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**CENTRO DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y HUMANIDADES.
MAESTRÍA EN INVESTIGACIONES SOCIALES Y HUMANÍSTICAS.**

TESIS

**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MEXICAN AND GERMAN
WORK CULTURE IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY.
A CASE STUDY OF THE ADMINISTRATION LEVEL IN THE MEXICAN SUBSIDIARY
OF A GERMAN OEM.**

PRESENTA

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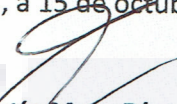Decana del Centro de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

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Para mis papás y mis hermanos por su amor y apoyo.

Para Thomas, mi compañero de vida.

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Abstract

The increasing investment of German Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) and their suppliers in Mexico causes the importance to understand the intercultural collaboration between Mexican and German professionals of the automotive industry. Based on the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the present research compares differences and similarities between the Mexican and German work culture in the automotive industry by exploring intercultural misunderstandings and their solutions in the administration level of a Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM. The sequential mixed-methods approach to the highly qualified work force shows differences as well as similarities between both groups regarding forms of communication, work task approaches, knowledge transfer, the understanding of time and language issues at the work place. These different and similar characteristics are rooted in both national cultures with their different history and they coin the day-to-day interaction of a global work force in a multinational company.

Resumen

La creciente inversión en México de los Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) y sus proveedores de origen alemán causa la importancia de la comprensión de la colaboración intercultural entre profesionales mexicanos y alemanes de la industria automotriz. Basada en el marco teórico de interaccionismo simbólico, la presente investigación compara diferencias y similitudes entre la cultura de trabajo mexicana y alemana en la industria automotriz partiendo de la exploración de malentendidos interculturales y sus soluciones en el nivel administrativo de una ubicación mexicana de un OEM alemán. La aproximación secuencial con enfoque mixto de la mano de obra altamente cualificada muestra diferencias y similitudes entre ambos grupos en cuanto a formas de comunicación, el abordage de tareas, el intercambio de conocimiento, el

concepto del tiempo y el idioma en el trabajo. Estas características diferentes y semejantes están arraigados en ambas culturas nacionales con su diferente historia y marcan la interacción diara de una mano de obra global en una empresa multinacional.

Zusammenfassung

Die zunehmende Investition von deutschen Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) und ihren Zulieferern in Mexiko begründet die Wichtigkeit des Verständnisses der interkulturellen Zusammenarbeit zwischen mexikanischen und deutschen Fachkräften in der Automobilindustrie. Ausgehend von der Perspektive des symbolischen Interaktionismus vergleicht die vorliegende Forschungsarbeit Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen der mexikanischen und deutschen Arbeitskultur in der Automobilindustrie durch die Erforschung von interkulturellen Missverständnissen und ihren Lösungen im administrativen Bereich eines mexikanischen Standorts eines deutschen OEM. Die sequenzielle Herangehensweise mit gemischten Forschungsmethoden an die hochqualifizierte Belegschaft zeigt Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen beiden Gruppen bezüglich Kommunikationsformen, Ansätzen zu Arbeitsaufträgen, Wissenstransfer, Zeitverständnis sowie Sprache am Arbeitsplatz. Die verschiedenen und gleichen Aspekte haben ihre Wurzeln in beiden nationalen Kulturen mit ihrer verschiedenen Geschichte und sie prägen die tägliche Interaktion einer globalen Belegschaft in einem multinationalen Unternehmen.

Similarities and differences between the Mexican and German

work culture in the automotive industry.

A case study of the administration level in the Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM.

1. Problem statement

The following chapter presents the research problem in a delimiting logic that parts from cultural conflicts as a broad social problem and draws the outlines in different stages to finally reach the definition of the specific research problem.

1.1   Theoretical and empirical context.

The presentation of the research problem starts with the following question: *Why is it important to study cultures?* The study of cultures has gained new attention and importance due to the changed interconnectedness of societies caused by globalization that has changed the view of a shared social space because "Over the last three decades the sheer scale and scope of global interconnectedness has become increasingly evident in every sphere, from the economic to the cultural." (McGrew, 2010, p. 16). Technological innovations like transport systems and communication rise the pace of the exchange of ideas, news, goods, information, capital, and technology around the world and these global interactions cause a two-way connection between local events and global consequences, which generates a "growing collective awareness or consciousness of the world as a shared social space (…)." (McGrew, 2010, p. 18).

McGrew (2010) defines globalization as "A historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents." (p. 19). Globalization causes the importance to study different cultures because "Rather than a more cooperative world order, contemporary globalization, in many respects, has exacerbated existing

tensions and conflicts, generating new divisions and insecurities, creating a potentially more unruly world." (McGrew, 2010, p. 22). Globalization is not only a highly uneven process because it varies in intensity and extensity between different spheres of activity; it is also highly asymmetrical and symbolizes inequality of global inclusion and exclusion (McGrew, 2010).

Different definitions of globalization stress the cultural component of the global connection. For example, Knight and de Wit (1997, cited by Jackson, 2014, pp. 4-5) "describe globalization as 'the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, (and) ideas (…) across borders"; whereas Inda and Rosaldo (2006, cited by Jackson, 2014, p. 5) consider "processes (…) that rapidly cut across national boundaries, drawing more and more of the world into webs of interconnection, integrating and stretching cultures and communities across space and time, and compressing our spatial and temporal horizons." McGrew (2010) views globalization as "a highly uneven process such that far from creating a more cooperative world it is also a significant source of global friction, instability, enmity, and conflict." (p. 15).

Critics of this growing independence of societies and cultures emphasize the loss of security of local networks, external uniformity, loss of linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, increasing economic and social inequality, as well as the unequal access to power and resources (McGrew, 2010). A fundamental aspect of Wallerstein's (2000) perspective regarding globalization is the consideration of human beings as active rather than responsive to mutations; this assumption leads to an undetermined future in which "The outcome is (…) intrinsically uncertain and, therefore, precisely open to human intervention and creativity." (p. 267).

The future, far from being inevitable and one to which there is no alternative, is being determined in this transition that has an extremely uncertain outcome. The processes that are usually meant when we speak of globalization are not in fact new at all. They have

existed for some 500 years. The choice we have to make today is not whether or not to submit to these processes but, rather, what to do when these processes crumble, as they are presently crumbling. (Wallerstein, 2000, p. 252).

Wallerstein (2000) argues that in this period of transformation, actors are not provided with already established rules but are rather inserted in a transition process; "transition not merely of a few backward countries who need to catch up with the spirit of globalization, but a transition in which the entire capitalist world system will be transformed into something else." (p. 252). Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) moreover criticize that discourses with a global point of view often result in an emphasis on explanatory (frequently technological, macro-economic or demographic) factors that are considered external forces with an impact on human beings and nations which see themselves obligated to endure them. In this "historical neo-darwinism" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2002, p. 2, own translation), people must adapt themselves to the imposed mutations; nevertheless, "the human beings don't only endure history, they also make it (…)." (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2002, p. 2, own translation). The authors therefore suggest the consideration of the distinct patterns of an individuals' dedication to actions, its subjective justification, as well as the meanings the subjects give to their actions.

Independently of the supporting or critical conception of globalization, it remains the most powerful force that shapes the world today and in the foreseeable future (Jackson, 2014). Jackson (2014) argues that "Because of globalizing forces, internationalization, transportation and technological advances, changing demographics and conflict situations, ethical intercultural communication is now more important than at any other time in the history of our planet." (p. 4). The researcher considers adaptation and thriving in unfamiliar environments, as well as the contribution to the world in a constructive and peaceful manner as important aspects of today's

learning. Through interaction with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, a person learns more about himself / herself and acquires the knowledge to discover respectful ways of building and nurturing intercultural relationships (Jackson, 2014).

Globalization led to the increase of the contact, stress and conflict between culturally diverse people and the need for everyone to "acquire the knowledge, respect and skills necessary to mediate intercultural disagreements in an effective, appropriate and peaceful manner." (Jackson 2014, p. 17). Reality shows that the diversity of opinions, values and beliefs often clash and may even lead to violence (see e.g. van Meurs & Spencer-Oatey, 2010; Neuliep, 2014) and the constant exercise of inappropriate or ineffective conflict negotiation strategies can turn minor misunderstandings into difficult and extended intercultural conflict situations (Jackson, 2014). "In the context of intercultural encounters, conflict is defined (…) as the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties from different cultures over substantive and/or relational issues." (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 360). In conclusion, the research interest has turned to cultures due to the growing interconnectedness of societies that can be the source of intercultural conflicts.

The subsequent question is: *Why is it important to study work culture?* Work and its development will always be a central topic in social discourse and will permanently constitute a principal social point of reference that orientates individuals. The fact that work has a fundamental significance for the composition of social identity establishes the reference to work culture.[1] The present research approaches work culture from the sociological perspective of

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[1] The analyzed theoretical definitions of work culture have in common to address general behavior at work as well the personal attitude towards work, which are constituted by objective aspects and subjective meanings. Work culture is influenced by values, norms and attitudes from national culture, but also has mutual influences by

symbolic interactionism that emphasizes the search for meanings and incorporates the actors and their social contexts of interaction in the study of labor identities with a focus on the analysis of social relationships at work, the daily practice and the reflexive action of the social actors.

The present comparison is theoretically framed by the concept of work culture defined as "the generation, actualization and transformation of symbolic forms in the labor activity." (Reygadas, 2002, p. 106) and the assumption that new meanings are being produced in intercultural encounters. The three-dimensional concept proposed by Reygadas (2002) parts from the meanings that become deducted in the negotiating interactions in the productive activity and their connection with culture (the symbolic), work (the material) and the context conditions. Such negotiations from the perspective of Anselm Strauss (1985) are part of a series of strategies and counterstrategies taken by the participants of the interactional process through which arrangements are worked out, maintained and reworked. The use of the concept of work developed by Strauss (1993) implies the rejection to see work from a rational point of view: The work place is not considered merely in terms of rational criteria like efficiency; to the contrary, stereotypes, social relationships, emotions, subjectivity and objective organizational conditions (overtly and covertly) interfere and must be negotiated day to day (Strauss, 1993).

The development of today's global work is characterized by distinct structural changes and corresponding conflict situations related with changes in society, economy and technology that altogether reconstitute the concept of work. Widuckel et al. (2015) consider globalization,

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organizational culture or corporate culture which refers to values, norms and practices that specifically differentiate corporations (Schein, 2010), whereas work culture refers to work and the act of work. Both definitions overlap in daily practice, but they are not equal, since corporate culture is always led by economic goals of a company and work culture by work goals and the significance of work for an individual (Widuckel et al., 2015).

flexibilization and digitalization to be the three global structural changes that build the center of

the current changes in the development process of work; Grint (2005) addressed the rise of

global capitalism as "what may be the most significant element" (p. 355) of changes in the future

of work. The concept of work is nowadays characterized with a diversity of dimensions:

different age generations, a higher percentage of female workers, sexual and racial diversity,

physical and digital presence, different languages and nationalities as well as the interaction with

artificial intelligence. The required new global work force thus includes a broader diversity with

an emphasis on "autonomy, freedom, risk, mobility, flexibility, entrepreneurship, and

innovation" (Lima & Pires, 2017, p. 774); this profile summarizes the changes in work relations

and conditions arising from technological and organizational changes in the era of flexible

capitalism in the neoliberal logic (Lima & Pires, 2017). According to Wallerstein (2000), the

world economy during the last 50 years is characterized with the relocation of sectors of

production from "now less profitable industries" (p. 256) in countries" such as "North America,

Western Europe and even Japan" (p. 255) to "semi-peripheral countries" (p. 256) with lower-

wage areas. These strategies are capitalistic reactions with the objective to limit the political

pressure that emerges because "over time in any given geographical/sectoral locality, the

workforce will seek to create some form of syndical organization and action that will enable

them to bargain more effectively either directly with the employer or indirectly via their

influence on the relevant political machinery." (Wallerstein, 2000, p. 261).

    According to Black et al. (1991), "The internationalization of the world's markets has led

to a significant increase in the cross-cultural interactions between businesspeople" (p. 291) and

the use of expatriate managers has led to large numbers of professionals who must adjust not

only to a new work culture, but also to new ways of living (Black et al., 1991).[2] Study results of CreditSuisseGroup (2014) concluded that the globalization process causes an increase of the significance of cultural differences due to the intensified interaction between cultures: The more globalization advances, the more important is the understanding of other work cultures.

The consequences of globalization on the concept of work are often displayed in relation to the implications of digitalization, because the global interaction is increasingly coined by the pace of the information flow (see e.g. Manyika et al., 2016).[3] Castells (2010) considers growing digitalization of social organization as one of the determining characteristics of the present world that has given rise to a "network society" (p. 60). Castells (2010) suggests the connection of social and technical forces: "technology is society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools." (p. 5). The World Economic Forum (2016) accordingly emphasizes the impact of technological drivers on the concept of work:

> Advanced robots with enhanced senses, dexterity, and intelligence can be more practical
>
> than human labour in manufacturing, as well as in a growing number of service jobs, such

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[2] Holden (2002) distinguishes cross-cultural research focused on comparative studies of a certain field (e.g. management) in different cultures from the term 'intercultural' which is more "concerned with interactions between people representing different cultures." (p. xix). According to Usunier (1998), the cross-cultural approach "aims to emphasize what is country specific and what is universal" (p. 9), whereas an "intercultural approach is centred on the study of interaction between business people, organizations, buyers and sellers, employees and managers, who have different national/cultural backgrounds." (p. 9). As the present research is guided by the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, it takes the intercultural perspective with a focus on interaction.

[3] Digitalization refers to "the structuring of many and diverse domains of social life around digital communication and media infrastructures" (Jensen & Craig, 2016, p. 560) and is a concept used "to discuss these macrolevel changes in social structure and practice caused by digitization." (Jensen & Craig, 2016, p. 560).

as cleaning and maintenance. Moreover, it is now possible to create cars, trucks, aircraft, and boats that are completely or partly autonomous, which could revolutionize transportation (…) as early as 2020. (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 7).

The interacting influences of "technological, socio-economic, geopolitical and demographic developments" (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 8) change the categorization of job positions and occupations and demand he need or displacement of those.[4] These changes have thus consequences on the required skills which altogether leads to a reconfiguration of common management and regulatory practices (World Economic Forum, 2016):

Application of technology has already changed when and where work is done in practically every industry as workplaces of the industrial age give way to work practices of the digital age, including remote work, flexible work and on-demand work. (World Economic Forum, 2016, pp.10-11).

The globalization process causes an increase of the significance of cultural differences due to the intensified interaction between cultures that is moreover influenced by technological innovation and flexibilization of work. These structural changes emphasize the need for a global workforce with distinct dimensions that requires an appropriate human resource management. According to the French sociologists De Gaulejac (2007) and Linhart (2015), the productive restructuring led to new forms of leadership that support the general individualization of work and degradation of work conditions and collective action. However, since transformations occur very distinctively in diverse contexts, the same principles have different local applications. De

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[4] "For example, technological disruptions such as robotics and machine learning - rather than completely replacing existing occupations and job categories - are likely to substitute specific tasks previously carried out as part of these jobs (…)." (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 19).

Paula Leite (1994), Hernández (2012) and Lauring (2011) for instance evidenced differences in response to the expressed trust or distrust by leaders in their subordinates. It is thus important to analyze local contexts to avoid the imposition of a leadership style developed and applicable in a certain context, but not necessarily adequate in another context with a different history.

Parting from the importance of work culture in this globalized work environment, the following question is: *Why study work culture in the Mexican automotive industry?* The present research approaches the phenomenon of work cultures in the Mexican automotive industry because it is characterized by globalizing tendencies (see for instance Pries, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a), an extraordinary economic growth and influential technological challenges that altogether will redefine competition strategies and corresponding work positions. Today, recovered from the global economic crisis, the Mexican automotive industry has changed drastically and developed into one of the important countries in the manufacturing and exportation of light vehicles. A market research about the Mexican automotive industry from 2014 highlighted the attractiveness of the country in the global context stating that Mexico "is on the path to become a leader in the manufacturing and exportation of light vehicles" (PWC, 2014, p. 1). "The competitive advantages Mexico has to offer in terms of supply chains, skilled labor, geographical location and preferential access to international markets has established the country as one of the world's leading vehicle producers and exporters." (ProMexico, 2016b, p. 94).

Covarrubias (2014) affirmed an "explosion of the automotive industry in Mexico" (p. 3, own translation) that is rooted in the high level of foreign direct investment by principal Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM).[5] Mexico maintained in 2016 for the third year the 7th rank in

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[5] The NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) members together produced 18.2 million vehicles in 2016, which is 19.1% of the global production, and the relative importance of Mexico in comparison to the US

the global production of automobiles with almost 3.6 million unities, representing thereby 19.8

% of the production of North America (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).

This economic increase is however considered critically when considering the previously

addressed technological innovations. "On the automotive manufacturing side (…), disruptions

such as advanced robotics, autonomous transport, 3D printing and new energy technologies will

have some of the most direct impacts on jobs of any industry." (World Economic Forum, 2016,

p. 15). Fariza (2017) argues that the current growth of the Mexican economy is endangered by

automation processes due to its competition strategy. According to the author, automation

endangers this industry model based on low-wage jobs and exportation of goods made in duty-

free zones and "poses one of the biggest threats to jobs in the 21st century. But the Mexican case

is particularly painful because of its growth model, in which competitive wages play a key role."

(Fariza, 2017, p. 1). Paraphrasing a study by McKinsey & Company (2017), Fariza (2017)

stressed the risk that with 52%, Mexico ranks seventh in the world in the percentage of jobs that

run the risk of being replaced by machines.[6]

In addition to automation processes, the industry furthermore confronts technological

developments of their products associated with security regulations and connectivity of vehicles;

protection systems and autonomous driving; changes in the social profile of mobility; as well as

environmental concerns related to the reduction of emissions and alternative resources

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and Canada has increased (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017). The automotive industry was in Mexico the industry with

mayor growth after signing NAFTA; and "Between 1994 and 2016, the indicator of the industrial activity of the

automotive sector increased 3.6 times" (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017, p. 2).

[6] See furthermore McKinsey & Company, 2017.

(Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).[7] The rapid technification of processes increases the possibility to substitute certain labor tasks, and at the same time demands a more qualified and creative workforce in the globalized context that seeks reconciliation of productivity, innovation and high labor standards (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).

Rodríguez and Sánchez (2017) included in their critical perspective the relation between Mexico's competition strategy based on low labor costs and the dependency on commercial agreements (predominantly the NAFTA). Politically challenging is the ongoing renegotiation of NAFTA (which is taking place during the time of this research) and the created pressure to relocate employment in automotive to the Unites States (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017). Rodríguez and Sánchez (2017) conclude that the present success of the Mexican automotive industry expressed in the rapid growth of production, exportation and employment, is questioned with the relocation of production sites. In summary, the Mexican automotive industry is characterized by a rapid technological transformation and the redefinition of manufacturing regulations, products and markets; these challenges demand a highly qualified and creative work force. Rodríguez and Sánchez (2017) suggest the obligation to increase the transition of the labor model based on low labor costs to a new one with better compensation and work conditions, which constitute the central elements of the development strategy of the industry.

This overview of the Mexican automotive industry provides the image of a highly growing industry based on a competition strategy that must be questioned considering the

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[7] Skilton and Hovsepia (2018) distinguished the terms that are used to summarize technological changes: Industry 4.0 is "The convergence of industrial production and information and communication technologies." (p. 10); "It is the fusion of these technologies and their interaction across the physical, digital and biological domains that make the fourth industrial revolution fundamentally different from previous revolutions." (p. 9).

present development of the global automotive industry. The population of the present research does not belong to the group of low-wage-production workers, the employees rather represent the required highly qualified workforce that is assumed to consider the influences of the industry's economic and political development.[8]

The subsequent question is then: *Why is it important to compare the Mexican and German work culture in the automotive industry?* A principal part of the displayed economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry is determined by the investment of German OEMs, which justifies the importance of the following comparison of the Mexican and German work culture. At the same time as the research was started, Mexico and Germany are celebrating the Dual Year from 2016 to 2017, which is part of a campaign called *Alliance for the Future*, an initiative established to consolidate ties between both countries. According to ProMexico (2016a), "Germany is Mexico's most important European trading partner and its fifth worldwide" (p. 6) and since 2013, several German companies have announced new investment and expansion plans.[9] According to the Mexican-German Chamber of Commerce in the last six years 600 companies with origin in Germany have been installed in Mexico, a number that represents 30% of all companies (Sánchez, 2016).[10]

The economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry and the investment of German OEMs in Mexico cause to critically analyze the consequences of international expansion

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[8] The research design includes a detailed description about the case study.

[9] Audi invests 1.3 billion USD in a new plant in San José Chiapa, BMW has announced an investment of 1 billion USD in San Luis Potosí, Daimler will be investing 1.2 billion USD in Aguascalientes (ProMexico, 2016a).

[10] Sánchez (2016) affirmed the development of seven German companies in Mexico in the period 2016-2020: ThyssenKrupp, Grünenthal, BMW, Bosch, Daimler, Kromberg & Schubert and the Volkswagen Group.

strategies on labor relations, which are nowadays characterized with an intensified interaction between employees from different cultural backgrounds. Maletzky et al. (2013) consider the international expansion of the German automotive industry a result of an extraordinary growth that adopts a second dimension because the quantitative increase requires qualitative changes with determining consequences for the leadership and control of a company. The new complexity of human resource management thus emphasizes the articulation of the labor strategy of the headquarters and the regional differences of every subsidiary.

In summary of the development of the concept of work (globalization, flexibilization and digitalization) and the present economic growth as well as the challenges of the automotive industry in Mexico, the importance of understanding different work cultures is displayed. To support the intensified interaction between Mexican and German employees due to the high investment of German OEMs in Mexico, the present research aims to identify the similarities and differences between both work cultures and as their meaningful consequences on collaboration to detect characteristics of productive collaboration.

The final question that limits the research object is: *Why is it important to study the administration level of work?* The focus on administrative work is argued with the identified shortage of this study object in academic research about the Mexican automotive industry (see chapter 2.1) and the important role of the highly qualified workforce in the current structural changes. The reflection of previous academic work evidenced an emphasis on the production level and labor relations of manual workers. The present study unit is therefore the administrative level of a Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM that started business in 2015 with administration functions in support of the production plant.

One of the main benefits of this case study is the point of time since it is realized in an

early phase of the intercultural collaboration and staff expansion: The research results about the adaption processes at the administration level can be used as point of reference for the collaboration at the production level and for other German companies that develop in Mexico. Since the increase of production is always related with the need for staff expansion, the study unit is faced with the global phenomenon of loss of talents which is particularly significant in Mexico (see e.g. Coletta, 2018).[11] The shortage of talent is increasing all over the world and vacancies that are the most difficult to occupy continue to be the certified professions (Michaels et al., 2001); in the Mexican case, the immigration of workers with superior education to the United States is explained with better labor conditions (Coletta, 2018). The results of this research can therefore be used in the training and qualification of the employees to generate individual identification with the employer in the attempt to prevent the loss of talents.

The importance to analyze the characteristics of intercultural collaboration at the administration level is furthermore justified because the negotiations between the German OEM and its Mexican suppliers are realized by managers, engineers or other professionals of the administration level. The complexity of the negotiations and work processes at the administration level require a more profound level of communication in need of intercultural awareness. The importance of research about the production level is additionally reduced due to the displayed consequences of automatization that are expressed in a need to increase the value of the workforce and a demand for training and qualification.

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[11] The term *war for talent* was introduced in 1997 by McKinsey & Company and summarizes two implications: First, the power has shifted from the corporation to the individual because "talented individuals have the negotiating leverage to ratchet up their expectations for their careers." (Michaels et al., 2001, p. 7). Secondly, excellent talent management has become a crucial source of competitive advantage (Michaels et al., 2001).

In today's work that is characterized with multiple dimensions, the appreciation of differences is required to establish a successful collaboration at every level and actually benefit from diversity. The appreciation of diversity reflects a mature vision that replies to the fear of difference, which is a characteristic property of those cultures that dedicated themselves to avoid their own evolution (Aguinis, 2005). Organizations must solve external and internal conflicts caused by cultural differences that can be dealt with by employees who interiorized intercultural competence which includes important personal competences like "toleration of ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, goal orientation, sociableness, empathy, polycentrism and the meta-communicative competence" (Kühlmann et al., 2004, cited by Deardorff, 2009, p. 219).[12]

> The easiest response to intercultural misunderstandings is avoidance; the most dangerous is to dominate the intercultural situation (…); and the most challenging is to understand the differences and their causes. This last option is slow, strenuous and difficult, to be sure, but it is the only one that guarantees continuous, mutually satisfying relations between citizens of different nations. (Schroll-Machl, 2016, p. 218).

The knowledge of another culture is important because it is a necessary step in the process of explaining incomprehensive behavior of another individual. Schroll-Machl (2016) argues that the knowledge of foreign cultures helps to see surprising behavior in a more positive light because it benefits to understand that it is indeed reasonable and sensible behavior that makes sense, once the historical background information is known.

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[12] Another characteristic is the possibility to reconsider own culture standards and those of another person. Intercultural competence consists in understanding as well as acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity (Moosmüller, 1997, cited by Deardorff, 2009).

In conclusion, the present research compares the Mexican and German work culture in the administration level during the present economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry in the attempt to identify characteristics of productive collaboration. The study is thus guided by its ultimate goal that consists in the creation of acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences at the workplace created by the knowledge about different meanings that emerge in the day-to-day interaction of coworkers with different cultural backgrounds.

1.2   Objectives.

The general objective of this research is to compare the work culture of Mexican and German employees in the automotive industry, in order to identify characteristics of productive collaboration at the administration level. The specific objectives are the following:

1. Detect similarities and differences between the Mexican and German work culture.

2. Identify the meaningful consequences of those similarities and differences on the collaboration between the employees.

3. Identify the characteristics of productive collaboration between both work cultures.

1.3   Research questions.

The general research question that leads the present study is: What are the similarities and differences between the Mexican and German work culture at the administration level?

The specific research questions are:

▪   How do the similarities and differences influence the collaboration of Mexican and German employees?

▪   What are the characteristics of productive collaboration of the two work cultures?

2. Theoretical and empirical framework

The following chapter presents the theoretical and empirical framework of the research which is divided into three parts: At first, the State of the Art provides an insight about previous research in the field; the second part presents the current economic growth of the automotive industry and the final part contains the theoretical foundation of the research.

2.1 State of the Art.

The following state-of-the-art-report is based on a bibliographic search for studies that either refer to the Mexican and German culture or to the automotive industry in Mexico. The empirical reflection provides a summary about previous academic work in this area of research, presents an introduction to the topic and identifies shortages that support the justification of this research. A variety of books, theses and articles in academic journals is identified in international as well as in Mexican and in German databases; the selection of relevant research is presented in the following order: The first part explains the pioneer studies that constitute the foundation of comparison of cultures; in the second part, specific research about work culture is analyzed; and finally, in order to establish a point of reference to the current context, the third part presents academic work and recent publications about the automotive industry in Mexico.[13]

Work culture was historically approached by three analytic interdisciplinary perspectives. In the first one, it was defined as the specific configuration of norms and social, adjustable and interchangeable meanings that characterized social areas of work. The second approach focused

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[13] The reflection is thus restricted to research that is considered relevant with regards to the study objectives, nevertheless, a broader variety of work in the context of culture and the global automotive industry is identified. See for instance Carbajal, 2012; Carrillo & Beukema, 2004; Carrillo & González, 1999; Hoshino, 2015; Pries, 1999a, 1999b, 2000b, 2000c; Pries & Seeliger, 2012; Ramalho & Santana, 2002.

on aspects related to the structural and subjective factors that guide individuals: work culture in between dominant orientations in the cultural system of a society and decisions taken by individuals in order to plan and design their working life. Third approach about worker's action showed an objective perspective that explained political and syndical participation. The principal international interpretations about work culture are based on perspectives with origins in sociological contemporary traditions of the second world war; however, the more recent development in Mexico goes back to the first years of the 1980s (Guadarrama, 1998, 2000).

The review of research about intercultural analysis identified the fact that many of the previous studies are based on the ground work of the Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede, who elaborated with his so-called *Dimensional Model of National Culture* a method that was used in many subsequent comparisons of culture. The dimensional approach to study culture has converted itself to a paradigm for empirical intercultural analysis (Hofstede, 2012). Hernández et al. (2010) emphasized the benefits and the importance of his model, referring to other authors of different disciplines that described culture using Hofstede's dimensional theory.[14] The results of Hofstede were derived from a study realized in the company IBM in the 1970s and extracted from a database that incorporated questionnaires about values of their employees in more than 70 countries. This research continues to be broadly cited and used by management scholars and despite several criticisms, Hofstede's work remains the dominant model for cross-cultural research (Venaik & Brewer, 2008).[15] "International business textbooks almost universally use the Hofstede cultural model to explain the importance of cultural differences and how to measure

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[14] See e.g. Bannenberg, 2011; Black et al., 1991; Boedeker, 2012; Latifi, 2007; Pelled & Hill, 1997; Roe & Ester, 1999; Schaffer & Riordan, 2003; Venaik & Brewer, 2008.

[15] See for example MacSweeney, 2002; Shenkar, 2001; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Javidan et al., 2006.

them." (Venaik & Brewer, 2008, p. 8). The comparison of work culture in this research critically discusses specific results of Hofstede's studies about the Mexican and German culture.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner published numerous editions of their study *Riding the Waves of Culture* using and transforming the model of Hofstede.[16] Their research addressed different cultural orientations that resulted from the participation of 30 companies with employees in 50 different countries. The focus of their studies was cultural diversity in working relations of employees and the systematization of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner has been used in subsequent academic work, because it enables efficiently the practical analysis of cultural differences that are difficult to describe.

Numerous studies have been detected in academic literature that address the German culture in comparison to other cultures.[17] To follow the objective of the present research, the review was restricted to those studies that refer to the automotive industry as well as to the comparison of the Mexican and German culture. Bannenberg (2011) presents a theoretical and empirical research using the conceptual work of Hofstede and Trompenaars to detect the demand and the practical application of intercultural development of employees in German companies of the automotive industry. Her research does not focus on the comparison of culture but concentrates on the significance of intercultural communication in the context of globalization. Bannenberg (2011) used a qualitative approach and presents relevant conclusions regarding intercultural activities in the companies studied, considering intercultural competence as an important challenge for companies and recognizing aspects of improvement in the reincorporation processes of employees that return from operations abroad and in the evaluation

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[16] See Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, 2000, 2012.

[17] See for example Brucker, 2013; Gremme 2013; Minkowa, 2009; Mirow, 2009.

of intercultural activities (Bannenberg, 2011). Even though the research does not capture the comparison of cultures, it provides several relevant results that are considered in the present study: a better understanding of the complex operation strategies of automotive companies in the context of globalization and the empirical proof of the importance of intercultural competence.

Regarding the comparison of German and Mexican culture there are two studies to be highlighted that coincide in the conclusion that they focus on negative differences between both cultural groups. Müller (2013) offers an enumeration of problems in the life of Germans living in Mexico that are related to privacy, friendship, auto-perception, perception of others and conversation. Since her research is based on the private life and does not contain aspects of work culture, it does not provide principal conclusions to the present study, but rather presents a general point of reference, because the understanding of differences in the private life might explain differences in work situations. An important theoretical reference for the present study is detected in the work of Ferres et al. (2005) who elaborated a qualification program designed particularly for German employees preparing for employment in Mexico. This manual is cited in the following comparison because it provides a range of possible differences in working life that emerged in real situations. The qualification program is based on the so-called culture standards developed by Alexander Thomas (2011), a psychological conception of culture that is also used in the present comparison.[18] The research of Ferres et al. (2005) provides relevant benefits for

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[18] Thomas et al. (2005; 2007) list five attributes of culture standards: (1) They are ways of perceiving, thinking, evaluating and acting that are considered normal, typical and binding by the majority of the members of a society; (2) the own behavior and the behavior of others is being managed, regulated and judged by those standards; (3) they function like regulations of actions in social relationships; (4) the individual and group-specific way to

the present study because it focuses on work as well as on Mexico and Germany.

Nevertheless, the negative perspective of both comparative studies is criticized (Ferres et al., 2005; Müller, 2013), which leads to a shortage of information in academic research about the solution of the expressed cultural problems. The present comparison aims to not only to identify intercultural misunderstandings, but to moreover detect aspects of problem-solving and productive collaboration. In a similar effort, the dissertation of Boedeker (2012) researched the success factors of collaboration in team work of German and Mexican employees in the automotive industry, based on the development of a method that combines systems theory with personal systems theory. The elaborated method was verified by qualitative interviews with German companies operating in Mexico. Due to the similar objective, the research is relevant to the following study; however, Boedeker (2012) only analyzed team work and does not consider other aspects of work culture.

Focusing particularly on academic research about work culture, the review detected different valuable results about theoretical conceptions of work culture, organizational culture and work values from sociological, psychological and economic points of view. Important information about the Mexican work culture and organizational culture is presented for example by Coria-Sánchez and Hyatt (2016), Guadarrama (1998, 2000), Mendoza (2010), Mendoza and Rositas (2011), Mercado and Zaragoza (2011), Montesinos and Martínez (1998) and Reygadas (1998); likewise, the German work culture is profoundly described by Schroll-Machl (2016), Thomas et al., (2005, 2007), Thomas (2011) and Widuckel et al. (2015).

According to Hofstede (1991), cultural differences manifest themselves in symbols,

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handle culture standards in the regulation of behavior varies in a certain range of tolerance; (5) behavior outside of certain range limits is rejected and punished.

heroes, rituals, and values. The core of culture is formed by values that are among the first things children learn, unconsciously and implicitly; and due to the early acquirement in life, many values remain unconscious to those who hold them and therefore cannot be discussed or directly observed by outsiders (Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede (1994) measured work-related values by the importance that people attribute to different work goals and resulted in the conclusion that "the ranking of average importance of work goals varies strongly with the respondents' occupation and education level" (p. 43). The biggest challenge for researchers to identify values is the fact that they are implicit and often unknown by the individuals themselves. It is thus difficult for individuals to talk about their own values, because expressing values implies questioning motives, emotions, and taboos (Hofstede et al., 2010). In conclusion, values are what differentiates one culture from another; thus, common values of a society define culture and culture standards, but they are also influenced by culture. Values additionally constitute the individual importance of work and for that reason they have an important influence on work culture. The cultural orientation system regulates values in the workplace:

> people who have to deal with others in business situations are usually (…) viewed within their culture as skilled professionals, judged on the basis of their past performance and successes as being ideally suited to international exchanges. Thus, both (…) are naturally convinced that their way of doing things is the right and most effective way, and they feel completely justified in accusing the other person of being difficult and counter-productive. (Schroll-Machl, 2016, p. 25).

