Concerned positioning**

Shaikah's mother had acted, out of concerned positioning, like a friend to her daughters – and particularly towards Shaikah. Shaikah, however, had thought this was a wrong step from her mother as she sometimes forgot that she was her mother and dealt with her as a friend. Shaikah had engaged in concerned positioning as she saw this as a mistake as it would cause unintentional disrespect to her mother. On the other hand, there was a more significant concern on the part of Shaikah's mother who saw a need to have Shaikah control her temper more effectively: it would appear that her mother had shown wise vision.

#### **Repair positioning**

Shaikah always tried to apologise for losing control. Shaikah had been unsuccessful in having her mother accept some of her apologies: her mother had



remained silent; however, with a glance, she had shown her disapproval of the behaviour. Shaikah, more and more, had immersed herself in repair positioning, trying hard to correct her mistake through apology – rather than changing her behaviour. Thanks to the timely intervention of a friend, Shaikah realised that she needed to behave better – both morally and ethically.

**Redemptive positioning**

Shaikah reflected on the frequent disruptive interchanges she had with her mother; she recalled that she was always running about ‘screaming’ and ‘shouting’. Shaikah had tried to recover this situation – using redemptive positioning. She regularly offered instant apologies for the irrational mistakes she had made. Losing control resulted in Shaikah offending her mother; this, in turn, led her mother to refuse Shaikah’s apology. It is a credit to the mother and the friend, Nada, that they attempted this redemptive positioning.

**Ethical positioning**

Shaikah apologized to her mother. Her mother, driven by ethical principles, wanted to set a good example for her daughter. Ultimately, Shaikah had engaged in ethical positioning, realising that both respectful behaviour and respectful apologising to a mother is an essential part of a successful mother and daughter relationship.

**Moral positioning**

Shaikah had reflected on her apology behavior from the time when she was a teenager. Initially, she did not regard apology as being important; however, as she grew up, she realised its significance. Shaikah had engaged in personal moral positioning; she realized the importance of apology, which revealed a significant distinction: immaturity vs. maturity. Immaturity led to Shaikah offering mocking apologies; in maturity, she took the issue of apology seriously.

**Concerned positioning**

Shaikah reflected on her friend, Nada's story; this proved to be a turning point in her life. Nada called Shaikah and warned her to control her behavior towards her mother, pointing out that the consequences would not turn out to be positive on every occasion they conflicted. Nada had realised this in the slapping incident: Nada had avoided conflict with her mother by reacting gracefully.

Consequently, Shaikah engaged in concerned positioning, trying not to repeat Nada's mistake; in controlling her responses, she would avoid upsetting both her mother and herself. Shaikah had been shocked by Nada's story; it awakened her to the need for positive rather than negative responses – Nada's love and respect for *her* mother had led her to react calmly and respectfully. Shaikah needed to show respect for others and not just for herself – beginning, especially with her mother.

**Harré and New Socio-cultural positionings**

In general, Shaikah used the four types of Harré positionings through her narrative: self, other, forced and deliberative. She also employed some New Socio-cultural positioning throughout her narrative: repair, relief, redemptive, moral, ethical and concerned positioning, a summary of which is contained in Table 7.2.

In the first episode, Shaikah had engaged in self- and other-deliberative and forced positioning, as well as concerned positioning, as she felt that she behaved unfairly towards her best friend; thus, she had to make constant apologies to repair her mistake and to gain back the friendship. Deliberative self-positioning also emerged in the second episode, together with redemptive positioning: Shaikah had to apologise to her students for her inappropriate behaviour.

In the third episode, Shaikah had engaged in repair, ethical, and redemptive type positioning as she wanted to gain her mother's satisfaction through constant

apologies, so she could repair her disrespectful behavior with her mother - as she also did not want her daughter to continue her ill-mannered behavior.

### Metaphors and selves

The dominant metaphor that I observed in Shaikah's narrative was *The Apologetic Woman*. Throughout her narrative, she had been behaving badly and disrespectfully to adults and children; thus, she had to apologise to both groups to repair her mistakes.

*The Apologetic Woman* has two selves: Shaikah, the *Kind-hearted Woman*, and Shaikah, the *Repentant Young Woman*. Throughout her narrative she showed concern for others; when she erred, she felt guilty for her mistakes and tried to correct them.

I put myself in their place. Whether or not they deserve an apology, I'd not like it that someone treated the way that I handled them.

This self is also evident when she endured considerable pressure to win back her friend's trust back (Sh.06).

### Concluding comments

In this chapter, I have provided my findings and a detailed analysis of the outcomes from the three narratives narrated by the three Saudi participants in Saudi.

In the next chapter, I provide a full details synthesis that displays the distinction between the types of Harré and socio-cultural positionings that emerged from the narrative of each participant in addition to the unique metaphors that identify each individual in the study.

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## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Harré and New Socio-cultural Positionings: A Synthesis**

I have four objectives in this chapter, as follows. Firstly, to distinguish between the types of Harré positioning that emerged, and to identify any significant Harré positioning findings associated with each group about their culture and location. Secondly, to distinguish between the types of ‘emerging’ New Socio-cultural positionings and to identify New Socio-cultural positioning findings associated with each group about their culture and location. Thirdly, to relate the Harré and New Socio-cultural positioning findings to a distinctive, unique metaphor that identifies individual self or selves. Fourthly, to link each self or selves to a specific culture and location.

#### **Harré positionings: Similarities and differences**

The Saudi and Australian women in Saudi and Australia employed all four types of Harré positionings in their apology behavior. The four groups utilised deliberative and forced self- and other-positioning to a greater or lesser extent. I discriminated between these by using criteria to determine the categories, as shown in Table 8.1. The criteria were provided by determining the inclusive

Table 8.1 Inclusive quartile range of Harré positioning elements for all groups

Harré positionings	Saudis in Saudi	Australians in Saudi	Saudis in Australia	Australians in Australia
	Frequency of occurrence			
<b>Deliberative self-positioning</b> <i>Deliberative intent</i>	12	27	12	35
Inclusive quartile range rating	19.5	29.0	19.5	35.0
Quartile range	Q2	Q3	Q2	Q4
Evaluation	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW	HIGH
	Frequency of occurrence			
<b>Deliberative other-positioning</b> <i>Parity</i>	2	12	4	23
Inclusive quartile range rating	3.5	14.8	8	23.0
Quartile range	Q1	Q3	Q2	Q4
Evaluation	VERY LOW	MEDIUM	LOW	HIGH
	Frequency of occurrence			
<b>Forced self-positioning</b> <i>Forced intent</i>	6	8	3	4
Inclusive quartile range rating	6.0	25.0	3	5.0
Quartile range	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Evaluation	MEDIUM	HIGH	VERY LOW	LOW
	Frequency of occurrence			
<b>Forced other-positioning</b> <i>Power</i>	18	2	10	7
Inclusive quartile range rating	18.0	5.8	12	8.5
Quartile range	Q4	Q1	Q3	Q2
Evaluation	HIGH	VERY LOW	MEDIUM	LOW

KEY

Inclusive Quartile Range	Evaluation
Q4	HIGH
Q3	MEDIUM
Q2	LOW
Q1	VERY LOW

quartile range ratings for the four Harré positionings encountered in all of the narratives: Saudis and Australians in Saudi; Saudis and Australians in Australia. Using the four sets of frequencies of occurrence, and an Excel spreadsheet with the statistical function QUARTILE INC, I produced the range for each quartile across each of the four Harré positionings and established related quartile ranges.

Table 8.1 includes four colour-coded categories of inclusive interquartile rank responses (Q1:0-25%; Q2:26-50%, the mean value; Q3: 51-75%; Q4: 76-100%, the highest value). The numbers refer to the frequency of occurrence of each set of responses and results in establishment of the quartile range. The quartile ranges provided consistent criteria for an evaluation of four types of Harré positionings for each of the four groups of participants. The evaluation range was from ‘very low’(Q1), ‘low’ (Q2), ‘medium’ (Q3), to ‘high’ (Q4). The colour-code provides an easy way to distinguish between the four types of Harré positionings and for each of the four groups of participants.

### **Similarities and differences across and between groups**

Saudis in Saudi and Australia made *low* or *very low* use of both deliberative self- and other-positioning. They made *medium* use of forced self-positioning in Saudi, and *high* or *medium* use of forced other-positioning in both Saudi and Australia. There was an emphasis on both forced intent and power in these instances.

In direct contrast, Australians in Saudi and Australia made *medium* or *high* use of both deliberative self- and other-positioning. Like the Saudis, they made *high* use of forced self-positioning in Saudi; however, they made *low* or *very low* use of forced other-positioning in both Saudi and Australia. There was an emphasis on forced intent in Saudi, but virtually no emphasis on the use of power by the Australians.

Both Saudis and Australians showed differences in forced self-positioning. Saudis in Saudi made medium use of forced self-positioning in Saudi, but very

low use in Australia. Australians showed a similar variation: high use of forced self-positioning in Saudi, but low use in Australia. For both Saudis and Australians, forced intent appears very much more likely to occur in Saudi than it does in Australia.

### **Deliberative self- and other-positioning: Deliberative intent and parity**

My evaluation of Saudis' use of deliberative self- and other-positioning in Saudi was *low* in deliberative intent, and *very low* in parity in Saudi; there was *low* use of both deliberative intent and parity in Australia. In comparison, my evaluation of Australians' use of deliberative self- and other-positioning in both Saudi and Australia shows there was *medium* use of both deliberative intent and parity in Saudi; there was a *high* use of both deliberative intent and parity (Q4) evident in Australia.

There was a difference in deliberative positioning when it came to 'saying sorry' amongst the two groups. Saudis tended to avoid deliberation in their pragmatic speech acts; Australians placed high emphasis on deliberation in theirs.

### **Deliberative other-positioning: Parity**

In Australia, Australians made dominant use of deliberative other-positioning; in Saudi, Australians also made frequent use deliberative other-positioning. When 'saying sorry', Australians considered the impact of their apology behaviour on others: they sought to be equals, both in status and value; thus, they found parity<sup>18</sup>. By comparison, Saudis in both Saudi and Australia made low use deliberative other-positioning; in other words, they appeared not to be concerned with finding parity with others when observing Australian cultural norms.

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<sup>18</sup> Parity = 'Equality, as in amount, status, or value'. Accessed at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/parity>, 12 May, 2017.

There was a striking difference between the two cultural groups: in their apology behaviour, the Australians were concerned with the feelings of others and hence they sought parity; on the other hand, the Saudis did not take this into serious consideration. My perception is that, when ‘saying sorry’, finding parity in Saudi is not a culturally based behaviour.

### **Deliberative self-positioning**

Australians made slightly differential use of deliberative self-positioning: medium use in Saudi; high use in Australia. It is apparent that the Australians were more likely to act with deliberative intent in their apology behaviour; however, they were more confident and assured in Australia than in Saudi, and this reflects in the emerging selves described later in this chapter.

In comparison, Saudis in both Saudi and Australia made low use of deliberative self-positioning, suggesting that their apology behaviour concerning deliberative intent lacks some of the confidence to act as forcefully as did the Australians. Perhaps they were less confident and assured than the Australians in this study.

### **Forced self- and other-positioning: Forced intent and parity**

In my evaluation, I observed a sharp reversal of socio-psychological positioning between the two groups when it came to forced self- and other-positioning. My evaluation of Saudis’ use of forced self- and other-positioning in Saudi was *medium* in forced intent and *high* in power; there was *low* use of both deliberative intent and parity in Australia.

On the other hand, my evaluation of Australians’ use of self- and other-positioning in both Saudi and Australia was a *medium* use of both deliberative intent and parity in Saudi; there was a *high* use of both deliberative intent and parity in Australia.



There was a difference in forced socio-psychological positioning when it came to ‘saying sorry’ amongst the two groups. Saudis appeared to favour the exercise of power over others or, at least, to respond to the forced intent of others in their pragmatic speech acts. Australians in Saudi, however, reacted very strongly to forced intent in their pragmatic speech acts – more strongly, in fact than did Saudis. Australians in both Saudi and Australia experienced a relatively low impact of forced self- and other-positioning: theirs was a uniformly low response to forced self- and other-deliberation.

### **Forced self-positioning: Forced intent**

Saudis and Australians in Saudi were frequently subject to forced self-positioning: they realised, on reflection, that they needed to respond in a particular way. Their apology behaviour was subject to forced intents.

Quite remarkably, neither Saudis nor Australians in Australia responded to this type of positioning to any great extent: forced intent was seldom experienced. The data suggest that this was a cultural effect: pressure to conform as a result of forced intent is high in Saudi; on the other hand, it is low in Australia. Australian culture is sometimes represented as being ‘casual’; it is reflected in the Australian slang phrase, ‘She’ll be right, mate’<sup>19</sup>. In everyday social interactions, Australians prefer, openly, not to force their views on others.

Saudis, on the other hand, are more formal and have culturally adapted to avoid confrontation; consequently, Saudis in Saudi have been conditioned to adjusting to forced intent and so are comfortable in frequently responding to forced self-positioning; somewhat surprisingly, despite the prevalence of the Australian attitude of ‘She’ll be right, mate’, the Australians in Saudi appeared to conform with the Saudis in Saudi in responding to forced self-positioning.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘She’ll be right, mate’. An Australian colloquial (slang) phrase meaning, ‘It will be okay’, Accessed at <https://www.australianexplorer.com/slang/phrases.htm>, Tuesday, May 30, 2017

The striking finding is that Saudis in Australia reflect the same attitude to forced self-positioning as do Australians in Australia: both groups indicated that in their apology behaviour they seldom responded to forced intent.

### **Forced other-positioning: Power**

Saudis in both Saudi and Australia were frequently subject to forced other-positioning. My inference is that their apology behaviour was subject to the control of others: these two groups were frequently subject to the power of others to conform. Surprisingly, the Australians in both Australia and Saudi were seldom subject to such an application of power; this suggests that exercise of power is a distinctively noticeable trait of Saudis' apology behaviour.

### **Saying sorry in Saudi**

In this section, I compare and contrast the Harré positioning elements and the New Socio-cultural positioning elements of apology behaviour ('saying sorry') of Saudis and Australians interviewed in Saudi. Tables of comparative behaviours are presented and discussed in the succeeding sub-sections; finally, I compare the two sets of responses from the two groups.

### **Harré's positioning in 'saying sorry' in Saudi**

There were differences in the use of Harré positionings of apology behaviours by the Saudis and Australians in Saudi. I have summarised my evaluation of these, using quartile ranges, in Table 8.1. The quartile ranges for self- and other-positioning were low (Q2) to very low (Q1) for Saudis, while for Australians they were uniformly medium (Q3); the quartile ranges for forced self-positioning were medium (Q3) for Saudis and high (Q4) for Australians. The quartile ranges for forced other-positioning were strikingly different: high for Saudis (Q4), and very

low for Australians (Q1).<sup>20</sup> Overall, the main difference between the two groups was that the Australians were much more deliberative than forced in their apology behaviours; the Saudis were more evident in their use of forced other-positioning/power and less in their deliberative positionings.

### **Saudi group responses in Saudi**

The Saudi group had engaged in all types of Harré positioning; the most frequent type was ‘forced other-positioning’; this dominant positioning that they employed in their apology behaviour exemplified power, that is, it was concerned with control over others. I evaluated this behaviour as high. The Saudis in Saudi used ‘forced self-positioning’ to a lesser extent; I evaluated this category as medium evaluated their use of deliberative intent in their apology behaviour as low they seldom sought to exercise parity, and I evaluated this behaviour as very low.

Overall, the apology behaviour of the Saudis in Saudi involved the use of Harré’s forced other-positioning: this was used to exert power over others. There was little indication of any attempt to engage in deliberation of any kind – both with ‘self’, and ‘between others’.

### **Australian responses in Saudi Arabia**

The Australians in Saudi, similar to the Saudis, engaged in all four types of Harré positioning; however, the weightings of their use were noticeably different. The dominant apology behaviours of the Australians in Saudi were deliberative self- and other-positioning associated with deliberative intent and parity. There was a similar contrast in the use of forced self-positioning: high for Australians; low for Saudis. Unlike the Saudis, who focused predominantly on power over others, the

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<sup>20</sup> **Note:** These evaluations relate to the quartile ratings for the entire population – Saudis in Australia and Saudi, and Saudis and Australians in Australian – as shown in Table 8.1.

Australians' positioning focus was on deliberation: deliberative self-intent and parity with others; there was a very low exercising of power over others.

### **Harré positionings in Saudi: Cultural comparison**

The Australian and Saudi use of Harré positionings was quite dissimilar. While the frequency of use of power had dominated the Saudis' apology positioning, deliberative intent had dominated that of the Australians. Both Saudis (low) and Australians (high) showed some disposition to forced self-positioning.

The narratives revealed striking differences between the behaviours of the two groups: Saudis were strongly influenced by concerns relating to power (forced other-positioning); Australians were concerned with deliberative intent and parity (deliberative self- and other positioning).

### **Saying sorry in Australia**

In this section, I compare and contrast the Harré positioning elements, and the New Socio-cultural positioning elements of apology behaviour ('saying sorry') of Saudis and Australians interviewed in Australia. I present tables of comparative behaviours in the succeeding sub-sections (see Tables 8.2, and 8.3). I have also included a comparison of the two sets of responses from the two groups – those in Saudi and those in Australia.

### **Harré positionings in Australia: Cultural comparison**

I found a distinctive difference in the use of Harré positionings of apology behaviours by the Saudis and Australians in Australia. The quartile ranges for self- and other-positioning were low for Saudis (Q2), while for Australians they were high (Q4); the quartile ranges for forced other-positioning were medium (Q3) for

Saudis and low (Q4) for Australians. The quartile ranges for forced self-positioning were similar: very low for Saudis (Q1), and low for Australians (Q2).<sup>21</sup>

Overall, the main difference between the two groups was that the Australians were much more deliberative than forced in their apology behaviours; the Saudis were more evident in their use of forced other-positioning/power and less in their deliberative positionings.

### **Harré positioning dimension in ‘saying sorry’ in Australia**

I have presented a table evaluating the use of Harré positioning elements by Saudis and by Australians living in Australia in Table 8.1. I include separate summaries of the group responses for the Saudis and Australians.

#### **Saudi responses in Australia**

To a greater or lesser extent, the Saudi group in Australia engaged in all four types of Harré positioning. Forced other-positioning (the exertion of power) was the most evident, with use evaluated as medium; it was different than self-positioning (forced intent) evaluated as very low. Also, deliberative self-positioning, and deliberative other-positioning once again indicated the lack of deliberation in ‘saying sorry’. Overall, the apology behaviour exhibited two paired-sets; the evident set of self- and other-behaviour: the first, the moderate to very low influence of forced intent and power, the second, the diminished influence of deliberative intent and parity on apology behaviour.

#### **Australian responses in Australia**

For the Australians in Australia, once again the dominant positionings were deliberative other-positioning/parity and deliberative self-positioning/deliberative

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<sup>21</sup> **Note:** These evaluations relate to the quartile ratings for the entire population – Saudis in Australia and Saudi, and Saudis and Australians in Australian – as shown in Table 8.1.

intent. There was also a lesser incidence of forced self-positioning/forced intent and forced other-positioning/power than evidenced by their compatriots in Saudi.

Overall, parity and deliberative intent were the most evidently used positionings in this group's apology behaviour.

## **New Socio-cultural positionings**

In this section, I compare and contrast the New Socio-cultural positioning elements that emerged from the analysis of the narratives of all participants in my research: Saudis and Australians in Saudi; Saudis and Australians in Australia. I present a summary of the type, frequency and quartile range of each of these elements in Table 8.2. Firstly, from the whole group, taking a 'helicopter view'. Secondly, I make comparisons between the groups and their responses: first, those interviewed in Saudi; second, those in Australia to compare social and geographical similarities and differences.

As for the Harré positioning analysis presented as Table 8.1, I used an Excel worksheet with the statistical function `QUARTILE INC` to establish, in quartiles, the quartile ranges from the frequencies ('scores') each of the nine positionings. I used the four quartile ranges to provide the evaluation range, from low to high, for each element; similarly, I used the same colour-code to distinguish between the four evaluation types, from low to high, to determine the inclusive quartile ranking of the frequencies, or 'score', of each of the nine elements identified as New Socio-cultural positioning elements across all of the four groups. The result, contained in Table 8.2, was a colourful portrayal ranging from 'high to 'not used'.

Table 8.2 Quartile rating of New Socio-cultural positioning elements

New Socio-cultural Positioning	Saudis in Saudi	Australians in Saudi	Saudis in Australia	Australians in Australia
<b>Concerned: score</b>	7	1	2	4
Interquartile range ranking	7	1	1.75	3
Quartile range	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
EVALUATION	HIGH	VERY LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
<b>Ethical: score</b>	3	4	7	1
Interquartile range ranking	3.5	4.75	7	1
Quartile range	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
EVALUATION	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	VERY LOW
<b>Moral: score</b>	9	0	9	4
Interquartile range ranking	9	NR	9	4
Quartile range	Q4	NR	Q4	Q2
EVALUATION	HIGH	NR	HIGH	LOW
<b>Reflective: score</b>	1	3	3	2
Interquartile range ranking	1	3	3	1.75
Quartile range	Q1	Q4	Q4	Q2
EVALUATION	VERY LOW	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
<b>Redemptive: score</b>	11	0	6	0
Interquartile range ranking	11	NR	4.5	NR
Quartile range	Q4	NR	Q3	NR
EVALUATION	HIGH	NR	MEDIUM	NR
<b>Relief: score</b>	1	2	1	4
Interquartile range ranking	1	2	1	4
Quartile range	Q1	Q2	Q1	Q4
EVALUATION	VERY LOW	LOW	VERY LOW	HIGH
<b>Repair: score</b>	4	5	3	1
Interquartile range ranking	3.5	5	2	1
Quartile range	Q3	Q4	Q2	Q1
EVALUATION	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW	LOW
<b>Self-interest: score</b>	2	0	2	1
Interquartile range ranking	2	NR	2	1
Quartile range	Q4	NR	Q4	Q2
EVALUATION	HIGH	NR	HIGH	VERY LOW
<b>Emotional: score</b>	0	1	2	0
Interquartile range ranking	NR	1	2	0
Quartile range	NR	Q1	Q4	0
EVALUATION	NR	VERY LOW	HIGH	NR

## KEY

Inclusive Quartile Range	Evaluation
Q4	HIGH
Q3	MEDIUM
Q2	LOW
Q1	VERY LOW
Nil response	NR

## **New Socio-cultural positioning in Saudi and Australia**

In terms of use of new positionings in Saudi and Australia, the Saudi and Australian women employed diverse types of positionings in their apology behavior.

### **Ethical positioning**

Noticeably, ethical positioning was in highest use by Saudis in Saudi, and medium by Australians in Australia. By comparison, this positioning was seldom used in the apology behaviour of Saudis in Australia and Australians in Saudi.

### **Moral positioning**

While moral positioning was frequent in the apology behaviour of the Saudis in both Saudi and Australia; it was interestingly used in a low rate by the Australians in Australia and was not considered by Australians in Saudi. This indicates that when ‘saying sorry’, Saudis and regardless of the context considered the importance of morals in their apology behaviour more than the Australians.

### **Redemptive positioning**

While redemptive positioning was high in use in the Saudis’ apology in Saudi and medium in the Saudis in Australia, it was remarkably not considered to be of any importance in the Australian’s apology in both Saudi and Australia. This reflects that the Saudis, in their ‘saying sorry’, acted to save or be saved from sin, error, or evil unlike the Australians.



**Reflective positioning**

Reflective positioning was the highest in use by the Australians in Saudi and Saudis in Australia. By comparison, it was seldom in use in the apology of Saudis in Saudi and Australians in Australia.

**Relief positioning**

While this category had high use by Australians in Australia, surprisingly, this category had low and very low usage by the remaining three groups, Saudis in both Saudi and Australia, and Australians in Saudi. Of the four groups involved, Australians in Australia made the highest use of relief positioning in their apology behaviour.

**Repair positioning**

This category was the highest in use in by Australians in Saudi and medium in use by Saudis in Saudi. Conversely, this category was seldom in use by Australians in Australia and Saudis in Australia.

**Self-interest positioning**

While this category had high use by Saudis in both Saudi and Australia, it had very low use by Australians in Australia. Surprisingly, this category was not used by Australians in Saudi. This shows that all the Saudi and Australian groups except for the Australians in Saudi had acted in their own interest to save their faces but not to an obvious extent.

**Emotional positioning**

This category is amazingly had high use by Saudis in Australia and very low by Australians in Saudi. Strikingly, it was not used by Saudis in Saudi nor by Australians in Australia.

**Similarities across and between groups**

The colour-coding enabled me to see, at a glance, where there were similarities across groups. Between Saudis in Saudi and Australia, the evaluation showed that the use of moral and self-interest positioning was high in both Saudi and Australia; a combination of high or medium use of redemptive positioning added a further possible positioning pair. Between Australians in Saudi and Australia, there were no positionings that met these two evaluation criteria. Overall, five elements rated as high or medium amongst Saudis in Saudi; there were two elements that ranked as high or medium amongst Australians.

Between Saudis in Saudi and Australian, there was a similarity of a low or very low evaluation of relief positioning, only. For Australians in Saudi and Australia, there was no similarity in any low or very low evaluation; in the case of redemptive positioning, there was no response from either Australian group.

**Difference within and across groups**

There were differences evident in evaluation between Saudis in Saudi and Australia – between high to medium, and low to very low evaluations. These occurred in reflective, and repair positioning. No comparison was possible between emotional positioning because of no response; overall, this positioning had a very low response rate. Between Australians, there were more differences evident – high to medium, and low to very low: these occurred in concerned,

ethical, reflective, and relief positioning. The very small response in self-interest and emotional positioning made comparison unviable.