Gahan and Abeysekera (2009) argue that research on the antecedents of work values typically uses either a cultural-level (or national identity) approach or individual-level explanations. The first of these approaches considers national culture as the key determinant of

work values, relying on the fundamental work of Hofstede, who proposed that national culture

has a significant impact on work values and behaviors. Gahan and Abeysekera (2009) examined

the effects of cultural adaptation on the relationships between national culture, individual self-

construal and work values. Their results indicated that "both national culture as well as a range

of individual level psychological and cognitive processes to shape one's self-construal resulting

in unique value structures." (Gahan & Abeysekera, 2009, p. 141).

      The literature review of academic research on work culture resulted furthermore in a

synonymous use of the distinct concepts of work culture and organizational culture. Corporate

culture or organizational culture refers to values, norms and practices that specifically

differentiate corporations or organizations (see Schein, 1985, 2004, 2010). In contrast, work

culture refers to work and the act of work, which is independent of a certain corporation or

organization. The two concepts overlap in daily practice, but they are not equal. Corporate

culture is always led by economic goals of a company, while work culture is led by work goals

and the significance of work for an individual (Widuckel et al., 2015). The present research

considers the theoretical differences between organizational culture and work culture and is

merely focused on the study of the Mexican and German work culture. Recognizing the overlaps

and mutual influences between both concepts, the present research object is work culture, which

is composed by elements that are independent of the membership to a certain organization.

      Academic literature offers distinct definitions of work culture from various disciplines.

For example, Widuckel et al. (2015) defined *work culture* as the values and norms that shape

individual and social action; also included are social relations that are built at work. These

values, norms and social relations constitute themselves in areas of conflicts, because they

express different needs, interests and non-simultaneities (Widuckel et al., 2015). Volti (2008)

used the term *workplace culture* to stress the component related to the location, because the workplace is more than the location to accomplish work-related tasks and earn a salary, it is also a "repository of values, attitudes, norms, and accepted procedures. In short, it has a culture" (p. 215). Work culture defined by Lotze (2004) has two different meanings. The first one is "the environment in which work happens" (p. 10), described as a "set of assumptions, understandings, and beliefs shared by a working community that manifests itself with clear and distinct patterns of interaction in a particular workplace." (p. 11). The second meaning is the "common sense that workers bring to work" (p. 11) that consists of shared attitudes towards work, beliefs about work in general, expectations about behavior at work, rituals and traditions of work (Lotze, 2004).

Sandoval (2003) described *cultura laboral* as an adaptive form or cultural system that interacts with its environment and concluded in the connection of work culture with corporate culture and culture of laborers. According to Bañares (1994), *cultura laboral* is observed in the relationship between the person and the result (a product or a device), but also between the person and its community. It can be detected in the social character of work and in feedback at a personal and collective level; at the individual level, work culture is detected in the way a person contributes something of its own to the organization.

Reygadas (1998) argued that characterizing the work culture of a society is without doubt a very difficult task because of the internal diversity of each nation, the changes that experienced a culture, the mixtures and intersections that exist in different national cultures and the subjective character of every cultural phenomenon. It is mostly inevitable to go back to stereotypes and generalizations, or to limit oneself to certain variables (Reygadas, 1998).[19] Paraphrasing Béjar

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[19] Reygadas (2002) criticizes the stereotypes used in the comparison of labor cultures that demonstrate differences between the national cultures to either praise the supposedly productive virtues of Western or Japanese

(1988), Reygadas (1998) justifies the use of stereotypes in the study of work culture: It is

extremely useful in the study of a national character to consider factors that configure a mental

image, because this helps the researcher to define the context or the situation in which the images

surge. It is obvious that this refers to national stereotypes that can indirectly provide

approximations to other manifestations of behavior, because they are inseparably connected to

behavior. Stereotypes have psychological functions that form part of the personality and they

have an influence on personality; it is therefore essential to consider national stereotypes as

aspects to study since they are instruments of thinking (Béjar, 1988, cited by Reygadas, 1998).

Resuming the development in the study field Sociology of Work in general, Guadarrama

(2000) detected a displacement of the technical-productive focus with the symbolic-expressive

elements of the world of production. The center of the study from the perspective of symbolic

interactionism is the daily experience and the reflexive action of the social actors, as well as a

more fluid relation between the internal and external worlds of work. More recent studies in

Mexico considered work culture as a composition of general principles of the dominant

production models and local work cultures, which result from local cultures. Today's work

culture is characterized by the process of globalization of current societies and by an

interdisciplinary cultural focus, which was inexistent when workers' culture was first spoken

about in the middle of the 20th century (Guadarrama, 2000).

Particularly in Mexico, the interest to study labor is based on a combination of

approaches orientated to highlight the fundamental elements of the so-called "cultura obrera"

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cultures or condemn the habits of other populations with supposedly harmful effects on discipline and quality; many

studies about organizational culture are thus covered by common-sense narratives about a good and a bad worker.

(Sánchez & Pérez, 2006, p. 139) which is the culture of production workers.[20] Mendoza (2010) stated that research about the production workers in Mexico originally concentrated (amongst others) on the following elements: characteristics and motives of the worker; work and its organization; personal investment to work; results and rewards of work; as well as attitudes that result from current conditions (see also De la Cerda & Núñez, 1996). Rooted in anthropology, researchers tried to highlight the relevance of culture as a key element to understand the complex processes that favour the conformation of identities of production workers (Sánchez & Pérez, 2006). This approach enabled the researchers to analyze culture parting from the own action field of the subjects; hence, the production worker had finished to be an abstract individual who is entirely subsumed by the weight of the structures, and was converted into a human being that creates meanings. This fundamental assumption led to different theoretical reflections about the reationship between work and culture (Sánchez & Pérez, 2006).

Work culture according to Guadarrama (1998) is a multiform concept that attends diverse practices of workers and their areas of social and institutional meaning and is considered a product of individual values towards work, personal ways of dealing with things in general, particular relations with faith systems and predominant values of the society. The *cultures of work* are thus multiples, and a reflection of the world of social relations, interconnected by the fact that work acquires multiple dimensions in space and time in the life of a person: work as a

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[20] According to Reygadas (2002), the influence of work on the processes of constructing meanings is present in Marxism as the theoretical base of many Mexican studies in the field of Sociology of Work, which have almost exclusively focused on the social class of production workers (cultura obrera). He suggests that research should nowadays expand the possibilities of analysis to enable the inclusion of distinct types of individual or collective subjects, rather than only focusing on the class of production workers.

social meaning, work as the exercise of liberty and creativity, work as a sentiment and obligation (Guadarrama, 1998). Guadarrama (2000) also understands work culture as the concern for meanings of work in the social life, the study of systematic forces to understand symbolism and significations of work. Work culture attempts to explain technological and organizational changes at work from a cultural perspective that is derived from history, sociology, anthropology and social psychology. Studies of labor culture analyze diverse topics: the symbolic content of work processes, the orientation of individuals towards work, the construction of labor and occupational identities, the relations between a dominant culture and workers' culture, as well as the ideology of the company and its social extension.

Mendoza and Rositas (2011) stated that the principal objective of the study of work culture is the identification of the symbolic and significant aspects of the work that consist in the orientation of the individual towards his/her work. This individual orientation is understood as a reflexive action that contrasts the material, technological and organizational aspects of work, which all are determined by the context in which this culture develops. The specific context of work influences significantly opinions, values, beliefs and ways of thinking of workers about their work and the employer (Mendoza & Rositas, 2011). According to Mendoza (2010), the complex reality requires to emphasize the relationship between the material level and this culture, as well as the way in which the material level is reflected in rules, processes and other work tasks. The study of culture at work requires to address the social practices in the organization, because they are the base of the cultural elements that are reproduced. This approach enables to consider the social practices as an anchor of the represented abstractions of values and beliefs which causes the necessity to focus on the processes that establish the meanings produced in the social interaction at work (Mendoza, 2010).

Resuming the distinct concepts, a variety of different definitions of work culture is detected. The aspect that they have in common is the understanding of work culture as general behavior at work and the personal attitude towards work, which is constituted by objective aspects and subjective meanings. Objective and general aspects that influence work culture are for instance working hours; production processes; organizational hierarchy; salary conditions as well as forms of regulation. Personal, subjective influences can be observed for example in perceived contribution to work goals; forms of collaboration; the significance of work if life; perceived employment security; forms of leadership and learning possibilities. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism and the conception of culture as systems of meanings, the daily work behavior is determined by the meanings the subject attributes to his work.

This research is guided by the definition of work culture as "the generation, actualization and transformation of symbolic forms in the labor activity." (Reygadas, 2002, p. 106). Reygadas (2002) emphasizes the important role of the meanings that become deducted from the productive activity they allow to discover the connections between the culture and the work.[21]

The presented research results about work culture are in summary based on observations of daily work experience as well as on questionnaires and qualitative interviews in companies.[22] The reviewed studies however do not specifically present comparisons of work cultures. Furthermore, the literature review of academic research on work culture resulted in a

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[21] The three-dimensional concept is presented in detail in the theoretical framework.

[22] The presented results were summarized from the work of Bañares, 1994; Barclay, 2015; de la Garza-Carranza et al., 2011; Elo et al., 2015; Gahan & Abeysekera, 2009; Hall, 1959; Hernández, 2007; Klein, 2008; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Lotze, 2008; Schein, 1985, 2004, 2010; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Shenkar, 2011; Stammerjohan et al., 2015; Widuckel et al., 2015.

synonymous use of the distinct concepts of work culture and organizational culture. The main

shortage of academic research is detected in the comparison of work cultures of different nations.

Both, the manual for German employees by Ferres et al. (2005) and the comparison of team

work by Boedeker (2012) include only certain aspects, they also do not present a broad

comparison of the German and Mexican work culture. Thus, no comparison of work behavior of

the two nations was found; a conclusion that justifies the importance of the present research.

The final part of the critical review captures relevant academic work about the Mexican

automotive industry that provides a necessary antecedent of the current economic growth and its

principal discussions regarding labor relations and employment. Numerous studies about work

processes, labor unions and technology in the Mexican automotive industry have been realized

and different automotive companies have been researched. The economic rise of the industry in

the 1990s led to various studies which coincide in two aspects: They researched a certain

Mexican plant of international automotive companies and analyzed the production level, focused

on labor relations of production workers.[23] Montiel (1991, 2001) for instance studied production

processes, labor unions and consequences of restructuration in the companies Volkswagen de

México, Ford and Nissan. The results about new forms of work organization and changes

experienced by workers were derived from participant observations in the plants and identified

effects of new forms of work organization on various aspects of work culture (Montiel, 2001).

Interesting research regarding labor relations in the Mexican automotive industry was

developed by Arteaga (1992, 2003), who also analyzed the incorporation of new forms of work

organization in the plants of General Motors and FORD in the 1990s. His main conclusion

consisted in the transformation of labor relations as a result of Japanese production methods, that

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[23] See Arteaga, 2003; Carrillo & González, 1998; Sandoval, 2003; Sandoval & Wong-González, 2005.

introduced severity and labor flexibility. Processes of flexibilization were considered the principal element of labor relations in the industry and the technological component as key factor in the transformation of the sector (Arteaga, 2003). These studies are relevant to the present research because they provide the historical periodization about the evolution of the automotive industry in Mexico; nevertheless, Arteaga and Montiel only analyzed work processes and labor relations at the production level and did not include an analysis of the administration level.

The researchers Carrillo and González (1998) provided a summary about the strategies and supplier relations of three German companies in Mexico. Their academic work is particularly relevant for the present research because they described the rise of the automotive industry in Mexico in the 1990s that facilitates the understanding of the current increase. According to the authors, the economic growth was fundamentally based on the competitive strategies of the automotive companies and the governmental politics of opening, deregulation and encouragement of direct investment from abroad (Carrillo & González, 1998).

The German professor Pries is the coordinator of several studies about the automotive industry in Germany and Mexico.[24] He published numerous articles about the competitive strategies of automotive companies in the global context and the economic relations between the two nations in the industry. Pries (1998) concluded in the existence of two poles in the automotive industry in Mexico in the 1980s: new, highly productive plants with critical working conditions in the north of Mexico and old plants with overdue levels of productivity, but much better working conditions in the center of Mexico. The 1990s are described with an approach of the two poles to the opposite position and a downward homogenization of working conditions: a convergence of labor and contractual conditions that reflect upgrading in the northern plants and

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[24] See for instance Pries, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Pries & Seeliger, 2012.

downgrading in the plants in the center of the country (Pries, 1998). With the example of

Volkswagen de México in Puebla, Pries emphasizes the important role that an OEM involucrates

in its region by representing the center of location of its suppliers.

With his case study about FORD Hermosillo, Sandoval (2003) was the first researcher to

introduce cultural aspects in his analysis of productive transformations. He concluded in an

identified shock between co-nationals from the same region who are confronted with different

interpretations of how to practically apply norms or standard work procedures that are imported

from a different country. The presented differences and are neither based on gender, ethics or

nationalities (because there are almost no foreign managers), nor on the confrontation between

individual and collective culture; they are rather based on several ways of facing and evaluating

systems of work, that are determined by hierarchic differences and education. FORD is one of

the examples that refers to the cultural diversity that is present in the Mexican automotive that

reflects current globalizing tendencies leading to a cultural homogenization, caused by its close

affiliation with universal models of industrial organization (Sandoval, 2003).

In contrast to the previous studies, Hernández (2007) approached the management level

with her analysis of strategies of Mexican business owners in the *maquila* industry.[25] She

concluded that the decision-making process and manager actions are influenced by structural

factors as well as individual, social and organizational factors. A diversity of business subjects is

present in the decision-making process, which are partly characterized by diverse subjectivities

and formed by culture and power relations (Hernández, 2007). The application of the concept of

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[25] "Maquila, thus defined, means a process that describes a broad industry involving a wide variety of

goods and services. The modern maquiladoras constitute assembly operations for products which, after processing,

are re-exported to the U.S. and other countries." (Hansen, 2003, p. 1).

Subjective Configuration allowed Hernández (2007) to research the agreement of subjective codes that were present in the business decisions: From this perspective, the researcher seeks to identify, interpret and understand the subjective sense and the cultural factors that influence the social actors in organizational and labor decisions (Hernández, 2007).

Carrillo and García (2009) offer an interesting description of the whole industry that is considered the point of reference for the present research. The authors described the situation during the context of the economic crisis of the industry that caused a worldwide reduction of demand.[26] The crisis was considered a strong setback for the Mexican economy and three American OEM the principal source of the direct foreign investment and employment in Mexico.

Regarding the role of Mexico during the crises, Covarrubias (2012) placed the critical question "Hacia dónde se dirige la industria en el plazo mediato - ya no digamos en el largo plazo?" (p. 248) but could not provide a simple response. He affirmed that the majority of the corporations operating in Mexico during the years 2008-2010 did not only not cancel their plans of anticipated investment, they even created new future projects. US-companies invested in plant openings or expansions in Mexico which was a development in contrast to other reduction activities in other parts of the world. Covarrubias (2012) answered his question with the reaffirmation of the strategic location of Mexico in the market focused on the North-American region: The importance of Mexico grew in the global crisis due to low labor costs, the specialization in the sector of compact cars and its high reliability as a platform of exportation.

Today, recovered from the global economic crisis, the Mexican automotive industry has changed drastically and developed into one of the important countries in the manufacturing and exportation of light vehicles. The high level of foreign direct investment in the sector in recent

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[26] See furthermore Bracamonte & Contreras, 2008; Carrillo & García, 2009.

years evidences the important role of Mexico in the international context; Covarrubias (2014) even expressed an "explosion of the automotive industry in Mexico" (p. 3, own translation), caused by the continuous and extensive investments of the principal OEMs.

Rodríguez and Sánchez (2017) present recent statistical data of the Mexican automotive industry 2016 and continue to call the industry "one of the mayor economic successes in the regional integration." (p. 1, own translation). The NAFTA members together produced 18.2 million vehicles in 2016, and the relative importance of Mexico in comparison to the US and Canada has increased (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017). The automotive industry was in Mexico the industry with mayor growth after signing NAFTA; and "Between 1994 and 2016, the indicator of the industrial activity of the automotive sector increased 3.6 times" (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017, p. 2, own translation). In 2016, the automotive industry represented 3.2 % of the Gross National Product (GNP), 18.9% of the GNP corresponding to the manufacturing industry, as well as 30,3% of the total exportations of Mexico (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).

A principal part of this economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry is determined by the investment of German OEMs, which justifies the comparison of the Mexican and German work culture. Papageorgiou (2013) listed as general arguments for German companies to invest in Mexico the strategic position between North- and Latin-America, the promising domestic market, the growing GNP and the demographic conditions (only 6,6% of the population is older than 64 years). "In the year 2011, Mexico imported goods with a value of 7,6 billion € from Germany and exported 4,3 billion €, which makes Germany the most important European trading partner of Mexico." (Papageorgiou, 2013, pp. 23-24, own translation).

The current economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry is however questioned when considering the competition strategy based on low-wage production workers. According to

Fariza (2017), technological advances in automation endangers the industry model based on low-wage jobs and exportation of goods made in duty-free zones. Rodríguez and Sánchez (2017) in accordance argue that Mexico's competition strategy must be rethought due to the technological and political transformation of the global automotive industry: The rapid technification of processes increases the possibility to substitute certain labor tasks and at the same time demands a more qualified and creative workforce in the globalized context that seeks reconciliation of productivity, innovation and high labor standards. In addition to the possible renegotiation of NAFTA, the current development obligates the transition of the labor model based on low labor costs to a new one with better compensation and work conditions, which constitute the central elements of the development strategy of the industry (Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).

This overview of the Mexican automotive industry provides the image of a highly growing industry based on the experienced success of certain conditions. However, this competition strategy must be questioned analyzing the current development of the global automotive industry (see Fariza, 2017; Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017). The current open questions are rather oriented to the future: How will the economic situation of the industry continue? How will the manufacturers in Mexico react to technological and political challenges? In a broader social context emerges the question: How do these strategic questions influence the labor relations between employees working in the automotive industry? The population of the present research is not part of the low-wage-production workers; the employees rather represent the addressed highly qualified workforce that considers the strategic development of the industry and is thus confronted with an uncertainty about the future (see e.g. Webster et al., 2008).[27]

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[27] The research subjects have a professional trajectory that includes superior education, international work experience and formal work conditions. It is therefore important to consider that the study participants represent a

Resuming the reflection of academic research, the following conclusions for the present research are highlighted: Primarily the importance of the dimensional model of Hofstede, due to its application in numerous studies (in different disciplines) about cross-cultural comparisons. Furthermore, comparisons of cultures are on the one hand often based on certain aspects of culture and not on culture in total; and on the other hand, many studies present a negative perspective focused on problems. This perception also applies to research about work culture, which resulted in a shortage of comparisons between nations; accordingly, no study was found that offers a broad comparison about the Mexican and German work culture.

Referring to research about the automotive industry in Mexico, the need to compare the current rise of the industry to the economic growth in the 1990s is detected. A critical analysis of the competition model of the industry leads to question the influences of the current economic and political uncertainties on labor relations. The investment plans of important German OEMs in Mexico justify the focus on labor relations between Mexican and German employees. The reflected studies about the Mexican automotive industry coincide moreover in the fact that only the production level was analyzed; no research was found that described labor relations and work processes at the administration level which reveals another important research shortage.

The importance to analyze characteristics of the administration level is concluded due to various reasons. Primarily, the results can be used as a first reference point before the start of production, which can be followed by subsequent research that studies work culture at the

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small portion of the Mexican population which is considered privileged in comparison to the large part of people in informal work with precarious work conditions: The non-compliance of labor rights, low levels of compensation, labor instability and a part of the population forced to create own jobs, reduce the possibilities of civic inclusion of the workers are expressions of the social inequality in Mexico (Cortés & de Oliviera, 2010).

production level after the production start. Furthermore, the results benefit the relationships and communication between employees of the German OEM and its Mexican suppliers because negotiations are realized by managers, engineers or other professionals of the administration level. The analysis of the production level is losing its importance in consideration of technological innovation because the consequence of automation is a demand for training and qualification due to high requirements of the design and operation of automatized machinery.

2.2 Theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework constitutes the foundation of the comparison of the work cultures, which is guided by the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism. The following chapter is divided into two parts: at first, the theoretical definition of work culture is explained; the second part presents the approach to intercultural encounters with the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

2.2.1 *The definition of work culture.*

The present research applies the definition of work culture developed by Reygadas (2002) and thus parts from the negotiations and conflicts in the work interaction in order to understand the specific cultural expressions, that are present in the local context about work at the administration level. The Mexican anthropologist developed his concept of work culture which is coherent with the historical-semiotic perspective of culture: the vision of culture as a process of production, transmission and appropriation of meanings in specific historical and social contexts.[28] The researcher assumes that the material production cannot be disconnected from the

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[28] An important semiotic concept is for instance the one of Geertz (1973) who argues that "(…) man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning." (p. 5).

symbolic production at work, the research task is thus to capture this intersection between the symbolic and the productive elements in the space of relations. Reygadas (2002) defines work culture as "the generation, actualization and transformation of symbolic forms in the labor activity" (p. 106) that requires a three-dimensional analysis of the connections between culture and work: (1) To study the ways in which the labor process affects the production of meanings (*symbolic efficiency of work*); (2) to analyze the influences of culture on the development of the productive activity (*labor efficiency of culture*); (3) to consider that the processes are mediated by conflict and negotiation that occur during the exercise of work and are involved in much broader social and cultural structures (see figure 1).[29]

Figura 4. *Las tres dimensiones de la cultura del trabajo*

EFICACIA SIMBÓLICA DEL TRABAJO

TRABAJO — interacción de los agentes productivos — CULTURA

EFICACIA LABORAL DE LA CULTURA
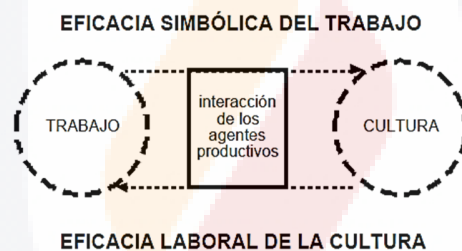
Figure 1. The three dimensions of work culture. Reprinted from Producción simbólica y producción material: metáforas y conceptos en torno a la cultura del trabajo (p. 118) by Reygadas, 2002, *Nueva Antropología, 18*(60), Mexico. Copyright 2002 by Reygadas.

The first dimension represents the influence from the productive to the symbolic, the influence of labor activity on ideas, representations, values, norms and habits of the productive

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The concept of symbolic action indicates that cultural symbols are needed as orientation and this orientation system is included in the system of meaning of any culture (Geertz, 1973).

[29] Reygadas (2002) suggests to support the three-dimensional study of work culture with concepts from the research fields Sociology of Work, industrial and business anthropology as well as organizational theory; complemented with the use and critics of metaphors, analogies, narratives, models and stereotypes.

agents and society as a whole, which Reygadas (2002) labeled "symbolic efficiency of work" (p. 106, own translation). The productive subjects export or transfer representations, norms and values from their work towards other spheres of their life; there is a movement of symbolic creation that parts from the sphere of production and is distributed towards other instances of society. Labor activity is thus always accompanied by symbolic construction because the subjects initiate relations with themselves, with other subjects and with distinct objects, thereby actualizing, interpreting and producing meanings with the use of symbols during work.

The second dimension of work culture refers to the influence from the symbolic to the productive; the influence of culture on production which is named "labor efficiency of culture" (Reygadas, 2002, p. 109, own translation). This process describes the reverse phenomenon, because it is the import of the combination of social to productive activity. For Reygadas (2002), research of this second dimension requires the exploration of the meanings of work, the value given to work and its products, as well as the place the productive activity occupies in the world view of a social group.[30] It is also necessary to study the effects of culture on the productive environment, because the subjects carry "symbolic resources" (Reygadas, 2002, p. 113, own translation) to their workplaces that contribute to form their activity and the dynamics of their relations at work. In the production of meanings towards their labor activity, the agents can rely on a broader symbolic capital and on values of their culture that are not reduced to images about work, but rather include diverse symbols related to morality, justice, gender etc.[31]

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[30] The cultural determinations on the productive activity include the representations towards work because every society has images, visions, conceptions, attitudes and values towards work (Reygadas, 2002).

[31] Reygadas (2002) proposes both dimensions to avoid cultural determinism that is often found in the overestimation of cultural influences on work processes. Because work is not only determined by culture, but also

According to Reygadas (2002), the import of meanings towards work as well as the export of those from the labor process pass necessarily through the interactions of subjects. The intersection between culture and work is not produced between those two ethereal, empty or abstract entities, it rather occurs in the relations that the subjects initiate between themselves and with work objects. In these interactions,

- the meanings are produced and adapted;
- the previous culture is actualized and affects work;
- the development of the labor activity generates new meanings that the subjects can afterwards transfer to other areas of activity.

The third dimension of work culture implies to analyze the interactions in the work process, which are implemented in the combination of the global structure of power relations between the agents in the workplace. Because the relation between the material and the expressive elements of work is mediated by the dimension of power, its study implies to consider the resources that control the agents participating in the productive process, as well as the political dynamics that interfere in it. From this perspective, not only the variety of negotiations between the productive agents is addressed, but also the structures of meanings that result from the combination of their interactions (Reygadas, 2002).

According to Reygadas (2002), dramaturgical approaches within symbolic interactionism are one of the perspectives to explain face-to-face interactions by using the theatre metaphor and considering social agents as actors that -in front of others- represent a role that corresponds to a

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by technical, economic and political (and other) factors, the strengthening or limiting influence of those on the reciprocal determination between work and culture needs to be included. Work culture is not a mere reactive response to labor conditions and cultural changes can or cannot modify the way of working.

script. Reygadas (2002) argues that irrespective of the theoretical approach, the analysis of the daily-life disputes and negotiations in the work process is fundamental to understand the intersection between the symbolic and cultural determinations in the workplace. Furthermore, the analysis requires to consider that the micro-social level of the interaction is inserted within broader institutions and within the social and cultural context.

2.2.2   *Approaching intercultural encounters with symbolic interactionism.*

Symbolic interactionism is one of the sociological approaches particularly concerned with the meaning of social action; as a scholar, it "was developed to understand the operation of society from the 'bottom up,' shifting the focus to micro-level processes that emerge during face-to-face encounters in order to explain the operation of society." (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p. 1). Symbolic interactionism takes the subjective meaning that individuals attribute to their activities and environment as empirical starting point (Blumer, 1969; Carter & Fuller, 2015, 2016; Flick, 2009). A central idea of symbolic interactionism is that individuals use language and significant symbols in their communication with others; in consequence, the research focus turns to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective, rather than addressing how common social institutions define and impact individuals. Symbolic interactionists emphasize subjective meaning over the objective structure of social interaction, because the meaningful interactions among individuals come to define the construction of a society (Blumer, 1969; Carter & Fuller, 2015; Flick, 2009). Blumer (1969) defined the three basic premises of symbolic interactionism:

1. "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them." (p. 2).

2. "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows." (p. 2).

3. "the use of meanings by the actor occurs through a process of interpretation." (p. 5).

Symbolic interactionism assumes that human groups or societies "exist in action and must be seen in terms of action." (Blumer, 1969, p. 6); whereas the action itself consists "of the multitudinous activities that the individuals perform in their life as they encounter one another and as they deal with the succession of situations confronting them." (p. 6). The practical implication for the present research is that culture derives from the action of persons and human group life must be considered as "a formative process and not a mere arena for the expression of pre-existing factors." (p. 10). Thus, behavior at work cannot be considered unchangable and stable, it is rather to be seen in a dynamic and ductile pattern because work culture also forms and impacts national culture; it is not merely a one-way influence.

Furthermore, symbolic interactionism understands social interaction as "a process that *forms* human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct." (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). Blumer (1969) distinguishes between two types of social interaction: the first one called "non-symbolic interaction" (p. 8) is found "when one responds directly to the action of another without interpreting that action" (p. 8); the second one called "symbolic interaction" applies when the social actors seek "to understand the meaning of each other's action" (p. 9). Regarding the analysis of work culture, this perspective implies that the worker acts in dependence of his interpretation of the situation; the actor is thus not merely guided by the unconscious cultural patterns but rather has the possibility to act voluntarily.

Human action according to Blumer (1969) consists of perceiving various things and designing a line of conduct on the basis of its interpretation. The social actor ascertains the

meaning of the actions of others and designs his own lines of action in the light of such

interpretation, constructing and guiding his action in response to factors operating through him.

This view of human action applies equally well to joint or collective action which consists of

individuals fitting their lines of action to one another (Blumer, 1969). "Joint or collective action

is an outcome of such a process of interpretative interaction." (Blumer, 1969, p. 16). The study

of work cultures thus must recognize the individual interpretation processes because action is

built based on "what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kind of

projected lines of action they map out." (Blumer, 1969, p. 16).

The study of work culture recognizes the existence of recurrent patterns of joint actions

that "are repetitive and stable" (Blumer, 1969, p. 17), because "In most situations in which

people act toward one another they have in advance a firm understanding of how to act and of

how other people will act." (p. 17). The shared common and pre-established meanings of what is

expected in the action of the participants guide the own behavior; however, this is precisely the

knowledge that is missing in the situation of intercultural misunderstandings. The present study

recognizes the cultural patterns and their influence on behavior at work; nevertheless, these

patterns may change in distinct social interactions. Every instance of newly formed or long

established joint action necessarily carries the background of previous actions of the participants

and the social subjects bring their world of objects, sets of meanings, and interpretation.

Symbolic interactionism views people as engaged in ongoing action in which lines of actions are

developed in the encountered situations and the meanings that are produced and since people are

clustered into different groups, they "accordingly approach each other differently, live in

different worlds, and guide themselves by different sets of meanings." (Blumer, 1969, p. 21).

Guided by the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism, the present research

parts from the interactions at work that are trespassed by negotiations and framed by context conditions (Reygadas, 2002). In the present research unit, these interactions are considered intercultural encounters that reveal differences between work cultures. Goffman (1956) offers a definition of the expression *encounter*, considering face-to-face interaction

> as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another 's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence. An interaction may be defined as all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another's continuous presence; the term 'an encounter' would do as well (p. 8).

The face-to-face encounter in the present research no longer implies the physical presence but rather includes all forms of digital encounters of two or more individuals. According to Fisher et al. (2008), "Intercultural encounters occur in many different contexts such as working in diverse teams, working as an expatriate or working in a trans-global organization." (p. 311). In a practical definition, an intercultural encounter is understood as the moment in which a worker questions himself with the concern "*I do not understand why my coworker is doing this.*" The key to this moment of questioning is that although the individual does understand the certain action, he or she does not understand its meaning and therefore asks why the other person acts this way, in search for the reason and intention of the action.

This moment of questioning is the starting point of the analysis of work culture; differences are visible in the very moment in which a person does not understand the action of another person. In an intercultural encounter, the individual observes an action, but does not understand what the action means to the other person. It is thus the meeting of different

meanings given to the same action.[32] In contrast to the encounter of people from the same culture, when people from different cultures meet in significant circumstances, a situation of cultural overlapping or intersection develops, in which the acting persons cannot count anymore with a commonly shared background knowledge (Thomas, 2011). In consequence, individuals turn to different points of reference in order to be able to interpret and evaluate actions and reactions of their counterparts and to control their own actions.

Schroll-Machl (2016) explained the process of dealing with intercultural encounters at the workplace in two steps: First, the individual tries to explain and understand the different and disturbing behavior of the other person imagining of how he himself would interpret the situation in his own culture, using his own culture standards as point of reference. This process of imagination considers the available information about the other persons' culture, which consists most of the time of prejudices and stereotypes. In a second step follows the correction process, in which the individual aims to correct the unexpected effect of his behavior on the other person (Schroll-Machl, 2016). The concept of socialization answers the subsequent question by explaining why an individual supposes that his actions are the *right* ones and the other person behaves in the supposedly *wrong* way (Goffman, 1983).

Reygadas (2002) proposed to study work culture parting from the daily interaction at work. The present comparison of work cultures understands intercultural encounters as these moments of interaction between employees from different cultural backgrounds, in which one action has different meanings for workers. These moments of questioning are considered the starting point of negotiations and learning processes; they are used in the common search for a

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[32] According to Thomas (2011), research about the development of intercultural competence has shown that particularly culture-caused critical interaction situations are useful to start a learning process.

solution that is supposed to lead to productive collaboration between workers from different

cultural backgrounds. The present research approaches these intercultural encounters with the use

of the theoretical concepts of Goffman and Strauss who are both considered important

representatives of the symbolic interactionism.[33]

The Canadian sociologist Goffman (1974) suggested that subjects are guided by frames

of reference and always perform a certain role (Goffman, 1956); both aspects are essential to

understand the social interaction order (Goffman, 1983). Goffman (1956) used the metaphor of a

theatrical performance as a framework to describe how actors present themselves to others and to

explain how they attempt to control others' impressions to be seen positively. He found a variety

of strategies that actors use in face-to-face interactions to manage impressions. For Goffman

(1956), life is like a theatre representation that consists in performances with actors and

audience, whereas the represented in the scene is conceived as real. Goffman (1956) understands

the masks used by actors to realize this representation as typifications that stereotype social roles

with the supposition of preexisting norms and rules of action which the individuals must fulfill in

their acting (Mercado & Zaragoza, 2011).

The dramaturgical theory is considered in the present research due to Goffman's

emphasis on the individuals' interpretation process in the exercise of every interaction. From this

point of view, the subject finishes to be assumed as a passive actor that modernizes the norms

and values of the society, to be conceived as an open human being provided with the creativity

that he produces (not only reproduces) to the society in his daily acting. Goffman's concept thus

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[33] Carter and Fuller (2015) describe Goffman as a representative of dramaturgical analysis and as "One of

the most important symbolic interactionist theorists of the classical era (…) though some might hesitate to classify

his work as representing purely an interactionist standpoint." (p. 6).

supports the proposal of Reygadas (2002) to study work culture recognizing that the social actors

generate, actualize and transform their meanings within global social structures. Goffman also

recognizes the existence of large social structures, however affirms that they suffer

transformations in the interactive process. Goffman (1956) proposed an important

interdisciplinary view to "bring into one framework the concepts and findings derived from three

different areas of inquiry: the individual personality, social interaction, and society." (p. 155).

In the understanding of Goffman (1974), social interaction is made meaningful by frames.

A frame is considered "a way of organizing experiences: it is one of the means whereby people

identify the kind of activity that is taking place." (Fine & Manning, 2000, p. 53); in consequence,

frame analysis "is defined as the study of the "organization of experience," each frame of which

is a principle of that organization" (Goffman, 1974, p. 11). Primary frameworks are the most

fundamental frames which are either natural (involving physical events) or social (involving

human intervention) (Goffman, 1974). Goffman's conception of frames bears resemblance to

what Blumer (1969) called joint action, in which the previous experience of individuals obtains

an important role in difficult situations, for example in intercultural encounters at work:

> In the fact of radically different and stressful situations people may be led to develop new
>
> forms of joint action that are markedly different from those in which they have previously
>
> engaged, yet even in such cases there is always some connection and continuity with
>
> what went on before. One cannot understand the new form without incorporating
>
> knowledge of this continuity into one's analysis of the new form. (Blumer, 1969, p. 20).

The concept of frames is particularly valuable in the approach of intercultural encounters

because Goffman's frames can be understood as the cultural orientation system to which the

individual turns to in the moment of not-understanding the action of a coworker from a different

cultural background. "When the individual (…) recognizes a particular event, he tends (…) to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary." (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). In this conception, the frames of Goffman have the same function to orientate the action of an individual which is also found in other concepts of culture. The orientating function attributed to culture (see for instance Geertz, 1973; Thomas et al., 2005) guides behavior in situations of intercultural misunderstandings. According to Thomas et al. (2005), the culture specific orientation system creates possibilities and stimulation of acting, but also determines conditions and limits of acting. Through the process of socialization an individual learns instruments to find his way in society and to seek orientation; and culture is such an orientation system.

Although neither cultural standards nor frames are used consciously by the social actor to define a situation, they determine the interpretation and the subjective process of giving meaning to the situation. Even though people do not perceive frames and culture standards as determining leaders of their movements, they influence the meaning of a situation and in consequence the subsequent action. Goffman (1974) uses the expression *primary* to emphasize that the application of a framework is seen by those who apply it as not depending on or harking back to some original interpretation; it is rather seen as "rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful." (p. 21). The main conclusion is that individuals tend to perceive events in terms of primary frameworks and the type of framework employed provides a method of describing the event. The primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture and the consequent task is to form an image of a group's framework of frameworks -its belief, system, its "cosmology" (Goffman, 1974, p. 27), because "Social frameworks (…) provide background understanding for

events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a life agency, the

chief one being the human being." (Goffman, 1974, p. 22).

The concept of frames directs to the difficult decisions of a social subject to be able to act

in an intercultural encounter, in which the meaning of an action of another individual is

incomprehensible. Geertz (1973) for instance argued that even though a blink and a twitch can

supposedly be physically identical, they are likely to mean something different in different

cultural contexts. Although the anthropologist does not talk explicitly about intercultural

encounters, it is exactly this situation of the meeting of different meanings given to the same

action that he presents in his example of the blink: To understand the unexpected action of the

other person, the individual turns to his or her own culture standards or reference frames in the

words of Goffman, because they orientate him in the process of giving meaning to the activity.

The underlying conception is given by the framework of symbolic interactionism with the

important consideration of the human being as "an organism that not only responds to others on

the non-symbolic level but as one that makes indications to others and interprets their

indications." (Blumer, 1969, p. 12). As a whole, "Social interaction is often a composite of

frames, each manipulating our understanding of others." (Manning, 1992, p. 121).

The theoretical framework of Goffman is applied in the present comparison of work

cultures to capture the meanings that are generated, actualized and transformed (Reygadas, 2002)

in the daily interaction of the employees from Mexico and Germany. According to the

dramaturgical view of Goffman, a social scene features the qualities of a theatre scene in a

metaphorical sense, thus the actor works to give an impression (an image) of his person that

corresponds to the social role that he must fulfill in dependence of the current social situation.

The subjective definition of the situation is never forced by one of the actors that participate in

the interaction, but in relation to all its participants. In the case of comparing work cultures, the social roles that possibly influence behavior at work are the role of being a representative of a nation in a multinational company; an expert in a certain work field; a leader or subordinate, etc.

The researcher is thus asked to identify the behavior limits, analyze the subjects corresponding to their role and embodied person in the situation and identify an interaction structure, expressions, behavior, expectations and values that all determine the action of the subject in the situation. Social identities negotiate in encounters, in which the mutual objective is to come to an agreement. In social encounters, subjects act according to the subjective meaning of the situation and the exercised representation is a carrier of social and cultural restrictions that meet the abstract expectations and stereotypes of the orientation frame of the other individual.

Goffman (1983) sees factories - which is extended to any work office space - as one of many "behavioral settings that sustain an interaction order characteristically extending in space and time beyond any single social situation occurring in them." (p. 4). This social situation is entered by participants that carry "an already established biography of prior dealings with the other participants (…) with a vast array of cultural assumptions presumed to be shared" (p. 4). Recognizing that the interaction order is composed of an unequal distribution of rights and risk (e.g. age and gender), Goffman (1983) emphasizes the central theme of arrangements "which allow a great diversity of projects and intents to be realized through unthinking recourse to procedural forms." (p. 6). The acceptance of conventions and norms as given and the initiation of an according action "is, in effect, to put trust in those about one. Not doing so, one could hardly get on with the business at hand; one could hardly have any business at hand." (p. 6).

Developed by research about hospital work, the theoretical concept of the American symbolic interactionist Anselm Strauss offers the bridge from interaction to interaction at work.

According to Strauss (1985), the interactional process - through which arrangements are worked out, maintained and reworked - consists of a series of strategies and counterstrategies taken by participants that include negotiations, compromises, discussion, education, persuasion, lobbying, manipulation, threatening and coercion; these are determined by the position (stance) taken by the actor towards work and the working-out process.[34] Productive collaboration is reached with the negotiations at the workplace that are necessary to achieve an arrangement by overcoming cultural differences in order to achieve the common work goal.

The concept of work according to Strauss (1993) is based on the concept of cooperative interaction by Mead (1934) which includes within universal human activity "the verbal and nonverbal conversation of gestures, taking the role of the other, language, significant symbols and meaning, the generalized other, and the interplay of the I and the Me." (p. 82). Strauss (1993) used these thoughts to generate the understanding of the mechanics of cooperative interaction which characterizes every form of interaction of two or more interactants: "the collaborative and the harshly conflictful" (Strauss, 1985, p. 2) are the two collective styles of interaction that are developed among workers when carrying out their respective tasks. "Interactional styles seem not only to affect the precise dividing up of work -what and who- but how that is put into operation; including in relation to accountability and to the necessary articulation of tasks." (Strauss, 1985, p. 2).

The concept of Strauss (1985) implies the need for an actor or an acting unit that is

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[34] Strauss (1993) rejects the definition of work in hospitals within a rationalistic framework because work is always exercised in specific contexts that influence how the activity is carried out and is therefore subject to change.

responsible for the articulation of each part of the arc of work.[35] Tasks can be distributed among

actors in different ways: They can be imposed; requested; assumed; delegated; proffered;

accepted; rejected and negotiated. In consequence, the allocation of tasks can similarly be met

with acceptance, rejection, agreement or disagreement that can be openly revealed or kept

invisible. The same actions can happen in the case of misunderstandings between and among

workers: "those disagreements only later perhaps becoming evident, or perhaps kept secret by

one or the other who understands the misunderstanding but does not say so. As analysts it will be

useful to lay out the conditions for such alternatives." (Strauss, 1985, p.6).

Articulation work is considered "a kind of supra-type of work in any division of labor"

(Strauss, 1985, p. 8) that includes the meshing of tasks, efforts of unit-workers and actors with

their various types of work and implicated tasks that takes place among organizational units and

sub-units. In dependence of the accountability given to the work position, every worker

articulates something which creates the variation of articulation work that depends on the

particularities of tasks, task clusters, arc segments and phases (Strauss, 1985).

Boden et al. (2009) emphasize that both articulation as well as coordination are required

to regulate the division of labor since it "aims at including all necessary (meta-)work to make

work work." (p. 126). In comparison however, the concept of articulation provides "a more

holistic understanding of cooperative work than concepts of coordination" (Boden et al., 2009, p.

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[35] The term "arc of work" (Strauss, 1985, p. 2) is used to describe the "the totality of tasks arrayed both

sequentially and simultaneously along the course of the trajectory or project." (Strauss, 1985, p. 4). Because some

parts of the arc are planned, designed and foreseen and others unexpected, the researcher can never completely know

the arc of work in all its details. Every type of work that is included in an arc of work implies different requirements

and the corresponding workers therefore bring different trajectories to their positions (Strauss, 1985).

126) because it includes in addition to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities the informal coordination mechanisms and other factors of which the actors are not even aware of (Boden et al., 2009). "(…) articulation work is the amount of all related contributions, strategies and conflicts; it is the distributed agency of collaboration, not its result." (Boden et al., 2009, p. 127). The application of the concept of articulation work in the present study thus requires the researcher to search aspects of which the actors themselves are not aware of as well as the factual informal articulation mechanisms that might differ from the official regulations.

According to Strauss (1993), articulation "is accomplished by means of the interactional process of working out and carrying through of work-related arrangements" (p. 87). These arrangements refer to the agreements that are established among the various actors in the work place (both among workers as well as units) with regards to the actions that are required to carry out the work as well as context issues such as resources, technology, supplies, information and correlated services. Arrangements are - even institutionalized as policies and procedures - not permanent but rather subject to changes caused by structural and organizational conditions that affect them with daily contingencies (Strauss, 1993). Similar to Reygadas (2002), Strauss (1993) also emphasizes the influences of context conditions which include personal and organizational history, relationships between departments, power structures and previous experience with arrangements. Strauss (1993) defines the activity of working things out as

> the interactional process through which arrangements are established, kept going, and revised. This process consists of a series of strategies and counterstrategies taken by participants, in response to what is said or done by others before and after the actual work begins. Strategies include negotiating, making compromises, discussing, educating, convincing, lobbying, manipulating, threatening, and coercing (Strauss 1978). (p. 88).

The original working-out-process of arrangements is based on the assumptions that each actor enters with stances that must be somehow harmonized in order for work to proceed. Agreement must be reached about every aspect that influences the realization of the work task without the requirement of reaching a complete consensus (Strauss, 1993). This agreement can be brought about "by domination or negotiation" (Strauss, 1993, p. 91) and requires arriving "at a common definition of the situation." (p. 91). This definition is achieved with the discovery, rethinking and modification of discrepant understandings through interactional strategies: In an ordinary process, each participant at first defines the aspects involved in the arrangement (for instance the purpose, persons, resources, own contribution, expectations etc.), thereby revealing the stances taken that are later present in interactional strategies. The interpretation of the stance of others follows as the second step as well as the response represented by continuation or revision of own stances and associated strategies as the third. This process of (1) definition; (2) interpretation; and (3) action continues until the completion of an arrangement. The activity thus may take a long time due to differences of the aspects and the positions taken regarding each aspect, the balance of power shifting back and forth and the broader structural and organizational conditions influencing the perceived power to control the process (Strauss, 1993).

Strauss (1993) argues that negotiation is meant to be "a major contributor to any social ordering" (p. 255) because even predominantly coercive and manipulative orders "ultimately require and produce negotiation" (p. 255). The concept of negotiated order is in summary characterized by the prevailing existence of negotiation in every case as well as the "temporal, mobile, and unstable character" (Strauss, 1993, p. 255) of the social order: "The various interactional processes-negotiation, persuasion, manipulations, education, threat, and actual coercion-will each have different salience, be of greater or less significance for particular

instances of any social order." (Strauss, 1993, p. 250). The primary significance is the continuation of the necessary base for making the arrangements that enable routines, standards of collective action as well as innovation; the interactional processes are also essential to the forming of the conditions (Strauss, 1993). "Although the theory adopts an open-systems perspective, its primary focus is on microlevel processes, as the emphasis is on negotiations among individual actors." (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2010, p. 38).

Seeing work in the present research from Strauss's perspective means that every work performance needs interaction in reference "to the articulated collective act of work performance (…) and to the strategies used in working out the arrangements that allow for the articulation of those collective acts within any given structural/organizational context." (Strauss, 1993, p. 89). Arrangements are needed in the workplace to articulate the different people and different types of work with regards to the organization and completion of each work task. The achievement, maintenance and revision of arrangements requires a working-out process that includes interactional strategies such as "negotiation, discussion, educating, lobbying, manipulating, threatening, and coercing." (Strauss, 1993, p. 89). The decision to select one of those strategies is determined by the position taken by the actors toward the work and the working-out process as well as the structural and personal conditions (Strauss, 1993).

With regards to collaboration at work, Strauss (1985) furthermore argues that the closely collaborative interaction style "requires actors who are sensitively attuned to each others' actions, moods, rhythms, pacings; (…) full commitment to the common enterprise, trust in one another, relative openness in communicating, often a degree of mutual psychological work, a considerable capacity to negotiate (…)." (p. 10). During the total arc, the work patterns (both, the collaborative and the conflictful) may vary and the interactions vary accordingly, more or less

collaborative or conflictful in the different phases (Strauss, 1985). When collaboration is transferred to collaboration between two work cultures, the interaction even gets more complex. Erbe and Snigh (2015) argue that "While collaborating across culture, participants from different cultures will interpret the same information and communication differently as they assess it form varied standpoints depending upon their cultural characteristics and social background." (p. 4).[36]

With the employment of the concepts of Strauss and Goffman, the research aims to identify the intercultural encounters at work considered as the meeting of different meanings of the same actions to part from the daily conflicts and negotiations that take place within structural conditions (Reygadas, 2002). Intercultural misunderstandings are seen as the moment in which differences between the Mexican and German work culture are noticeable; the resulting solution strategies are then considered the action that results from each actor's definition and interpretation of the situation (Blumer, 1969). According to Strauss (1993), interactional processes including negotiation are needed to work out arrangements that are determined by the position (stance) taken by the actor as well as context conditions. Goffman (1983) argues in agreement that arrangements are attempted that allow diversity due to the unequal distribution of rights and risks; actors seek shelter in procedural forms because the trust found in the acceptance of conventions and norms is needed to "get on with the business at hand" (p. 6).

With this theoretical framework, the study aims to identify the strategies employed by the workers to continue with the business at hand, the achievement of the work task realization (which is considered the joint goal of everyone) by working out arrangements to overcome the

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[36] "All cross cultural collaboration aims to achieve intended goals and bridge differences to realize higher mutually benefitting situation(s) for overall good (…). This involves showing deep interest in another's point of view with a reciprocal attitude to effectively arrive at the envisioned objective(s) (…)." (Erbe & Snigh, 2015, p. 4).

intercultural misunderstandings caused by the encounter of two different work cultures. The use of the definition of work culture by Reygadas (2002) requires starting the analysis of work culture in the interactions at work that pass through negotiations and conflict. In those interactions, meanings are generated, actualized and transformed; the workers must collaborate and overcome their differences by jointly developing arrangements.

In conclusion, productive collaboration in the current case must take place in daily intercultural encounters in which the meanings from the Mexican work culture encounter different meanings from the German work culture. The common goal is nevertheless productive collaboration which is necessary in order to achieve the joint work goals although disagreement and rejection are more likely in an intercultural work environment.

Whether the work goes smoothly or conflictfully is not just because personalities conflict or are in harmony, but first and foremost because the divergent lines of work characteristic of those different social worlds mix harmoniously or only with great tension and discord. The greater a discrepancy in social world perspective and activity, the more obviously will there be a need for explicit negotiation among workers to get the joint or collective tasks accomplished with any efficiency. (Strauss, 1985, p. 11).

In summary, the theoretical framework of the present research is guided by the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism with a structure based on the three-dimensional concept of work culture developed by Reygadas (2002) that parts from negotiations and conflicts in the work interaction in order to understand the specific cultural expressions that are present in the local context about work at the administration level. Work culture as the "the generation, actualization and transformation of symbolic forms in the labor activity" (Reygadas, 2002, p. 106) assumes that new meanings are being produced in the interaction of individuals - in

this case from different cultural backgrounds in intercultural encounters. The subjects act according to a certain role (Goffman, 1956) and in doubt turn to their well-known frames from their cultures (Goffman, 1974) that unconsciously demand to sanction behavior which is not conform to the used social order (Goffman, 1983). Productive collaboration is then reached with the negotiations at the workplace that are necessary to achieve an arrangement by overcoming cultural differences in order to achieve the common work goal (Strauss, 1978; 1985; 1993).

3. Research design

The following chapter presents the research design to provide an overview about the paradigm, the methodological approach and the instruments used in the empiric study. Guided by the sociological framework of symbolic interactionism, the study object was approached with a mixed method approach in an exploratory case study (Yin, 2009) in the administration level of a Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM (see table 1).[37] As displayed in the theoretical framework, the research approach parts from intercultural encounters to identify the differences and similarities between both work cultures and their meaningful consequences on collaboration.

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[37] See for instance Baxtor & Jack, 2008; Díaz de Salas et al., 2011; Hernández et al., 2010; Johansson, 2003; Reyes & Hernández, 2008; Stake, 2007; Yin, 2009 for information about the benefits of case study research.

Table 1 *Research design.*

Research approach:	Method of data collection:	Sample:	Application:	Time period:
Exploratory case study of the administration level in one Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM	In-depth interviews	One Mexican manager; one German manager; three Mexican subordinates; three German subordinates	Personal. Meeting rooms of the Mexican subsidiary	15th of November 2017
	Questionnaire	69 employees including Mexican and German managers and subordinates	Online	12th - 23th of February 2018
Complementing data from two German OEMs and a labor union in the region "ABC Paulista" in Brazil	In-depth interviews	13 employees of two German OEMs including members of the workers' council; two members of the labor union	Personal. Meeting rooms of the OEMs and the labor union	27th - 28th of March 2018

Note: Own elaboration.

Reygadas (2002) suggested to expand the possibilities of analysis to enable the inclusion of distinct types of individual or collective subjects rather than focusing only on the influence of work on the construction of meanings of production workers that is found almost exclusively in many Mexican studies in the field of Sociology of Work (see chapter 2.1). The present research unit was one Mexican subsidiary of a German OEM that employs 136 Mexican and German employees (70% Mexican and 30% German) who work at the administration level of the

corporation (RH-manager, personal communication, May 2[d], 2017).[38] In addition to the arguments presented in the problem statement, the company was selected because the personnel department shared an interest with the researcher in regard to how the collaboration between their Mexican and German employees can be improved.[39] The study was realized maintaining the confidentiality of the company and its employees; the researcher thus did not receive names or personal information about the research participants.

The approach to the study object work culture in the present research is limited to the administration level of work because the study unit provides only supporting functions and not the production of vehicles (see chapter 1.1). Strauss (1985) argues that "An arc for any given trajectory - or project - consists of the totality of tasks arrayed both sequentially and simultaneously along the course of the trajectory or project." (p. 4). Because some parts of the arc are planned, designed and foreseen while others are unexpected eventualities, "the arc cannot be known in all its details - except in very standard, contingency-minimal projects-until and if the actors look back and review the entire course which they have traversed." (Strauss, 1985, p. 4). Due to the starting phase of the Mexican subsidiary, most of the arcs - the totality of tasks - in the present study unit are considered new. The establishment of the work processes is based on the procedures used in the headquarters and in other international subsidiaries of the corporation; the operation start of the supporting functions and the production site in Mexico requires the

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[38] The case study was conducted complying with the conditions of a mutual agreement between the researcher and the company. The principal requirements are the confidentiality of the information obtained and the anonymity of the company and its employees. The research design therefore does not provide more information about the OEM, which may not, but could be identified with the revelation of the geographical location.

[39] The suggestions for the personal department of the company are displayed in appendix 11.

tasks first to be learnt and secondly to be adapted to the new conditions.

Differences between the arcs of work entail different divisions of workers and "Insofar as the mix and articulation of tasks and work types vary, so will the distributions of persons at work." (Strauss, 1985, p. 4). The corresponding units of the present organization are the following (among others): Accounting & Finance; IT-Management; Human Resources; Purchasing & Supplier Quality; Research & Development. "The number and type of resources needed for each line of work varies with the type, degree of difficulty, amount, and consistency of the work to be done." (Corbin & Strauss, 1985, p. 234). According to the RH-manager (personal communication, May 2^d, 2017), the types of occupations include office work, expert positions with a focus on engineering and purchasing as well as approximately 20 managers. Furthermore, the organization has employees from different nationalities (not merely Germans and Mexicans) and uses three types of labor contracts: local, expatriate and inpatriate contracts.[40] In consequence, the types of work tasks in the present research can be summarized as technical, professional and managerial work which "all involve the exercise of expert knowledge. Also involved in professional and managerial jobs are autonomous professional judgments based upon experience. Managerial activity in addition includes the evaluation and control of the work of others." (Perrolle, 1986, p. 111). Ordered by criteria of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), the study results address the following occupational group profiles:

- Architecture and engineering.

- Business and financial operations.

- Computer and mathematical.

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[40] These variables were included in the questionnaire and the results are displayed in detail in chapter 4.2.1.

- Management.

- Office and administrative support.

Since the study approach to work culture refers merely to the administration level of work, the theoretical concept of white-collar work is addressed. Rather than categorizing profiles of workers, Hopp et al. (2009) distinguish between white-collar and blue-collar work on the task level: (1) "White-collar tasks involve significant use of knowledge in generating ideas, processes or solutions (Davenport and Prusak 2002), while blue-collar tasks consist primarily of physical transformations or transactions." (p. 2). (2) "White-collar tasks often rely on generation of novel solutions or combination of previously unrelated ideas (Davenport and Prusak 2002, Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003, Shalley 1995), while blue-collar tasks consist primarily of repetitive application of known methods to familiar situations." (p. 3).[41] This concept implies that "Virtually any type of work consists of some whitecollar tasks and some blue-collar tasks." (Hopp et al., 2009, p. 3). Regardless of the nationalities, the totality of the workers in the present research is characterized by a high level of English as second language (which is a hiring requirement since it is the official business language in this subsidiary), and elevated academic or professional education. Due to the specialized professional requirements of the corresponding positions, this research population clearly does not represent a majoritarian, but rather a small part of both national cultures.

Strauss (1993) emphasizes the dynamic perspective of organization which includes the developing and changing nature of work; "the structures that emerge to handle the work are a temporal reflection of the negotiated order who participate in the work" (Garrow & Hasenfeld,

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[41] See Hopp et al. (2009) for a review of theoretical distinctions between blue- and white-collar work.

2010, p. 38). Negotiation thus impacts the definition, realization, amount and evaluation of work, as well as the responsibles and accountables of each work task (Strauss et al., 1985). "The structure under which management takes place is a fluctuating and changing one - hence the phrase 'structure in process'" (Corbin & Strauss, 1985, p. 227). Regardless of a global strategy of a multinational corporation, each sub-organization is individualized to meet the needs of the local context. Each work environment is coined by the physical, social and emotional aspects of the relationship between its employees and the work setting will change over time.

Since the present comparison of work cultures is theoretically framed by the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the underlying epistemological paradigm is pragmatism, which provides the primary intellectual underpinnings of the four basic variants of the scholar including the dramaturgical approach (Reynolds, 1993).[42] "Scholars in the conceptual tradition of symbolic interactionism can use quantitative data and statistical analysis within a pragmatist epistemology, especially in conjunction with qualitative data." (Ulmer & Wilson, 2003, p. 531).[43] The principal argument of the combination of mixed research methods within symbolic interactionism is its fundamental focus on connections between shared meanings and human behavior which is independent of the type of data (Benzies & Allen, 2001).

Due to the complex nature of work culture, it is particularly difficult to work strictly within the quantitative or qualitative research paradigm; by using a combination of qualitative

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[42] Reynolds (1993) summarized the key characteristics of pragmatism: humans are creative and active actors (rather than passive recipients of stimuli); the world is subject to planned change; meaning resides in behavior directed towards an object; a focus on the solution of practical problems, the reconciliation of science and idealism.

[43] See for research examples Benzies & Allen, 2001; De Nooy, 2009; Giordano et al., 2002; Kramer & Ulmer, 2002; Meltzer et al., 1975; Ulmer & Wilson, 2003.

and quantitative techniques, different aspects of work culture can be revealed. The

methodological approach in the present research project was based on a sequential combination

of techniques that started with eight semi-structured in-depth interviews used for a situational

analysis to get a profound understanding of the current situation and the meanings of differences

and similarities between both work cultures.[44] The qualitative data was used to elaborate the

quantitative approach in the attempt to generate findings about the total population in search for

the triangulation of cultural factors, bias reduction, validity increase and a deeper understanding

of the collaboration.[45] The empirical results of both approaches were then discussed from a

distant perspective using complementary data obtained by qualitative interviews in Brazil.

3.1   Design, procedure and data analysis preparation of the qualitative approach.

The primary purpose of the in-depth interviews was the situational analysis by getting

input from employees and managers about intercultural interactions in their everyday work. A

focus was placed on day-to-day work experience as well as on the meanings given by the

participants to noticed differences and similarities between both work cultures. The interview

questions were formulated to detect the subjective experience with different work cultures. The

semi-structured interviews started with questions about personal information; followed by

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[44] The situational analysis is part of the background analysis which is a type of exploratory research with

the purpose to generalize ideas and perspectives and to put the problem in perspective regarding its range and

characteristics. "Precisely, the objective of a situational analysis is to quickly observe the internal and external

environment of the organization (…)." (Namakforoosh, 2005, p. 64).

[45] The main purpose of triangulation is the use of multiple viewpoints that allows greater precision of

judgements by the collection of different kinds of data about the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979). "The effectiveness

of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter-

balancing strengths of another" (Jick, 1979, p. 604).

examples of intercultural misunderstandings and their solutions in everyday work and requirements of productive collaboration (see appendix 1). The focus on anecdotes follows the example of Goffman (1974): "(…) I do not present these anecdotes (…) as evidence or proof, but as clarifying depictions, as frame fantasies which manage, through the hundred liberties taken by their tellers, to celebrate our beliefs about the workings of the world." (p. 15).

According to the theoretical framework of Reygadas (2002), work culture is meant to be analyzed in the interactions at work that pass through negotiations and conflict; the interviews thus aimed to identify the intercultural encounters defined as the meeting of different meanings given to the same action, as well as the solution strategies that result from the definition and interpretation of the situation. The application of the theoretical concept of articulation work by Strauss (1985), the analysis searched for differences between the formal work organization and the factual work practices displayed by the interviewees. Articulation work asks the researcher to look at efforts of both, coordination and meta-work and analyze them by contrasting the anticipated logic of the process with the observed one. According to Strauss (1993), the interactional process - through which arrangements are worked out, maintained and reworked - consists of a series of strategies and counterstrategies taken by participants that include negotiations. Goffman (1983) adds that arrangements are attempted that allow diversity due to the unequal distribution of rights and risks; actors seek shelter in procedural forms because

> to accept the conventions and norms as given (and to initiate one's action accordingly), is,
> in effect, to put trust in those about one. Not doing so, one could hardly get on with the
> business at hand; one could hardly have any business at hand. (Goffman, 1983, p. 6).

The objective of the interviews was thus to identify the strategies employed by the workers to continue with the work task at hand to achieve its realization which is considered the

joint goal of everyone. In order to keep the business running, workers must collaborate which is possible only by overcoming the intercultural misunderstandings caused by the encounter of two different work cultures and jointly developing arrangements. The game metaphor of Burawoy (1979) seems to apply well: The common logic of the presentation of work between two work cultures is to keep playing the game or to keep running the business.[46]

The interviewees were selected by the HR-manager of the company, who based his selection on a list of socio-demographic characteristics elaborated by the researcher (see appendix 2). The eight participants received from their HR-manager an invitation to a meeting of one hour on November 15th, 2017 with the subject "intercultural interview"; more information was not provided to them.[47] After the presentation of the researcher, the research as well as the interview structure were explained and the consent form was signed (see appendix 3).[48] Figure 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the eight interview participants:

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[46] Raimundo (2005) calls *Manufacturing Consent* (Burawoy, 1979) an inflection point in the tendency of critical research focused on the conflict in the work place abandoning thereby the observation of the consent.

[47] The researcher met the participants in different meetings rooms of the company installations; all interviews were conducted during the work hours of the employees.

[48] This introduction was realized in the mother tongue of the participant, the interviews were however conducted in dependence of the interviewees' choice: three in English, four in German and one in Spanish. The interviews took between 22 and 43 minutes; were audio-recorded with a smartphone application; and the transcripts including required changes were authorized by the interviewees via email.

Self-chosen pseudo-nym	Age	Nationality	Highest professional degree[49]	Nationality of the boss	Position[50]	Level of responsibility[51]	Work or study experience
Rodrigo	27	Mexican	Bachelor	German	Supplier quality engineer (since May 2015)	No leadership tasks; high responsibility regarding supplier quality	Germany
Monica	29	Mexican	Bachelor	German	Executive assistant to the CEO (since May 2016)	No leadership tasks; high responsibility regarding management organization	US
Manuel	33	German	Diplom - Ingenieur	German	Sachbearbeiter für ein Gewerk des Fahrzeugs (since September 2016)	No disciplinary leadership tasks, project leader; high responsibility regarding supplier quality	US, Spain, Mexico, Argentina
Alejandra	30	Mexican	Bachelor	German	Recruitment and selection specialist (since February 2016)	No leadership tasks; high responsibility regarding staff selection	US
Miguel	54	German	Tech-nischer Betriebswirt	Austrian	Sachbearbeiter Purchasing & Localization, Body in White (since May 2016)	No leadership tasks; high responsibility regarding supplier quality	US

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[49] These are the direct expressions the participants used to describe their professional or academic degree.

[50] These are the direct expressions the participants used to describe their position in the organizacion.

[51] According to Strauss (1985), all actors share the characteristics of having "the "responsibility" for doing their assigned, assumed, etc., portions of the arc of work. (…) workers or units of workers are rendered accountable for accomplishing those tasks according to certain criteria: when, where, how, how soon, level of quality." (p. 7).

Striepe	65	German	Zweites Staats-examen für Lehramt	German	Gerente Recursos Humanos (since May 2016)	Disciplinary leadership tasks (two subordinates)	Netherlands, US, Mexico
Hector	31	German	Master	German	Maturity control (since September 2017)	Temporary disciplinary leadership tasks (two subordinates)	US, Spain, Peru
Robin	37	Mexican	Maestría	German	Gerente de cross functions (since September 2016)	Disciplinary leadership tasks (five subordinates)	US, China

Figure 2. Demographic characteristics of the in-depth interview participants. Own elaboration.

The work tasks of each interviewee can be summarized as white-collar tasks because they are not "mainly physical and routine" (Hopp et al., 2009, p. 3) and rather "highly intellectual or highly creative" (Hopp et al., 2009, p. 3) including the significant use of knowledge in the generation of ideas, processes or solutions of previously unrelated ideas (Hopp et al., 2009). The participants described their field of activity as followed:

(1) Supplier quality engineer: coordination of activities at the suppliers (Gonzalo).

(2) Executive assistant: organization of management meetings; participation in management meetings (Monica).

(3) Recruitment and selection specialist: organization of the complete hiring process in collaboration with the corresponding managers (Alejandra).

(4) Sachbearbeiter Purchasing & Localization: reporting; quality control and negotiations with suppliers (Miguel).

(5) Gerente Recursos Humanos: Human Resource management; project participation and leadership; performance evaluation (Striepe).

(6) Maturity control: project development reporting; management (Hector).

(7) Sachbearbeiter für ein Gewerk des Fahrzeugs: project leadership; quality control and negotiations with suppliers (Manuel).

(8) Gerente de cross functions: project development reporting; creation and description of processes (Robin).

Among all interviewees, two clusters of tasks were detected as particularly important in this work environment: the organization and participation in meetings, as well as activities associated with information. Personal and digital meetings were mentioned with team members; between leader and subordinate; with coworkers from other departments or project members from the same subsidiary and the German and Mexican headquarters; with representatives of suppliers. The activities referring to information include the internal and external search for information as well as the process of requesting, providing and documenting information.

The interviews were analyzed based on the methodology of *Grounded Theory* developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Strauss (1987) suggested the coding paradigm of "Conditions, Interaction among the actors, Strategies and tactics, consequences" (p. 28). In the present analysis, this proposal was adapted to the following structure: characteristics of the German and Mexican work culture, differences and similarities between them, intercultural misunderstandings and their solutions. The first step of "open coding" (Strauss, 1987, p. 28) was realized by scrutinizing the transcripts of the eight interviews - one by one - using the software Atlas.ti. The data was then coded and categorized in different steps: First, categories about the differences and similarities between both work cultures were elaborated; in a second step, relations between these categories were established and each one was finally related to one of the five intercultural encounters that were defined as "core category" (Strauss, 1987, p. 21). "(…) through these relations among categories and their properties, it has the prime function of

integrating the theory and rendering it dense and saturated as the relationships are discovered."