Striking differences are evident between the Saudi and Australian groups between the evaluation categories of high/medium and low/very low. For Saudis, these occurred in concerned, moral, and redemptive positioning; for Australians, these happened in ethical, reflective, relief, and repair positioning. Once again, the response rates were too low to include an analysis of self-interest and emotional positioning. No positioning element that appeared to be common to all groups.

### **New Socio-cultural positioning in Saudi**

In this section, I compare and contrast the New Socio-cultural positioning elements that emerged from the analysis of the narratives of participants in Saudi. A summary of the type and frequency of the elements identified is contained in Table 8.2.

#### **Saudi responses in Saudi**

The Saudis used several types of New Socio-cultural positionings in quite a distinctive manner. The most frequently used were ‘redemptive’, ‘moral’, ‘self-interest’ and ‘concerned’ positionings; they moderately used ‘repair’ positioning. Their use of New Socio-cultural’ positionings was low in ‘ethical’ and very low in ‘reflective’ and ‘relief’ positionings.

#### **Australian responses in Saudi**

The Australians used diverse types of New Socio-cultural positionings. They made distinctive high use of ‘reflective’ and ‘repair’ positionings; medium use of ‘ethical’ positioning; low use of ‘relief’; and very low use of ‘concerned’ and ‘emotional’ positionings.

### **Comparison of New Socio-cultural positionings in Saudi**

Saudis and Australians used New Socio-cultural positionings in diverse in ways; however, the frequency of their use was noticeably different. They did not share any similar use of the New positionings. There were striking differences in both frequency and type: the Saudis exhibited ‘concerned’, ‘moral’, and ‘redemptive’ positioning at a high level; of these three, only one Australian exhibited ‘concerned’ – and that on a single occasion. Of the remaining types, the use was low, bordering to moderate; there were both similarities and differences in the types used in both groups.

In their narratives, overall, it was striking that Saudis used a broader range of my New Socio-cultural positionings than did the Australians, suggesting that in ‘saying sorry’ the Saudis, culturally were used to employing such apology behaviour, whereas Australians’ were limited in both range and extent of cultural apology behaviour. A cultural divide may exist in the approach of the two groups to this particular pragmatic use of language.

### **New Socio-cultural dimensions in ‘Saying Sorry’ in Australia**

In this section, I compare and contrast the New Socio-cultural positioning elements that emerged from the analysis of the narratives of participants in Australia. A summary of the type and frequency of the elements identified is contained in Table 8.2.

#### **Saudi responses in Australia,**

The Saudis in Australia used all of the types of New Socio-cultural positionings – and frequently at high rate. Those used most frequently at a high rate were ‘ethical’, ‘moral’, ‘reflective’, ‘self-interest’ and ‘emotional’ positioning; relatively, I rated this use as high; they made medium use of ‘redemptive’

positioning. I rated the remaining New Socio-cultural positionings as either low; in ‘concerned’ positioning; or, as very low in ‘relief’ positioning. Compared with the use of New Socio-cultural positionings, there was a noticeably higher use of these apology behaviours by Saudis in Australia than Saudis in Saudi.

### **Australian responses in Australia**

The apology behavior of the Australians in Australia was noticeably different: the Australians tended to use fewer New Socio-cultural positionings, and the frequency of their use was lower than that of the Saudis. The Australians made ‘high’ use of ‘relief’ positioning, and ‘moderate’ use of ‘concerned’ positioning. They made ‘low’ use of ‘moral’, ‘repair’ and ‘reflective’ positionings, and ‘very low’ use of ‘ethical’ and ‘self-interest’ positionings. They made no use of ‘redemptive’ or ‘emotional’ positionings.

### **Comparison of the New Socio-cultural positionings in Australia**

The Saudis’ and Australians’ use of New Socio-cultural positionings was quite dissimilar. While the Saudis used all of the New positionings, the Australians employed only a few; the Saudis in Australia used the New positionings to a much greater extent than did the Australians.

While, there remained some obvious differences in both frequency and type between the groups in Australia, the frequencies of New Socio-cultural positioning were higher across both groups than for those encountered in Saudi. It emerged that the Saudis in Australia were strikingly more conscious of using New Socio-cultural positionings than were the Australians in Australia.

## Pragmatics: Positioning, Metaphors and Selves

In this part of the chapter, I provide a ‘helicopter view’ of the pragmatic positioning world and the defining metaphors for each of the individuals comprising the four groups of women engaged in my study. I have summarised the outcomes from my research in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3 Metaphors and selves of all participants**

Participants	Metaphors	Self/Selves
<b>Yamam</b>	The Proud Orphan	The fragile ‘orphan child’ The maturing young woman The repentant young woman
<b>Malak</b>	The Virtuous Daughter	The moral young woman: A young woman who upholds high values subscribes to high ethical standards all of which are underpinned by her Islamic heritage The strong young woman
<b>Shaikah</b>	The Apologiser	The repentant young woman The kind-hearted woman
<b>Laura</b>	The Peace Seeker	The sensitive woman The delicate woman The powerful woman
<b>Becky</b>	The Moral Woman	The empathetic woman The emotional woman
<b>Kaity</b>	The Peace Seeker	The wise woman
<b>Alya</b>	The Fragile Woman	The sensitive woman
<b>Zahra</b>	The Super-Strong Woman	The emotional woman The stubborn woman The sensitive woman
<b>Renad</b>	The Moral Woman	The patient woman
<b>Britney</b>	The Disempowered Woman	The sympathetic woman The grateful woman
<b>Kara</b>	The Apologiser	The tolerant woman The kind-hearted woman
<b>Zilda</b>	The Moral Woman	The delicate woman

### KEY

Location	Nationality
Saudi	Saudi
	Australia
Australia	Saudi
	Australian

I draw together a series of ‘threads’ that will exemplify pragmatics in action via the New positionings exhibited and the metaphors that emerge. Davies and Harré (1990 48) refer to such metaphors as detecting the ‘positioning’ of selves:

...in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines.

New positioning provides an understanding of selfhood: each participant will have a personal identity accompanied by a multiplicity of selves which emerged from the narrative.

In this section, I provide a ‘helicopter view’ of the pragmatic positioning world and the defining metaphors for each of the individuals comprising the four groups of women engaged in my study. I draw together a series of ‘threads’ that will exemplify pragmatics in action via the positionings exhibited and the individual metaphors that emerge. Finally, I identify the Harré and New Socio-cultural positionings associated with the apology behaviour of the four groups of participants. As a consequence, I have identified at least one single strong metaphor for each participant.

### **Saudis in Saudi: Yamam, Malak and Shaikah**

#### **Yamam’s positionings and defining metaphor**

In Yamam’s narrative, the Harré positioning that dominated her pragmatic apology world was forced other-positioning in which, initially, she exercised power over others; this defied normally-accepted teacher-student power relationships (Y.08):

[The teacher] told me that I had to apologise. This apologising is something I wouldn’t do ever. So, I was stubborn. I wouldn’t go and tell her sorry.

Yamam was assertive, strong and defiant. Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Yamam eventually succumbed, reluctantly, to concerned and redemptive positioning that emerged as Yamam realised, with growing maturity,

that her earlier behaviour had been unacceptable; it had been a case of ‘youthful indiscretion’ for which she did indeed feel sorry. From my perspective, her assertiveness and inner strength as a defiant orphan, moderated by socio-cultural influences as she responded to caring others, led Yamam to emerge as a *Proud Orphan*.

This emergent metaphor revealed the steady impact of a changed Saudi culture within a new environment. She enrolled in a new school in an unfamiliar city; she had a growing awareness of belonging to a caring community; she could accept her redemption without diminishing her self-pride by saying sorry; thus, she was able to show some selves that involved both deliberative self- and other-positioning.

#### **The multiple selves of the Proud Orphan**

The emergent ‘Proud Orphan’ represents a person who gained parity with others through the offering and the accepting of apologies. This metaphor shows how Yamam controlled her apology situation. She was a Proud Orphan who struggled not to lose her pride by performing apology. Distinctive other selves were revealed later in the narrative: ‘the repentant self’ for example, made her realise the importance of apology in social interactions; the concerned self showed a growing awareness of the needs of others. It is surprising that the various selves arose from this proud orphan child; initially, so proud while being so fragile; in the process, emerging as a caring, young woman, behaving as a most moral person.

In short, Yamam’s apology behaviour is a mixture of four significant elements; a confession of inappropriate behaviour, a maintenance of pride in self; a fear of face loss; ingrained stubbornness, arising from her fight for survival as an orphan constitute an entity of an orphan’s pride. These constitute the elements of an orphan’s pride: pride in protecting her fragile self against a hostile society. She was empowered, declaring ‘I’m undefeatable! No one can break my soul’. Ultimately, however, Yamam yielded to two influences. The first was a cultural



concern that others felt for her welfare and for the need to restore good family relations that, earlier, she had rejected. The second was a religious code expectation that she would benefit both from following a strong moral code of ‘good behaviour’, and that she should accept the forced offers for her redemption.

### **Shaikah’s positionings and defining metaphor**

‘Power’ dominated Shaikah’s narrative; in this regard her apology behaviour was very similar to that of Yamam’s. In Shaikah’s narrative, forced other- and self-positioning were the dominant Harré positionings: she had both exerted, and experienced an exertion of power over her; also, she accepted forced intent to change – mostly, as a result of her uncontrolled behaviour (Sh.12):

When I’m not in the mood, I make fun of everything – whether [it is] worthy or nonsense, and this makes people around me, as well as me, nervous.

While Shaikah at times appeared to be irrational and disrespectful; essentially, she was a kind-hearted young woman.

About New Socio-cultural positionings, Shaikah ultimately had demonstrated ‘concerned’ and ‘repair’ positioning that emerged as she attempted both to satisfy her mother and to please her friend through reparative apology. Her earlier uncontrolled and often irrational behaviour and disrespectfulness that ultimately had been moderated by socio-cultural influences led her to apologise to repair her mistakes. Shaikah had emerged as *The Apologiser*.

### **The multiple selves of The Apologiser**

The emergence of *The Apologiser* represents a person able to act with deliberative intent thus maintaining her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, she gained parity with others through her offering of heartfelt apologies; in so doing, she had effectively been able to apologise to repair her mistakes.

Shaikah had carefully managed her apology situation. In the process, she retained her ethical values by performing appropriate apologies; at the same time, she disclosed invaluable and distinctive other selves throughout her narrative: ‘the ‘repentant’ self’, for example, enabled her to realise how crucial apology is in social communication. Shaikah attributed her immature behaviour to ‘youthful indiscretion’; it is impressive that Shaikah had started to consider the importance of apology, which revealed to her the distinction between of immaturity and maturity.

Although Shaikah appeared to be irrational and disrespectful, the ‘kind-hearted self’ had emerged. Shaikah’s love and concern for others had led her to try her best to repair her mistakes by applying different apology behaviours. Her ‘love positioning’ and her realisation of the power of love motivated her to show forgiveness: love drove Shaikah’s strong determination to provide satisfaction through ‘saying sorry’. At the same time, Shaikah’s moral values, influenced by Islamic ethical teachings, had been inherited from her family. She had been raised in an environment that emphasised this moral behavior; this was obvious when her sister did not blame her for what she had done; however, she warned her not to repeat her mistake

At the same time, Shaikah’s ethical values had emerged which led her to choose an appropriate reparative approach through apology. Her guiding principle was to ‘do unto others what you would have them do unto you’; as Shaikah affirmed (Sh.16):

When I’m in their place, I’d not love that someone treats me this way. So, I guess this is the only reason when I want to apologise. I consider that, whether they deserve an apology or not, I put myself in their place.

Shaikah’s moral values, influenced by Islamic ethical teachings, had been inherited from her family: she had been raised in an environment that emphasised this moral behaviour. This was apparent when her sister did not blame her for what she had done; however, she warned her not to repeat her mistake.

### Malak's positionings and defining metaphor

Unlike Yamam and Shaikah, the strongest Harré positioning in Malak's narrative was deliberative self- and other-positioning as she undertook her actions with deliberative intent, with the intention of achieving parity. Malak was a brave, redemptive and reconciliatory young woman. About the New Socio-cultural positioning, Malak demonstrated 'moral' and 'redemptive' positioning as her feelings of guilt and remorse for her mistakes had emerged from the influence of Islamic values: she had always chosen the option of apologising thus repairing her mistakes. Malak was 'a woman with strong values'. When she made an apology to the woman assuring her how mistaken she had been, she was most repentant. She referred to her Islamic background by repeating a saying of the Prophet Mohammed that is known as the 'Golden Rule' in the Christian culture, (M.16):

I said, "I am really sorry; I know you're angry with me; I know what I said was very wrong and that I should not do that to anyone else because, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Like for your brother what you like for yourself".