(Strauss, 1987, p. 35). The description of each intercultural encounter in chapter 4.1.1 thus

includes the intercultural misunderstanding, resulting solution strategies, underlying

characteristics of both work cultures, its consequent differences and similarities, as well as the

relations to theory and context. The same structure is subsequently used to order the quantitative

results. Table 2 summarizes the presentation of the five identified intercultural encounters:

Table 2 *Description of the identified intercultural encounters.*

Intercultural encounters (core categories):	Description:
Commu-nication:	This core category includes different dimensions from "a transmission view of communication (…). The center of this idea of communication is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control." (Carey, 1992, p. 15). In the present study, the term summarizes the differences and similarities that refer to preference of styles of communication, non-verbal communication and communication between leader and subordinate. Jackson (2014) defines intercultural communication as "interpersonal communication between individuals or groups who are affiliated with different cultural groups and/or have been socialized in different cultural (and, in most cases, linguistic) environments." (p. 3). Differences in the preference of communication styles are not merely coined by national cultural differences but also "by the relations between communication practices and the social organization of differences in the workplace." (Lauring, 2011, p. 233).
Knowledge transfer and collaboration:	"The process of knowledge transfer resembles a typical communication process between a sender (the knowledge owner) and a receiver (the knowledge learner) in which a particular message (knowledge) is to be encoded and articulated from the sender to the receiver who then decodes and assimilates the message (knowledge) (Shannon & Weaver, 1949)." (cited by Law, 2013, p. 360). The following information implies three main assumptions: the action results from each actor's subjective definition and interpretation of the situation

	(Blumer, 1969); knowledge is a form of power (Bourdieu, 1986); the ownership of knowledge is ambiguous (Bowman & Swart, 2007).
Work task approaches:	The term summarizes the detected differences and similarities regarding the patterns the social actors employ to carry out their assigned work task. Strauss (1985) argues that the plurality of both the tasks and the relations of the actors to tasks requires the complex articulation of tasks. Articulation work includes the meshing of tasks, efforts of unit-workers and actors with their various types of work and implicated tasks that takes place among organizational units and sub-units. In dependence of the accountability given to the work position, every worker articulates something which creates the variation of articulation work that depends on the particularities of tasks, task clusters, arc segments and phases (Strauss, 1985).
The understanding of time:	This category includes perceptions and meanings of time; definitions of punctuality; the structuring of work tasks; and boundaries between the private and the professional life sphere. The underlying assumption is that "the perception of time is conditioned by the position occupied by the idea of work in the life of persons and by the expectations placed on it. By this, the activities in the daily life are organized hierarchically." (Szlechter, 2009, pp. 143-144, own translation). The different perceptions and experience of time depend on the social group to which the individual belongs to; "this diversity does not only come from internal criteria of the symbolic structure of the social groups but is additionally product of the hierarchical relations of a society based in classes." (Szlechter, 2009, p. 143, own translation).
Language at the work place:	Although language is a possibility to communicate, it is displayed as individual category to emphasize its importance in the present intercultural environment that is characterized by the use of English, Spanish and German. Culture is variable and continuously produced through discourse; language interaction is therefore central to how culture evolves within and between groups of every level (Scollon et al., 2012). Language as symbolic power is addressed from the perspective of Bourdieu (1991) and "seen as "inner treasure' (…) deposited by the practice of speech in subjects belonging to the same community" (p. 43) that can create the exclusion of other groups. The use of a certain language by bilingual speakers is also related to national identity and membership to a social group (Christiansen, 2016).

Note: Own elaboration.

3.2   Design, procedure and data analysis preparation of the quantitative approach.

The quantitative data was collected with an online questionnaire using *EFS Survey software* and analyzed with the software SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The instrument contains five sections that refer to different perspectives: (1) closed and scale questions about sociodemographic aspects; (2) open questions about the general characteristics of both work cultures; (3) Likert-scale questions about the agreement to statements regarding the present work environment; (4) the attribution of characteristics to a group of coworkers; (5) one ranking and two open questions regarding productive collaboration (see appendix 4).

The validation of the instrument was evidenced with nine empirical tests that were conducted as cognitive interviews to verbalize the thoughts of the participants in the process of responding to the questionnaire (see e.g. Van Someren et al., 1994).[52] The modification and improvement of the instrument was enabled by the audio recordings and protocols of the empiric tests until reaching the final authorization of the HR-manager of the study unit.

The HR-manager then distributed the link to the actual online-survey to an email group of 136 employees who responded between the 12th and 23th of February 2018. In total, 69 data sets were registered including a maximum of eleven missing cases in certain questions which are justified as following: (1) Ten participants ended their participation after a certain section of questions without finishing the complete survey; in these cases, only the completely answered questions were counted. (2) Some of the questions about personal information were not obligatory to answer; the response "no answer" was then defined as "missing case". (3) The open

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[52] Sample of test-participants: three Mexican and one German specialist in quantitative research and five German professionals working in the Mexican automotive industry.

questions that were answered with "No comment" or "N/A", only letters or inadequate words were counted as missing cases.[53] (4) The answer "5/12/2011" was defined as missing case with regards to the start of the current position because the subsidiary started its operation in 2015. (5) One participant ranked only one instead of all the requirements in the last section; this answer was defined as missing case because one rank does not allow to evaluate the importance of this requirement in comparison to the others.

For every participant, a list of 100 response items was constructed; the items used to measure the attribution of characteristics to a certain group of coworkers (see chapter 4.2.4) were regrouped to the respective dimension. To enable the measurement of frequencies, the answers to string variables were standardized with regards to their English translation; if an unambiguous translation to English was not possible, the answers were analyzed in German or Spanish.

3.3 Complementary data from Brazil.

The theoretical concept of work developed by Strauss (1985) implies methodological consequences for the present research because in contrast to studies about manual work, service work needs to be analyzed with different levels of occupations, distinct complexities of work tasks and the required qualification. The work of Strauss is generally coined by an emphasis on the influence of macro- and micro-conditions on the daily work interaction (see conditional matrix in Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

> While some change in conditions can be anticipated and planned for, others are quite
> unexpected. Expected or not, fluctuations and a change in conditions bear upon the
> number and type of tasks to be performed, who does them, when, the kinds of

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[53] For instance, the answers "Tacos, Salsa, Fiesta" to describe the Mexican work culture and "Cerveza, Salchicha, Coches" regarding the German work culture were considered inadequate and defined as missing.

negotiations over this division of labor, and the resources needed for their performances

and the potential success of management outcomes (Freidson, 1976; Strauss, 1985).

(cited by Corbin & Strauss, 1985, p. 232)

The division of labor is directly or indirectly impacted by structural changes from the

industry that influence the formal organizational structure and result in changes of the

organization of work tasks. These context conditions imply the researcher to reflect on the

empirical findings from a distant and broader perspective. In the present research, this reflection

was enabled with a complementary third field work that was realized in the industrial region

called "ABC Paulista" (Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007, p. 15) in Brazil. ABC Paulista is the most

important industrial region in Brazil with an accumulation of companies of the automotive

industry since the 1950s; it is characterized with (in comparison to the rest of the country)

extraordinary good labor conditions and strong labor unions (Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007). The

complementary data obtained from the third field work was particularly useful since the

confidentiality agreement with the present study unit does not allow a broader description of the

organization and the geographical context.

To enable the comparison of the local context in Brazil to the one in Mexico, in-depth

interviews were conducted with employees of two German OEMs that started their productive

activity in the region in the 1950s. The contact to both companies was established by

relationships of Unicamp and the labor union "Metalúrgicos ABC".[54] The interview participants

include workers at the production and administration level, one supervisor, and members of the

workers' council. Two interviews were conducted with representatives of the labor union

"Metalúrgicos ABC" to complement the data with information about the political and economic

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[54] The research access required to maintain confidentiality of all names including the name of the company.

situation of Brazil, the historical development of labor representation, and the present and future development of the Brazilian automotive industry. In accordance to the first field work, after the presentation of the researcher, the study objectives as well as the interview structure were explained, and the consent form was signed. Although the interviews were based on an interview structure (see appendix 5), the conversations were however adjusted to the different participants.[55] Since the primary purpose of the third field work was the identification of context conditions to discuss the research results, the corresponding findings are displayed in chapter 5.2.

In conclusion, the methodological approach in the present research project is based on a sequential combination of techniques that started with eight semi-structured in-depth interviews used for a situational analysis to get a profound understanding of the current situation and the meanings of differences and similarities between both work cultures. The qualitative data was used to elaborate the quantitative approach in the attempt to generate findings about the total population in search for the triangulation of cultural factors, bias reduction, validity increase and a deeper understanding of the collaboration. In summary, the study object work culture was approached with a sequential mixed methods approach in a case study to reach a complete understanding and a greater validity through data triangulation. The empirical results of both approaches were then discussed from a distant and broader perspective using complementary data obtained by qualitative interviews in Brazil.

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[55] The interviews of the third approach were audio-recorded and conducted in Portuguese.

4. Research results

The following chapter presents the research findings; at first, the qualitative data is presented and secondly follows the quantitative data.

4.1   Results of the qualitative approach.

The following results are displayed in three parts: The first section presents the five identified intercultural encounters (communication, knowledge transfer, work task approaches, understanding of time and language); each of them starts with an example told by one interviewee that is followed by the description of the intercultural misunderstanding, solution strategies and underlying characteristics of both work cultures related to theoretical positions and context conditions. The second section displays the analysis results about productive collaboration and the third one the findings about cultural translators; the results end with a summary and reflection about the qualitative approach. Table 3 summarizes the structure:

Table 3 *Structure of the qualitative results*

Section:	Theoretical concepts:	Content:
Intercultural misunder-standings (encounters)	Intercultural encounters (Reygadas; Goffman); symbolic capital (Bourdieu); symbolic interactionism (Blumer); negotiations (Strauss)	- Communication - Knowledge transfer - Work task approaches - The understanding of time - Language
Productive collaboration	Coordination and articulation work (Strauss)	- Description of the situation - Requirements
Cultural mediators	Coordination and articulation work (Strauss)	- Perceptions about the existence - Characteristics of the persons - Actions of translation work
Conclusion		- Reflection about the results - Limitations

Note: Own elaboration.

4.1.1   Intercultural encounters.

4.1.1.1 Direct or indirect communication? Different forms to communicate.

Three intercultural encounters were included in the concept of communication: avoidance and confrontation of conflict, non-verbal communication, and instructions. "In international subsidiaries, differences in styles of communication are inevitable and are often argued to slow down the process of decision making and working processes and they may weaken social ties." (Lauring, 2011, p. 241).

a)   Avoidance and confrontation of conflict:

> back then in Germany (…) a colleague of mine invited me to a supplier and I already had the birthday of a friend of mine on that day, so I would miss the party. (…) I think a German would have been like, "yeah, I already have something, sorry I can't go". But I really didn't want to tell him that it was my friend's birthday, because I was like "yeah but common, he is inviting me, I cannot disappoint him and my friends gonna be there lifelong (…) I don't know how long I'm gonna work with him, so I might as well come." And I went around things and I actually went to the supplier with him. While we were (…) on the way to the supplier he was like "Yeah dude you seem not so (…) at ease with this situation" and I was like "yeah well, I have my friend's birthday today in the evening." He was like "yeah but you're not gonna make it, we are gonna be 400km away from there." Yeah well, he asked me "Didn't you know?" "Yes of course I knew." "Then why didn't you tell me?" (*louder voice*). Like he was really…he couldn't believe I wouldn't have told him before, you know?
>
> (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Figure 3. The first intercultural encounter: communication (the avoidance and confrontation of conflict).

This anecdote from Rodrigo's work period in Germany is one of several intercultural encounters mentioned in the interviews that refer to differences between the avoidance and the confrontation of conflicts. According to theoretical positions, the German work culture tends to confront conflicts whereas the Mexican work culture tends to avoid them, both making use of direct and indirect forms of communication (see e.g. Hall, 1959). The interviews partially support theoretical descriptions, but more importantly, they reveal the subjective meanings of actions rooted in differences between the avoidance and confrontation of conflict.

Placing this intercultural encounter in the framework of Goffman (1956), the scenery - or

the theatre stage - is in Germany: Rodrigo, the Mexican inpatriate, is on a business trip to a supplier with his German coworker from the headquarters.[56] As supplier quality engineer, visits to suppliers are a common work task for Rodrigo; assuming that his coworker has a similar occupation, both social actors in this interaction have a similar hierarchical position. Although Rodrigo did not reveal information about their relationship, it is interpreted that he appreciates the time they have been working together because he expressed his worries: "I don't know how long I'm gonna work with him" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Both are performing the roles of two professionals with the common goal to achieve the goal of the supplier visit. With the rejection of the birthday invitation, Rodrigo decided to prioritize his professional role over his role as a friend; despite the fact that he was hiding this worrying mask, his coworker noticed his discomfort. This scene is an example of how private and professional borders overlap in the daily social interaction at work; both stages cannot be separated from each other, even if the actor is trying to do so. Every worker never only performs his professional role, but always a private role.

The intercultural misunderstanding was caused by the non-expression of disagreement of a Mexican which was not understood by the German coworker who in a second step directly expressed this doubt. This interaction demonstrates Rodrigo's reason to not express his problem

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[56] Rodrigo is one of the employees who worked for 1,5 years as inpatriate in the German headquarters. In order to understand the expressions used by the interviewees to title their coworkers, the following distinction is necessary: The study unit employs expatriates, inpatriates and employees with local contracts to whom the interviewees refer to using the abbreviations "expats", "inpats" and "locals". These three types of contracts can neither be distinguished by manager-subordinate positions nor by nationalities, however the majority group of the expatriates is composed of Germans and the inpatriates as well as locals are mostly Mexicans.

with the invitation: he wanted to not disappoint his German coworker. From the German perspective, Rodrigo's action was incomprehensible because used to a direct form of communication, Germans workers expect their coworkers to inform them about the existence of a problem or disagreement. In order to investigate the reason for the incomprehensible action of Rodrigo, the German coworker therefore directly expressed his surprise by sharing his honest perception about the state of mind of Rodrigo in the very moment of noticing his discomfort. This direct expression of worries then represents the second incomprehensible action of the situation - this time from Rodrigo's perspective - because the immediate sharing of sincere doubts, disagreement and criticism of Germans is not common in the Mexican culture (see e.g. Gannon & Pillai, 2015; Rodríguez & Ramírez-Buendía, 1992; Tebeaux, 1999) and therefore causes discomfort in Mexican workers: "I've got used to it, but at the beginning it was like rough for me." (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

In the discussion about cultural roots that explain differences in the preference of a certain type of communication at work, it is essential to avoid cultural determinism that is often found in the overestimation of cultural influences on work processes (Lauring, 2011; Reygadas, 2002). Most authors argue that because culture determines the encoding and interpretation of messages as well as the transmission mediums, the use of the own cultural reference frames appears as barrier in the recognition of signs (Lauring, 2011). To understand culture as the determining force affecting communication in intercultural settings however fails to consider "the fact that culture itself is created in communication" (Lauring, 2011 p. 234), the motivation of both participants to establish the communicative act and the influence of power relations on relationship building and social organization (Lauring, 2011). Because work is not only determined by culture, but also by technical, economic and political (and other) factors, the

strengthening or limiting influence of those on the reciprocal determination between work and culture needs to be included; work culture is not a mere reactive response to labor conditions and cultural changes can or cannot modify the way of working (Reygadas, 2002).

> although interaction patterns among employees are guided by the perception of differences, the perception of differences is developed and organized in interaction. (…) the social organization of the workplace is both conditioned of and conditioned on communication. Consequently, a one-way link between general cultural and communicative differences is a too static representation of intercultural organization communication. (Lauring, 2011, p. 247).

In consequence, cultural differences ought to be understood as "negotiated and socially organized in the local setting rather than being something a priori. The informal social organization of cultural differences is the local coordination of group relations negotiated among individuals and groups in a continuous process of interaction." (Lauring, 2011, p. 233). To include the connections between communication practices and the social organization of differences in the work environment - in addition to cultural differences - in the analysis of intercultural encounters, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (2000) can be helpful to interpret the direct form of communication in the present case as a form of sanctioning behavior that does not correspond to the social norms of the society.

According to Bourdieu (2000), the effect of symbolic domination related to gender, culture, language, ethnic and others is produced by the different schemata of perception, appreciation and action; symbolic violence is considered implicit or invisible because it transforms cultural modalities into natural ones with the goal to subordinate a social group using strategies developed by those with power (Bourdieu, 2000, cited by Álvarez, 2016). In the official discourse, language incorporates the social meanings, references and the order imposing a behavior

"that determines what one needs to do, be and say to form part of the collectivity." (Álvarez, 2016, p. 21, own translation). It is difficult to perceive this form of violence in daily activities since it is inserted in the social organizations and relational dynamics. Although violence is usually assumed to be a physical act, signs of violence appear invisibly in society and institutions because they are expressed as restrained violence and exercised essentially by purely symbolic patterns of communication and knowledge or feelings (Bourdieu, 2000, cited by Álvarez, 2016).

The resulting interpretative concern is the start of this type of violence: When does symbolic violence begin at the workplace? Is the expression of disagreement (as found in the example of Rodrigo) perceived as pure discomfort or already as offense? The adjective used by Rodrigo (rough) can be interpreted in different senses: from only unexpected to offensively rude. Since it is part of the process of defining and interpreting the situation (Blumer, 1969), every subject has a unique perception that cannot be estimated by the counterpart. The Germans in this case should consider the possible effects a direct expression of disagreement or criticism can have on their Mexican coworkers, although they themselves might see their actions as natural. The meanings given to such an action depend on the social norms prevailing in each culture; an action might be common and expected in one, but unexpected and rough in the second one.

The conversation about Rodrigo's worries in the example represents an interaction in which two coworkers are playing a social game that is constructed in the work space. In this game, the official rules, the critical and reflective competence of the actors to negotiate and achieve an arrangement is being tested (see Strauss, 1985). The intercultural misunderstanding between Rodrigo and his coworker as well as the associated feelings consciously or unconsciously affect their collaboration during the following supplier visit. This process of reaching an arrangement requires both social actors to negotiate the rules, considering that each one enters the game from a different position: The German coworker assumes that Rodrigo

would have informed him about any discomfort, whereas the Mexican coworker comes from a culture in which this type of information is not directly shared. Each actor enters the interaction with the assumption that his reference frame (see Goffman, 1974) is the right one; however, in an intercultural work space (in this case, in a car on a business trip in Germany), the well-known rules are being questioned, negotiated and reconstructed.

Among the theoretical explanations for the German form of direct conflict confrontation are the culture standards objectivism and separation of the professional and private life; the first one prioritizing objective facts over emotions and the latter to the contrary (see e.g. Schroll-Machl, 2016; Thomas, 2011). Manuel expressed in agreement that Germans can tell each other directly and clearly what they think without it being perceived as loss of face; he however added that Germans also do not always stay objective and involve personal issues in their professional relationships. Nevertheless, both the Mexican and German interviewees in summary emphasize the German direct and Mexican indirect form of communication: "in Germany if they think something, if they feel like it or if they want to communicate something, they tell you. The Mexicans don't" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

With regards to the addressing of problems or concerns, Mexicans in comparison "just talk around things and not go straight to the point, whereas Germans don't lose time with it." (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017). The German interviewees agreed stating that in this work environment, the mode and tone of an expression of information are more important than its amount: "Yes, I think, here much more runs with indirect communication. How I say something and in which tone, instead of expressing everything." (Hector, personal communication, November 15, 2017, own translation).

Manuel even addressed a theoretical explanation: "In every case…really, this High-

Context-Culture, I notice it in every meeting, it is like that." (personal communication, November 15, 2017, own translation). The theoretical concept titled *high-context culture* was developed by Hall (1976), for the project leader Manuel it includes: (1) To talk around things; (2) politeness; (3) a longer way to the cause and (4) to lose the focus on the long way. Publications about intercultural communication have been greatly influenced by Hall's distinction of high- and low-context styles of communication (Jackson, 2014): "A high context (…) message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message." (Hall, 1976, cited by Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). Low-context communication presents the opposite because the mass of the information is transmitted in the explicit code (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Hall (1976) indicated high-context communication style in collectivist-oriented nations such as Mexico that are characterized by indirect communication in which most of the information is communicated through indirect and nonverbal means, based on a reliance on mutually shared knowledge (Jackson, 2014). According to Hall (1976), people from high-context cultures distinguish more between insiders and outsiders of a group, have larger expectations of others and people in positions of authority are "personally and truly (not just in theory) responsible for the actions of subordinates down to the lowest man" (Hall, 1976, p. 113), whereas in a low-context setting, responsibility is dispersed and thus difficult to determine.

From a leaders' perspective, Robin emphasized the difference between the communication styles comparing directness and sensitivity of his subordinates. He told an example in which his Mexican subordinate could not convince a coworker from a different unit (the same hierarchical level; nationality unknown) to realize a requested work task, whereas his German subordinate (as second choice) could. The German thus benefited from the fact that he

requested the same task from the different position of already being expressed a first time by the Mexican coworker "de buena manera" (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017) which however did not lead to success.

In order to critically analyze this example, Strauss (1985) suggests to search for the different positions and reasons of the coworker to reject a request without visibly expressing this rejection: What made him not fulfill the request the first time, but the second time? For Robin, the reason was the sensitivity of the first and the directness of the second expression of the request; another possible explanation could also be found in the nationalities since the first request was given by a Mexican and the second by a German coworker. Despite the equal official responsibilities and authority of both coworkers, the fulfillment of the task was different. Maybe the coworker perceived the expressed urgency of the task differently or attributes a different authority to his coworkers? The concept of articulation work by Strauss (1985) particularly refers to the differences between the explicit model of coordination and the factual practices in the work space. In this case, the official authority given to both coworkers is the same, but the perceived one is different.[57]

The differences regarding directness and sensitivity were in addition to the expression of requests furthermore mentioned with regards to criticism and the communication about problems. For the German leader Striepe, a possible reason to not confront a coworker between Mexicans is the fear of loss of face and the expression of evidence of incapability to correctly comply with the jobs' demands, which led him to the conclusion that Mexicans do not confront each other to not be exposed. In consequence, Striepe in his leading position needs sensitivity regarding the confrontation of conflicts because he does not see the possibility to express a

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[57] The questionnaire addresses the emerged doubts about differences in the fulfillment of requests.

problem on an objective level without hurting the subordinates' feeling. From the perspective of a project leader (without disciplinary leadership power), Manuel transferred the avoidance of conflict to the non-expression of problems in sight:

> We had a few cases at the beginning in which I thought "how can one not inform about it? It is obvious that we are walking towards a problem." And it then was hushed up due to the impression, I don't know, if it was not considered important or if they could maybe see it as personal criticism, because it is their supplier (…) (Manuel, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Manuel perceived at the beginning uncertainty of his Mexican coworkers regarding the decisions about when and how strongly to ask for support and to inform about possible problems in the work task. This behavior however has changed strongly during the collaboration which is appreciated as learning process. In a more general description, the German interviewees do not understand the lack of information flow about a problem in sight, if it has been clearly visible. Possible explanations mentioned are the avoidance of conflict, the consideration of the problem as not important or the avoidance of personal criticism related to the exposure of guilt.

It is interesting that the German participants revealed their thoughts about possible explanations of conflict avoidance whereas the Mexican interviewees did not reveal their thoughts about reasons of the German conflict confrontation. For instance, Rodrigo explained his personal conflict avoidance with a lack of assertiveness and the desire to not disappoint people. This argument agrees with theoretical positions that sustain an aspiration to harmony as a characteristic of the Mexican culture that is expressed in the emphasis on personal relationships in collectivist societies (see e.g. Coria-Sánchez & Hyatt, 2016; Tebeaux, 1999). Another Mexican employee justified his sensitivity with the desire to not destroy the trust between him

and the responsible coworker. According to different authors (e.g. Rehner, 2003; Tebeaux, 1999), trust in the Mexican culture is created with personal relationships and should therefore not be destroyed with the direct expression of criticism: "Because of Mexico's collectivist culture, Mexicans are much more relationship oriented (…). For Mexicans, establishing trust is critical to any business relationship, and winning that trust is the essential prerequisite to producing any business agreement." (Tebeaux, 1999, p. 53).

In the displayed subordinate-leader relationship, the expression of objective criticism by the Mexican leader about sensitivity and non-fulfillment of the work task personally offended the Mexican subordinate who neither understood the criticism nor agreed with the proposal to be less sensitive because for him, being less sensitive means losing the trust of his coworker. In contrast, for Robin, the direct expression of the problem rather means the achievement of a requested work task. This is an example of the meeting of different meanings given to the same action; the negotiations in this case take place between a subordinate and a leader who despite the same work culture disagree on the meaning, consequences and necessity of sensitivity.

In search for the solution strategies that are employed by the employees, as a result of numerous intercultural encounters, the German leader Striepe developed different methods to express criticism according to the personalities of his (merely) Mexican subordinates: Some of them need direct instructions without sensitivity, whereas others need "talking around things" (Striepe, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017) with more sensitivity. Striepe's solution to the intercultural misunderstandings was thus the adaption of his leadership strategy depending on the personality of each subordinate.

Negotiations between subordinates and leaders must always consider the organizational conditions that structure this relationship and the objective consequences of corresponding

interactions because "(…) the employee's perspective is subordinate to that of the boss - power, derived from organizational structure, clearly shapes the negotiation." (Nadai & Maeder 2008, p. 18). The interactive construction of performance/criticism negotiations relies on negotiations that are institutionalized by the organizational parameters that define a given structure of actors and authority, providing thereby the basic frame (Goffman, 1974) that declares the interactional situation as legitimate and with consequences on the social order.

From the subordinates' point of view, the participants also revealed diverse strategies to react to the expression of criticism by their leaders. For instance, Monica told that at times she prefers to not argue with her boss, but at other times she does correct him in order to make him see that she was not wrong. In her own words, this reaction needs to be done "very gentle" (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017) which is not a surprise considering her power status as subordinate expressing disagreement with her boss. Her description however contradicts the theoretical position that Mexicans do not disagree with their boss (see e.g. Schuler et al., 1996). Although Monica does aspire to general harmony in her work environment, she distinguishes her actions depending on the situation and the work task itself, for example "if it's not a big thing" (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017). This explanation represents the subjective action of the subordinate which depends on the situation and requires an interpretation; the reaction to the disagreement is negotiated and a decision is made. Strauss's perspective of the negotiated order (1993) enables to demonstrate that the creation of apparently objective facts such as Monica's performance is coined trough negotiations; the previous

common knowledge of the actor acquires an intersubjective and formal status through the

everyday negotiations that are as a whole generating social facts.[58]

    b) Non-verbal communication:

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a phone conference, (…) the German colleague wanted to say something through hand gestures which just weren't understood and he was sure my Mexican colleague was getting it. He was pretty much laughing at the situation because he was making fun of the people on the phone and the Mexican guys started thinking "he was making fun of him" (*stresses hi*m) and feeling like quite uncomfortable and not at ease with the situation. So then you have to go again and tell him "it's not about you, it's about what's happening. And he's meaning this and this" (…) But if those things hm are left unnoticed, they leave the conference and nobody clarifies the situation. Maybe the other guy got offended and (…) he will hold this grudge against the German guy.

(Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Figure 4. The first intercultural encounter: communication (non-verbal communication).

Hand gestures were mentioned by two Mexican interviewees who described the same

hand gesture which is obviously frequently used by their German coworkers. The characteristics

are the following: (1) It was unknown to them at the beginning; (2) it is perceived as rude; and

(3) leads to misunderstandings as in the example of the conference. Because the German

participants did not find the topic worth mentioning, the use of hand gestures is considered

unconscious without the corresponding awareness about the transmitted message the caused

feelings because even if not intended, a (rude) hand gesture can be taken as personal offense if

the recipient does not know its meaning or misunderstands the object addressed by it.

The presented intercultural encounter is situated in a digital space because Rodrigo and

his Mexican coworker from the Mexican subsidiary interact in a phone conference with their

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[58] Alejandra also described herself as a more direct subordinate in the relationship with her German leader: "I speak with him, like right away, yes, it doesn't matter what it is and if I screwed up or if something is not working because it's not of me (…)." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). The communication in situations of problems is thus characterized with openness and directness regarding the guilt of a mistake. Alejandra however emphasized that the acceptance of help from her leader first requires the unsuccessful personal effort.

colleagues from the German headquarters. Seen from the framework of Goffman (1956), the theatre stage in this case is not a physical location. All the interviewees - regardless of their positions - mentioned meetings with their coworkers in the German headquarters as an essential part of their daily activities; the close interaction is related to the type of tasks since there are hardly any tasks that can be considered routine in the starting phase of a new subsidiary.

In the present case, Rodrigo did neither reveal the positions of the participants of the phone call nor their relationship with each other. He mentioned the participation of himself, his Mexican coworker in the same room and the German coworker in Germany; it is however possible that more participants were involved. Similar to the first intercultural encounter, this example presents an interaction in which a communicative act caused negative feelings in a coworker, hence it is another scene in which the professional and the personal role of a worker overlap on the theatre stage. In this scenery, the actors' performance that is directed to reach the professional objective of the conference call, is disturbed by the fact that a hand gesture - which is common in one work culture - is misunderstood by a member of the other work culture. Once more, the experience and the symbolic meanings of actions that every actor brings to the work place are questioned due to the encounter with another work culture (see Reygadas, 2002).

Hand gestures are part of non-verbal communication which is considered an essential aspect of intercultural communication (see e.g. Jackson, 2014) and Goffman's performances (1956): "We find that sometimes disruptions occur through unmeant gestures, faux pas, and scenes, thus discrediting or contradicting the definition of the situation that is being maintained." (p. 152). The immediate presence of two or more individuals in social encounters highlights the promissory character of social life because both appearance and manner evidence status and relationships; the line of visual attention, intensity of involvement and forms of initial actions

enable others to explore the immediate objective, regardless of verbal or non-verbal communication (Goffman, 1983). The actor has consequently different options: "to facilitate this revealment, or block it, or even misdirect (…) viewers." (Goffman, 1983, p. 3).

The interviews identified that hand gestures are generally common in this work environment; differences regarding non-verbal communication are on the one hand more noticed at the beginning of the collaboration and on the other hand, although noticed, doubts about meanings are not expressed to be clarified. In consequence, the expression, use and meaning of hand gestures are part of the learning process in the collaboration between different work cultures in which the translation work of cultural mediators interferes. Rodrigo assigned to himself the "role of a cultural bridge" (personal communication, November 15, 2017) which he explained with his study and work experience in Germany (in the German headquarters of the OEM). For him, the ability to translate meanings of hand gestures is part of the important knowledge acquired with work experience in Germany or in a German company and the requirement of his work as a cultural translator (see chapter cultural mediators).

The present anecdote is an interesting example of the role of non-verbal communication which is as important in social interaction in digital encounters (in this case in a phone conference) as in face-to-face encounters (Goffman, 1956). As mentioned in the citation, Rodrigo noticed that his Mexican coworker misunderstood the hand gesture of the German but however did not reveal his doubts. In this case, Rodrigo reacted initiatively without being asked to clarify the misunderstanding and avoid the creation of grudge. The subsequent recommendation is therefore that in the moment of noticing differences and doubting meanings, either the acting person must be asked to clarify a hand gesture or a "cultural bridge" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017) to translate the meaning. Without being asked for

the reason of a hand gesture, the acting person does not even notice the caused misunderstanding and in consequence has no reason to change this action. Nevertheless remains the question if the explicit expression of doubt is the solution to similar misunderstandings? Is the acting person able to explain comprehensively the reasons for using a certain hand gesture or is an explanation not possible because hand gestures are employed unconsciously?

The consideration of the creation of grudge as a rejection action of a social actor in the concept of Strauss (1985), it "may be invisible to others, or at least to important others." (p. 6). In consequence, "those disagreements only later perhaps becoming evident, or perhaps kept secret by one or the other who understands the misunderstanding but does not say so." (Strauss, 1985, p. 6). In order to determine the disagreement and the visibility or invisibility of the misunderstanding, the subsequent questions are: Would grudge be created without the intervention of a cultural translator? What would be different if the person had expressed the personal offense to the German coworker? What would be different if he could not have been able to explain the use of his rude hand gesture? Would the same grudge be created or is even an intent of clarification sufficient for the avoidance of grudge?

In addition to personal offense, similar intercultural misunderstandings addressing non-verbal communication can also have a contrary impact: the appreciation of adopted social practices. Mexican and German interviewees told that the German coworkers have completely adopted the Mexican greeting practices at the work place (a kiss on the cheek or a hug). The role of greeting gestures is important in intercultural communication because it additionally addresses culturally determined physical territory: "Spatial changes give a tone to a communication, accent it, and at times even override the spoken word. The flow and shift of distance between people as they interact with each other is part and parcel of the communication process." (Hall, 1959, p.

204). From a male German perspective, Hector revealed his former discomfort with this Mexican social practice particularly in reference to greeting a female coworker:

> In Germany, if you give a woman who you don't know that well a kiss on the cheek, you would probably get accused of sexual harassment (*laughs*). Yes, I noticed that. I was also scared at the beginning when women approached me and greeted me this way (…).
> (Hector, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

For him, to be greeted with a kiss by Mexican coworkers, especially in case of female coworkers approaching male coworkers, was initially strange and uncomfortable because the physical distance in a German work place is larger, greeting practices are reserved and less affectionate.[59] The feelings expressed by Hector represent the different meanings and effects of non-verbal communication practices. According to Goffman (1983), immediate presence in face-to-face encounters makes the actor vulnerable through physical assault, "words and gesticulation to the penetration of (…) psychic preserves, and to the breaching of the expressive order" (p. 4) that is expected to be maintained.

> Personal territoriality is not to be seen merely in terms of constraints, prohibitions, and threats. In all societies there is a fundamental duality of use, such that many of the forms of behavior through which we can be offensively treated by one category of others are

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[59] Although Hector clearly exaggerates with his joke about a possible sexual harassment complaint, this case raises questions about gender roles at work and the physical distance which is permitted between both genders - both according to official labor law and to the subjective perception. The behavior related with gender behavior is socially sanctioned in the diverse cultures (Bandura & Bussey, 1999, cited by Álvarez, 2016). The division between genders (Bourdieu, 2000) is socially and arbitrarily constructed, its objective status presents a normativity and legitimacy of the system of cognitive and social structures; the actors' habits are thus connected with the nature of their bodies in accordance to the systems of perceptions and structures in the social world (Álvarez, 2016).

intimately allied to those through which members of another category can properly

display its bondedness to us. (Goffman, 1983, p. 4).

From a female Mexican perspective, Alejandra stated in agreement that at the beginning,

her German coworkers greeted her with a reserved handshake:

A: (…) at the beginning man with woman was just the hand and like really far away and

now they don't give you hand, they give you a kiss so that's like Mexican.

MZ: And what does that mean for you?

A: Nice. I think it's nice because they are like adapting to our culture and for us it's like

really open (…) to have a greeting and say "Hey" with a kiss, so it's not like "Oh they are

being disrespectful" Or no, we understand like how they are. Yes they are being like

more open to our culture (…). (Alejandra, personal communication, November 15, 2017),

According to Goffman (1983), costume, gesture, and bodily alignment is a form to

portray a diverse list of immaterial things that are significant in the life of an actor which "yet do

not cast a shadow: notable events in the past, beliefs about the cosmos and our place in it, ideals

regarding our various categories of persons, and of course social relationships and larger social

structures." (p. 9). It is interesting that neither Hector nor Alejandra distinguish between the

different hierarchy levels in the discourse since greeting forms and physical distance are clearly

determined by the social positions constituted by the relationship between the actors. The

adaptation of the Mexican greeting practice apparently took place in all hierarchical levels and

includes the relationships between managers and subordinates.