Her virtuous nature and her inclination to reconciliation moderated by socio-cultural influences, including the religious and social values of her parents, led me to describe her as the *Virtuous Daughter* (M.09):

First of all, that's what Islam says. Second of all, that's what my mother has taught me to do. When I do something wrong and I know it is wrong, I have to apologise.

### The multiple selves of the Virtuous Daughter

The emergent *Virtuous Daughter* represents a person able to be deliberative while preserving her moral values and her sense of 'self'; in the process, the *Virtuous Daughter* obtained parity with others through admitting her mistakes and by the offering of apologies. Shaikah's moral values, influenced by Islamic ethical teachings, had been inherited from her family's regular offering of apologies.

This metaphor suggests that Malak closely controlled her apology behaviour; that is to say, she was The Virtuous Daughter who struggled to retain her ethical Islamic values, together with her parental teachings, by willingly undertaking apology. Distinctive other selves were revealed later in her narrative: ‘the moral self’ for example, made her realise the importance of apology in social interaction. Malak was praised for her honesty by her teacher (‘You do good, you find good’, an Arabic proverb) as good always prevails. Malak stood firmly for herself; she was able to emerge as a ‘strong young woman’. An example of this occurred when in the presence of her parents she was deceptively accused by her brother; she refused to apologise (M.31):

I didn’t apologise. I said. ‘No, I didn’t do anything’.

Malak’s narrative reflected ‘repentance’ and ‘reconciliation’. There was a persistent theme: she followed any apology by seeking forgiveness and offering compensation; Malak had learned that apology was the key to rewarding consequences.

Malak exemplified the development of a positive moral code of behaviour; similar to Yamam and Shaikah, Malak admitted that some of her early mistakes had arisen as a result of her immaturity. Finally, she realised that apology was an indication of bravery and strength, rather than being a sign of weakness. Malak had thoroughly absorbed the values of Islam and her parent’s teachings: they were the source of her moral guidance; they were a ‘golden value of apology’.

### **Australians in Saudi: Laura, Kaity and Becky**

#### **Laura’s positionings and defining metaphor**

The most dominant Harré positioning in Laura’s narrative was deliberative self-positioning: she behaved with deliberative intent to control her apology behaviour; she also demonstrated deliberative other-positioning behaviour to achieve parity with others. Generally, Laura was peaceful, kind, and straight forward. When

occasions demanded it, however, Laura applied forced other-positioning; this ‘power’ defined her as a *Powerful Australian Woman*. As a demonstration, she told her neighbour (L.11):

I cannot handle someone constantly knocking [on my door], checking on me, and asking me to do this and asking me to do that. I said I am my own person. I do not need a mother or someone to tell me what to do.

Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Laura was ‘reflective’ when avoiding loss of face and emotional disturbance; personally, she considered apology to be difficult; however, she knew that she had to say sorry for decisions made that inconvenienced others. This ‘reflective’ positioning also involved an ‘ethical’ element: she was concerned about the welfare of others. From my perspective, her strong, yet peace-seeking self, moderated by socio-cultural influences as she was avoiding conflicts with others, led me to see Laura as *The Peace Seeker*.

### **The multiple selves of The Peace Seeker**

The emergent *Peace Seeker* represents a person able to act in a deliberative manner while keeping her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, *The Peace Seeker* achieved parity with others through the offering and the accepting of apologies. This metaphor demonstrates to me how Laura managed her apology behaviour; as *The Peace Seeker*, she made great effort to be at peace with others as well as herself. When exerting power, she was careful to minimise harm to others by exercising appropriate apology behaviour. For example, Laura had been very direct in solving the situation with her ‘intruding’ neighbour. On that occasion, Laura, *The Peace Seeker*, could be seen as the person who would rather initiate saying sorry. Regardless of the circumstance, she sought to be in a state of ‘personal peace’; she did not wish to engender bad feelings. Thus, Laura’s apology behaviour was immediate; she was especially concerned about other people’s feelings; she did not postpone apology behaviour for she did not wish, personally,

to suffer from remorse. Laura emerged as a person who would perform an apology first even if it was not her mistake: this enabled her to preserve the peace and to be to herself.

Distinctive other selves were revealed later in her narrative: she was a ‘delicate’ woman as she went to great ends to avoid conflict with her neighbour: she avoided appearing to be mean. This self revealed her perception of the importance of apology in social communication. Laura was also a ‘sensitive’ self. As she matured, she tended to become more cautious about making friendships with people who were not her type – she favoured ‘honesty’ in her relations with others; however, should these delicate, sensitive, peace-seeking selves clash with the mature self of Laura, the *Powerful Woman* emerged. This self was seen when she confronted her neighbour. She confronted her neighbour; she no longer feared to hurt the feelings of others when the outcome was good for both her and the others.

### **Becky’s positionings and defining metaphor**

The most dominant Harré positioning in Becky’s narrative was deliberative self-positioning: her apology behavior indicated deliberative intent. To a lesser extent, she was also responsive to forced self- and other-positioning. Although, ‘forced’ positioning was not a dominant feature of her apology behaviour, elements of forced intent were evident in parts of her narrative.

Becky was kind, caring and moral. Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, her gentle and kind self, moderated by socio-cultural influences as she tended to apologise out of concern about others’ feelings, led me to see Becky as *The Moral Woman*.

### **The multiple selves of The Moral Woman**

*The Moral Woman* represents a person able to act in a deliberative manner while keeping her distinctive ‘self’ in the process; the Moral Woman gained others’

satisfaction her consistent behaviour. Becky's 'ethical' behaviour was evident in the narrative despite all the anxiety and intensity she experienced. She always chose to apologise as she considers apology represents a positive action, and that apology in some scenarios would make a person appear as more just and humble; she said (B.07):

In fact, I sometimes feel that if you apologise for errors like that in front of students, it has a positive effect. Because they see you as fairer, I guess, as willing to acknowledge mistakes.

Another emergent self was Becky, the *Empathetic Woman*, evident when she made exceptional efforts only for the sake of one of her students to support his future studies in the UK. Becky, the 'emotional', had also emerged: she felt concern for her friend whom she did not want to be left alone at the fireworks.

### **Kaity's positionings and defining metaphor**

The most dominant Harré positionings in Kaity's narrative were deliberative self-positioning and forced self-positioning; as she had linked her apology behaviour with both deliberative and forced intent.

Kaity was peaceful, wise and humble. Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Kaity demonstrated 'repair', and 'ethical' positioning which emerged as she was trying to repair her mistakes making repairing apologies and by her ethical behavior; she said (Ka.22):

I say sorry quite a lot if I've done something wrong, [if] I've done something incorrectly or [need to] be upfront about something".

From my perspective, her humility, wisdom, and peace-seeking apology behaviour indicated that she always preferred to take on the blame rather than being deeply involved in problems; this, moderated by socio-cultural influences, led me to identify Kaity's self as being similar Kaity's self as being similar to that of Laura: both were *Peace Seekers*.

### **The multiple selves of The Peace Seeker**

The emergent *Peace Seeker* represents a person able to maintain her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, the Peace Seeker gained others’ satisfaction through making ‘apology’ a priority in her interaction with them. Similar to Becky, Kaity sees that apology is part of her humility; saying sorry was not a problem to her.

A second emergent self was Kaity as the *Wise Woman*: she always tried hard to manage situations and to avoid becoming involved in problems in the first place. Although she sometimes found herself in a power position, she did not use this to exert power over others; instead, she took on the blame and apologised to lessen the stress of the situation. Kaity preferred apology to sustaining an argument: it was her maturity that influenced Kaity’s apology behaviour; she said (Ka.19):

I’d be better bringing that back rather than keeping [up with] the argument. If I were in my twenties, I would have argued and made a comment to the other teacher. I just thought “Okay, Solve the problem; I’ll just put it back to myself”.

### **Saudis in Australia: Alya, Renad, and Zahra**

#### **Alya’s positionings and a defining metaphor**

The dominant pair of Harré positionings in Alya’s narrative were deliberative self-positioning/deliberative intent and forced other-positioning/power. The first narrative concerned actions taken with ‘deliberative intent’; she said (A.04):

‘When the Police came I just felt sorry, sorry I said, “Very sorry” ‘.

The second narrative concerned actions relating to others having exerted power over her; in this case, she recalled (A.19):

She was very angry with me, “Why are you late by 20 minutes?” and shouted in my face in front of all the people.



Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Alya demonstrated ‘concerned’ positioning, which emerged as a result of the compassion shown to her by some people following her accident. Alya was both ‘moral’ and ‘emotional’ in her apology behaviour. From my perspective, her delicacy and fragility, moderated by socio-cultural influences as she tended to apologise out of embarrassment, Alya, for me, emerged as *The Fragile Woman*.

### **The multiple selves of the Fragile Woman**

The emergent *Fragile Woman* represents a person able to act deliberately while keeping her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, the ‘Fragile Woman’ gained satisfaction through offering and receiving of apologies from others. As a ‘sensitive’ woman, she was affected emotionally by people’s pained reaction: she cried all night in response to the attitude of her supervisor: the supervisor had embarrassed her in the class.

### **Renad’s positionings and defining metaphor**

The most dominant Harré positionings in Renad’s narrative were deliberative self-positioning/deliberative intent and forced other-positioning/power over her; this emerged, for example, in the reaction of the foreign teacher when Renad asked the teacher to dance with her; (R.03):

She shouted at me and told me, “You are so rude”, in front of lots of people. It was very embarrassing for me. I could not talk. Suddenly, I started to cry; then I went away.

Renad was patient, respectful and moral.

Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Renad demonstrated ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ apology behaviour when she had chosen to apologise: she responded to her code of ethics and religious principles; hence, her reaction to her teacher after having been accused Renad of cheating: she said (R.15):

She was like apologising to me that she made a mistake. And I also told her that, ‘I am not a cheater. My religion does not allow me to cheat’.

From my perspective, her moral behaviour and respect for others, moderated by socio-cultural influences that supported her in acting according to her moral code, and by offering apologies even though she knew that she was not mistaken, allowed to see Renad, like Becky, emerging as *The Moral Woman*.

### **The multiple selves of The Moral Woman**

The emergent *Moral Woman* represents a person able to act with deliberative intent while keeping her unique ‘self’; in the process, the ‘Moral Woman’ was able to gain parity with others through offering of apologies. This metaphor indicates how Renad can control her apology behaviour; she offered apologies although knew that she was mistaken, showing just how strong was her ‘moral code’. As a second self, Renad emerged as being ‘patient’: her patience was obvious in her communication with others in spite of the unfairness that she had experienced.

### **Zahra’s positionings and defining metaphor**

In Zahra’s narrative, the Harré positionings that dominated her pragmatic apology world were deliberative intent; using deliberative intent, she was able to respond positively to the forced other-positioning she perceived when others attempted to exercise power over her.

Zahra was emotional, patient, independent, and determined; she was also a risk-taker. About the New Socio-cultural positioning, Zahra demonstrated ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ apology behaviour: she sought to protect her Islamic ethics, understanding that these underpinned her moral behaviour. From my perspective, her patience, sense of independence, determination, and inner strength – moderated by socio-cultural influences – enabled her to endure a great deal of social and cultural pressure. These personal strengths sustained her risky, brave

action in which she risked everything as she sought freedom in her married life. She truly emerged as *The Super Strong Woman*.

### **The multiple selves of The Super Strong Woman**

*The Super Strong Woman* metaphor represents a person able to act with a strong intention while preserving her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, *The Super Strong Woman* gained parity with others through the offering and the accepting of apologies. This metaphor underpins Zahra’s controlling of her apology behaviour; it relates to the obvious impact of both Saudi and Australian cultures on Zahra, particularly evident when she left for Adelaide without her husband’s permission to force him to realise her needs. I assume that, initially, her strength was acquired as she came from a Saudi family who would have taught her to be strong and independent since childhood; similarly, showing an independent streak is also a strong feature of Australian culture.

Other selves of Zahra had also emerged: ‘the emotional; ‘the stubborn’; the ‘sensitive’. These multiple selves were displayed when Zahra took the emotional position of leaving for Adelaide. Her regretting this decision, and her apologising to her husband when she saw that her husband had changed his attitude to please her and grant her wishes supported this position. Poignantly, she described it thus (Za.32):

I thought at that time: “Okay, I have to say sorry”. And, when I said sorry, it was a very emotional moment for me.

Indeed, she had been ‘super strong’.

### **Australians in Australia: Britney, Kara, and Zilda**

#### **Britney’s positionings and defining metaphor**

Deliberative self-positioning was the Harré positioning that dominated her pragmatic apology behaviour; as a consequence, she acted with deliberative intent.

To a lesser extent, in experiencing forced other-positioning, she was subject to others exercising power over her. Britney was kind, compassionate and rational; the New Socio-cultural ‘relief’ apology behaviour element, she was able to avoid unsatisfying and distressful consequences: she felt relieved. From my perspective, her empathy and kindness, moderated by socio-cultural influences as everybody was exercising power over her led Britney emerged as *The Disempowered Australian Woman*.