This intercultural encounter caused distinct feelings: The Germans had to overcome fear

and strangeness, whereas in contrast, the Mexicans showed joy and appreciation of the

adaptation. This contradiction supports the idea of Hall (1959) who argued that "The associations

and feelings that are released in a member of one culture almost invariably mean something else in the next." (p. 190). The underlying question however remains: What are the reasons to substitute an own social practice although it causes discomfort? A compromise between both practices could have been another possibility; nevertheless, the Germans in this case chose a complete abandonment of their business practice. Hence, what are the requirements to completely adopt a social practice at work? What aspects are considered in the decision to adopt one but reject another? What makes an adaptation considered easy or difficult?

Practical conclusions are derived from these thoughts about the present example. It is important for the Germans to know that the supposedly small adaptation of the greeting practices represents a highly appreciated adaptation to the culture from the Mexican perspective. It is assumed that the Germans in this work environment are unaware of the broad meaning of their action; the small effort of giving a kiss on the cheek has more profound positive effects on the collaboration as they might consider. From the other point of view, it is important for the Mexicans to know that this business practice can be perceived as an intrusion in German locations of the company: To greet with a kiss (particularly between male and female coworkers) might be seen as lack of respect and cause of discomfort.

This example evidences the importance to consider that social practices that are common in the own culture, might have different meanings with negative effects in others. Transferring this idea to the theatre stage of Goffman (1956), the difference between performing on one stage in comparison to another is expressed. On the own, well-known stage, the actor performs everyday actions that are not even thought about; they are acted unconsciously because they are learned in the socialization process as referential frames (Goffman, 1974). Social ritualization or "the standardization of bodily and vocal behavior through socialization" (Goffman, 1983, p. 3)

both simplifies and complicates the exploration of observations. However, if the same action is performed on a different stage, both, the other social actors and the audience might not understand its meaning and in consequence not know how to react to it. The actor has then three options: first, maintain his well-known performance; second, change it partially; or third, change it completely by substituting it with the one from the second stage. All three reactions require the awareness of the differences, the definition and interpretation of the situation and the subjective decision made based on those (Blumer, 1969).

The general conclusions derived from both examples about body gestures is that non-verbal communication plays an important role in intercultural communication. Even without expressing words (and the additional influence of language), misunderstandings are possible due to the diverse meanings an action can be given to in different work cultures.

c) Instructions:

I had the expectations that the German people were (…) clear, like "I want this, with this type of people, with this and this and this person (…) at the latest this time" (…) with all the specifications and not like kind of changing it. There was a misunderstanding because at the end (…) my boss started getting a little bit mad with this other person (…) and I saw the whole picture from the outside and I was like "but there was different communications at different times and they all said different things.

(Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Figure 5. The first intercultural encounter: communication (instructions).

This intercultural encounter takes place on a stage in the Mexican subsidiary and involved are the Mexican assistant Monica and her German boss. In the present case, the social interaction is situated in the relationship between a subordinate and her boss, hence the hierarchical difference between them clearly shapes their communication. This scene is an interesting example of the overlap and the references the social actors establish from their particular work space to the broad society: Monica starts her narrative with the expectations she had about the German culture without knowing it, then compares them to the specific behavior of

her German boss and afterwards readjusts them based on her actual experience in this work environment. These processes of reconstructing the symbolic meanings of actions in an intercultural work space demonstrate how the social actors relate the distinct dimensions with each other. As proposed by Reygadas (2002), the import of meanings towards work as well as the export of those from the labor process pass necessarily through the interactions of subjects in which the meanings are produced and adapted; the previous culture is actualized and affects work; the development of the labor activity generates new meanings that the subjects can afterwards transfer to other areas of activity. Similar to the previous intercultural encounters, in this interaction between Monica and her boss, the experience and the symbolic meanings of actions that every actor brings to the work place are once more questioned due to the encounter with another work culture.

Because the interactions at work are implemented in the combination of the global structure of power relations between the actors in the workplace and the relation between the material and the expressive elements of work is mediated by the dimension of power, the resources that control the agents participating in the productive process, as well as the political dynamics that interfere in it must be considered (Reygadas, 2002). Using the theatre metaphor of Goffman (1956), Monica enters this scenery as subordinate from an inferior position because she is in a defense position about a misunderstanding that had caused an error in the realization of a work task. Her boss enters the same scenery from a superior position due to the hierarchical power over subordinates, but he also enters with an emotional performance due to the resentment about the occurred error. This intercultural encounter represents a reconstruction of the established social rules in the work place because both actors negotiate the topic and do not act according to the well-known reference frames of one another. This social game thus reveals the

interpretation and definition process of both actors that lead to their corresponding action.

Monica told the intercultural encounter from a subordinates' perspective and clearly contradicts the previous description of the direct and clear form of communication of the German work culture. In this case, the instructions from her German boss showed three weaknesses: They were made with different information, at different times and to different subordinates. The misunderstanding was thus caused by the missing clarity demonstrated by a German boss to his Mexican subordinates which leads to the interpretation that the Mexicans in this work environment expect clearer instructions to be able to satisfactorily fulfill their work tasks. Monica's example contradicts the theoretical positions that consider Germans as very clear and direct; in her opinion, the demonstrated clarity is insufficient:

I expected that if they thought something, if they thought you were wrong or they didn't like what you were doing or how you were doing it, they would clearly just tell you (…). But to be honest I think that not a lot Germans are like that, that's just my opinion. (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Monica's anecdote moreover emphasizes the influence of expectations; hers were created by the media because this work position is her first contact with Germans. These previous expectations characterized the Germans as strong, clear and direct, which is an image that caused her to be "scared" (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017). However, this description does not match her factual impression. In comparison of her German and Mexican coworkers, Monica concluded that "yes, they are not as clear as I expected but they're a lot more clear than Mexican people, so for me that's perfectly fine." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Although the Germans she works with are not as clear as she expected and as she would like them to be, they are in comparison clearer than Mexicans, which she prefers.

It is interesting that - instead of using the pronoun "we" - Monica used "Mexican people" (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017), which is interpreted as an exclusion of herself from the group that is in her opinion not sufficiently clear. This example gives insight about the differences between a general description of a work culture and its finer, more profound variation in the factual social life that is related to differences between personalities. In reference to the social interaction order, Goffman (1983) stated that there are two forms how an individual characterizes another: (1) the categoric form involves the placement into one or more social categories; and (2) the individual form that connects the observed subject to a uniquely differentiating identity with distinguishing attributes such as appearance, tone of voice, name, etc. "This dual possibility - categoric and individual identification - is critical for interaction life in all communities except by gone small isolated ones, and indeed figures in the social life of some other species as well." (Goffman, 1983, pp. 3-4).

Accordingly, the differentiation of oneself from a characteristic of the own culture is consequently evidenced if the cultural aspect is considered negative. This subjective distinction was detected with changes in the use of personal pronouns: the interview participants switched in their discourses between "we", "they" and "I", depending on the particular cultural aspect. Goffman (1956) provided an explanation for this phenomenon:

> When an individual appears before others, he willingly and unwillingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself is an important part. When an event occurs which is expressively incompatible with this fostered impression, significant consequences are simultaneously felt in three levels of social reality, each of which involves a different point of reference and a different order of fact. (p. 155).

Reygadas (2002) proposed to include - in addition to cultural differences - the reflection about distinct sources of conflicts and misunderstandings in the work place since they also reveal tensions that are inherent in productive relations. The objectives of the corporation and its corresponding mechanisms to continuously reach the predominance of efficiency and profitability must be considered in the discussion about how the production of collaboration. Assuming that the productive work is regulated by these criteria, the subjects still maintain a frame of control which they use in their daily negotiations to reach the necessary arrangement (see Strauss, 1985) to achieve the common work goal - in this case, the collaboration despite cultural differences. Considering the dimension of power and the interfering resources of control not only reveals the variety of negotiations between the productive agents but also the structures of meanings that result from the combination of their interactions (Reygadas, 2002).

The present intercultural misunderstanding takes place in the hierarchical relationship between a German leader and Mexican subordinate. The possible reactions to unclear instructions are again negotiated and depend on the situation; Monica for instance, differentiates her reactions that result from the definition and interpretation of every intercultural encounter (as argued by Blumer, 1969). One - however undesired - solution for Monica is the guess: "I see that sometimes they don't really tell you if they think you're correct or if they think you are doing it right, so you have to sometimes be guessing" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Nevertheless, Monica emphasized that her reaction (considered as part of the negotiation) is different in every case: At times, she decides to "stay quiet" (Monica, personal communication,

November 15, 2017) and not argue with her boss, but at other times, she contradicts and corrects him to make him see that she was not wrong.[60]

From the leaders' perspective, Hector mentioned the need for clear and detailed instructions as a difference between Mexican and German subordinates. German leaders focus on the realization of the work task and give autonomy about its approach and the corresponding responsibility to their subordinates. In Germany, rather than concentrating on the work pattern, leaders expect the contribution of subordinates with own ideas, improvement proposals and creative work task approaches.[61] From the German subordinates' point of view, this liberal leadership means (1) to not expect a predetermined work pattern from the leader; (2) to express proposals about the approach to the superior; and (3) to fulfill the request with own ideas (Hector, personal communication, November 15, 2017). In comparison, the perspective of Mexican subordinates is coined by work experience in Japanese and Mexican companies:

> Japanese are very (…) workaholics and they are sometimes abusive (…). And the Germans (…) want their space so they also give you your space, they (…) assume you know how to do things and if not then you're gonna go to them and ask whether they can help (…). So they will let you be, whereas the Japanese are very (…) intrusive I would

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[60] In another case told by Alejandra, clear information and detailed instructions were similarly missing from a German coworker (no hierarchical relationship) to continue the recruitment process. Similar to Monica's experience, more clarity and objective facts were required to realize the work task; the problem was solved with the interference of her boss who enabled the transfer of the information. Both examples thus contradict the German cultural standard of fact-orientation and describe the Mexican workers with a need for clarity and objective data.

[61] Thomas (2011) described particularly this difficulty of German managers in international assignments, explaining it with the cultural standard objectivism as well as low power distance.

say. (…) they go after you and chase you for you to do your work. (…) So that contrast is also felt here. (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

According to Rodrigo, work experience with Japanese and Mexican leaders is notable in the present work environment; in comparison to the Japanese work culture, German coworkers are not workaholics which is defined as wanting and giving space. The freedom given by the liberal style of leadership means for him the assumption that subordinates "know how to do things" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017). In a similar discourse, Alejandra expressed her appreciation of the German leadership style in comparison to the Mexican one by describing a more authoritarian leadership based on control and supervision:

> something that I see that I like different from Mexicans is (…) your boss. Here in Mexico it's more used to have your boss in your back, like behind you and "(…) what are you going to do today?" (…). And the Germans I think they are more into objectives so if you need to make one (…) in my case then it doesn't matter how you get it as long as it's with the policies (…) And I think it's a really, really big difference. Because they are, they let you work (…) because they know that have to do tasks to get to the objectives but they are, like if you need help, they help you and they listen to you (…). (Alejandra, personal communication, November 15, 2017).[62]

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[62] These results support the empirical findings of Hernández (2012) who described the failure of a German director of a Mexican subsidiary with an emphasis on hierarchic differentiation and an ideological racialized position demonstrating distrust of the mother company towards Mexican operators and managers. The comparison of the studies must however consider two different contexts because this German director arrived at the Mexican plant (operated by merely Mexican workers) in a financial and legal crisis to juridically cure the branch, whereas the German leaders in the present case arrived in the starting phase in which expatriates and local employees establish work processes together. A further difference is that Hernández (2012) analyzed the manager and production

The Mexican leader Robin considers a similarity that both his German and Mexican subordinates reject this kind of authoritarian leadership style which he mentioned as "micromanagement" (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017) that is perceived by his subordinates as distrust; however, for him, it is a way to assure the function of things.[63] It was a learning process for Robin to understand the distinct meanings and disapproval of micromanagement that is shared by his subordinates and thus interpreted as a similarity between the Mexican and German work culture in this work environment. Since the corporation always is in search for efficiency and profitability, different mechanisms of control are employed to reach the business objectives despite cultural differences. The work is thus influenced by cultural differences as well as the regulation of the work processes and leadership is from this perspective considered a kind of control mechanism. "Boltanski and Chiapello argue that the history of corporate leadership is a history of the permanent sophistication of the forms of domination happening in the company and its environment." (Szlechter, 2009, p. 147).

With regards to the interaction between the organization and the broader social structures,

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workers and the present research merely addresses the administration level. Hernández (2012) interpreted the business strategies of the German director as rooted in distrust of the German headquarters; foreign companies generally aim to take competitive advantage of the passiveness of Mexican workers and their expressed resistance (e.g. sabotage) is the reaction to the imposition of surveillance and control. In comparison, the German leaders in the present study are described by the Mexican interviewees with showing trust in an own work task approach of their subordinates and difficulties are rather rooted in different expectations about the given responsibility and freedom.

[63] Robin's definition of micromanagement is "to be in the back of subordinates" (own translation); for instance, Chambers (2004) defined it as "the excessive, unwanted, counterproductive interference and disruption of people or things" (p. 12) that emphasizes the role of subjective perception: "There is a significant gray area between what one person sees as interference and another sees as support and interaction." (p. 12).

Strauss (1985) particularly addressed the influence of personality and work experience on the creation of potential conflictive situations by considering the division of labor as "responsive and potentially flexible" (p. 11) and as intersection of workers and their social worlds. Micro-situational, larger organizational and supra-organizational conditions (market and occupational bases of allocation, skills and ideologies of the worker) influence the daily negotiation between coworkers because the accomplishment of arcs of work or parts of them include intersections of representatives from different social worlds or subworlds (Strauss, 1978).

In the present case, the workers represent for instance communities of managers, engineers, administration and technical professionals with experience in the automotive industry including its corresponding occupational particularities. Every representative is trained and experienced in certain activities that are brought to the arc of work; the distinct qualification is clearly related to the respective occupational worlds that are influenced by political, educational and social conditions of each nation. Because the present research addresses a work force with superior academic and professional education including international work experience, the different reference points regarding the access to superior education must be considered when comparing Mexico and Germany. Social inequality is always present in the access to education which in Latin-America is generally limited to a small group of the societies with financial resources for private education. In addition to unequal labor conditions, the possibility of a Mexican worker to provide superior education for his family is clearly different than of a German worker who can moreover benefit from adequate public education. Because the education system also influences the age of entering the labor market, different aspirations to start with challenging and difficult work tasks are created.

In summary, the three presented intercultural encounters revealed differences regarding

the treatment of conflicts between both work cultures as well as emotional consequences of

differences of non-verbal communication. In addition, missing clarity was identified from the

perspective of Mexicans referring to the communication of German leaders and coworkers on the

same organizational level which results in a consequent need for clearer instructions. The

freedom provided by the liberal leadership style of German leaders is in comparison considered a

differentiating and appreciated aspect of the German work culture. Furthermore, the qualitative

data about communication evidenced that generalized cultural differences about directness and

indirectness do not necessarily hold in all the presented encounters. The social relationship of the

participants, hierarchical circumstances, expectations about the other cultural group and the way

to manifest information affect the mutual interpretation of the situation.

4.1.1.2 Expatriates, inpatriates and locals. Knowledge transfer and collaboration.

At the beginning, I can tell you about an expatriate, he is focused on the computer and I tell him "You know what, I need you to pass this message to the whole team, you are the expert, you give it to them. An agent comes from Germany and we will present the project." And he says: "No, I present it. You don't, don't need to know this, the Mexicans." At the beginning. Now not anymore.

(Robin, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Figure 6. The second intercultural encounter: knowledge transfer.

This intercultural misunderstanding told by the Mexican leader Robin occurred at the

beginning of his work and addresses problems that can emerge in the factual practice of

knowledge transfer which is the principal goal of expatriate programs. In theory, an expatriate is

sent from the headquarters to the new subsidiary to train the company processes to the local

employees; problems with the success or failure of expatriate knowledge transfer are however

experienced and studied in numerous occasions (see e.g. Harvey et al., 1999). The theatre stage

of the present scene (see Goffman, 1956) is the office in the Mexican subsidiary; the involved

actors are the Mexican leader Robin and his German subordinate with an expatriate contract.[64] The understanding of the setting requires the information that the scene takes place during the early collaboration of both coworkers, because the intercultural misunderstanding emerged due to the fact that the expatriate has an information that the rest of the team needs to prepare a presentation. Instead of sharing this information and enabling the presentation as a team, the expatriate keeps it from them in order to present it alone. Although both social actors occupy administrative specialist positions with similar tasks, Robin enters from a hierarchically higher position due to his leadership function. This scene is an example of the negotiation of power positions in work interactions, because one form of power is found to be more determining than the other. The social game is thus played with strategies that are determined by the position (stance) taken by the actor towards work and the working-out process (Strauss, 1985). In the present case, one actor enters with a power stance constituted by his hierarchical position and the other one with a power stance constituted by the possession of knowledge.

Law (2013) argues that research from the study field management fails to focus on the human aspect in the discussion about knowledge transfer in organizations because "the success of knowledge transfer per se depends on the attitude and behaviour of organisational members who actually carry out the transfer process." (p. 365). The present approach to knowledge

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[64] In this case, Robin was asked how his five subordinates generally work and he answered by referring to this particular subordinate as "el expat" (personal communication, November 15, 2017) which leads to the interpretation that he - rather than distinguishing between Mexicans and Germans - distinguishes between locals and expatriates. Neither the gender nor the nationality of this expatriate is known; the masculine form is used only to facilitate the reading. It is assumed that the nationality is German due to the expression "Ustedes no, no necesitan saberlo, los mexicanos." (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

transfer implies three basic assumptions: an action results from each actor's subjective definition and interpretation of the situation (Blumer, 1969); knowledge is a form of power (Bourdieu, 1986); the ownership of knowledge is ambiguous (Bowman & Swart, 2007). Knowledge transfer addressed from the "communication-appropriation perspective" (Law, 2013, p. 359) suggests three propositions: (1) Knowledge appropriation concerns affect the willingness to transfer knowledge; (2) instead of the maximum degree of knowledge transfer, a worker may choose the partial transfer of proprietary knowledge; (3) in the process of transferring knowledge, a worker may "strategically manipulate the modes of communication" (Law, 2013, p. 364).

In the present intercultural encounter, the intended knowledge transfer was indeed unsuccessful because the expatriate did not share the knowledge acquired by work experience in the German headquarters with the Mexican boss and coworkers, but rather used it for personal career purposes. Although this example can simply be interpreted as a problem caused by one personality, it is nevertheless important regarding the collaboration in this work environment because this conflict determined the professional path of the Mexican leader by coining his distrust or carefulness towards expatriates. The addressed person must know that by starting a work position in the Mexican subsidiary in the role of an expatriate, his actions are associated with the whole group of expatriates. The Mexican leader recognized accordingly in the interview that he had this negative experience with the failure of knowledge transfer and now experiences the sharing of knowledge from other expatriates.

The withholding of information can be analyzed with the concept of symbolic power of one of the three forms of "cultural capital (…) in the embodied state" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17):

the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic

profits for the possessors of a large cultural capital (…) the relationship of appropriation

between an agent and the resources objectively available, and hence the profits they produce, is mediated by the relationship of (objective and/or subjective) competition between himself and the other possessors of capital competing for the same goods, in which scarcity - and through it social value - is generated. (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.18-19).[65]

The present case represents a situation in which the symbolic power of cultural capital in form of company knowledge of the expatriate was more determining than the hierarchical power of his leader. Knowledge (cultural capital) was thus used for personal benefits instead of shared to enrich the knowledge of the whole team (which is the theoretical goal of expatriation). The withholding of information is considered one of the frames of control that the subjects use to maintain their power in the social game. In every organization, the social games that emerge assure its continuity because the day-to-day adjustments avoid its paralysis. Reflecting on the deviations of control, the distrust, disagreements, misunderstandings are all part of the dynamics that regulate the productive space. Strategies that are employed by the social actors are thus always a reflection of their capacity to on the one hand play the social game according to its rules, and on the other hand to negotiate and change those. The strategy of the expatriate of withholding information is considered a deviation of the rules used to maintain control and support personal benefits.

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[65] Menéndez-Menéndez (2014) summarized the contribution of Bourdieu as "a theoretical framework in which the symbolic (…) is the basis for domination, because it is an instrument of knowledge, for the construction of a world view. This symbolic capital coexists with cultural, economic and social capital, but its objective is to provide society with frameworks for interpretation that are not seen as oppressive, thereby achieving the adherence of the dominated group. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 173)." (cited by Menéndez-Menéndez, 2014, p. 65).

The aspiration for power comes from the workers' desires to appropriate rents, to

participate in higher-level decision making and to obtain better deployment of valuable

resources(…). In modern knowledge-intensive organisations, the issue of power struggles

has manifested in the tension of appropriation of knowledge between the organisation and

its workers and also among the workers themselves. (Law, 2013, p. 362).

The presented case must of course be compared to other situations of knowledge transfer

in the organization to be able to identify patterns or consider it a negative exception; the

quantitative approach is used to reach a broader picture of the whole subsidiary.

This intercultural encounter is also an example of the different roles (see Goffman, 1956)

that are attributed to an expatriate from different perspectives: For the addressed person, the

position means personal career development which involves using company knowledge for

personal sake and recognition; in contrast for Robin, being an expatriate means being an expert

of the company processes and the carrier of information. For the Mexican leader, the expatriates

bring the company knowledge and distribute it among their teams; for the local employees, the

expatriate thus represents a learning source which is used to jointly establish the company

processes from the German headquarters in the new Mexican subsidiary.[66] Including nationality

in this role, Manuel expressed his understanding with regards to the economy of his home

country: Every member of the group of expatriates not only performs a representative role of a

German company and its economic situation, but additionally of the economic situation of the

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[66] In addition to the case of failed knowledge transfer, Robin had initially further challenges with Mexican

subordinates who rejected to accept help and training of expatriates which led to the problem that expatriates

stopped to help. Both were problems at the beginning which are now (after one year and two months) being solved:

"today, the harmony is being formed." (Robin, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

nation Germany. For Manuel, the role of the German expatriate represents not only the economic success of the German company and Germany, but rather the mentalities and structures that caused this success. The subsequent question to ask is: Would this role change in an economic crisis of the company or Germany as a nation?[67]

From a different perspective, the work experience of the expatriates in the German headquarters is for Hector the main criteria that distinguishes his German from Mexican coworkers in the work environment because it is the reason for "little careless mistakes" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). According to his interpretation, the Germans carry the work experience from the headquarters and have already interiorized the instructions and policies and simply because of that, they are able to avoid little careless mistakes. In the interview, Hector repeated numerous times that he is completely satisfied with the performance of his Mexican coworkers because they learn quickly and have already adapted the companies' work patterns. Since he considers the lack of work experience in the company the only reason for little careless mistakes, his strategy to balance this difference is to enable that local Mexican employees get to know the German headquarters. According to Hector, to work a period of time in the German headquarters is a source to learn the companies' processes; it additionally establishes networks with the counterparts (the coworkers they daily collaborate with); and it increases work motivation (the incentive of a business trip to Germany).

Miguel additionally related the role of being an expatriate with his age and the corresponding work experience in the company. Including himself, he told that because the expatriates in this subsidiary are older, they have already accepted the company proceedings,

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[67] It seems interesting to compare in a subsequent research this self-understanding to the ones of expatriates during the economic crisis of the automotive industry between 2008 and 2010.

whereas the Mexican employees, due to their younger age (and corresponding minor work experience) are in a development phase regarding organizational work patterns. Miguel used the personal pronoun "we" to describe the expatriates who he considers the "experienced ones who form or develop the unexperienced Mexican coworkers" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).[68] The distinguishing criteria is once again not the nationality but rather the work experience in the company which correlates with age. In consequence, the task of an expatriate is for Miguel the training of coworkers which he realizes with communication and the active approach to his colleagues. Instead of correcting them, he rather asks about possible improvements regarding the "optimization of the whole" (Miguel, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). Like Manuel and Hector, Miguel appreciates the willingness and ability to learn demonstrated by his Mexican coworkers.

In his description of knowledge transfer, signs of the German apprenticeship system were detected, in which Miguel performs the role of the trainer and his coworkers the role of the apprentices. This interpretation is based on his frequent use of technical terms like efficiency, quality, optimization of processes, improvement etc. In consequence, the described knowledge transfer from the expatriate to the local employee is interpreted with a training atmosphere from the (experienced) coworker with company knowledge to the (unexperienced) one without company knowledge. Miguel's description is also an example of articulation work according to Strauss (1985) due to the differentiation between official job responsibilities and factual ones: Although Miguel has the same hierarchical position as his coworkers since he has no official leadership tasks, the actual practice of knowledge transfer has created the impression of a trainer-apprentice environment due to differences in age and work experience in the company.

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[68] See chapter 4.2.1 for the detailed sociodemographic characteristics of the study population.

Changing the perspective from the subordinate stage to the management stage (see Goffman, 1956), a different scenery is revealed: Long work experience in the company is considered complicated in the management level. Robin described himself as the only manager who was new in the company in contrast to the others who started the positions in this subsidiary with long company experience. According to him, these managers know well the company processes, which is the knowledge he first had to acquire in the German headquarters; nevertheless, they lack knowledge about Mexico, specifically about Mexican suppliers. Robin considers his knowledge about Mexico and work experience with other companies as his unique advantage in response to the tunnel vision created by work experience within one organization.

Robin's solution strategy to this difficulty was to get to know the German headquarters which he considers the essential source of knowledge about the company's proceedings that is necessary to start leading his team and engaging in discussions at the management level. The work period in the Germany was one of the three reactions (solution strategies) that resulted from the misunderstanding regarding knowledge transfer described at the beginning of this chapter. According to Robin, the initial failure of knowledge transfer from the expatriate to the team had caused significant difficulties which until today are not sufficiently solved. For the first four months, he worked in his position without knowing the proceedings and objectives until his first business trip to the German headquarters, which was the inflection point that made him realize that the German counterparts had already shared the necessary information with the expatriate who however neither transferred it to him nor to the rest of the team. Instead of the expatriate in his team, his source of knowledge was thus the German headquarters.

The second reaction was that the position change of the expatriate within the organization. Although the reason for the change is unknown, this strategy can be interpreted as

a control mechanism employed by the superior managers to establish the teams' capacity to reach the required agreement for the achievement of the work goal. After the position change, the realization of a teambuilding is the third reaction in search for integration and Robin's attempt to create harmony in his team that is newly composed by other expatriates (who share their knowledge) and local employees. However, this proposal led to a following problem because the willingness to participate is missing by some members of the team who use excuses like the general aversion of socializing. Robin does not understand this unwilling behavior due to its effects on the whole team: By being egoistic, neither the team nor consequently the organization wins. Hence, willingness to participate in trainings is one of the requirements of productive collaboration (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Reygadas (2002), Strauss (1985) and Gofman (1983) emphasize to consider structural conditions and their influences in the analysis of knowledge transfer in organizations. In general, expatriates are sent to a foreign subsidiary of the mother company with labor conditions of the sending nation (see e.g. Vance & Paik, 2015). In the present case, the German labor regulation is without doubt more positive than the Mexican one due to rigid labor law traditions, the national social security system and the strength of the labor unions (see e.g. Della Coletta, 2018; García, 2008; Neubauer, 2015; Pries, 2000a). Expatriates - both, managers and subordinates - are usually experienced employees who earn in addition to the regular labor conditions of the sending company other benefits as compensation for the international assignment (see e.g. Harvey et al., 1999; Vance & Paik, 2015). In addition to expatriate and local contracts there is a third group of

employees called inpatriates who are generally understood as the counterpart of expatriates.[69] In the present study unit, Mexican employees were sent to the German headquarters for a period of time to acquire knowledge about the company processes which is - in addition to the expatriate knowledge - subsequently used to train local employees. Differences between the three types of work contracts cause objective inequality regarding the same hierarchical positions in the company that are argued with the experience and company knowledge of expatriates and inpatriates. This inequality regarding labor contracts was expected but however not addressed by the interview participants.[70] Since the interviews did not reveal information about the influences, this lack of information is addressed in the questionnaire.

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[69] "inpatriates, or "inpats" are host country or third country nationals who are invited to MNC headquarters, typically for an extended period of time (…) to gain valuable exposure and understanding of company strategy, culture, core competencies, and priorities." (Vance & Paik, 2015, p. 291).

[70] Robin expressed the only reference to labor conditions by comparing the Mexican labor conditions to the present ones in the company: "Unfortunately in the Mexican culture you sometimes have people that qualified and paid less and the people don't see that (…) they don't appreciate that they are working for a good organization, the labor environment is good more or less, it is controlled, they give you vacations, in which you have time that you can spend with your family, you can travel (…) whatever you like, and work." (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). Robin addresses two dimensions: on the one hand his disapproval of the salary conditions in Mexico that don't adequately reflect the highly qualified labor force; and on the other hand, that his coworkers don't appreciate their present conditions in sight of possible competition. Although this expression addresses labor conditions in Mexico, it does not refer to the inequality between locals, expatriates and inpatriates.

4.1.1.3 Free transparency or silent creativity? Work task approaches.

What more do I notice about differences? (*pause*) (…) if you say that in Germany to anyone (…) if I say to a colleague "Hey, could you please do that? And in fact in the near future." then most of the time he stops what he is doing and concentrates on what I have told him. And if you say that to a local here (…) then maybe you must be more direct regarding the urgency of a certain thing, because for him "gleich" means the famous "ahorita" well yes, some time in the near future. And then it partially happens that you enter the kitchen and you are totally surprised" that he is there talking to somebody although you actually need something from him.

(Hector, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Figure 7. The third intercultural encounter: work task approaches.

Hector told this anecdote to illustrate the comparison between the pace of the fulfillment of his requests by his Mexican and German coworkers. Placing this intercultural encounter in the framework of Goffman (1956), the scenery - or the theatre stage - is in the Mexican subsidiary; involved are the German expatriate Hector and a Mexican coworker from a different unit. Both work on the same hierarchical level and each one realizes one step of a joint work task; Hector needs first the realization of his coworkers' work task in order to realize his one. This scene is an interesting example of the interdependence of the realization of a determined work task in the whole arc of work (Strauss, 1985). Although both are performing the roles of two professionals with the common goal to achieve the work task, differences between the two work cultures regarding the prioritization of activities, the flow of information and the adherence to plans and schedules cause a conflict and negative feelings. This intercultural encounter is another example of how the private and professional borders overlap in the social interaction at work; both stages cannot be separated from each other. In search for the production of collaboration, both actors question the rules of right and wrong (their acquired reference frames according to Goffman, 1974) in this encounter which makes new arrangements necessary.

Hector's reference frame is the assumption that his German coworkers in general almost immediately fulfill his requests, whereas it surprised him to see a Mexican coworker having a coffee break after receiving a request from him. He did not understand how his coworker can

talk (he assumes about private matters) with someone in the kitchen although he needs to be doing something for him.[71] He assumed that the coworker did not understand the urgency of his request, however admitting in the same thought that he had never expressed a time limit. For Hector, this intercultural encounter was an inflection point because from this moment on he started to set time limits for every request he expresses; it was thus an intercultural misunderstanding that caused him to change his work pattern.

Nevertheless, although Hector set a time limit in another case he inconsistently likewise got upset when his Mexican coworker had lunch before fulfilling the request. This feeling was caused because although the time limit was an answer during the day (and not before lunch), Hector had meetings scheduled for the afternoon and wanted to get the task (for which he needed the answer) realized before those. The reason for the resentment was thus not the action of having lunch before fulfilling the request, but to not inform about it; Hector argued that if the coworker had told him he will have lunch first, he would not have waited and would not have been upset.[72] This intercultural encounter emphasizes the meaning given to actions that are unnoticed by the acting person because resentment was caused without awareness, intention and communication with language; in Bourdieu's words (1991): "the factors which are most influential in the formation of the habitus are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness, but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life." (p. 51).

The two examples address important aspects of the comparison of both work cultures:

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[71] The gender of this coworker is once again unknown, the male form is only used to facilitate the reading.

[72] This argumentation furthermore reveals the need of Germans to use time as efficiently as possible and the negative feelings caused by waiting time (see chapter 4.1.1.4).

They express on the one hand the importance of maintaining a work day schedule and on the other hand the need for transparency of the Germans. Mexicans must know that interruptions to the compartmentalized work schedule of their German coworkers can cause negative feelings. They are consequently in constant need of information about others' work task statuses and possible interruptions that might influence the structure of their personal work day. According to Hector, his personal schedule could have been adapted with the knowledge of his coworker's schedule, however the Mexican coworker is not even able to know that he caused resentment since he complied with the time limit of the requested task.[73]

Hall and Hall (1990) explain similar differences with the categorization of Germany as a low-context culture and Mexico as a high-context culture: "High-context people are apt to become impatient and irritated when low-context people insist on giving them information they don't need. Conversely, low-context people are at a loss when high-context people do not provide enough information." (p. 9). The challenge for every worker in in an intercultural context is in consequence to find the appropriate level of contexting that is needed in each situation, in the attempt to avoid talking down to the counterpart or to give insufficient information that makes the counterpart felt left out (Hall & Hall, 1990). "Ordinarily, people make these adjustments automatically in their own country, but in other countries their messages frequently miss the target." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 9). The flow of information also depends on this distinction because "In low-context countries, such as (…) Germany (…), information is highly focused, compartmentalized, and controlled, and, therefore, not apt to flow freely." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 22), whereas in a high-context setting, "information spreads rapidly and moves

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[73] The monochronic understanding of time according to Hall (1959), high uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation by Hofstede et al. (2010) are theoretical approaches to the compartmentalization of the (work) day.

almost as if it had a life of its own." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 22).

The interviews furthermore addressed differences regarding perceptions of urgency and prioritization of private over professional matters (see chapter 4.1.1.4); forms of requesting tasks (see chapter 4.1.1.1); and the need for transparency and structure in the German work culture. The determining character of the need for transparency is present in the concept of Strauss (1985) who considered reporting a requirement of an accountability system that is "a crucial condition for further interaction-and work-among actors in the total division of labor." (p. 8). Both, the German and Mexican interviewees mentioned that the German work culture is characterized by a need for structure, planning, documentation as well as transparency and information flow; these findings support theoretical explanations about objectivism and internal control (see e.g. Thomas et al., 2007; Schroll-Machl, 2016). The qualitative analysis identified additionally an emphasis on transparency as part of the organizational culture of this company. According to Rodrigo, this OEM generally highlights reporting; with the exaggeration "tell your every move to all of the organization" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017), he emphasizes the strong need for documentation and open communication, whereas Mexicans are more used to work alone and keep information from others.[74] In Rodrigo's opinion, the two opposite poles represent an important difference: Whereas Germans need transparency because they allow an own work task approach, Mexicans prefer to hide their moves.

> Mexicans do things without telling anybody, they have their very own initiative,
> sometimes not the best ideas, and weird things happen because of this. And the Germans
> (…) they like to know your every move, maybe you are allowed to do the things the way

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[74] Rodrigo expressed his doubt if this need for transparency is a specific characteristic of the company or the German work culture. This doubt is interpreted as an interesting research question for subsequent studies.

you want them, but tell (*stresses the word tell*) what you are doing. (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

From the German leaders' perspective, Striepe agrees with Rodrigo by expecting from his subordinates to inform him about the realization status of their work tasks. This reporting is however an aspect he complains about because this information flow does not happen or only in exceptional cases; he consequently must actively keep track of the status of his subordinates' work tasks. Striepe criticized the missing information regarding task statuses because he assumes that the tracking is - together with the work task - delegated to his subordinates. The implied question however is: Do his subordinates not keep track and therefore do not know the status of their work tasks or do they keep track and just do not inform him about it? Maybe there is a discrepancy between the need for formality and official information flow of the German leader and the indirect information flow of the Mexican subordinates (high-context communication).

The explanation is for Striepe the constant change of the priority of a work task; priority can either be reduced or totally forgotten due to the lack of personal responsibility of the subordinate for the realization of the work task. The flexible change of urgency and priority is thus perceived as part of the Mexican work culture.[75] Because his subordinates do not feel responsible for the realization of work tasks, Striepe as the responsible leader is obligated to keep track of the current statuses which however upsets him in his leading function. What the German leader mentioned as responsibility is in sociological terminology known as accountability, the

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[75] Hofstede et al. (2010) explain these practices with the concept of short-term orientation which "stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present - in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face," and fulfilling social obligations." (chapter National Values and the teachings of Confucius), whereas the opposite long-term orientation is directed towards future rewards (perseverance and thrift).

characteristics shared by all actors of having "the "responsibility" for doing their assigned, assumed, etc., portions of the arc of work." (Strauss, 1985, p. 7). In the concept of Strauss (1985), accountability can be met with agreement/ disagreement and understanding/ misunderstanding, which is precisely the situation displayed in the interview.[76] Striepe as disciplinary leader is without doubt the person who defines the work task; he achieved this right by being accepted to fulfill the leading position; the third aspect - the achievement of the power to reach acceptance and operationalization of the definition - is rather the one in question. Striepe expects his coworkers to operationalize the definition, whereas those expect him to do it and give instructions to them. Is this discrepancy between expectations the root why he thinks that his subordinates lack responsibility? Maybe the Mexican subordinates do not consider themselves responsible (accountable) for the tracking and realization of the work task because they assume that he - as their leader - has the responsibility.

In total, three aspects in his work environment upset Striepe in his leading function: (1) The obligation to keep track of the status; (2) the non-fulfillment of work tasks; (3) the excuses given for non-fulfillment.[77] Striepe considers as lame excuses technical problems (for instance computer errors), family issues and the transfer of responsibility for the non-fulfillment of a work task to another department or coworker. The explanation for him is the avoidance of

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[76] Because the division of labor contains a system of accountability which is significant to the realization of types of work and their tasks, Strauss (1985) recommended the identification of (1) the person or unit with the highest responsibility who defines the total project; (2) the way to achieve the right to realize this definition; as well as (3) the power to reach acceptance and operationalization of the definition.

[77] For Striepe, this is a characteristic of the Mexican work culture because he already experienced it in his previous assignment in another subsidiary in Mexico; it is thus not a particularity of the present work environment.

conflict in the Mexican culture (see chapter communication) because the use of a lame excuse is caused by the sensitive expression of the question regarding a missing work task realization. Striepe sees the non-fulfillment of time plans including the flexible concept of priority and the search for excuses a characteristic of both his Mexican and German coworkers in the present work environment because the Germans have adapted this social practice. Striepe's solution strategies to this situation are different from previous leading positions in Germany: (1) He keeps track of the delegated work task statuses; (2) he reminds his subordinates by repeating the time limit and the task itself; (3) he requests active information flow from them in case of a problem that possibly interferes in the punctual fulfillment. In collaboration with other departments, his solution strategy to reach reliability and the fulfillment of work tasks is a realistic plan that should be followed by everyone involved.

In agreement with Hector who started to set detailed time limits for his requests as a solution strategy that resulted from problems about the non-fulfillment of requested work tasks, the project leader Manuel reacts with insistence on documentation and information flow. To create the understanding of the benefits of this work task approach, he maintains this constant persistency although he is aware that it sometimes causes "internal eyes-rolling" (Manuel, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017) of his coworkers. This comprehension is already created which implies an appreciated change process Manuel observed in the behavior of his team members. Persistency on documentation and status reporting are considered solution strategies to the lack of information flow about a problem in sight at the beginning of the collaboration (see chapter communication).

The strong need for documentation detected in the interviews is also visible in an exaggeration of formal meetings by the Germans in this work environment (Monica; Robin,

personal communication, November 15, 2017). In comparison, the Mexicans rather prefer to resolve an issue immediately with informal and personal conversations; they always help although being occupied which demonstrates their extraordinary service attitude, whereas German coworkers get upset by interruptions. Instead of helping immediately, they rather react with the answer "send me a meeting and I will accept" (Robin, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). These characteristics are related to different understandings of time since interruptions to plans and schedules can either be handled with flexibility or considered problematic as in the German work culture. Since this difference causes intercultural misunderstandings, the Germans must know that the need for formal meetings upsets their Mexican coworkers; likewise, Mexicans must understand that this need for formal meetings is part of the persistency used as a solution strategy to experience with unreliability. These findings support the description of high-context cultures according to Hall and Hall (1990) in which interpersonal contact receives priority over everything else and information flows freely because people are spatially involved with each other. "In these cultures most people are already highly contexted and therefore don't need to be briefed in much detail for each transaction; the emphasis is on stored rather than on transmitted information." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 23).[78]

The actions Germans describe with "persistency" are in contrast perceived as an expression of stubbornness or "squaredness" by their Mexican coworkers: "(…) some things that they know they work like that, they are squared like it. So it is the way it is and it will be like this and like that it happens, sometimes" (Alejandra, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

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[78] Individuals used to high-context communication expect that everybody is contexted to open up the information channels, regulate group work and evaluate the possibilities of reaching an agreement. "The drive to stay in touch and to keep up to date in high-context cultures is very strong." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 23).

Alejandra and Robin for instance expressed this stubbornness as a kind of tunnel vision: In the case of well-known and well-functioning work task approaches, German coworkers strictly adhere to them, thereby demonstrating narrow-mindedness regarding other ideas and flexibility.

Manuel explained why it is personally important for him to hold on to agreed upon plans: The avoidance of the feeling of discomfort that is caused if a topic is not planned but could have been planned. In his work as project leader he constantly communicates the benefits of a plan and the objective of the work task to increase the team motivation and emphasize the personal contribution of each member to the goal. However, he perceives difficulties of his local coworkers to understand the sense of a plan, which includes for him (1) to know its reasons; (2) its dependencies; (3) and the consequences of its non-fulfillment. The importance of dependencies was mentioned in numerous occasions by different interviewees because they are considered both the reason and the consequence of the adherence to planned schedules. Since workers depend on the previous work of others, the fulfillment of planned steps enables others to start their work. Dependencies between work tasks are thus interpreted as the reason for the inflexible adherence to plans demonstrated by the Germans.

The persistency of the Germans has a third meaning in addition to a reaction to the lack of reliability and an expression of stubbornness: the creation of trust. The project leader Manuel justifies his persistency on exaggerated documentation as part of the training of his less-experienced team members because he wants them to interiorize and afterwards automatically exercise the reporting structures without being told to. For him, this is a strategy to create trust and develop reliability because the knowledge about the interiorization gives him the necessary security to trust that his coworkers are able to substitute him during his vacations, even in the

current difficult phase of the project (see uncertainty avoidance by Hofstede et al., 2010).[79]

When switching the focus from the subordinate stage to the management stage, the situation once more indicates a different setting. In comparison, the Mexican leader Robin described a time-pressured environment at the management level that causes insufficient time for planning: "the people from above don't have this…this feeling (…) to say "hang on, hang on!" "I need this information but I need it until yesterday or the day before yesterday." No way! One has to plan!" (Robin, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). His complaint about the managers in higher hierarchy levels demonstrates a lack of the consideration of feelings due to time pressure. Robin emphasized his disapproval of "information needed until yesterday" that contradicts the theoretical positions about both work cultures because the Mexican leader needs more time to plan that the German leader however does not provide.

In summary, the present chapter revealed differences regarding the fulfillment of requests and the adherence to plans in the collaboration between coworkers at the same hierarchical level, between subordinate and leader and between leaders at the management level. In consequence, a distinction must be made between the organizational levels in the discussion of these characteristics of the Mexican and German work culture.

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[79] "Uncertainty avoidance can (…) be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. This feeling is, among other manifestations, expressed through nervous stress and in a need for predictabilty: a need for written and unwritten rules." (Hofstede et al., 2010, chapter Measering the (In)tolerance of ambiguity in society: The uncertainty-avoidance-index). The avoidance or tolerance of uncertainty has important impolications for planning and control processes because they are strongly influenced by cultures when considering planning as the intent to reduce uncertainty and control the situation.

4.1.1.4 Ahorita or time is money? The understanding of time.

if it's a phone call for example with Germany and I will say "Yeah I'll call you at 8.30." sometimes I am like (…) 10 minutes late and I haven't yet called and (…) I'm sure he's waiting at his desk with the phone beside him, waiting for my call since 8.30, you know? (…) sometimes I have some colleagues with whom I already have good friendships and once I call them, they pick up the phone and "yeah, you're 10 minutes late again, dude!" (…) they know I'm being a little bit late with my calls, with my emails, with my everything. And yeah, they are aware of that.

(Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Figure 8. The fourth intercultural encounter: the understanding of time.

The understanding of time was defined as core category because it was identified as one of the main differences between both work cultures that is related to most of the previously described aspects. The anecdote told by Rodrigo takes place in another setting without physical presence of the social actors because the Mexican supplier engineer talks about the collaboration on the phone with his coworker in the German headquarters. Although Rodrigo does not describe the position of his coworker and their relationship, it is interpreted that they regularly meet on the phone since he talks about his general punctuality and uses the expression "sometimes" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017). It is assumed that both social actors occupy engineering positions with similar tasks and no hierarchical difference interferes.

In the present case, the work goal of the meeting is unknown and irrelevant, Rodrigo rather used this example to illustrate differences between both work cultures regarding the treatment of time, which he relates to the start of scheduled phone calls. This scene on an intercultural stage addresses three dimensions: (1) different definitions of punctuality; (2) the direct communication of disagreement; (3) differences regarding the intensity of social relationships between coworkers. Rodrigo demonstrates with his narrative once again the intersection of the private and the professional role of a worker and he also evidences how differences between work cultures interfere in a supposedly objective work task such as a phone conference. The subjects always negotiate the rules of the social game in the work place, because

every social actor enters the scene with the references previously acquired in diverse life spheres and questions them in the moment of encountering a different work culture. In such intercultural encounters, new symbolic meanings are constructed (Reygadas, 2002).

Due to his work experience in Germany, Rodrigo considers himself a Mexican who has already adapted the German treatment of time:

> I try at least to be punctual (…) So when I call my German colleagues I am normally between 5 and 10 minutes late and they notice and they tell me, but (…) when I expect a call from somebody here in Mexico, they are even later (…). I try to be there maybe 5 minutes after the time we agreed (…) and they call 20 minutes late (…) in that sense I think I've tried to (…) germanize myself but haven't quite made it so far (*laughs*). (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

As demonstrated by this intercultural encounter, the interviews detected different definitions of punctuality between Mexican and German employees as well as consequent contradictory descriptions of a punctual or unpunctual work environment: Some participants complained about overall unpunctuality whereas others stated that the collaboration is punctual. In comparison between the current work environment and his previous ones, Striepe for instance expressed his disapproval of the longer time needed for the realization of tasks in work groups (in collaboration with the Mexican headquarters) which is caused due to broader communication, the gathering of everyone involved, interruptions, non-fulfillment of tasks and flexible changes that are made although a work step has already been declared finished.

Differences were moreover addressed by the German participants regarding the time needed for private conversations at work, both in person and on the phone. The interviewees demonstrated different perspectives regarding this aspect: On the one hand, it is appreciated

because it is important for relationships, collaboration and trust; on the other hand, it is

considered a waste of time (which can be explained with the separation of the personal and

professional life sphere). Since the Germans emphasize its importance in the present work

environment they engage in private conversations at work, however still insufficiently. Hector

for instance expressed his discomfort with the adaptation to the exchange of personal

information in the morning: He considers a conversation about private matters a waste of time

because instead he could be realizing a work task or talking about a work-related topic and he

prefers to share private experience and feelings with his friends rather than with his coworkers.

Szlechter (2009) argues that this type of personal organization of schedules depends on the value

given to work: "the perception of time is conditioned by the position occupied by the idea of

work in the life of persons and by the expectations placed on it. By this, the activities in the daily

life are organized hierarchically." (pp. 143-144).[80]

　　　　With regards to working hours, Manuel told the example of an intercultural encounter in

which he did not understand why his Mexican coworkers do not start and end their break early

instead of holding on to the official lunch hours. His Mexican coworkers arrive to work, leave

the office and have their breaks according to the official regulations, whereas the Germans adapt

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[80] Scholars with a critical perspective on capitalism argue that the intersection of the professional and

private life is caused because the work force of the companies internalizes a certain idea of time that includes both

the labor time and the one external to work. Since the networks are constructed in every moment and in every place,

every action will be subordinated to the rules of the market including the division between labor time and free time.

Both are connected and have an organization imposed by work; free time must be used in the best attempt to

reproduce life and to reach a better performance of the workers at work (Sgrazzutti, 2004, cited by Szlechter, 2009).

their work hours to the work load.[81] Rodrigo however contradicts Manuel by stating that the Germans arrive and leave work every day at the same time because their day is completely structured, both in the private and in the professional part of the day. Because his personal day is not structured, Rodrigo in contrast arrives and leaves work at different times in dependence of his state of mind and private activities in the evening.

Alejandra additionally mentioned the later arrival to work by Mexican employees (including herself) due to the perception of a relaxed environment which was met by a management interference: "it happened at the beginning because we thought that its more relaxed (…) we started getting more late (…) So we got like an attention call and now I see that everybody is getting like on time" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). In this case, the change towards punctuality was not voluntary but instead obligated because it was a change process caused by a management attention call. Although Alejandra considers the change as "better", she reveals a difficult adaptation process to a considered negative aspect that is neither realized easily nor desired. This management interference is interpreted as a control mechanism that affects the activity range of the workers; hence, misunderstandings are not only based on cultural differences but also coined by the organizations' regulation of the work space. These disagreements thus express tensions that are inherent in the productive relations. Every company assures its rational objectives by the establishment of mechanisms to reach those despite any cultural differences; efficiency and profitability always receive the highest priority in management decisions. In the present case, the workers were given a broader frame of action at

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[81] It is important to consider that the same official working hours apply to the employees in this subsidiary regardless of the contract type. However, the Germans are used to a flexible time system in the German headquarters and new to the presence regulations in Mexico (Manuel, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

the beginning that was then closed by the organization with the "attention call" (Alejandra, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

In agreement with Rodrigo, Alejandra furthermore addressed the distinction between a monochronic and polychronic treatment of time that differentiates her German coworkers from herself: "if they have one activity until they are done, they do the next one. It doesn't matter if it takes like 2 hours or the whole day (…). I don't, sometimes I do different things at the same time." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). The theoretical explanation was also developed by Hall: "Monochronic time means paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time. Polychronic time means being involved with many things at once." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 13). In monochronic cultures, a linear way of the experience and use of time is predominant and time is segmented, scheduled and compartmentalized to enable the concentration on one thing at a time; the schedule receives priority above everything else and "Time is perceived as if it were money that "can be "spent," "saved," "wasted," and "lost." (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 13).[82] In contrast, the simultaneous occurrence of several events as well as the involvement of persons characterize polychronic time in which human transactions receive priority over the adherence to schedules. In addition, people feel the need to be informed about everything and everybody in both, professional and private relationships which are therefore emphasized (Hall & Hall, 1990).

According to various authors, the Mexican culture is characterized with a polychronic treatment of time (see e.g. Boedeker, 2011; Gannon & Pillai, 2015; Jackson, 2014; Hall, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1990; Hooker, 2003) and the German one among the monochronic cultures (see e.g. Boedeker, 2011; Hall, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1990; Schroll-Machl, 2016; Thomas et al., 2007). Recognizing that the description of Alejandra supports this theoretical concept, the results from

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[82] This concentration on one thing at a time explains the aversion of interruptions (Hall & Hall, 1990).

the previous chapter however question this categorization because the Germans - and not the Mexicans - are characterized with a need for formal documentation and constant information.

Apart from the discussion about working hours, contradictions were also presented regarding the punctual arrival to meetings. Alejandra for instance told about the collaboration:

I think the environment is like most of the time respected for the punctuality (…) I can't see people getting that late like…like 5 or 10 minutes or something. (…) I think the Mexicans, we are trying, we are getting more punctual (…). (Alejandra, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

A general adaption process regarding more punctuality from the Mexican to the German coworkers is described that reveals important definitions: First, the expression "most of the time" shows that punctuality does not prevail all the time; secondly, to arrive five or ten minutes late is defined as more punctual and not unpunctual; and third, the change process implies a change from not punctual to more punctual. In comparison, the German interviewees demonstrated different meanings of arriving five to ten minutes late to a meeting:

(1) It shows lack of respect of the time of the other meeting participants.

(2) Because time is money, the accumulated waiting time is a loss of money.

(3) Meetings must start on time to be finished on time, because everyone has follow-up meetings and work tasks depend on other work tasks.

(4) The purpose of the meeting is questioned, and the time used is compared to others.

(5) Unpunctuality shows a lack of work quality and reliability.

These different meanings of arriving five to ten minutes late to a meeting were identified in the interviews with German participants in clear contradiction to the definitions mentioned

earlier that considered this time period as punctual or at least more punctual.[83] The differences between the definitions of punctuality and the consequent meanings of unpunctuality are important to know for both work groups because

> time is thought and experienced in different patterns according to the social group to which an individual belongs to. This diversity is not only comes rooted in the internal criteria of the symbolic structure of the social groups but is also a product of the hierarchic relationships of a society based on classes. (Szlechter, 2009, p. 143).

Time is thus interpreted as a resource for the Germans which requires to not be wasted; it is furthermore a measurement entity because the interviewees constantly compared the time used for one purpose to other possible purposes in search for efficiency and optimization. The project leader Manuel considers the observed unpunctuality of his Mexican coworkers regarding the arrival time to the team meeting as a lack of respect in contradiction to the high value of politeness in the Mexican culture which he generally perceives in the verbal communication. Manuel stressed his difficulty as project leader without the disciplinary authority to obligate the meeting participants to arrive on time. His solution strategy is the creation of understanding by trying to convince the meeting participants to take advantage of the short time together because the appreciation of the time of others without interruptions of discussions is a benefit for everyone and an expression of respect.

As strategy to solve intercultural misunderstandings rooted in unpunctuality, the Germans thus rely on the direct expression of their disapproval (see chapter 4.1.1.1). Although neither one has disciplinary leadership power, both the project leader as well as project team members

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[83] Neither one of the interview participants related unpunctuality with laziness, missing effort to hard work or work commitment, which is often found in research about Mexican workers (see e.g. Hernández, 2012).

explicitly expressed their expectation to start on time. The direct expression of criticism in the team meeting was a success for Miguel because the addressed coworkers started to arrive on time from this moment on. This intercultural encounter was another inflection point because it changed the pattern of team work and the dynamics of this regular group meeting. Nevertheless, Miguel considers it an ongoing change process towards punctuality which is not satisfactorily enabled with one expression of criticism but instead requires repetition.

In this aspect, Miguel once again seems to be talking from a trainer perspective (see chapter knowledge transfer): "you don't change people quickly, you don't change people who are used to a rhythm" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). The question is raised if change is an objective to be reached? The interactionist perspective considers order as "created (…) and maintained or changed in desired directions through action." (Strauss, 1993, p. 257) which implies that "What is one actor's rapidly, even drastically changing world is another's relatively unchanging, stable world." (Strauss, 1993, p. 259). The personal relevance and necessity of change thus depends on the perception of the actors who in consequence initiate the - for them - most appropriate actions themselves (Strauss, 1993).

With regards to the present case, because punctuality is relevant for the personal work structure of Miguel, he insists on the necessity of changing it in his coworkers; their perceived relevance may however vary, but in the same way determine the respective actions. The different perceptions lead to negotiations open to debate considering that the arrival times to meetings are regulated by organizational parameters (the basic frame in the words of Goffman, 1974). On the other hand, the definition of punctuality is determined by the subjectivity of the different actors (the meeting participants) with their definition and interpretation of the situation (Blumer, 1969) and own reference frames (Goffman, 1974). Despite formal definitions of agreed upon

schedules, the on-time arrival to meetings has many faces and various meanings in different contexts and a common cultural model of time under the surface of specific interpretations of punctuality and techniques of dealing with it. Negotiations between the actors take place not only among the members of the meeting, but also among them and their respective supervisors; on a different level between HR and management or between the management and labor unions in the collective negotiation of working hours.

In summary, the German interviewees consider time used for waiting as a waste of money and a destruction of the quality that could have been created instead. For instance, to make constant changes to work tasks that have already been declared finished means for Striepe a waste of time and quality; accordingly, unnecessary correction work caused by a delay in the problem detection means a waste of time and money that influence rentability and efficiency. The importance of time in the German work culture can be summarized with the search for efficiency and rentability as well as the view of a nonrenewable resource. For Miguel, this is also the argument for the compartmentalization of his workday: Without an organization of the tasks during the work hours, at the end of the day only half the work is realized, which is a sign of inefficiency. This defense of the compartmentalization of a work day is important for Mexicans to know because it explains the negative feelings caused by interruptions due to unpunctuality.

Recognizing personal differences, Manuel thinks that time has a different meaning for his Mexican coworkers because they consider the first ten minutes of a meeting as not that important and determining. Miguel interpreted that his coworkers rather consider arriving until thirty minutes after the scheduled time as normal. Alejandra shared another German perspective about the Mexican understanding of time: "(…) I have heard that they say that (…) time is like something that we have but it's...for them it's more valuable to have time so that's why they

appreciate and they make the best of it (…)." (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Alejandra personally agrees with this German coworker because for her time likewise means

"recurso no renovable" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Although she prefers the

German treatment of time, the Mexican way of life taught her a different, flexible treatment of

time. Both, Alejandra and her German coworker agree with the desire of a "Mexican" treatment

of time in the private life and a "German" treatment of time in the work place and although this

idea was mentioned as a desired vision, it exemplifies the two-directional influence between the

work place and culture in the concept of Reygadas (2002).

According to Reygadas (2002), the analysis of work culture must address the ways in

which the labor process affects the production of meanings and the influence of culture on the

development of the productive activity, considering context conditions. The treatment of time is

thus seen as an aspect of work culture that the workers bring from other life spheres to their

workplace and due to interactions at work, it can be either reproduced, changed or adapted and

afterwards again transferred. In the present case, Alejandra and the German coworker discussed

the different treatment of time in a work interaction and concluded that they would like to use

one of them for their work and the other one for their private life. Because this interaction took

place within the organizational structure that includes the company's labor conditions, questions

about the realistic operability of this desire are raised: Is the treatment of time already set by the

official regulations of each organization? With official regulations, how much liberty for cultural

preferences is left? Does the nationality of the company (in this case German) or the geographic

location (in this case Mexican) determine time structures? If a certain time treatment is set by the

company, to what degree can the workers continue to exercise their culturally preferred pattern?

Changing once more the perspective from the subordinates' stage to the managers' stage, a further distinction was made in comparison with the German headquarters, because Robin observed punctuality and structure only in the German headquarters and not in the management level of this Mexican subsidiary:

Some say that the Germans are good in planning. "Always on time." Truth is, I don't think so. (*laughs*) Because I don't see it here. We have even taken classes about efficient meetings. You must enter, start on time, finish on time and believe me…there has been not a single meeting at the management level that we arrived on time and made it on time. (Robin, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Robin disagrees with the description of Germans as a work culture with plans and structure because he does not observe it in his current work environment (however in the German headquarters). To evidence the unpunctuality of his German coworkers he mentioned (like Monica) the training which was necessary to reach efficiency and punctuality in meetings. Monica also mentioned unpunctuality of German coworkers which she considers a consequence of false expectations and an issue in the good collaboration: "I see some Germans that (…) have the idea that the Mexicans are going to maybe arrive late to a meeting (…) and they arrive even more late (…)." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). In this aspect, Monica emphasized again the importance of expectations of one group towards another because the expectation of unpunctuality leads her German coworkers to arrive late.

In conclusion, the interviews detected contradictions in the observation of punctuality in the work environment that are caused by different understandings of punctuality. Unpunctuality is observed by both the Germans and Mexican employees, however with different dimensions.

4.1.1.5 English, Spanish or German? Language issues.

> you sometimes see a long (…) chain of emails, they start in German and they eventually include (…) somebody who doesn't speak German, so (…) they start communicating in English. But sometimes (…) somebody comes up to you and tells you "I really don't get where this is going" and you start going back through the conversation and eventually find that a translation originated a misunderstanding (…) if you go back and see the German version of the email and you understand the content of the German email, then it all makes sense all of a sudden. You can go forward to the English emails and say "that's what they meant" (*stresses the word that's*) And this is where we got a misunderstanding. So you can use this German background to go fix the (…) English email and sometimes (…) if I'm involved in this email chain, I am the one to go forward and clarify the misunderstanding through the email. Not saying "hey guys you made a mistake" but just rephrasing things so that they recover the original meaning (…).
>
> (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Figure 9. The fifth intercultural encounter: language issues in the work place.

Rodrigo told this intercultural encounter from the perspective of a worker who business-fluent in Spanish, English and German, due to his study and work experience in Germany. In continuation of the previous discussion about non-verbal communication, Goffman (1983) states that speech "immensely increases the efficiency of (…) coordination, being especially critical when something doesn't go as indicated and expected" (p. 3). According to Bourdieu (1991),

> Communication between classes (…) always represents a critical situation for the
>
> language that is used, whichever it may be. (…) Each word, each expression, threatens to
>
> take on two antagonistic senses, reflecting the way in which it is understood by the sender
>
> and the receiver. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 40).

The interviews identified four critical aspects related to languages: (1) translation mistakes; (2) information that is lost in translation; (3) meaning mistakes (independent of the language translation); and (4) the avoidance of the use of English that stops information from flowing. The analysis of intercultural encounters first requires the consideration of the current situation in this Mexican subsidiary of the German OEM: The official business language is English, hence neither the Germans nor the Mexicans work in their mother tongue but instead in

their second language. Some of the employees speak all three languages and others only two of them; some Germans takes Spanish classes and some Mexicans take German classes.

Placing the present intercultural encounter in the framework of Goffman (1956), the scenery - the theatre stage - is once again a digital space, in this case the interaction takes place in an email correspondence between German and Mexican employees in the Mexican subsidiary and their coworkers in the German headquarters. The social actors involved in the conversation about the content of the email chain are Rodrigo, performing the role of a cultural translator, and his Mexican coworker who does not understand German. There is no information about the coworkers' position and the relationship between them, it is nevertheless interpreted that Rodrigo - simply because he is fluent in German - has a professional advantage over his coworker regardless of their qualification and knowledge of the topic. Both are performing the roles of two professionals with the common goal to achieve the work goal addressed in the email correspondence, however Rodrigo enters from position with more power, because he is able to understand the lack of information caused by the translation of the German to the English. This intercultural encounter is another example of power associated with knowledge, in this case, knowledge of a language (see Bourdieu, 1991).

Assuming that the common goal is the production of collaboration, Rodrigo demonstrates how the dimension language influences the social relationships in an intercultural work environment and how the knowledge and use of a certain language determines power and the capacity to criticize the social games that are constructed at work. The example furthermore evidences the influence of the organizational structure on the regulation of work since the company controls the information systems and thus its language. However, the social subjects act within their frames of action and negotiate these pre-established standards by taking

advantage of language. Situations are thus detected that question the factual application of official organizational regulation. According to the concept of articulation work developed by Strauss (1985), the analysis searched for precisely these differences between the formal work organization and the factual work practices.

As explained in the example of Rodrigo, in the everyday collaboration, his German coworkers speak German with each other and switch to English in the moment of including a coworker who does not speak the language; this pattern leads to problems regarding the understanding of texts. It is interesting that Rodrigo considered the use of English as official work language as one of the main difficulties in the collaboration, whereas other interviewees did not even mention this aspect. Why is there such a variation among the participants? Maybe Rodrigo perceives the difficulties caused by translation due to his ability to dominate all three languages, whereas the others who do not are not aware of the information lost in the process. The awareness regarding language problems is interpreted as a competence acquired by international study and work experience which includes different expressions within the same language (in the Spanish case the different expressions used by Latin-Americans), translation errors and meaning differences that are independent of grammatical correctness.

The ability to speak all three languages at a business fluent level is interpreted as symbolic power according to the argument of Bourdieu (1991) who stated that "one must not forget that the relations of communication par excellence - linguistic exchanges - are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized." (p. 37).

Grammar defines meaning only very partially (…) The objective meaning engendered in linguistic circulation is based (…) on the distinctive value which results from the

relationship that the speakers establish, consciously or unconsciously, between the linguistic product offered by a socially characterized speaker and the other products offered simultaneously in a determinate social space. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 38).

The Mexican leader Robin expressed regarding the collaboration in his team that tasks from the German headquarters arrive either in German or English; in the first case, he needs the help of his German subordinates who assimilate it together with the counterparts in Germany and afterwards train the team members. In his description of the knowledge transfer between coworkers, Miguel added that information is communicated differently than it would be in the mother tongue because the Germans use English which is like their Spanish "not perfect" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017). Language problems in the opinion of Rodrigo start in the moment of the translation from German to English and are related to both the literal translation and the meaning the message was meant to communicate.

With the example of the email chain, Rodrigo showed that the knowledge of German is sometimes a requirement to understand the root of misunderstandings perceived by Mexican coworkers. If this is the case, he helps them proactively (without being asked to) with translation errors to the clarify English expressions (see chapter 4.1.3). Rodrigo additionally recommended the avoidance of colloquial language and the use of proper, standard English that includes the grammatical and the meaning sense; this type of neutral communication precisely addresses the concept of language by Bourdieu (1991): "Recourse to a neutralized language is obligatory whenever it is a matter of establishing a practical consensus between agents or groups of agents having partially or totally different interests." (p. 40).

Rodrigo emphasized furthermore the importance of knowing German in this work

environment because it is the language of the binding legal documents; this situation helps the Germans to avoid English that subsequently stops information from flowing:

> most of the Germans don't really speak Spanish, they are learning it (…) and most of the Mexicans don't speak German either, so the lingua franca is English. But you get some weird translations every now and then. (…) And the bad thing about this is that even though we are in Mexico, this is still a very German oriented, German dominated (…) company. (…) most of the important information is still in German and (…) from the legal point of view, the binding documents are the German ones. (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Bourdieu (1991) argued to consider both the situation as well as the relationship in the analysis of the word since "The different meanings of a word are defined in the relation between the invariant core and the specific logic of the different markets, themselves objectively situation with respect to the market in which the most common meaning is defined." (p. 39). The comprehension of symbolic effects of language (see Bourdieu, 1991) in this case requires rather to search for the symbolic meanings given to the use of a language that is not shared by all the interactants. The avoidance of English Rodrigo observes by his German coworkers is explained with laziness and comfort; bad business practices or an intentional concealment of information as reasons were not mentioned: "you get lazy, you don't want to be speaking English all the time, you want to speak your mother tongue or the tongue, the language you feel most comfortable in." (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

In addition to laziness and comfort, what other reasons are assumed by the Mexicans who do not speak German? Distrust or the intentional concealment of information are possible. In the consideration of Bourdieu (1991) citing Saussure, language is seen as "inner treasure' (…)

deposited by the practice of speech in subjects belonging to the same community" (p. 43) that can create the exclusion of other groups. The role of language as form of symbolic domination is expressed in the unaware attitude by those who submit to it (Bourdieu, 1991). Such assumptions can have profound negative consequences on collaboration that can never be objectively evaluated by the person who is not capable to translate. Regardless of the factual reason, the use of German can be subjectively perceived as an expression of either understandable laziness (Rodrigo) or intentional exclusion of a group of persons - a perception that the actor cannot influence.[84] Exclusion based on linguistic ability can be used as control mechanism to establish, maintain or rise power over a situation and to sustain control about information. Such strategies are considered part of the deviations that the subjects take advantage of in situations determined by distrust, disagreement and misunderstanding. As all strategies influence the production of rules, the capacity of the player to play the social game depends on his ability to know and use a certain language. The action can also be interpreted as symbolic violence (see Bourdieu, 2000) in the sense of a differentiating strategy based on the unequal distribution of linguistic recourses.

The concept of articulation work by Strauss (1985) requires furthermore to compare the official regulation to the actual situation in the work place. According to the company discourse, the official business language is English, but how much influence does this official regulation of the company have if the workers continue to speak in their mother tongue? This concern is profoundly analyzed with the results of the quantitative approach to the whole study unit.

The interviews moreover identified the social dimension of the knowledge of Spanish which changes the general adaptation of Germans to Mexico, both, in the private life and in the

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[84] A further question is raised that is addressed in the quantitative approach: Is the avoidance of English demonstrated by merely German coworkers or also by Mexicans?

organization. The intensity of private networks and the interest in the country are aspects that are described with a determining influence on the productive collaboration between Mexicans and Germans (see chapter productive collaboration). As expected, the Germans who speak Spanish have a more intense private and professional contact to Mexicans which influences their general well-being and the collaboration at work. However, according to Striepe, private contacts do not necessarily require a good knowledge of Spanish, because some Germans have established a social network without being fluent in Spanish.