### **The multiple selves of The Disempowered Australian Woman**

*The Disempowered Australian Woman* represents a person who acts forcefully maintains her distinctive ‘self’; in the process, the Disempowered Woman obtained parity with others through offering them apologies. In employing this apology behaviour, she was forced, in recounting three episodes, to apologise to others to prevent unpleasant consequences; thus, she made herself vulnerable; she explained (Br.30):

So, if we go back over the three situations, I made myself vulnerable to my son, okay, by saying I’m sorry but that worked, okay. And by saying I’m sorry to my partner, that allowed us to have a bridge, okay. But saying I was “sorry” to my sister, that was not a bridge, and that was not a good position in which to be.

It seemed that her inherent kindness led Britney always to expect kind reactions; this apology behaviour resulted in her suffering ‘loss of face’ and caused her embarrassment.

Britney realised that apology was a two-sided weapon: important to save relationships; at times, making her to appear weak and to feel ‘devastated’.

Interestingly, she disclosed distinctive other selves later in the narrative: she was *The Sympathiser* when she sympathised with her partner over the loss of his friend. She was *The Grateful* when she told her older sister that she appreciated all that the sister had done for their mother despite her sister having acted in a ‘senior surgeon’ manner.

### **Kara's positionings and defining metaphor**

The dominant Harré positionings in Kara's narrative were deliberative self-positioning: she had taken this position with deliberative intent; also, she had used and deliberative-other positioning to achieve parity with others.

Kara was kind, polite, respectful, moral and delicate (K.08):

I often say sorry, even when I'm not a directing type of agent causing something to happen.

Kara, whether mistaken or not, used apology behaviour according to the direction of her moral stance.

Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings, Kara demonstrated 'concerned positioning' that emerged as Kara showed 'concern' to others through offering constant apologies as part of her delicate self.

From my perspective, Kara's delicacy, kindness and willingness to make sacrifices to benefit others moderated her socio-cultural positioning elements: she was acting with great concern for others; she offered apologies even if she was not the initiator simply to soothe others. Thus, I defined Kara's dominant self as *The Apologiser*; she confirmed this as follows (K.22):

That's, probably, an instance of where I have said sorry more than I have ever said in my life. That's thirty instances of saying sorry during the day.

She was a true apologiser.

### **The multiple selves of the Apologiser**

The *Apologiser* represents a person able to act in a deliberative manner while keeping true to her unique 'self'. In the process, the *Apologiser* was able to gain parity with others through offering outbursts of apology resulting from the embarrassment caused both by her mistakes, as well as those caused by others as well. Other selves that emerged were evident. There was Kara the 'tolerant' when she acted as a mother for her irresponsible sister and thus apologising on her

sister's behalf; there was Kara the 'kind-hearted' as she sacrificed her birthday plans to attend to the needs of her ill mother at the behest of her 'selfish' younger sister.

### **Zilda's positionings and defining metaphor**

In Zilda's narrative, the Harré positioning that dominated her pragmatic apology world was deliberative self-positioning; as a consequence, she managed her apology actions with a focused deliberative intent.

Zilda was emotional, patient, wise, and moral. Concerning the New Socio-cultural positionings. Zilda eventually demonstrated 'moral' positioning that emerged as Zilda maintained her personal 'values' and 'ethics': she realised that apology behaviour was an essential part of moral behaviour. From my perspective, her patience, wisdom, and morals, moderated by socio-cultural influences as she performed apologies, led me to recognise Zilda, for me, to emerge, similar to Becky and Renad, as *The Moral Woman* – in the same sense as were Becky and Renad.

### **The multiple selves of The Moral Woman**

*The Moral Woman* is representative of a person able to act well while preserving her distinctive 'self'. In this case, *The Moral Woman* obtained parity with others through realising the importance of apology in social interactions: being able to smooth things over while being able to show herself as 'polite'. A second self had also emerged: that of *The Delicate Woman*. Zilda's highly moral, delicate character was revealed when she reflected on her reaction to an apology made by The Honourable Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia, 13 February 2008<sup>22</sup>. She said (Z.29):

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<sup>22</sup> This is known as 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples', accessed at <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>, Tuesday, May 2, 2017.

I was moved considerably by an apology that Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia, made to indigenous Australians in Parliament in 2008. I was sitting at my desk looking at my computer in real time, and I was weeping to hear that apology. I think it was a compelling thing to do.

In this episode, Zilda was involved in deliberative self- and other-positioning by a national leader, the Prime Minister of Australia.

### **Summary of all emergent metaphors and selves**

To summarise, diverse metaphors arose from the four groups; there was a sharing of some metaphors and selves; however, a majority was unique.

### **Common metaphors**

Shaikah, the Saudi in Saudi, and Kara, the Australian in Australia shared the same metaphor: 'The Apologiser'. Moreover, the 'moral woman' metaphor emerged from three women; Becky, the Australian in Saudi, Renad, the Saudi in Australia and Zilda, the Australian in Australia; surprisingly, those three cross-cultural women shared the same metaphor. Finally, a metaphor, the 'peace seeker,' was common to Laura and Kaity – both Australians in Saudi. The remaining participants had unique emergent metaphors. There is an extensive listing of both unique and common 'selves' in Table 8.5. The four groups shared common 'selves': the sensitive, the emotional, the delicate, suggesting that the Saudi and Australian women displayed similar emotions and responses - such as 'affection; and 'delicacy' - in their apology behavior.

### **Concluding comments**

In this chapter, I have provided a detailed synthesis that displays the distinction between the types of Harré and socio-cultural positionings that emerged from the

narrative of each participant including a set of metaphors that identify each woman in the study.

In the next chapter, I provide a full summary of the categorised findings of this research and link them to give an overview, a discussion of limitations, and a consideration of possible implications.



## CHAPTER 9

### Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated the extent to which Saudi and Australian women differ from each other regarding ‘saying sorry’ contexts and positions, the role of cultural variability and values, and women’s power in influencing their choice of contexts and positions within the overall frame of pragmatics in the English language. My research questions can be summarised in one global question:

**To what extent do the choice of contexts and positions influencing Saudi and Australian women’s cultural variability, values, and women’s power, affect them regarding their ‘saying sorry’?**

I identified the elements arising from the narratives by using inductive data reduction and narrative analysis, and the application of positioning theory. The outcome was a pragmatic account of the cross-cultural use of the speech act of apology by Saudi and Australian women in two contexts: Saudi and Australia.

In this chapter: I summarise the key findings of my research. I provide an overview, including a discussion of the limitations of my study. Finally, I consider implications and prospects for future research.

**Table 9.1** Harré positioning percentages across groups

Participating group	Deliberative self-positioning	Deliberative other-positioning	Forced self-positioning	Forced other-positioning
Saudis in Saudi	12	2	6	18
	32%	5%	16%	47%
Australians in Saudi	27	12	8	2
	55%	24%	16%	4%
Saudis in Australia	12	4	3	10
	41%	14%	10%	34%
Australians in Australia	35	23	4	7
	52%	34%	6%	10%

KEY

Percentage Range	Code
>40%	High
20-39	Medium
1-19%	Low

### Key Trends of Harré Positioning Data: Australian groups

The Australian group exhibited many more positionings in both contexts – Saudi and Australia – than the Saudis, with all categories evident. As shown in Figure 9.1, the Australians showed a strong preference for the two types of deliberative positionings in both Saudi and Australia (55% and 52% self-positioning; 24% and 34% other-positioning). In both contexts, deliberative self-positioning was more preferred to deliberative other-positioning. In Saudi, however, the Australians expressed more ‘forced self-positionings’ (16% versus 6%), and fewer ‘deliberative other’ positionings than in Australia (34% versus 24%).

### **Key Trends of Harré Positioning Data: Saudi groups**

While Saudis exhibited all four types, in each context, they expressed fewer positionings than did the Australians. The Saudis' most preferred positionings were 'forced other-' and 'deliberative self-' positionings; the rank order of preference of these differed between Saudi and Australia. Comparing the two contexts, Saudis expressed more deliberative positionings in Australia than they did in Saudi (55% versus 37%). Noticeably, in Saudi, 'forced other' positioning is the dominant preference (47% of their total usage), whereas in Australia, 'deliberative self-positioning' was the highest ranked preference (41%). Strikingly, the Saudis were shown to be the main users of 'forced other' positioning overall (47% in Australia; 34% in Saudi).

### **Key Trends of New Socio-cultural positioning Data**

I compare here the use of apology positioning between the four cultural groups: this time with the nine different positioning types. The Saudis' in Saudi highest use was for concerned, moral, redemptive and self-interest positioning; it was moderate for repair. The Saudis in Saudi were the most frequent among the groups using concerned positioning; this suggests that the Saudis in Saudi most frequently showed care in their apology behaviour.

The Australians in Saudi were the highest among the groups using reflective and repair positioning; this implies that they acted most frequently to redress a mistake or error as part of their apology behavior. This group also made moderate use of ethical positioning.

Ethical positioning was used considerably more frequently by Saudis in Australia than by the Australians in Saudi; Australians in Australia used ethical positioning at a very low rate. Saudis in both Saudi and Australia made the highest use of moral positioning. Overall, Saudis most frequently acted according to

ethical principles; what is more, they preferred to act according to moral principles of goodness and worth in their apology behaviour.

The Australians in Australia used relief positioning with high frequency; this suggests that it was Australians in Australia who most frequently sought release from distress, discomfort or guilt in their apology behaviour. Offering relief was the ‘self’ that Australians in Australia projected.

Regardless of location and culture, Australians in Australia matched the Saudis in Australia in their low use of repair positioning; by contrast, repair positioning showed a high frequency of use by Australians in Saudi.

The Saudis in Australia made high use of five categories of New Socio-cultural positioning. Saudis in Australia shared high use of reflective positioning with Australians in Saudi, and self-interest with the Saudis in Saudi. High use of these categories implies that these three groups acted, following a period of reflection, either in their specific interest or to save face, regardless of culture and location.

Saudis in Australia were the only group to make high use of emotional positioning; this implies that they were the only group who acted on emotional impulse. Saudis, both in Saudi and Australia, were the only cultural group to make either high or medium use of redemptive positioning; this indicates that the Saudis were highly concerned, in their apology, to act to save or be saved from sin, error, or evil. In turn, this may be explained as a cultural by-product of the influence of Islam.

Both Saudis and Australians in Australia used diverse types of New Socio-cultural positionings; however, the frequency of their usage was irregular and varied: similar in some cases and different in others. Overall, the Saudis utilised New Socio-cultural positionings to a greater extent than did the Australians.

To conclude, across the cultures in the different countries, Australians in Australia had different responses from Australians in Australia; the same applies to the Saudis in Saudi and Australia. Such results indicate that, concerning

apology positioning, differences exist both within and between the groups and contexts of these participants.

## **Reflection**

The similarities and differences highlighted above indicate how cultural values and personal values, ethics and attributes influenced the groups' choices of socio-cultural positioning. These similarities and differences in the use of apology positioning reveal that cultural groups can exhibit similar positioning types despite their contextual and cultural differences. Observed differences, nevertheless, can be attributed to a great extent to the culture and context as well. It is clear from these findings that universally shared values influence apology positionings. There are also cultural and personal values that lead to clearly evident differences in positionings adopted.

While I have failed to find evidence of any prior research dealing specifically with apology positionings, research on apologies in different contexts provides support for the perception of there being a degree of universality in apology strategies (Austin 1962, Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989, Olshtain 1983). Jebahi's (2011) findings from his study of apology strategies in Tunisian Arabic also support the claim of the universality of the speech act of apology. However, the precise selection from available apology strategies confirms the that there is a degree of culture specificity in the realization of the speech act (Thijittang 2010, Farashaiyan and Amirkhiz 2011). Besides, as the findings of (Demeter, 2006; Muhammed, 2006; and Thijittang, 2010), have demonstrated there is support for the notion that apologies are situation-specific. Moreover, language users in several studies revealed that a grouping of apology expressions were common across the different scenarios (Demeter 2006, Nureddeen 2008, Langat, Onyango et al. 2017). Also, employment of apology multiple strategies in higher frequencies were also detected in studies by Obeng (1999), and Vollmer and Olshtain (1989). This use of multiple apology strategies in high rates contradicts

studies that have found that stand alone strategies were more frequent (Al-Sobh, 2013, Bergman and Kasper 1993, Holmes 1990, Saleem, Azam et al., 2014). However, the findings of my study coordinate and at the same time contradict such previous findings of the mentioned studies as the Saudi and Australian women sometimes used one type of apology positioning in their apology behavior and in other situations they grouped more than on type of apology positionings.