In summary of the five intercultural encounters, the interviews enabled the detection of the different dimensions that interfere in social relationships in an intercultural work environment. The presented intercultural misunderstandings evidenced the influence of differences on the production of collaboration in reference to five core categories: communication, knowledge transfer, work task approaches, the understanding of time, as well as language issues at the work place. This categorization is subsequently used to display the quantitative findings in discussion with the qualitative data.

4.1.2   *Productive collaboration.*

In the last part of the interviews, the participants were asked about the productive collaboration of Mexican and German coworkers. Monica described her perception of the current situation with a rather harmonious image: "(…) I think in general the organization, the atmosphere and the collaboration between the two cultures here in this company, in this organization is very good, but there's always going to be (…) some little things we have to work on." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). For Monica, these difficulties are rooted in the different personalities. Alejandra agrees with her picture of a harmonious collaboration between departments: "Ah good, yes, I think I can go and ask them for information or (…) since

we are HR they come and need a lot of information from us or requests, so yeah I think we get along like with all of us, yeah I think we work together." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Miguel additionally stated that the collaboration in his team is particularly good because they neither age positions nor work experience are emphasized.

Rodrigo gave a more profound answer about the current situation by stressing the multicultural aspect of collaboration in this company; he distinguished between working with people from different cultures and working in a multicultural environment in an immersive way:

I would call like the ambience we have here is very, very multicultural and it's the first for many people even though they have worked with other nationalities before. (…) it's not only about already working with (…) people from other countries, but working in an immersive way, in a way that you feel (…) that there are two different cultures, not just a couple of (…) guys sitting over there from another country. (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Rodrigo addressed with his description the organization's hierarchical particularities: In this subsidiary, German and Mexican employees occupy the same hierarchical positions in comparison to many other cases in which manager positions are occupied by foreign expatriates and Mexicans are employed as subordinates with local contracts. This situation led Rodrigo to distinguish between working with Germans and working in a multicultural environment. The subsequent doubts remain: How are the differences felt? What is different between working with Germans and working with Germans in an immersive way?

In addition to the description of the current situation, the interviewees expressed requirements of productive collaboration between both work cultures that were summarized to six groups: (1) Open-mindedness or awareness; (2) communication efforts; (3) compromise; (4)

trainings; (5) company, product and work task knowledge; (6) language knowledge.

The first requirement categorized as open-mindedness or awareness includes different dimensions. From a general perspective, each worker must be aware about working in a company with two (or more) work cultures that bring different expectations about one another. Awareness is required with regards to different types of personalities, work task approaches and possibly resulting misunderstandings. Monica considers open-mindedness a requirement for productive collaboration and a similarity between the Mexicans and Germans in this work environment: "(…) specifically in this company, the Mexicans and the Germans are more open than (…) other Mexicans that just have worked for Mexican companies and have really never visited other countries or maybe just once and that's it." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Monica thus characterizes both her German coworkers as different to the Germans who have never left Germany, and likewise her Mexican coworkers different from the ones who have never left Mexico. International work and travel experience is for her a source for open-mindedness which she considers a requirement for productive collaboration. Monica additionally expressed her appreciation of the interest shown by her German coworkers to get to know Mexico because it is related to the joy of travel and happiness in the private life which influences well-being at work; both types of happiness are the reason for more productivity of her German coworkers (in comparison to her previous US-American coworkers).

For Striepe, awareness about differences between personalities rather than nationalities additionally includes to tell others that they are different from the own perspective and to communicate the influences of these differences on the joint achievement of results. Rodrigo added a more profound awareness about cultural roots: "the first, the very first thing you have to understand when you work with people from different nationalities is that there's a cultural

background to everything" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Hence, he extended the concept of awareness to not only personal and cultural differences, but to their origins. For Manuel, a subsequent requirement of cultural awareness is the willingness "to really enter into the other culture" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017) which is expressed by listening to new proposals that are different from own ones.

Communication efforts were summarized as second requirement of productive collaboration. In the understanding of Monica, communication effort means "to communicate as much as possible" (personal communication, November 15, 2017) in order to understand the other person and solve a misunderstanding. In comparison, Alejandra mentioned communication referring to respect in the daily interaction that is expressed in a helpful attitude, an appropriate tone of voice and general politeness. Robin emphasized service attitude as a requirement of productive collaboration: For him, to have and express a feeling of service towards everyone is necessary even as answer to incorrect behavior on a coworker.[85] As mentioned before, an extraordinary service attitude is one of the most appreciated characteristics of the Mexican work which the German interviewees explicitly emphasized in comparison to their own work culture:

> that the people are indeed helpful (…) I really noticed this, the people don't discuss that much with you. If you want something from someone, then he first of all says "Yes" per se (…) but in Germany you always first have to hear "Why should I do this now? It is not my task." And here, they are really much more helpful. (Hector, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

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[85] Robin explicitly clarified that service for him does not mean slavery but rather "to provide what the operation requires." (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Manuel and Hector added the interest in the private life of coworkers as an important aspect of productive collaboration in addition to interest in Mexico as a country. Despite their preference of a separation of the private and professional relationships, the Germans engage in private conversations at the work place which is nevertheless still an aspect to improve: For Hector, it takes patience and persistence to talk with Mexicans about private issues and at the same time keep track of the business focus; Manuel considers patience also as a requirement particularly necessary at the beginning of the collaboration in the sense of being able to overcome aspects that do not function the way they are expected to.

According to Striepe, a further requirement especially for leaders is the explicit expression of disagreement to confront conflicts which is possible with the clarification and emphasis on objective expectations and demands from leader to subordinate. The confrontation of a subordinate regarding a mistake is considered part of productive collaboration in which the general expectation and the corresponding specific request must sometimes be repeated to avoid insufficient clarity. Striepe used the metaphor of black snow to highlight the impossibility of achieving the fulfillment of a work task without confrontation: To always stay nice and friendly even in cases of non-fulfillment causes never-ending non-fulfillment.

In agreement, the project leader Manuel highlights empathy in the expression of criticism with an emphasis on objective facts as part of good collaboration: the open and transparent expression of feelings and expectations is the way to create the understanding that generates the willingness to accept the criticism. Robin added to empathy the requirement of the team playing together (he used a basketball-metaphor) as well as the knowledge that every work task has consequences for another one and the corresponding coworker. From his leading perspective, he desires a communication in between the too direct (German) and too sensitive (Mexican) pattern

of expressing criticism or requests between subordinates: "No tan baby tampoco tan fuerte" (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017). This recommendation implies the rejection of both approaches; the ideal expression of a request is thus realized as a kind of compromise: respectfully and not too directly; without offending the other one by pressure and without acting like a child (too sensitive).

The third requirement of productive collaboration was precisely to reach a compromise, which was mentioned first regarding the expression of criticism (Robin) and secondly regarding punctuality. Monica for instance shared her ideal idea of compromise:

> maybe "us in Germany we think that the meetings had to start on time" And us Mexicans we think that "15 minutes later is fine" So maybe if we both are open and we both know that maybe we can talk about it and agree on something "ok let's give (…) 5 minutes for everyone to arrive". (Monica, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Monica considers a compromise as the solution of misunderstandings caused by cultural differences and therefore a requirement of productive collaboration. An obvious question emerges in this aspect: Is it possible to meet in the middle within the organizational structure of a company with origins in Germany? Monica's idea of an ideal compromise is neither the way of the German company nor the Mexican way because of the geographic location:

> to open your mind and understand and not say "ok we are in Mexico, we have to do it the Mexican way" or "we are a German company, we have to do it the German way" (…) it has to be kind of a mixture of both. (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

The need for trainings was mentioned as a further requirement of productive collaboration to work on difficulties and create awareness of cultural and personal differences. Robin considers activities of teambuilding a useful reaction to problems in the collaboration of

teams that require the willingness to participate by everyone involved.

For Hector, productive collaboration requires furthermore the understanding of the complete work process, the specific procedures and the purpose of each work task in the whole division of labor. Because the work in his team is particularly abstract, it is important to create the understanding about the contribution to the product, which is realized by providing business trips to other production sites and the German headquarters. For Hector, knowledge about the product and the specific contribution is part of a learning process to create the same product fascination (branding) than the Germans which also relates the identification with the company. Work experience in the company is thus interpreted as an influence on the employees' identification with the product and a criterion that distinguishes the German and Mexican coworkers. This thought of Hector agrees with the concept of Strauss (1985) who suggested that the collaborative type of work interaction "requires actors who are sensitively attuned to each others' actions (…); also a full commitment to the common enterprise, trust in one another, relative openness in communicating, often a degree of mutual psychological work, a considerable capacity to negotiate (…)." (p. 10).

The final requirement is language knowledge as determining factor of the private social networks that positively influence the professional collaboration between German and Mexican workers. For Rodrigo, productive collaboration requires workers to speak standard (grammatically correct) English and avoid figures of speech as part of the necessary neutral communication. The implied requirement is experience with coworkers from a different language background which creates language awareness and enables the willingness to use the neutral communication that is necessary to solve misunderstandings caused by the use of a second language instead of the mother tongue. Striepe added that the knowledge of the other's

language generally represents interest in the country and the culture and avoids the impression of "the other must adapt and get used to me" (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017), which he considers a further essential aspect for the productive collaboration.[86]

4.1.3   Cultural mediators.

In search for characteristics of productive collaboration, the participants were furthermore asked about persons in their work environment who they would describe as cultural mediators. Rodrigo mentioned this aspect without being asked to by recognizing himself as one of them; he introduced the following metaphor which was afterwards used in each interview: "it's a role I have here, so to say is a cultural bridge, I would call it." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). According to his own explanation, Rodrigo performs this role due to his work experience in the German headquarters and knowledge of the German language.[87]

The answers about the existence of cultural mediators varied between "we all are" (Miguel, own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017) to "nos hace falta" (Robin, personal communication, November 15, 2017). According to Miguel, everyone in this subsidiary is a cultural bridge because everyone is expected to understand the other coworker and discuss distinct arguments instead of insisting on the own approach. He however mentioned these actions as expectations thereby not revealing if he actually observes them. In comparison, Manuel does not recognize particular persons in his environment that fulfill this role and Robin

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[86] From the contrary perspective, the rejection to learn a language can also be perceived as lack of interest which similarly influences - however negatively - the collaboration.

[87] In addition to the expression *cultural bridge*, other names were given such as *kulturelle Brücke*, *cultural translator*, *cultural mediator*, *intermediary*, *middle person* and *gente mediadora*.

even described a lack of cultural translators: "(…) they are missing. There aren't many." (own translation, personal communication, November 15, 2017).[88]

The interviewees who observe the existence of cultural translators listed different persons that include Mexican coworkers who speak German and Germans who speak Spanish; coworkers with German-Mexican family relationships; leaders and subordinates with international work experience; coworkers to whom they have a deeper trust; and friends who are not employed in the organization. The principal characteristic mentioned by Rodrigo addresses the translation of languages and mindsets: "Because sometimes the other Mexicans have no experience with the Germans. (…) they don't understand the way they behave or why they are doing things the way they are doing them. So I kind of try to translate the mindset of one group to the mindset of the other one." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Rodrigo solves misunderstandings rooted in languages with literal and cultural translation; hence, language knowledge is considered an essential part of this type of mediating work. The participants mentioned that both, the Mexicans who know German and the Germans who know Spanish occupy an unofficial translator-function. For Rodrigo, the background to know how expressions are directly translated from one language to the other is an important competence of a cultural translator.

Language knowledge is furthermore considered a determining aspect that changes the adaption to Mexico for Germans in the private and in the professional life. The creation of private contacts does not necessarily require a good knowledge of Spanish because there are

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[88] Robin redirected the answer about the lack of cultural translators to a complaint about his boss: He is constantly in a disapproved fighting situation because his methodology and planning are not heard by his leader; this is the aspect, in which mediators are needed. At first, Robin expressed the shortage and then contradicted himself by stating that there are other managers who help him with doubts by explaining specific proceedings.

some Germans who have a social network without dominating the language. In general, private social networks between Mexicans and Germans outside the work place are considered an important characteristic of being a cultural translator. Three correlating characteristics were in summary emphasized about cultural translators: first, they have language knowledge; second, they have private social networks; and third, they have work experience in different countries.

The third characteristic of previous international work experience was mentioned with different variations: (1) work experience in different countries; (2) in Latin-American contexts; (3) in a German company; (4) in this company; (5) and finally particular work experience of Mexicans in Germany and of Germans in Mexico. The three characteristics of cultural translators correlate with each other because one can be the determining aspect of another. For instance, a family relationship can be the reason for the acquirement of a language, which then influences the acceptance of a work position abroad that enabled to develop the intercultural competence needed to fulfill the function of a cultural translator.

The interviewees described the clarification of intercultural misunderstandings as the principal activity of a cultural translator because of his/her ability to notice a cultural aspect in contrast to others who either do not notice it or - after noticing it - do not ask for its meaning. Cultural mediation consists in the explanation of the others' action in the intent to avoid the creation of doubts, offense and grudge. The questioning must however be expressed either to the acting person or to a third person to enable the clarifying interference of a cultural translator.

Monica for instance interfered as intermediary in a case in which personal differences between two German coworkers were blocking the professional progress. They tried to solve the problematic situation with more meetings which instead resulted in more discussions. Monica then "went in the middle" (personal communication, November 15, 2017) and enabled the

necessary transfer of information from one to another coworker which is a mediating action that is explained with a desire to help and enable the sharing of necessary information.[89] The principal goal of mediating actions was well explained by Monica: "I tried to support and (…) to not have as much friction in the company or in the organization (…) I try to support the main objective of everything but hm so there was no discussions." (personal communication, November 15, 2017). The work as an intermediary is interpreted as an expression of an aspiration to harmony in the organization as a whole; the cultural translator thus wants to contribute to solve problems, reduce discussions and avoid frictions to support the shared goals.

4.1.4   Conclusion.

The interviews were directed to identify intercultural misunderstandings and the strategies used by the workers in the intent to achieve the work task. In order to keep the business running or - in the words of Burawoy (1979) - to keep playing the game, the workers must collaborate and overcome their differences by jointly developing arrangements that are composed of different factors that are put into the interactional game: stereotypes; hierarchy; separating borders between the private and the professional life; work task approaches; knowledge; control; work experience; definitions of punctuality; meanings of the knowledge and use of languages as well as the role of complaints. The displayed social relationships at the work place represent social relationships in the broad sense and the society is expressed in the social interactions between diverse actors on the work floor. Hence, the work place is not considered

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[89] This example furthermore reveals three contradictions to theoretical positions: first, the Germans did not separate their private from their professional relationship and did not stay objective in the common achievement of the work goal. Secondly, the Germans did not confront the conflict and instead avoided it. Third, Monica's direct confrontation of the problem contradicts the conflict avoidance prevailing in the Mexican work culture.

merely in terms of rational criteria like efficiency; to the contrary, stereotypes, social

relationships, emotions, subjectivity and objective organizational conditions (overtly and

covertly) interfere and must be negotiated day to day (Strauss, 1993).

The presented dimensions in this chapter are - rather than the negotiation of stereotypes -

part of the game that exists between rigidity and flexibility, between transparency and opacity,

between frankness and ambiguity; they are part of the continuum and the negotiations. In every

company, the social games constructed in its interior assure its continuity, because the emerging

adjustments avoid its paralysis. The deviations including distrust, disagreements and

misunderstandings, are also part of the dynamics that regulate the productive space and the

strategies the actors use to play the game depend on their capacity to play according to the rules

and to modify them. The actions are always based on the frames of control that the subjects

intent to maintain, such as differentiating strategies used to establish exclusion for instance via

the withholding of information or via linguistic abilities; these can also be interpreted in the

concept of symbolic violence. In every situation additionally interfere the objectives of the

company that establishes its own mechanisms to reach efficiency and profitability despite any

intercultural difficulties. These regulations of the work place are the fundament on which the

collaboration is produced; hence, the production of collaboration takes place in this environment

in which the subjects act within their range of action.

Since the interview situation itself is an (intercultural) interaction, similar reflections must

be made about the information obtained with this first field work. Reflexivity and subjectivity of

the researcher and the interviewees require the displayed findings to be discussed critically

because interview information is - similar to every interaction - always the result of the personal

reflection of the actor and his decision to act resulting from the definition and interpretation of

the situation (Blumer, 1969). Intersubjective relations emerge during an interview situation: First, the interviewees decide with subjectivity which information to share and which to hide from the researcher; secondly, they reflect on activities, feelings and attitude towards their work and their employer, since every worker has subjective reasons to work in the certain position and how to realize the corresponding work tasks. With regards to the present interview situations, although the participants explicitly declared to participate voluntarily, their participation can also be interpreted as obligatory since the invitation was sent by the HR-manager and the conversations took place during the official work hours of the employees. A third context condition was the decision of the participants to conduct the interview in Spanish, English or German; the findings thus represent information obtained in the mother tongue, in the second or third language of the employee and/or the researcher which implies the same limitations as addressed in the chapter about language issues in the work place.

Although not perceived in the interviews, a certain reticence may have influenced the attitude of the Mexican interviewees in response to the researcher being German. This aspect was explicitly addressed in the introduction, however as always in cultural research, the participants may have answered with an intent to not offend the researchers' nationality, for example with complaints about their German coworkers or leaders. The complaint itself plays an important role because the interviews may have been used as platform for concerns that cannot be openly expressed in the work environment.[90] The consideration of the interview as a platform for criticism about the organization implies the further limitation of a possible reticence or

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[90] The complaint plays an important role in any organization and gains even more importance in the creation process of collective action in a context like Mexico, in which the capitalistic production supports individualization and resignation using the flexibilization of labor conditions (see e.g. Mendoza, 2017).

distrust towards the researcher that is caused by the connection between the research and the HR-department and the fear of personal information being forwarded to the management.

From a retrospective view, each of the interviewees mentioned negative perceptions and complaints about - although different - actions of the other work culture, specific coworkers or organizational aspects, hence the trust relationship between the participants and the researcher was interpreted as healthy and open. Particular trust and ease to share information was perceived in the interviews with Monica and Alejandra, who have a similar age and the same gender as the researcher. In comparison, the interviews with the Mexican participants were considered easier with more laughs than the ones with German workers who maintained a more serious communication during the conversations. Despite the subjective interpretation of the interview situations, a researcher can never completely know the subjective position of the interviewee. Reflecting on the conditions of the data collection, the obtained information offers a valuable insight about the collaboration in the study unit because the Mexican and German interviewees shared their subjective perceptions about the noticed differences and similarities.

4.2   Results of the quantitative approach.

4.2.1   Description of the sample.

The survey was responded by a total of 69 participants of whom 73.9% are male and 18.8% female. The study sample represents a relatively young work force since the largest group (40.6%) is between 20-29 years old and another 30.4% between 30-39 years. It is furthermore a highly qualified work force since the lowest professional/academic degree is Licenciatura/Bachelor. 56.5% of the participants have the Mexican nationality; 40.6 % the

German and two participants have other nationalities.[91]

Analyzing the sociodemographic data differed by nationality, the largest group of the Mexicans (59%) is between 20-29 years old, followed by 33.3% between 30 and 39 years old and only 3 persons who are older. In comparison, three quarters of the German participants are distributed almost equally into the age groups between 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 and only a minor part is among the youngest participants. The female percentage of the Mexicans is with 27% significantly higher than the one of the Germans (8%). With regards to the professional degrees, most of the Mexicans (66.7%) have the degree Licenciatura/Bachelor and 30.8% Maestría/Master/Diplom, whereas the proportion is reverse among the Germans with only 11.5% Licenciatura/Bachelor and 76.9% Maestría/Master/Diplom.

In support of the qualitative findings, it was evidenced that all the participants speak English; 25% of the Germans speak Spanish and 25.6 % of the Mexicans speak German.[92] Most of the participants work in the departments *Research & Development* and *Purchasing & Supplier Quality*. The starting date of the current work position ranges between March 2015 and February 2018; some of the employees thus have about 3 years of experience with both work cultures whereas others have just started recently. The ones who started the earliest are merely Mexicans; this group was identified as the inpatriates who previously worked in the German headquarters and afterwards started at the study unit in Mexico.[93]

The Mexican study participants and the ones with other nationalities have 100% local

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[91] One of them has the Brazilian and the other the Mexican and the German nationality.

[92] Ten employees speak additionally another language (French, Portuguese or Russian).

[93] This interpretation was possible since the contract type *inpatriate* was not selected: The inpatriates who previously worked in the German headquarters are now employed with a local contract in the Mexican subsidiary.

contracts and 100% of the Germans have expatriate contracts (neither the option *other* nor *inpatriate* were selected). Considering the early stage of the collaboration (the subsidiary was established in 2015), the high number of expatriates in the organization is understandable given that multinational corporations use expatriate programs to establish the processes of the headquarters in new subsidiaries (see e.g. Harvey et al., 1999; Vance & Paik, 2015). The fact that all the German employees have expatriate contracts is seen as a source of possible conflict in the collaboration since the differences between the types of labor contracts cause objective inequality regarding the same hierarchical positions in the company that are argued with the experience and company knowledge of expatriates and inpatriates.

When comparing the type of labor contract with the employees' age, the largest group between 20 and 29 years old is composed of a small number of expatriates and mostly employees with local contracts. The evidence of a generally young work force (between 30 and 39 years) and older employees with mostly expatriate contracts provides a clearer picture of the description of the work force obtained in the qualitative interviews. The study sample furthermore includes 18 leaders that are divided into five Mexican and five German leaders who have merely Mexican subordinates, and seven German leaders and one with another nationality who have subordinates with different nationalities. The distribution in dependence of the type of labor contract demonstrates that both types of labor contracts are present in both types of positions. Hence, expatriates are not assigned merely to management positions and local employees to subordinate positions (as common in other companies, see e.g. Lauring, 2011).

Table 4 *Comparison of the variables leadership tasks and nationality.*

Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			Total
			Mexican	German	Other:	
Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	No.	Count	34	13	1	48
		% within Nationality	87,2%	52,0%	50,0%	72,7%
	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Count	5	5	0	10
		% within Nationality	12,8%	20,0%	0,0%	15,2%
	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Count	0	7	1	8
		% within Nationality	0,0%	28,0%	50,0%	12,1%
Total		Count	39	25	2	66
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Note: Own elaboration.

Table 4 indicates four different nationalities among the leaders: 7.6% of the study sample have a Mexican, 77.3% a German and 15.2% a boss with a different nationality (Brazilian or French). The management level in the study unit is thus mainly represented by German employees which once again supports the interpretation of a corporate strategy that attempts to establish the processes from the headquarters in the new Mexican subsidiary. Nevertheless, these numbers must be interpreted considering two limitations: first, no distinction of different management levels was included; second, the participants were not asked if their bosses work in the same subsidiary or in another one of the corporation.

The final sociodemographic information evidences international work experience of the participants since - despite the young age average - only 34.8% of the population does not have

international work experience. Large groups of 35.9% of the Mexicans and 32% of the Germans

worked less than one year in different countries; the group with the longest experience (over

three years) represents 2.6% of the Mexicans and 36% of the Germans.[94]

Pearson correlations were run between the sociodemographic variables (see appendix 6)

to examine the association of two variables. A strong positive association was identified between

the variables *age* and *type of labor contract* (Pearson R: .546): The sample begins with a large

group of local contracts among the young employees and the higher the age, the larger the

number of expatriate contracts. The proportion local contract/expatriate contract shifts from the

youngest group to the oldest group which presents an expected result since the main

characteristic of expatriates is work experience and company knowledge that both are positively

correlated with age: the higher the age, the more work experience is possible.

The variable *age* is furthermore strongly positively associated with *disciplinary*

leadership tasks (Pearson R: .550). Similar to the first correlation, the results present a small

number of leaders and a high figure of subordinates in the youngest group of employees, which

is first reduced and then shifted towards more leaders and less subordinates in the groups with

higher age: the higher the age, the higher the number of leaders. This association was expected

since leadership positions (like expatriate positions) generally require (among other personal

capacities) both high qualification and long work experience.

In accordance with the previous findings, age is moreover positively associated with

international work experience (Pearson R: .507). The first interesting result is that there are more

employees with international work experience than without it in all age groups. The group

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[94] Shorter durations with less than one year vary more and include European Asian countries and Latin-American countries; six Mexicans have work experience in Germany and two Germans in Mexico.

without international work experience is the largest in the youngest age group, then reduced in the older groups and finally reaches 0 in the oldest. In comparison, international work experience of less than one year and between one and three years is similarly reduced from the youngest to the oldest age groups, whereas the employees who have more than three years of international work experience show as only group an increasing tendency from the youngest to the oldest group. These results were expected considering that all the employees have at least a Bachelor's degree and thus started their first work position approximately in the age range of 20 to 29.

In summary, the study sample represents a young workforce that includes Mexican and German subordinates and leaders who occupy different supporting functions and started their collaboration between three years and two weeks ago.

4.2.2   Work culture in three words.

The second section of the questionnaire asked the open questions *What are the first three words that spontaneously come to your mind thinking about the Mexican and German work culture?* The interpretation of the answers needs to consider that the questions were not directed to the current work environment of the respondents but rather to their general perception of both work cultures. The original list of answers is displayed in appendix 7; the following results have been modified by the summarization of similar words (both in reference to their meaning as well as to the English translation) to enable the analysis of frequencies.[95]

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[95] The following data excludes the two participants with other nationalities to facilitate the reading.

Table 5 *The Mexican work culture described by Mexicans.*

Fre-quency:	Words:
13	Hard-working
6	Creative, Friendly, Unpunctual
5	Passion
4	Commitment
3	Fast, Spontaneous
2	Dedicated, Enthusiastic, Flexible, Fun, Lazy, Practical, Quality, Relaxed, Warmth
1	Arduo, Cheap, Cheerful, Compromise, Considered, Courage, Desorganizado, Dynamic, Extra workload, Hierarchical, High-context, Honest, Improvisado, Inteligencia, Interpersonal, Long working hours, Messy, Multitask, Noisy, Not efficient, Old style, Open-minded, Optimistic, Overtime, Poco productivos, Proactive, Problem solving, Procrastination, Productive, Service oriented, Smart, Specialized skills, Structured, Supporting people, Talachero, Talkative, Team, Trabajador, Trouble fixer, Unproductivity, Unreliable

Note: Own elaboration based on the frequency of the mentioned word (see appendix 7).

As demonstrated by table 5, the word which was mentioned the most by the Mexican participants (N=35) was *hard-working*; including the expressions that address the same concept (*trabajador*, *arduo*, *long working hours*, *overtime* and *extra workload),* this maximum would be even higher. The frequency of 13 additionally evidences a large distance to the following important words: *unpunctual*, *friendly* and *creative* with a frequency of 6, as well as *passion* (5) and *commitment* (4). The expressions *hard-working*, *passion* and *commitment* can be categorized as work values since they describe fundamental attitudes of individuals towards work. The adjective *friendly* rather addresses the interactions among coworkers; *creative* the kind of work task approach; and finally, *unpunctual* the opposite of punctuality. Due to their frequency, these words are interpreted as the most important ones in the description of the Mexican work culture.

The rest of the words are interpreted as more or less equally important since they were expressed between one and three times by the participants; to analyze them as a whole, the expressions were summarized into categories. *Enthusiastic*, *passion*, *dedicated* and *commitment*

can be included in the concept of commitment to work; *smart* and *inteligencia* describe the

capacity intelligence; *service oriented* and *supporting people* characterize the work attitude

helpfulness. Another group of words was summarized with emotions at work: *warmth, friendly,*

relaxed, team, interpersonal, fun, cheerful, optimistic; and others with inefficiency: *not efficient,*

unproductivity and *poco productivos* - this group however contradicts the word *productive*.[96]

The general impression given by the Mexican participants is a description of a hard-

working person who is committed or dedicated to his/her work and shows a tendency to solve

problems with an extraordinary service attitude and an aspiration to harmony and team work.

Table 6 *The Mexican work culture described by Germans.*

Frequency:	Words:
8	Friendly
3	Flexible, Spontaneous
2	Mañana, Relaxed, Short-term oriented
1	Always an excuse...lo que pasa..., Arriving too late, Boss oriented, Chatty; group-oriented, Clever/interested/open, Creative, Distracted, Experienced, Friends, Hard & long working, Helpful, Hierarchical, Hierarchy-oriented, Interested and willing to learn, It wasn't me, Long working day incl. long breaks, Long working hours, Mikromanagement, Missing initiative to take responsibility, Motivated, Nearly chinese culture style, No lead, No negative reports, Nobody cares, Nobody says something, Not efficient, but flexible, Not result driven, Open, Patient, Personal relations, Procrastination, Professional, Punctuality not first priority, Reactive work culture, Reminder, Slow, Sluggish, Socializing, Team spirit and harmony is important, Thirsty for knowledge, Together, Top-down culture, Unpunctual, Unreliable, Unstrukturiert, Unverbindlichkeit, We have no problems, Willing to learn, Willingness

Note: Own elaboration based on the frequency of the mentioned word (see appendix 7).

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[96] The stereotype *lazy* which is according to Hernández (2012) part of the reference about the Mexican

culture, was mentioned twice by Mexican participants and not mentioned by Germans (see table 3). The word

talachero is a Mexican expression for a person who mechanically repairs something; the repairing services thus

direct to the concept of problem solution, which was moreover mentioned with the English expression *trouble fixer*.

Table 6 presents the answers given by the German study participants (N = 23) about the Mexican work culture which were generally more disperse but however addressed similar topics. The word which was mentioned with the highest frequency and with a large distance to the following most important words was the adjective *friendly*, followed by *spontaneous* and *flexible*. In agreement with the Mexican participants, several Germans wrote words that address the concept of hard-working: *Hard&long working, Long working day incl. long breaks, Long working hours*. Another group of words moreover highlighted the sociability of the Mexican work culture: *Team spirit and harmony is important, socializing, together, personal relations, Friends, Chatty; group-oriented*. A further expected category was unpunctuality addressed with the words *unpunctual, punctuality not first priority, arriving too late, Mañana.*

New categories of words which were not mentioned by the Mexican participants address leadership styles (*Hierarchical, hierarchy oriented, top-down culture, Mikromanagement, boss oriented*) as well as interest as a work attitude: *Clever/interested/open, willingness, willing to learn, open, motivated, Interested and willing to learn, Thirsty for knowledge*. An interesting summary of negatively written expressions address the concept of avoidance of conflict: *It wasn't me, No negative reports, Nobody says something, We have no problems.*

Comparing the self-image and the others' image, both lists of words about the Mexican culture identified few contradictions: The Mexican and German answers contradicted each other in the aspects *structured* and *unstructured*; *proactive* and *reactive*; *fast* and *slow*. In contrast, several similarities were detected because both attributed unreliability, unpunctuality, spontaneity, creativity and helpfulness to the Mexican work culture. In reference to the importance of time, both groups moreover mentioned the words *procrastination*, *long working*

hours and *relaxed*. The most significant similarity between both perceptions about the Mexican

work culture is the emphasis on hard work and the team (*team spirit).*

Table 7 *The German work culture described by Mexicans.*

Frequency:	Words:
9	Discipline
8	Punctual
6	Organized
5	Strict
4	Direct, Planning, Responsibility
3	Cuadrados, Detail, Focused, Precision, Quality
2	Cold, Honest, Open, Serious, Stress, Structured, Transparent
1	Accomplish, Boss, Cero doble caras, Close-minded, Commitment, Complex, Deadline, Dedicated, Demanding, Difficult, Efficient, Familia, Fast, Flexible, Freedom to work, Hard to communicate, High focus, Individual, Loyalty, Methodical, Not so supporting, Order, Perfección, Political, Productivos, Quiet, Respect, Right-way, Rigid, Rude, Self managed, Self-learning, Straight, Straightforward, Timing, Vacations

Note: Own elaboration based on the frequency of the mentioned word (see appendix 7).

The words mentioned by the Mexican participants (N = 35) about the German work

culture are displayed in table 7; the expression with the highest frequency was *discipline*,

followed very closely by *punctual* and *organized*. Since punctuality and organization can be

considered an expression of discipline, the combination of these three words gains even more

importance. Discipline and task-orientation are moreover addressed by *Precision*, *perfección*,

quality, *detail*, *planning*, *order*, *deadline*, *timing, High focus*. These substantives are supported

by a large group of adjectives: *strict*, *straight*, *straight forward*, *serious*, *rigid*, *direct*, *focused*.

The combination of the words *individual*, *self-managed*, *self-learning*, *responsibility*,

Freedom to work highlights the responsibility given to the individual in the German work culture

which is an expression of individualistic work that contradicts the focus on the team detected in

the Mexican work culture. Other adjectives rather refer to the direct form of communication:

rude, *cold*, *quiet*, *difficult*, *hard to communicate*, *not so supporting*. This description directs to a lack of affection and helpfulness at the work place which supports the previous findings. The expressions *cuadrados* as well as *close-minded* moreover reinforce the qualitative results about inflexibility and stubbornness perceived by the Mexican coworkers. The last group of work values emphasize the importance of transparency in the German work culture: *respect*, *honest*, *cero doble caras*, *transparent*, *loyalty*. Accordingly, the word *stress* supports Robins' description of a fast work environment and the expression *rude* was also addressed in the qualitative approach with regards to the difficult use of hand gestures.

Table 8 *The German work culture described by Germans.*

Frequency:	Words:
7	Efficient
4	Discipline
3	Punctual, Inflexible
2	Accurate, Direct, Experienced, Friendly, Result driven, Structured
1	Arriving and leaving on time, Boss is leader, Communicative, Correct, Do it now, Done in short time, Exact, Fast, Focus on problem, Hard-headed and stubborn, Hard-working and focused on results, Harsh, I need to succeed, Independent, Insisting on agreements made, Long-term oriented, Meetings, More trustful, Name of the company (confidential), Non-hierarchical, Not open for other opinions, On schedule, Open, Own responsibility, Planning, Planning to the detail, Prioritised, Proactive, Reliable, Rule driven, Say also no, if it's not possible, Serious, Solution-oriented, Strict, Strong, Stronger communication, Target oriented, Unfriendly, Very detailed even where it is not necessary, Work result more important than to be a nice colleague

Note: Own elaboration based on the frequency of the mentioned word (see appendix 7).