The detected differences and similarities between the Australian and Saudi women in their apology behaviour support the findings of studies, such as Jebahi's (2011) which support the distinctiveness of how the apology strategies were utilised in diverse cultures. For example, children are not explicitly apologised to in Tunisia (Jebahi 2011) and Egypt (Soliman 2003). Al-Zumor (2011), in his interlanguage and cross-cultural study on apologies concluded that English and Arabic speakers assign varying degrees of severity to the same situation, and attributes this to cultural differences. Such findings are in concordance with the results of my study as while Saudis show great concern for specific apology situations; the Australians, conversely, consider similar cases to be of low interest.

Differences and similarities provide support for the findings of Salehi (2014), of apology strategies used by Iranian EFL learners and English native speakers. These revealed specific similarities and few differences regarding the frequency and the type of apology strategies utilised by the participants. Also, the found similarities resonate with Al- Zumor's (2011) finding of the essential similarities in the choice of patterns of major apology strategies in the apology behaviour of the Arabs and Indian English speakers. Aspects of cultural similarities may be used to explain some of these results. Olshtain (1989) concluded that 'different languages will realise apologies in very similar ways' (1989:171).

There are cross-cultural studies that have emphasised the role of culture in influencing the apology behaviour and choice of apology strategies implemented that correlate with the findings of my study. For instance, Sugimoto (1998), reveals that cultural differences in Japanese and American styles of apology

influence perceptions and employment of linguistic practices. Similarly, in my research, the influence of culture is revealed in the Saudis' and Australians' dissimilar use of employment of apology positionings. Guan, Park, et al., (2009), who examined the influence of three cultures (U.S., China, and Korea), found that participants from the three cultures varied in their apology utilisation. In addition, Shardakova (2005) and Shariati and Chamani (2010) have shown that the preferences for using apology strategies appeared to be culture-specific. Furthermore, Le (2011) attributed the variation of the speech act of politeness utilised by Vietnamese as an L1 in Australia and Vietnam. He demonstrated that Vietnamese living in Australia are more linguistically polite than those living in Vietnam, to the influence of sociocultural change, intercultural contact and context.

My study suggests that there is an impact of Saudi and Australian women's power on their apology behaviour. Women, whether belonging to the same culture or not, may feel powerful and use this power in two ways: to exercise power over others to reach balance in social communication or to have control over others and show their strength and prejudice. That is to say: they use power for personal benefits disregarding others' feelings. This aspect consolidated their apology position; it made them stand firmly for their apology attitude. Both Saudis and Australians were shown to be strong in their apology positioning, as they used Harré's 'power positioning'; however, the Saudis were shown to be more powerful than the Australians, and the Australians were more direct and bold than the Saudis, which is undoubtedly a cultural influence.

The directness in the Australians' apology behaviour aligns with Rizk's (1997) findings that Arabs utilised implied apologies contrasting with native speakers of English who seem to be direct. It also supports the finding of other studies such as El-Khalil (1998), who revealed that the majority of the Jordanian participants utilise implicit apology strategies. This result conflicts with Farashaiyan & Amirkhiz's (2011) finding who reported that Saudi participants are positively

influenced by their L1 transfer into their L2 output as they decide to choose the direct expression of apology based on their cultural practices.

Moreover, the attitude the participants took in their apology positioning was influenced by socio-cultural dimensions in their apology positioning has been highly influenced by socio-cultural dimensions (including religious orientation), such as the 'golden rule'. The religious dimension emerged more obviously in the Saudis' apology behaviour than the Australians'. The Saudis in Saudi and Australia have been influenced by the religious dimension, which was obvious in their apology behaviour. Islamic teachings highly focus on values and ethics; specifically, it lays great importance on a person's behaviour towards others, to take great care of other feelings, respect their attitude and most importantly treat them in a very gentle manner otherwise people will not accept a person who is rude in behaviour. Apology for any mistake is an Islamic principle before becoming a human behaviour. Such teachings were evident in the Saudis' apology behaviour. For example, such ethics and values can be observed when some of the Saudi women in certain situations did not exercise power over others when they had the chance to, as Islamic teachings that were instilled in them prevented them of exercising wrong power attitudes. Saudis took some of their apology positionings as they were led by the Islamic values and ethics. They sometimes reported some of the prophet sayings to support their apology position. They also followed their parents' teaching and values as Islam focuses on the importance of obeying parents. Such finding show that religious orientation influenced the Saudi's use of apology positioning and that is an integral part of Saudi everyday expressions. This finding resonates with El-Khalil (1998) finding on apology strategies of Jordanians, which revealed that verses from the holy Quran and proverbs were utilised to lessen the offence, and he claims that this strategy can be attributed to the influence of the Islamic teachings and tradition on the performance of speech acts. Also, supporting my findings is Al-Zumor (2011) who reported that religious beliefs, concepts and values played a crucial role in



the many deviations in the Arab's apology from that of the native speakers of English, British and American. For the Australians, their values and ethics were evident in their apology behaviour which are ethical principles driven from their Christian teachings. Interestingly, both the Australians and Saudis share identical values which were obvious in their use of the golden rule, 'Like for your brother what you like for yourself', in their apology behaviour. However, both groups expressed this feature differently. While the Saudis' frequently referred to sayings of the prophet and their family teachings, the Australians mostly showed their instilled family and personal values and ethics.

However, the Saudi tend to have no problem in recounting their apology situations to others more than the Australians when I asked them, 'did you recount this situation to anybody?', who preferred not to recount their apology situations to anyone as they were avoiding face loss, as most of the Saudis recounted some of their apology situations to others while the Australians preferred not. This finding gives support to the claim of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), that states that apology is a communicative act in the production of which an apologisee has to act politely, both in the vernacular sense and in the more technical intellect of giving attention to the recipient's face wants.

This finding also indicates that Saudi tended to offer apologies in public to ease the offended and it would be explained more as a cultural attitude. For example, when I asked Zahra, one of the Saudi women, if she recounted the story of leaving her husband to anyone, she replied that her sister said, (Za.44):

She said, "You are so mean. You don't deserve him. You don't deserve this man". Yeah.

Conversely, Britney, one of the Australian women, had avoided recounting her apology stories as fear of failure and embarrassment had reduced her capacity to share 'saying sorry' incidents; she said, (Br.32):

It's not something I would readily share because I think I feel stupid, you know, because I made the wrong judgment call.

This finding lends support to Al-Zumor's (2011) finding which reported that admitting's one deficiency in the Arab context does not cause the same degree of embarrassment as in the Anglo-Saxon context. This claim is supported by the very genuine offers of help in the situation of 'bumping into a lady and hurting her'. It also corresponds with Al Ali's (2012) finding that expression of embarrassment was the least used strategy by the Australian women among all the apology strategies which might reveal that the Australian women prefer not to show embarrassment to avoid damage to face.

Within the narratives, I have been able to observe that both Saudis and Australians can admit responsibility explicitly and such a finding characterises some of apology aspects of Saudi and Australian society in performing the speech act of apology. It contradicts Al Ali's (2012) conclusion that it is difficult sometimes to admit responsibility in Saudi culture, which had seemed to be an influential cultural aspect. The extent of the difference in the result is considered to be huge-almost incomparable- because of methodological differences, as narratives and positioning theory helped in disclosing the profound use of apology.

The exclusive use of redemptive positioning by the Saudis in both contexts, Saudi and Australian, which expresses remorse for a wrong action, supports the notion of the universality aspects of language. It aligns with the finding of Langat, Onyango, et al. (2017), who point out that apology choices in situations that revealed varying degrees of severity of offence. For example, most participants used intensifiers such as 'very' and 'really' with their 'sorry' expressions, to make their apologies acceptable, lessen the offence, and to show genuine remorse.

Most importantly, this account of apology positionings made by the four groups reveals how Saudi and Australian women consider the importance of apology in social communication. Metaphors and selves

Positioning theory was used in the previous chapters to identify the four key socio-psychological Harré positionings taken by each of the participants as they used

narratives to describe the circumstances under which they were led to ‘say sorry’. As I engaged in the inductive data reduction process, sets of distinctive metaphors and related sets of ‘selves’ emerged amongst the four different linguistic and cultural groups.

### **Common and different metaphors and selves**

Specifically, the metaphors began emerging from the Harré positionings; the selves emerged as I considered the New Socio-cultural positionings. Diverse metaphors arose from the four groups, many metaphors and selves were shared. A summary of these elements is contained in Table 8.9.

### **Values of metaphors and selves and role of culture**

The new metaphors and the providing of evidence of multiple-selves showed the role of culture in influencing the ways in which each group realise their ‘saying sorry’. The metaphors and selves explained the way participants positioned themselves and others while performing their apologies. The result of such discursive interactions was the identification of self. Davies and Harré (1990) claim that it is a particular self of the individual that is involved in these interactions; thus, positioning leads to a comprehension of selfhood: a participant, displaying multiple-selves in a discourse, may show themselves to be selfish, kind or angry.

For me, it was interesting how metaphors and various selves arose concerning the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and settings – Saudis and Australians in Saudi and Australia. Such metaphors and selves have provided insights into the groups’ use and cognition of the pragmatics of apology. It also revealed the similarities and differences between Saudi and Australian women with regard to the pragmatic emergence of metaphors in their apology behavior; that is to say, how the metaphorical traits have influenced their apology position.

### **Metaphors and the selves in revealing aspects of the two cultural groups**

Those metaphors played a significant role in revealing specific aspects of Saudi and Australian women's apology position, which showed how they controlled their apology situation. It is surprising that how such metaphors and various selves arose from those cross-cultural groups and that they share some of the metaphors and selves although they belong to different cultures and contexts.

The metaphor of peace seeker is specific to Australian women and the proud for the Saudis. The moral women, the apologist, is shared by Saudi and Australian women. For the selves, the Saudi and Australian share similar selves that show women are emotional and sensitive though strong and powerful. This observation coincides with the results of who revealed that while some conceptual metaphors might be shared between the two cultures, others were dominating in each specific culture. Obviously, cultural aspects play a role in the different manifestations of *metaphors* and thus in the variations of their uses and formation as linguistic expressions. Gibbs (1999:153) claims, 'what is missing...is an explicit acknowledgement of culture and its important, perhaps defining, role in shaping embodiment and, consequently, metaphorical thought'.

This is essential because the study of culture helps to obtain more profound insights into the context-sensitive meanings of linguistic expressions. Can and Can (2010) claim that it is believed that metaphors are not in "in the hands" as figures of speech; instead, they are embodied in cultural situations, and therefore they are inseparable from the cultural context with which it interacts. This shows that metaphors and selves in terms of apology behaviour are universally and culturally determined.

The above differences and similarities between the Saudi and Australians women in their realisation of apology reveal specific aspects of each group's culture and provide a profound picture of each group's use of the speech act of apology. Such differences are explained by the fact the two groups come from

different cultural backgrounds which can be regarded as culturally specific, and the similarities suggest universality of apology, see metaphor Table 8.5. for details. Overall, the Saudi and Australian used different positionings, although culture clearly has some influence over their choice of apology positioning. Such conclusion lends support to the culture-specific aspect of language use as well as to the universality of apology. This extends our understanding of the use of apology by Saudi and Australian women and thus enriches the body of research into cross-cultural pragmatics.

## **Key findings**

My research was concerned with Saudi and Australian women's realisation of apology positionings in two cultural contexts. A key finding of this research is that the Saudi and Australian differ from each other concerning these positionings; this is consistent with the claim of Tan and Moghaddam (1995:43) that culture determines the concept of apology positioning. There were, as well, similarities between the Harré and the New Socio-cultural positionings.

Specifically, for the groups in Saudi, the frequency of use of power positioning had dominated the Saudis' apology positioning, whereas forced intent had dominated that of the Australians. However, both Saudis and Australians used forced self-positioning almost similarly. For the groups in Australia, while the Saudis were surprisingly also concerned with power positionings, which is identical to the group in Saudi, the Australians were concerned with deliberative intent and parity. Remarkably, both groups did not share any identical usage of the positionings.

For the New Socio-cultural positionings in Saudi, both the Saudi and Australian groups employed diverse types of the New Socio-cultural positionings; they shared everyday use of types; however, the frequency of their use was outstandingly different, they did not share any identical frequencies. However, it

was prominent that Saudis used a wider range of New Socio-cultural positionings than did the Australians. For the group in Australia, both Saudis and Australians used a variety of the new positionings. Notably, both groups shared almost similar frequency of one type of positionings which was 'repair'. However, it is evident that the Saudis in Australia were more conscious of using the new positionings than were the Australians.

A further significant finding of the study was the variation in the use of apology positioning within the same cultural groups, indicating that differences potentially occur even among participants from the same gender and cultural background. My study also reveals a picture of the importance of politeness in terms of apology in both cultures, and how ethics principles are of great importance. As politeness seems to be a powerful concept in human interaction, and up to the present time, several models of politeness have been created in the literature.

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) formulation of politeness behavior, if compared with other models of politeness, is the one that most clearly sustains its validity, therefore naturally claiming its function as a basis for cross-cultural comparison (O'Driscoll 1996). In this study, the apology behavior of Saudi and Australian women who are regarded as having apologetic norms that distinct each of them, however, the findings provide evidence to support Brown and Levinson's universal thesis. Thus, my conclusions remarkably conform with those of Brown and Levinson; they show that while there are indeed some general concepts and dimensions of politeness that are shared by both groups, the different positionings they use focus on the crucial role culture plays in speakers' speech act performance. Thus, the importance of cultural influence must never be forgotten when we explore the issue of speech act universality.

As I engaged in the inductive data reduction process, sets of distinctive metaphors and related sets of 'selves' emerged amongst the four different linguistic and cultural groups; surprisingly, there was sharing of some metaphors

and selves. This confirms the universality of metaphors and selves in apology behaviour. Such results support the findings of Can and Can (2010) who claim that many conceptual metaphors are common between cultures while others dominate in each specific culture; that cultural trait has a role in the different expressions of *metaphors* and thus in the differences of their uses and creation as linguistic expressions. Moreover, the selves and metaphors reveal the characteristics of each woman in the study; that vary from being proud, virtuous, peaceful, kind, sensitive, stubborn, tolerant, to fragile and disempowered, however, most of the women share one remarkable trait that is power. Power positioning distinguishes their apology behaviour. Such outstanding findings would have merged without the beneficial use of inductive data reduction and positioning theory which are new approaches in applied linguistics and this distinguishes my thesis from the other apology studies in the literature which used the typical DCTs or role-plays and the framework of apology types, thus they had limited findings, (Kasper 2000, Golato 2003, Cummings 2006).

Holmes (2013:175) on her study of politeness with the data collected from New Zealand, claims that women seemed to be sensitive to the extent they are concerned to ensure that offences are alleviated, mainly when the offended has greater power. Conversely, men do not differentiate to the same extent between those of higher and lower position; they almost provide similar shares of apologies to both. Interestingly, men apologise respectively more than women do to those with unequal power compared to their status equals. Apologies are possibly not the usual everyday practice of politeness for men as they are for women. Those findings support the results of my study as both Saudis and Australian women used apology positionings associated with concern of the offended, and were also concerned with offence remedy of those of higher power status.

Besides, as a product of my research a rich model consists of socio-cultural positionings was developed, that are an extension of Harré's positioning theory- which I have entitled, the 'New Socio-cultural positionings'.

In general, the Saudi and Australian utilised different positionings, although culture has some influence over their choice of apology positioning. Such conclusion supports the culture-specific aspect of language use. The above-mentioned findings expand our comprehension of the use of apology by Saudi and Australian women and thus enhances the body of research into inter-cultural and cross-cultural pragmatics.

## **Implications**

The findings of my study suggest a number of possible implications for the study of cross-cultural pragmatics. First, this research suggests that specific features might be important for understanding the way people from different cultures use speech acts. Such features include cultural and linguistic background, religious teachings, personal and family ethics and values, different selves emerging within use of speech acts. The findings show that the Saudi and Australian groups employed some apology positionings associated with emergent selves and metaphors, which provided a profound picture of the use of apology in both cultures.

Secondly, the findings suggest the value of comparing apology positionings employed by participants from the similar and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to attain intended outcomes, since there were interesting similarities and differences in positioning usage.

Thirdly, using in depth interviews as a data collection method offers the researcher rich data that allow for having a profound view of the use of apology by Saudi and Australian women, living in two contexts, Saudi and Australia.

Fourthly, the use of positioning theory as a data analysis approach facilitates, for a researcher using inductive data reduction, the identification of types of positioning, the identification of new positioning categories, and the identification of new forms of positioning, thus expanding the boundaries of positioning theory.



Fifthly, these expanded boundaries might include the design of future cross-cultural teaching material; for instance, apology norms of Saudi and Australian cultures could be a valuable pedagogical consideration. So, this might lead to stronger, smoother and better cross-cultural communication. L2 speakers and intercultural communicators, as a consequence, would become aware of the elements that weaken or strengthen intercultural and cross-cultural communication concerning apology. They would also become mindful of the impact of women's power in this field, and thus how to deal with such factors in future communication.

Sixthly, most recent studies on cross-cultural apologies, including those of (Sugimoto 1998), (Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu 2007), (Chang 2010), and (Guan, Park, et al., 2009), have only focused on European-based cultures. Most studies of apology have only used Discourse Completion Tests, or role-plays which limit the findings. Previous studies of apology have used neither narrative analysis nor positioning theory in investigating the speech act of apology; they have focused on apology strategies, rather than contexts and positions. Most importantly, from a pragmatics perspective, my study is contributing by adopting a new theoretical and methodological framework, and what is currently a limited body of work, positioning theory in pragmatic analysis, (Davies & Harré, 1989).

Since then other work had been done. Ling (1998) applied positioning theory and studies in self and metaphor to create a better understanding the practice of curriculum development. Lionel Boxer (Boxer & John 2000), using Ling's study as a springboard, explored the concept of sustainability by using positioning theory as it applied to the positioning of senior executives in national companies based in Australia and how they positioned themselves in the international market. A chapter based on his study is contained in Harré and Moghaddam (2003). It appears that I am the next researcher in the line investigating a topic on the socio-cultural aspect and I discovered quite correctly that they did mention culture but they did not develop culture.

The point is that the cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics fields were evolving contemporaneously with positioning theory; however, they were emerging in two discreet strands of thinking and research. Intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics, as I have explained in my literature review, was very much focused on the minutia; it was at the micro level of linguistic realisation of speech acts; it was not interested in the broader socio-psychological and socio-cultural aspects of positioning. I pointed to Pavlenko (2007) in my literature review because I realised that she has been quite influential in thinking about language in a broader, more public manner. She is concerned with personal identity, in a socio-psychological sense; she is involved not only in *what* people say but also in the *motivations* behind what they say.

I believe my study is more than just a passing interest. It is based on a broader theoretical framework: speaking on one level about discourse and language, but commencing from a socio-cultural perspective – in this case, ‘saying sorry’, the act of apology. I believe this to be an interesting, fresh, new way of looking at pragmatics: not just focused on the minutiae; having, as well, a perspective on the socio-cultural influences that affect what is done with language. For me, that is the basis of pragmatics: using language to express what motivates you towards achieving your personal and social goals.

With discourse completion task (DCT), researchers use traditional methodology to elicit apologetic responses that do not reflect real life scenarios. The weakness of the discourse completion task approach and the related role plays is it is merely concerned with what happens rather than considering an actual act of apology and analysing how people apologise. They create the context and then they only examine what people say, but they do not investigate them in terms of understanding what differences exist in what they mean. Why are there these differences? They do not refer back to their participants and ask them why did you say it this way? What was the motivation for you saying it this way? A similar critique can be made of the frequently adopted method of concluding strategies

without any evidence of actual motives from the DCT or role play responses (see, Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of negative and positive face). Such approaches can only ever offer a limited, restricted and thus finite, perspective on natural apologising behavior in real life interactional settings.

In the same vein, those who used the strategies of Brown & Levinson's framework around negative and positive face and even in the role plays, might ask: What did they produce in the role plays assuming the role plays are going to be something close to real life context? Why they have not paid attention to individuals and understanding why and what they were trying to do with their choice of what they said and how they said it?

In my opinion, DCT is an inadequate approach to acquiring data. It is for that reason that I have an innovative way and to discover valuable aspects of apology that I trust will create both national and international interest: using narrative analysis and positioning theory to investigate apology. By using positioning theory as a useful theoretical framework, and inductive qualitative analysis as a valuable analytical tool, I anticipate that I have obtained a deep and thorough command of the diverse features and dimensions of the speech act of 'saying sorry'.

There is no research on apology contexts and positions made by Saudi and Australian women in light of positioning theory and narratives. It is therefore my expectation that my study will fill a significant gap in pragmatics research. Furthermore, my study, rather amazingly to me, revealed social cultural factors in 'saying sorry', about which no one has written. I am extremely proud of this realisation.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

Although, the scope of my study was broad - international, with two groups in each of two countries – there were some limitations to this study. First and

foremost, the participants were from two cultures only: Saudi Arabian and Australian. The ability to generalise across the populations may be restricted. In an effort to combat this limitation, future research should include participants of different social groups. The results, however, provide insights into the way Saudi and Australian women realise the speech act of apology and the types of apology positioning employed by them.

My study involved only female participants. I recommend that future research includes male participants to make it possible to observe gender effects. In addition, although in-depth interviewing is a valuable data collecting method, a mixed-methods survey would enable a signification expansion of numbers – perhaps involving just two international sets – or by expanding to more tightly focused mixed- or single-method surveys exploring the notions of positionings, metaphors, and selves to see what impact larger, more diverse numbers of participants might have on research into speech act of apology.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that to have more comprehensive picture of the use of the speech act of apology, further research on apology in a broad range of settings is necessary. In future research, I plan to involve more social groups from both genders in different contexts and by using surveys. A similar study of Australians who were born or raised in Saudi would also be valuable.

## **Conclusion**

Within my research study, there were two distinct language background groups, one with English as L1 and the other with English as L2 and Arabic as L1, women in each group were reflecting on their positionings and contexts for apologising in two contrasting cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Saudi Arabia (EFL) and Australia (English is the majority L1, but also spoken by many as an L2). My thesis is about social and cultural factors that affect saying sorry have sought

notable differences between Saudi and Australian women in cultural settings, that were either similar or different.

Apology varies across cultures; this research has revealed that different cultures influence apology differently. Saying sorry is affected by culture and power differences, and the social and cultural context influences how power and culture are expressed and thus contributes to understanding of how culture and power impact on saying sorry and bridge pragmatic misunderstanding across cultures.

My findings have helped in magnifying the domain of inter-language and intercultural pragmatics by showing how apology has realised by Saudi L2 learners of English and influenced by L1 exposure to the target culture on their apologies. In also focusing on Australians native speakers of English, it has revealed influence of exposure to a different culture on their apologies and the influence of target culture on identity construction in the act of apology. Other findings – including the emergence of metaphors and the providing of evidence of multiple-selves – have shown that participants have positioned themselves and others while performing their apologies. The result of such discursive interactions is the identification of self. Davies and Harré (1990) claim that it is a particular self of the individual that is involved in these interactions; thus, positioning leads to a comprehension of selfhood: a participant, displaying multiple-selves in a discourse, may show themselves to be selfish, kind or angry.

This research showed that the Saudi and Australian women were similar in some cases and different from each other in other cases in terms of ‘saying sorry’ contexts and positions. It also reveals the role of cultural variability and values, and women’s power in influencing their choice of contexts and positions. It showed how apology varies between people of the same culture, and across cultures as well, and that different cultures influence apology differently and similarly as well. Those series of ‘threads’ have exemplified pragmatics in action via the positionings exhibited and the metaphors that emerged.

Such similarities and differences between the Saudi and Australian women in terms of their apology positioning are attributed to the influence of culture and women power. Identification of such differences distinguishes the Saudi and Australian cultures. The differences that occur between the same culture group reveal that such obvious differences potentially occur even among participants from the same gender and cultural background. As the study showed that the Saudi and Australian women used apology positioning sometimes similarly and other times differently, this suggest that the Saudi and Australian cultures seem to have some different and some common aspects in the way they realise apology positioning in everyday discourse.

Also, religion influenced the Saudi use of apology which reflects some aspects of their religion and cultural tradition and provides valuable insights into the Saudi daily practice of apology. Directness and confrontation distinguished the Australian apology behaviour which reveals some aspects of the Australian culture and give a picture of their daily use of apology. However, power was a distinctive feature of both the Saudi and Australian women in their apology behaviour which is a cultural effect. Demeter (2006) who investigated apologies made by Romanian speakers found that in most cases, the speakers used apologies in situations that needed maintenance of relationships; the speakers maintained their social relationships supreme and opted to have harmony amongst them by extending apologies whenever there were offences. He considered that the apology strategies used by the Romanian speakers employed in relation to politeness norms. The findings have shown that Romanian speakers prefer explicit expressions of apology which coordinate with the finding of my study as the Australian women preferred direct and explicit apology behaviour. Also, the Romanians had a preference for minimizing or denying responsibility rather than acknowledging it. This finding contradicts with my study findings as both the Saudi and Australian women took on responsibility in terms of apology behaviour.

Dalmau and Gotor (2007) who examined apology patterns among Catalan learners of English as a second language recognised that there was inter language pragmatic transfers of L1 features to L2. Qorina (2012), who also discovered that there were transfer apology features from Indonesia to English. Tuncel (2011) also found that there was a transfer of apology features from Turkish speaking respondents to English. These findings are in tandem with my study results as the Saudi women transferred L1 features while involving in their apology behaviour such as using expression of self-deficiency, e.g., and explicit self-blame and offer of repair. These features are obvious in their use of specific types of New Socio-cultural positionings such as repair and redemptive.

The findings of this study have identified the pragmatic functions, in concerning apology, of the metaphors and selves that emerged within the metaphors that I used to uniquely identify the Saudi and Australian women's narratives both in Saudi and in Australia.

Also, the results show the benefit of positioning theory in detecting the types of positionings the groups used in their apology behaviour in addition to its help in the emergence of new positionings. It also assisted in revealing the 'selves' the Saudis and Australian women were 'saying sorry', in addition to recognizing the most useful metaphors in describing the selves; and to observe the influence of women's power in the realisation and performance of their 'saying sorry'.

Most importantly, the findings of the study not only showed Saudi and Australian women's perception of the 'saying sorry' concept, but also revealed a number of their personal and special qualities and behaviour – in addition to a number of special features that were utilised by the two cultural groups of females in their positioning, and being positioned, when 'Saying sorry'.

To conclude, there are amazingly a number of crucial and worth noting points and features that characterise the use of the speech act of apology by Saudi and Australian women.

Some participants of the two cultural groups consider apology as a custom, whereas the majority viewed it as a bridge, repairing and a soothing medicine and that apology at the end is for everybody's benefit, so, they are really aware of the Benefits of saying sorry such as apology to show fairness. Also, saying sorry was a mark of respect for older people.

While some of them perceive apology as an easy act, others realise it the opposite as it makes a person vulnerable to the extent that some of them regretted their apologies. Personal disappointment and sorrow were a cause of saying sorry to others.

Above all, respect always comes first in their apology behaviour and they take on responsibility seriously.

What is considered to be a common cultural feature in their apology account is taking swearing seriously, and the power of old siblings that influence apology behaviour.

Moreover, what is a distinctive feature in both group's apology is that they lay high importance on prestige, pride, dignity, keeping a good self-image and awareness of social class. However, mercy, kindness, apology sincerity and concern for others' feelings and face needs are obvious in their apology attitude. Also, guilt accompanied by apology, self-recrimination and taking on the blame to avoid struggle, save face or out of heightened awareness of the feelings of others are obvious elements in their apology positioning.

Clash of cultures and power clash and sometimes rage; and interestingly repentance and reconciliation are distinctive qualities in the apology positioning of both groups.

Most of all, moral agency managed the apology attitude of the group which always helped in putting things in the right track. Finally, true love was a unique feature in some of apology positioning of the groups which evoked the right self and inspired the individual to set things right through apology.



With the use of positioning theory as a beneficial theoretical framework and inductive qualitative analysis as a valuable analytical tool, I anticipate that I have obtained a profound and thorough command of the diverse features and dimensions of the ‘saying sorry’ act.

The importance of this study lies in my interest to place Saudi women in the ‘spotlight’ as studies on Saudi women are so scarce. Also, what make my study unique is the investigation of women and women’s power and agency in the different cultural contexts; the way women are positioned in terms of their power and agency in Australia versus in Saudi. It is a whole new insight into the extent to which apologising and approaches to apologising and positioning over apologising is an individual personal issue as opposed to a cultural issue.

Although the study shows there are differences between the two cultural groups in terms of apology positionings, but the positionings as well as the emergent metaphors showed there are strong irreversible similarities. This reveals the international nature of the socio-cultural issues in apology, that is to say, the study of apology behavior is international and national. So, the here is discovery that there were Australians who behaved like Saudis and Saudis who behaved like Australians and I think that is surprising that there are such strong cross-cultural apologetic similarities because it is an international feeling and so I just mapped that out.

This study will enhance the literature of positioning theory by providing a new model of positioning- in terms of the speech act of apology, as it has been created from analysis and evaluation of the emergent data. It also provided an insight into how women’s power played a role in influencing apology realisation.

It is hoped that this study has made a valuable contribution to the field of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics by investigating apology realisation of Saudi L2 learners of English and influence of L1 exposure to the target culture on their apologies, as well as of Australians native speakers of English and influence of exposure to a different culture on their apologies – in addition to the influence of

target culture on identity construction in the act of apology. This is an area that has not been investigated in the literature before, as there is no reported study that has been conducted on apology made by Saudi and Australian women, precisely through the lens of positioning theory, and which for that reason might provide unique insights into the differences and similarities between (and within) Saudi and Australian women in terms of culture and as well as linguistic behaviour. Thus, I hope with the findings of this research that I have filled this gap in the literature of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. An example of the process of Inductive Data Reduction

F7 : X ✓ fx Relief or intimidative positioning?								
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	manuscript 15Jan15							
2	Comment	Construct	concept	Theme	Emergent themes	reflection 1	reflection 2	True
3		analysing	evaluating	synthesising	changing			
4								
5	Za.10 I love my country, actually, it's ... everything there. My parents, my family, my job and I feel, I miss everything there.  The most emotional situation for me was a few years ago, 2006, or 2007. That's while I was with one of my friends. When we were studying at university, I was her best friend, and she realised that in the last year, she had lots of problems at home and sometimes she called me at home, and we were spending sometimes long hours, and that caused me conflict with my family.	When Zahra was at university she had a close friend who was calling her too much and spending long hours on phone, as she had lots of problems at home, and that caused Zahra problems with her family.	A friend's pressure led to family problems. Severity of action.	Background				
6	Za.10 So I told her, "look if you will continue like this I don't want this friendship. Because you caused me many problems at home. I have a problem with my family because of your calls", sometimes she's calling at midnight. So, she said, "Okay I will stop calling you", and she didn't do it actually. She continued calling me. So I told her, "Look, I don't want this relationship anymore. So, stop it."	Zahra told her friend that if this situation would last longer than this she'd break up. Her friend promised her to stop but she didn't. So Zahra couldn't stand this pressure any more and broke up with her.	Zahra broke up with her friend as all that she gained from this friendship was headache. Power role.	Breaking up	Reflective positioning?			
7	Za.10 A few years after our separation, when we graduated from university. I told her, I saw her many times in my dreams. I didn't know if it's like guilt, or, I didn't know. So I told myself, I will call her and that was after maybe 10 years from that incident. I called her home and her mom told me, "She's married now and she has a few children", so she gave me her number. When I called her the first time, she didn't recognise me, and I told her, "Look, I want to say something to you. I saw you in my dreams, especially the last month. So I don't know if you are okay, or",	After ten years of the friends' separation, Zahra saw her in her dreams and decided to call her as she felt guilty.	Zahra called her friend out of guilt and to feel relieved.	A remedial call	Relief or intimidative positioning?	Calling at midnight isn't appropriate according to some strata of Saudi society.		
8	Za.10 So I don't know if you are okay, or",				Self positioning			
9	Za.11 She said "Yeah, I'm okay, I miss you actually. And I wish we continue to be friends again." I told her, "Okay, I want to say sorry, I'm sorry for that situation..."	Zahra apologised to her friend for the old incident and she accepted it and wished to be friends again.	Remorse led Zahra to apology and indifference led her friend to accept it easily.	A guilt-based apology	Deliberative positioning of self	Painful emotions? She apologised to get rid of the painful emotions inside her.	It's strange how she accepted the apology this fast. Maybe this is the years remedy?	



## Appendix 2. Plain Language Statement



### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

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#### You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

**A cross-cultural study of positioning in the act of apologising in English by Saudi and Australian females.**

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Ms Shatha Al Ali, as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Adjunct Professor Dr Ian Ling the College of Education at Victoria University.

---

#### Project explanation

This research will investigate the extent to which Saudi and Australian females differ from each other in terms of the contexts and positions of the apology act of 'saying sorry'. The research aims to determine the extent to which cultural variability and values, and women's power and agency influencing their choice of contexts and positions affect Saudi and Australian females in terms of their 'saying sorry'.

---

#### What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews; each interview will last for between 45 minutes and an hour. The second interview will take place approximately three months after the completion of the first interview. The interviews will be digitally audio-recorded. You will be asked questions of the following kind:

1. I would like you to think of a recent situation in which you have felt the need to say 'Sorry'. Tell me the whole story associated with your saying 'Sorry' – describe the situation in which it arose; what was said; how it was resolved.
2. What were the consequences of the resolution? Describe these consequences in detail: again, tell me the whole story of the resolution – tell me about the occasion or occasions on which this occurred; what was said; what was the outcome.

---

#### What will I gain from participating?

You will have the opportunity to participate in a cross-cultural study that is one of the first of its kind: it involves 12 tertiary educated women from both Australia and Saudi; uniquely, it explores – using the process of narrative analysis – the stories told, the speech acts employed, and the position taken by each participant as they recount various experiences of 'saying sorry'. You will be able to engage in this project, knowing that the findings will advance the understanding of cultural and gender issues between Australian and Saudi women.

---

#### How will the information I give be used?

The information that you provide will be used by me to write a PhD thesis. Later, the data may be published in journals; details of the study may be presented to groups of people at seminars and conferences. At all stages, we, the researchers will endeavour to maintain confidentiality of given information.

---

#### What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

This research does have potential social risks. The objective of the interviews is to explore the speech acts of apology and hence it is highly likely that the discussion will raise sensitive issues: it is under these circumstances that people say sorry. What is more, it is difficult to maintain absolute confidentiality; nevertheless, we, the researchers, will endeavour to maintain confidentiality by the use of pseudonyms and by the careful storing of all recordings and transcriptions of data.

## Appendices

Generally, the potential risks may be as follows:

1. You may feel upset or uncomfortable during the interview as a result of revealing some information that you consider private. You may reveal information that you think is private and then regret it.
2. You may reveal information that unacceptable in terms of your cultural norms and values.

If this is the case, I will immediately suspend the interview. You will be given time to recover then you will be asked if you wish to withdraw or whether you are willing to continue. In the case of wishing to withdraw, you will then be offered the opportunity to receive counselling from bodies such as 'Lifeline' in Australia, or a corresponding body in Saudi, should you so desire.

---

### How will this project be conducted?

You will be invited to participate in two interviews – either in Australia or in Saudi, and conducted in English, with the possibility of clarification of complex issues in Arabic for Saudi participants – that will be conducted at Victoria University Melbourne Australia or at King Faisal University, my employing university, in Saudi; alternatively, I will choose a private place that is mutually acceptable and safe for both you and me. The precise location of these interviews will be relayed to you by email, well in advance. The questions that I will ask you will be carefully phrased so as not to offend any cultural or personal values that you may hold.

Prior to each interview, you will be reminded that all information that you provide will be strictly confidential, that your anonymity is guaranteed and that you may withdraw at any time without any jeopardy. The interviews will be digitally audio-recorded; I will also take notes during each interview.

A literal transcription of the interviews will be made and copies will be emailed to you for your confirmation; you will be encouraged to make any amendments such as additions, corrections, clarifications or deletions to correct the record or to remove any information that do not wish to be revealed.

After the completion of the two interviews and having returned the draft copies, amended as you see fit, I will make no further demands of you.

---

### Who is conducting the study?

The study is conducted by Ms Shatha Al Ali and Adjunct Professor Dr Ian Ling from the College of Education, Victoria University Melbourne Australia.

The student researcher, Ms Shatha Al Ali, may be contacted by email at [Shatha.Ali@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:Shatha.Ali@live.vu.edu.au). The other member of the team is the Chief Investigator, Adjunct Professor Dr Ian Ling; he may be contacted by email at [Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au).

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone +613 9919 4781 or 4461.

## Appendix 3. Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

#### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into

**A cross-cultural study of positioning in the act of apologising in English by Saudi and Australian females.**

This research will investigate the extent to which Saudi and Australian females differ from each other in terms of the contexts and positions of their 'saying sorry'. The research aims to determine the extent to which cultural variability and values, and women's power and agency influencing their choice of contexts and positions affect Saudi and Australian females in the apology act of 'saying sorry'.

You will be asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews; each interview will last for between 45 minutes and an hour. The second interview will take place approximately three months after the completion of the first interview. Each interview will be digitally audio-recorded and we will take notes during the interview.

There are risks associated with this project. There is the possibility of some social and psychological discomfort arising as a result of your being asked to relate personal stories. If at any stage we notice that you are experiencing difficulties of any kind in responding, we will immediately stop the interview, give you time to recover your composure, and will then offer you the opportunity to withdraw from the project should you so desire. If you should choose to withdraw, we will assure that any records of the interviews made up to that time will be destroyed and will not be used in the project; similarly, we will guarantee that you will not receive any adverse consequences, either personally or professionally; at the same time, we will also offer you the opportunity to receive counselling – either in Australia or in Saudi – from trained university staff counsellors should you so desire. Should you so desire, we will offer you contact details so that you might receive counselling.

#### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, "[Click here & type participant's name]"  
of "[Click here & type participant's suburb]"

certify that I am at least 18 years old" and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

**A cross-cultural study of positioning in the act of apologising in English by Saudi and Australian females.**

being conducted at Victoria University by **Adjunct Professor Dr Ian Ling**.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

**Ms Shatha Al Ali**

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- **An initial semi-structured interview that will last for between 45 minutes and an hour.**
- **A second interview that will take place approximately three months after the completion of the first interview.**



I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

**Adjunct Professor Dr Ian Ling, phone +61 417 368 072**

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.