In comparison, table 8 presents the self-image of the Germans (N=23) about their own work culture that shows precise similarities to the description of the Mexicans. The word mentioned with the highest frequency was *efficient*, followed by *discipline* as well as *inflexible* and *punctual*. The German participants furthermore wrote *planning to the detail*, *correct* and *accurate* as well as *target oriented*, *solution oriented*, *result driven*, *Hard-working and focused*

on results which are all expressions of the cultural standard task-orientation. One participant even addressed a difference between both work cultures with the statement: *Work result more important than to be a nice colleague.*

The German participants agreed with the Mexicans describing an individualistic work culture: *Own responsibility, Non-hierarchical, Independent, I need to succeed.* Both lists moreover coincide with the direct form of communication and insistence: *strong, stronger communication, say also no if it's not possible, harsh, insisting on agreements made, Not open for other opinions, inflexible, hard-headed and stubborn, direct.* Another group of words accordingly emphasized the importance of time and punctuality in the German work culture: *done in short time, do it now, punctual, on schedule, Arriving and leaving on time, Long-term oriented.* Finally, the word *meetings* supports the previously detected need for formal meetings.

Comparing the self-image and the others' image about the German work culture, the description of the Mexican and the German participants presented several similarities. The most frequent words were almost equal (discipline, punctuality and organization, efficiency) and further characteristics were also similarly mentioned by both groups. The German employees seem to be aware of their inflexibility and stubbornness perceived by their Mexican coworkers.

In summary, comparing the lists of words that describe the Mexican and German work culture, the image of two different work cultures is constructed, however the self- and the others' image of each one is mostly similar. The Mexican work culture is considered friendly, relaxed and supporting, with a focus on the team and overall harmony; the German work culture is described as direct, honest and accurate, with an emphasis on individual responsibility, results and planning. Two basic discrepancies were detected between both work cultures: the focus on the team in the first and on the individual employee in the latter; as well as the flexibility in the

first and inflexibility in the latter. These differences explain the first image of a friendly and social environment and the second one of a cold and task-oriented environment and several phenomena that refer to different forms of communication or work-task approaches.

4.2.3   Agreement questions: My work environment.

In the third section, the participants were asked with a Likert-scale about their agreement to twelve statements about their current work environment indicating whether they *strongly agree* (4), *agree* (3), *disagree* (2) or *strongly disagree* (1).[97] The variables were measured by frequency, median and mean of the subjects' agreement to the statement in dependence of the variable *nationality* and correlations with sociodemographic variables were analyzed. The results present a population of N=60 cases (nine missing cases); the answers varied with one exception between 4 and 1, with a standard deviation between .649 and .954 (see appendix 8).[98]

The first two statements were elaborated to evaluate the complaint expressed in the qualitative interviews by leaders about their subordinates not reporting the current status of their work task to them. The interesting doubt that remained from the interviews was if the subordinates do not know the current work status or just do not report it.

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[97] The possibilities were limited to an equal number of agreement and disagreement without a neutral option to avoid a tendency to the middle response (see e.g. Hernández et al, 2010; Hodge & Gillespie, 2003).

[98] The results of the whole population need to be interpreted considering that the sample is composed of a larger number of Mexican (N=35) than German employees (N=23) and two participants with other nationalities.

I always know the current status of my work tasks.

I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.
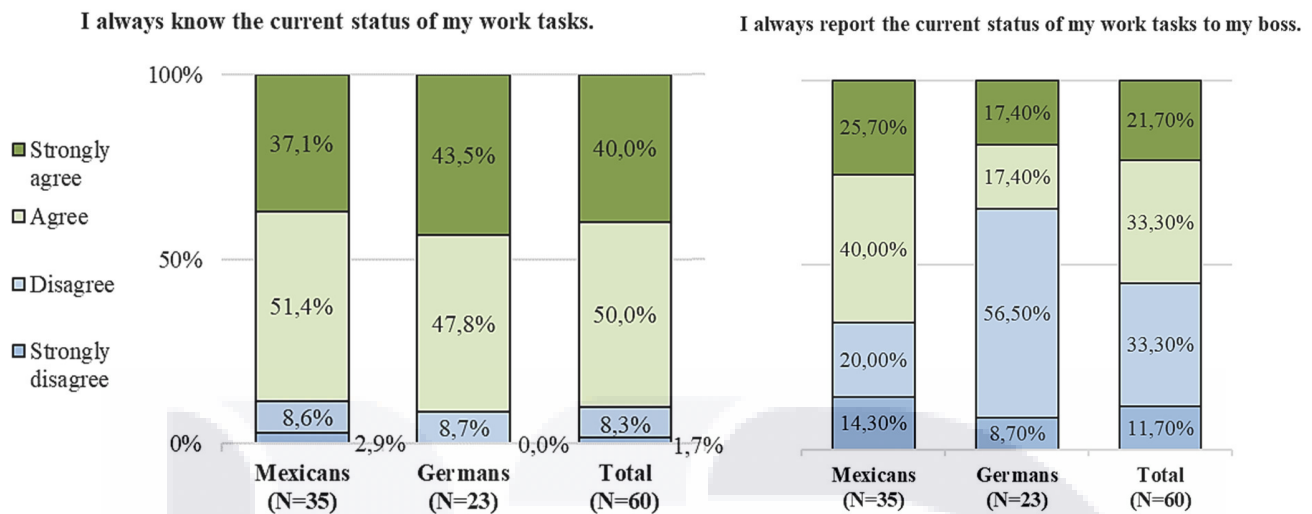
Figure 10. Agreement to the statements: I always know the current status of my work tasks. I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss. Own elaboration.

As demonstrated by figure 10, the whole population evidence a central tendency (mean 3.28; median 3.0) to the answer agree regarding the knowledge of the current status of work tasks; a similar image is constructed when comparing the answers differed by nationality: 88.5% of the Mexicans and 91.3% of the Germans agree with the statement. The average of the whole population also agrees with the reporting of the work status to their bosses (mean: 2.65; median 3.0); figure 10 indicates however agreement of the majority of the Mexicans and disagreement of most of the Germans. These results thus contradict the qualitative findings which described the Germans as focused on reporting and transparency and the Mexicans with a lack of information about work statuses; the quantitative approach contrarily shows that most of the Mexicans always report to their leaders whereas the majority of the Germans does not.

An analysis of Pearson correlations was run to assess the relationship between status reporting and leadership tasks that evidence a low positive correlation between the variables (Pearson R: .088; see appendix 8). It is an interesting result that one leader (and not merely subordinates) is among the group of employees who strongly disagree with reporting (N=7). The

group of subordinates without leadership tasks (N=43) is almost equally distributed into one half in agreement and the other in disagreement with the constant reporting to their leaders, whereas 70% of the leaders with Mexican subordinates (N=10) and 57.2% of the leaders with subordinates of different nationalities (N=7) agree.

In summary of both questions, the quantitative results showed no significant discrepancy in the comparison of the nationalities, but rather between the statements and the hierarchical positions. Although the statements are rooted in the complaint of leaders expressed in the qualitative interviews, the quantitative findings show that there are also leaders who disagree with the constant reporting to their leaders. The subsequent doubt is if those leaders - although they themselves do not constantly report - expect reporting from their subordinates to them?

The following data refers to the discussion about the responsibility and freedom given from German leaders to their subordinates regarding own work task approaches as well as the need for clearer instructions. Figure 11 demonstrates that the average of the whole population (mean 3.45; median 4.0) agrees with the *statement I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach* and shows additionally the clear tendency to agreement by both nationalities with only three Mexican participants in disagreement. This is moreover the only statement with which all the German participants either agree or strongly agree. The quantitative results thus support the qualitative findings that detected the responsibility and freedom given by the leaders to their subordinates, regardless of their nationality.

The analysis of the variable in dependence of the nationality of the boss indicates furthermore that also the Mexican bosses and the ones with other nationalities (and not only the German leaders) provide their subordinates with responsibility and freedom, which contradicts theoretical descriptions that characterize Mexican leadership as authoritarian

(micromanagement).[99] The detected three employees who disagree with the statement have a German boss; the comparison of their departments however rejected the hypothesis that these three cases might have the same leader. The important result of the atypical cases is that there is more than one German leader who does not provide his/her subordinates with responsibility and freedom to have their own work task approach.
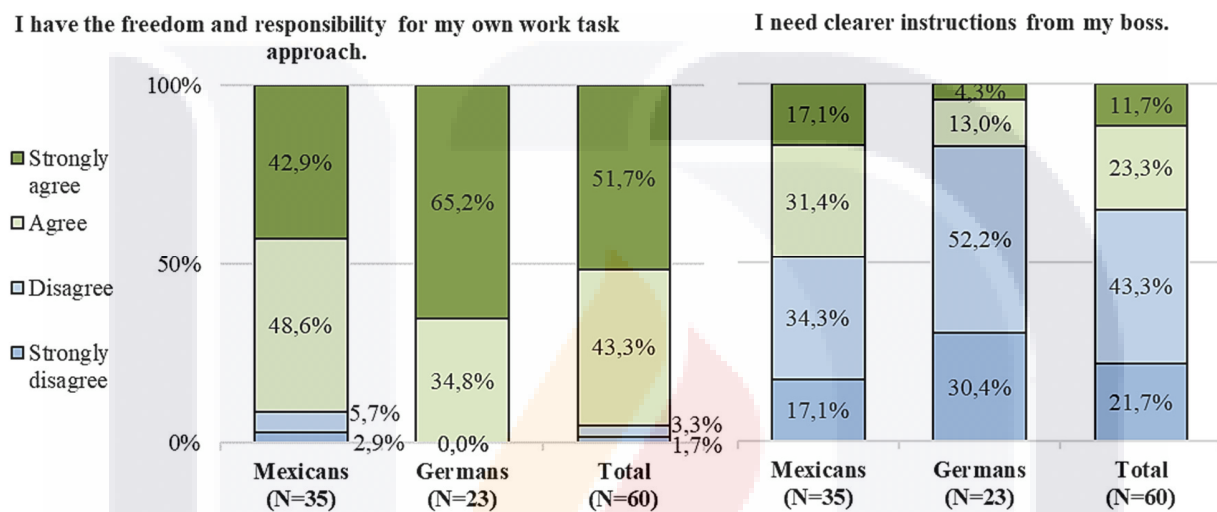
Figure 11. Agreement to the statements: I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach. I need clearer instructions from my boss. Own elaboration.

The statement *I need clearer instructions from my boss* was included to assess the complaints of Mexican subordinates about the lack of clarity of their German leaders and coworkers. The average of the whole population (mean 2.25; median 2.0) however disagrees (see figure 11). The comparison in dependence of nationality shows that the significant majority of the Germans is not in need for clearer instructions, whereas the Mexican employees are divided into two groups. The discrepancy between the answers supports the qualitative findings as well as theoretical descriptions: Most of the German employees are familiar with more personal

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[99] If the subordinates of Robin are among this group of employees, it is possible that they disagree with Robins personal perception of showing micromanagement (see chapter 5.2.1).

responsibility and less instructions, whereas half of the Mexicans require clearer instructions. For the leaders it is essential to know that the need for clearer instructions is not prevailing in the Mexican work culture, but rather applies to only half of the employees. In consequence, every manager is asked to evaluate if his/her Mexican subordinates belong to the first or second group.

Table 9 *Comparison of the need for clearer instructions and positions with leadership tasks.*

I need clearer instructions from my boss. * Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?					
			Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?		
			No	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican sub-ordinates	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates	Total
I need clearer in-structions from my boss.	Strongly dis-agree	Count	8	3	2	13
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	18,6%	30,0%	28,6%	21,7%
	Dis-agree	Count	19	3	4	26
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	44,2%	30,0%	57,1%	43,3%
	Agree	Count	10	3	1	14
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	23,3%	30,0%	14,3%	23,3%
	Strongly agree	Count	6	1	0	7
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	14,0%	10,0%	0,0%	11,7%
Total		Count	43	10	7	60
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Note: Own elaboration.

The low negative association between the statement and the variable *leadership tasks* (Pearson R: -.162) shows that 37.3% of the subordinates (N=43) and also 40% of the leaders

with merely Mexican subordinates (N=10) are in need for clearer instructions, which is an important result in the search for productive collaboration (see table 9).

Table 10 *Comparison of the need for clearer instructions and the nationality of the boss.*

			Nationality of the boss			Total
			Mexican	German	Other:	
I need clearer instructions from my boss.	Strongly disagree	Count	0	12	1	13
		% within Nationality of the boss	0,0%	25,5%	12,5%	21,7%
	Disagree	Count	1	22	3	26
		% within Nationality of the boss	20,0%	46,8%	37,5%	43,3%
	Agree	Count	3	9	2	14
		% within Nationality of the boss	60,0%	19,1%	25,0%	23,3%
	Strongly agree	Count	1	4	2	7
		% within Nationality of the boss	20,0%	8,5%	25,0%	11,7%
Total		Count	5	47	8	60
		% within Nationality of the boss	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Note: Own elaboration.

The analysis of the association between the need for clearer instructions and the variable *nationality of the boss* (see table 10) provides an additional evidence that there are employees in need for clearer instructions among all the three groups; however the percentage is the highest (80%) in the group with Mexican bosses (N=5), lower (50%) in the group of employees who have bosses with different nationalities (N=8) and the lowest (27.6%) in the group with German bosses (N=47).[100]

The next statement *I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability* was included to measure the complaints of the German interview participants who consider

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[100] The comparison of the groups must consider the inequality of the sample sizes.

unreliability the reason to use insistence to reach the fulfillment of requests. The agreement of the whole population supports the qualitative findings (mean 2.73; median 3.0) (see figure 12):

I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability.
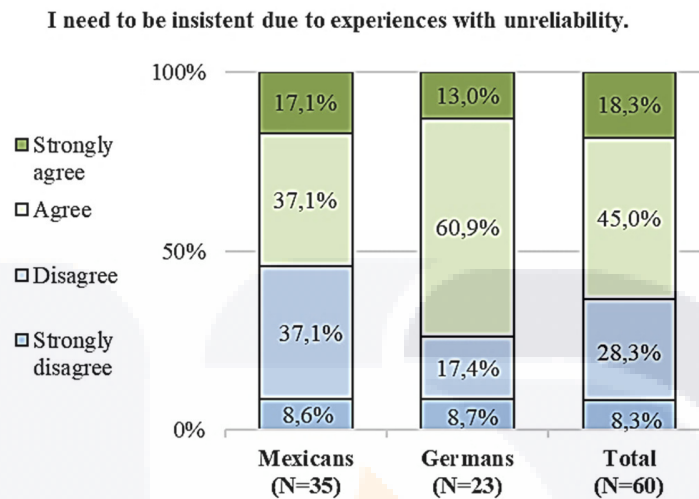
Figure 12. I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability. Own elaboration.

The comparison of the answers in dependence of the nationalities revealed that insistence is however not a merely German characteristic, but rather of both, Mexicans and Germans. The answers of the Mexican participants are distributed into one half in disagreement and the other in agreement, whereas the clear majority of the German participants agrees with the statement. These results thus show that insistence as a consequence of unreliability is a strategy used by both nationalities that is however more significant among the German employees.

In continuation of the discussion about reliability, the agreement to the different fulfillment and expression of requests provides further information.[101] The total population disagrees (mean 1.87; median 2.0) with a different fulfillment of tasks and the comparison of the nationalities evidences no influence of the variable, because 88.6% of the Mexicans and almost

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[101] The survey displayed the following clarifying introduction for its participants: "The expression "coworker" includes colleagues from the same position, superiors, as well as subordinates.

similarly 88.3% of the Germans answered in disagreement (see figure 13). The majority of both

groups thus accordingly claims to make no distinctions in the fulfillment of tasks.[102]
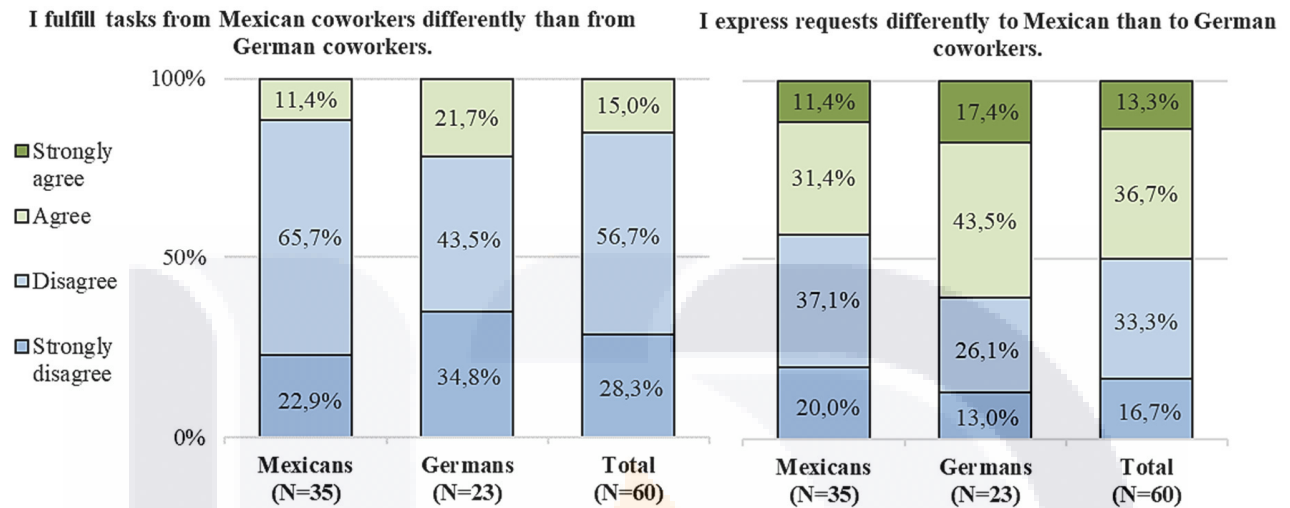
Figure 13. Agreement to the statements: I fulfill tasks from Mexican coworkers differently than from German coworkers. I express requests differently to Mexican than to German coworkers. Own elaboration.

The average of the whole population also disagrees (mean 2.47; median 2.5) with the

different expression of requests, thereby claiming that in addition to the fulfillment of requests,

they also do not make differences in the formulation of requests. The comparison of the

nationalities in figure 13 demonstrates however a contradictory proportion of the answers:

Although both groups are divided into employees who agree and who disagree, the proportions

are different, since relatively more Mexicans are in disagreement (57.1%) but more Germans

(60.9%) in agreement. Whereas the majority of the Mexicans does not make a difference, most

of the Germans differentiates the expression of requests.

The contradicting statements about the use of company knowledge by the expatriates

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[102] With a variance range between 1 and 3, this was the only statement to which no one answered with

strong agreement. As previously criticized by the HR-manager, this statement might have been answered politically

correct due to its political formulation (see Holtgraves (2004) about the bias of social desirability).

were included to profound the obtained qualitative information about the knowledge transfer.

The average of the whole population with (mean 3.32; median 3.0) agrees with the statement

Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit (see figure 14):
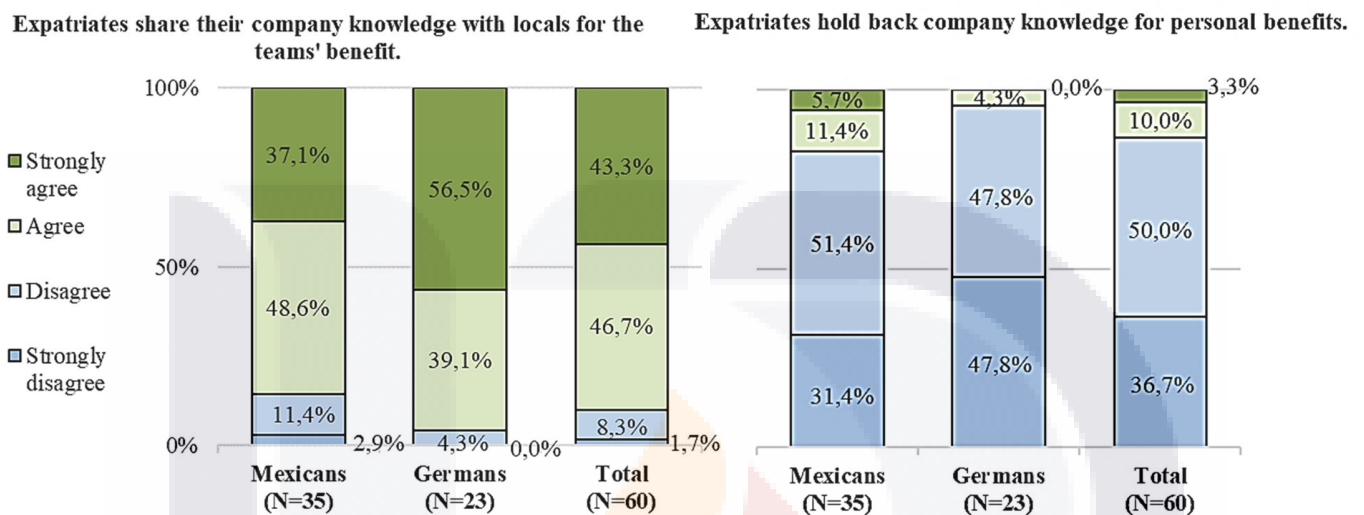
Figure 14. Agreement to the statements: Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit. Expatriates hold back company knowledge for personal benefits. Own elaboration.

The differentiation with the variable nationality indicates moreover the agreement of the

significant majority of the Mexican (85.7%) and German (95.6%) participants. The significant

agreement of the German employees must however consider that all of them have expatriate

contracts. The statistical results nevertheless contradict the example of the failed knowledge

transfer in the qualitative approach that can now be considered a negative exception, since the

average of the whole population moreover disagrees with the statement *Expatriates hold back*

company knowledge for personal benefits (mean 1.80; median 2.0). The disagreement of 82.8%

of the Mexican and 95.6% of the German participants accordingly rejects the use of company

knowledge for personal benefits (see figure 14).

The following statement *The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates*

and locals influence our daily collaboration was added due to the lack of information given in

the interviews about the influences of the unequal labor conditions of the employees. The total

population answered in disagreement (mean 2.43; median 2.0) (see figure 15):
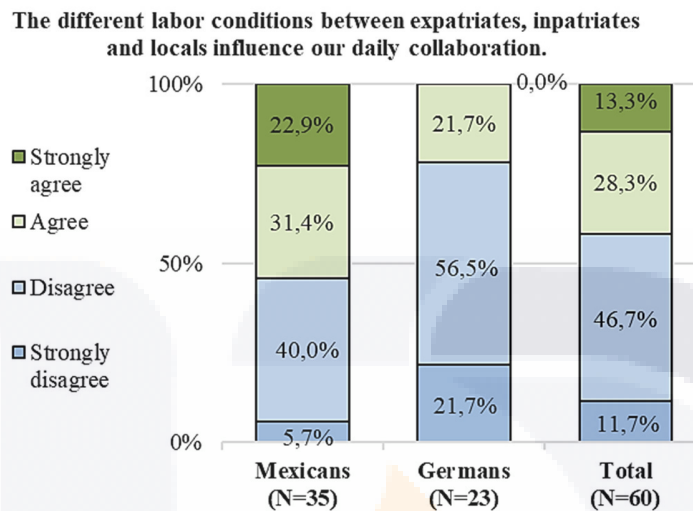
Figure 15. Agreement to the statement: The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates and locals influence our daily collaboration. Own elaboration.

The comparison of the nationalities shows however the division of the Mexican answers

into two groups in disagreement and agreement, whereas most of the German employees

(78.2%) disagree. Additionally interesting is that 22.9% of the Mexicans strongly agree with the

influences on collaboration whereas no German chose strong agreement. The discrepancy

between both perceptions was expected since the Germans have expatriate contracts with - in

comparison - better work conditions due to the German labor law and the benefits provided for

international assignments. It is rather interesting that the Mexicans (who all have local contracts)

are divided into approximately one half that observes influences of inequality and another that

does not. This proportion causes doubts and the need for a subsequent qualitative approach to

study the subjective dimensions of the observation and the type of influence. The present result is

merely the evidence that one half of the Mexicans and only a quarter of the Germans observe

influences of the differences between the labor contracts on collaboration; no conclusions can be

derived about the characterization of these influences.

The statement *During a regular work day I speak my mother tongue more than English* was included in the questionnaire to get a broader insight about the language situation in the study unit. The qualitative findings showed that English as the official language is sometimes avoided by the Germans; with a mean as well as median of 2 (disagree), the quantitative population however rejects to use their mother tongue more English (see figure 16):
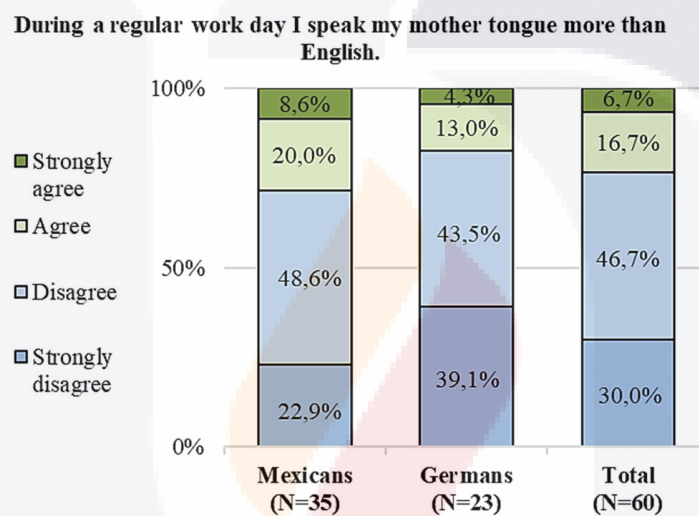
Figure 16. Agreement to the statement: During a regular day I speak my mother tongue more than English. Own elaboration.

The comparison of the nationalities indicates the disagreement of the large majority (71.5%) of the Mexican employees and even more of the German employees (82.6%). Since only a small part of both groups stated that they speak their mother tongue more than English, the results contradict the qualitative findings; nevertheless, the answers must be interpreted critically because the official business language is English and doubts are raised if the

participants answered to avoid the revelation of a violation of official company regulations
coworkers (see Holtgraves (2004) about the bias of social desirability).[103]

I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans is the
last statement to measure the qualitative findings about the existence of cultural translators in this
intercultural work environment which varied between "nos hace falta" and "we all are". The
statistical results also revealed a discrepancy between the possible answers; the average of the
population however agrees with the existence (mean 2.62; median 3.0) of cultural translators.
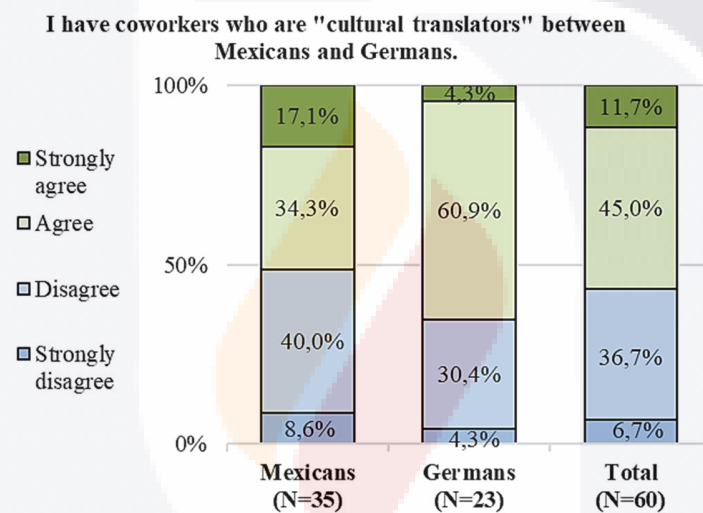
Figure 17. Agreement to the statement: I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans. Own elaboration.

Figure 17 displays the comparison of the nationalities and provides the information that
approximately one half of the Mexicans disagrees whereas the other half agrees; the German
employees show a tendency to agreement (65.2%), however also with a significant group in

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[103] In the present statement, the participants answered from the personal perspective about themselves and
the mere use of the mother tongue, whereas in section four, they were asked about the avoidance of a group of
coworkers thereby excluding themselves. Both results together reject the predominant use of the mother tongue as
well as the avoidance of English, since this characteristic was mostly attributed to none of the coworkers.

disagreement. The quantitative results therefore support the qualitative results by also indicating a discrepancy among employees who observe cultural translators and others who do not. No conclusion can be derived from these findings about the different subjective interpretations of the expression "cultural translator" as it was possible with the qualitative approach.

In conclusion, the questions of the third section of the questionnaire asked the participants about their agreement to twelve statements about their current work environment that refer to work task approaches, knowledge transfer, language issues as well as cultural translators. Some of the quantitative results support the qualitative findings, others however contradict them. In summary, a broader picture was provided by the quantitative approach about the specific aspects detected in the qualitative interviews about the collaboration of the Mexicans and Germans in the present study unit.

4.2.4   Attribution questions: My coworkers.

In the fourth section, the participants were asked to choose if the statement describes their Mexican coworkers, German coworkers, both groups or none of their coworkers; the questions were thus directed to identify differences between opinions about oneself (section three) and about others. The 13 short statements were developed in the attempt to detect, if the characteristics in this work environment agree or disagree with the theoretical and qualitative descriptions of both work cultures. The short and simple expressions meant to stimulate a spontaneous reaction of the participant and a quick attribution to one group of coworkers. The following results present a sample of N=60 (nine missing cases); each statement was analyzed

with frequencies, mean and median of the total population as well as more profound data in

dependence of the variable nationality.[104]

Table 11 *Frequencies and adjusted residuals: attribution of twelve statements to a group of coworkers.*

Statement:	Response:		Nationality:		
			Mexican (N=35)	German (N=23)	Total (N=60)
… share private information and feelings with coworkers.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	20	8	28
		% within Nationality	57,10%	34,80%	46,70%
		Adjusted Residual	1,9	-1,5	
	My German coworkers	Count	2	0	3
		% within Nationality	5,70%	0,00%	5,00%
		Adjusted Residual	0,3	-1,4	
	Both groups	Count	10	12	23
		% within Nationality	28,60%	52,20%	38,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-1,8	1,7	
	None of my coworkers	Count	3	3	6
		% within Nationality	8,60%	13,00%	10,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,4	0,6	
… prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	8	12	21
		% within Nationality	22,90%	52,20%	35,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,3	2,2	
	My German coworkers	Count	2	1	3
		% within Nationality	5,70%	4,30%	5,00%
		Adjusted Residual	0,3	-0,2	
	Both groups	Count	10	3	14
		% within Nationality	28,60%	13,00%	23,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1,1	-1,5	
	None of my coworkers	Count	15	7	22
		% within Nationality	42,90%	30,40%	36,70%
		Adjusted Residual	1,2	-0,8	

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[104] The results of the whole population once more need to be interpreted considering that the sample is composed of a larger number of Mexican (N=35) than German employees (N=23) and two participants with other nationalities (see appendix 8). The corresponding values were attributed to the answers in the following pattern: 1 = "My Mexican coworkers"; 2 = "My German coworkers"; 3 = "Both groups" and 4 = "None of my coworkers".

… communicate their mistakes.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	2	0	2
		% within Nationality	5,70%	0,00%	3,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1,2	-1,1	
	My German coworkers	Count	7	9	17
		% within Nationality	20,00%	39,10%	28,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-1,7	1,5	
	Both groups	Count	20	5	25
		% within Nationality	57,10%	21,70%	41,70%
		Adjusted Residual	2,9	-2,5	
	None of my coworkers	Count	6	9	16
		% within Nationality	17,10%	39,10%	26,70%
		Adjusted Residual	-2	1,7	
… are unafraid of conflict.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	0	2	2
		% within Nationality	0,00%	8,70%	3,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-1,7	1,8	
	My German coworkers	Count	14	15	30
		% within Nationality	40,00%	65,20%	50,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-1,8	1,9	
	Both groups	Count	12	5	18
		% within Nationality	34,30%	21,70%	30,00%
		Adjusted Residual	0,9	-1,1	
	None of my coworkers	Count	9	1	10
		% within Nationality	25,70%	4,30%	16,70%
		Adjusted Residual	2,2	-2	
… tend to avoid conflicts.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	11	17	29
		% within Nationality	31,40%	73,90%	48,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-3,1	3,1	
	My German coworkers	Count	3	0	3
		% within Nationality	8,60%	0,00%	5,00%
		Adjusted Residual	1,5	-1,4	
	Both groups	Count	15	4	20
		% within Nationality	42,90%	17,40%	33,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1,9	-2,1	
	None of my coworkers	Count	6	2	8
		% within Nationality	17,10%	8,70%	13,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1	-0,8	

	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,90%	0,00%	1,70%
		Adjusted Residual	0,9	-0,8	
	My German coworkers	Count	25	15	41
		% within Nationality	71,40%	65,20%	68,30%
… express criticism (too) directly.		Adjusted Residual	0,6	-0,4	
	Both groups	Count	6	1	7
		% within Nationality	17,10%	4,30%	11,70%
		Adjusted Residual	1,6	-1,4	
	None of my coworkers	Count	3	7	11
		% within Nationality	8,60%	30,40%	18,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,3	1,9	
	My Mexican coworkers	Count	13	16	31
		% within Nationality	37,10%	69,60%	51,70%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,7	2,2	
	My German coworkers	Count	5	1	6
		% within Nationality	14,30%	4,30%	10,00%
… express criticism (too) sensitively.		Adjusted Residual	1,3	-1,2	
	Both groups	Count	12	1	13
		% within Nationality	34,30%	4,30%	21,70%
		Adjusted Residual	2,8	-2,6	
	None of my coworkers	Count	5	5	10
		% within Nationality	14,30%	21,70%	16,70%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,6	0,8	
	My Mexican coworkers	Count	4	1	5
		% within Nationality	11,40%	4,30%	8,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1	-0,9	
	My German coworkers	Count	12	4	17
		% within Nationality	34,30%	17,40%	28,30%
… are inflexible and stubborn.		Adjusted Residual	1,2	-1,5	
	Both groups	Count	8	2	11
		% within Nationality	22,90%	8,70%	18,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1,1	-1,5	
	None of my coworkers	Count	11	16	27
		% within Nationality	31,40%	69,60%	45,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,5	3	

… have a need for formal meetings.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	2
		% within Nationality	2,90%	0,00%	3,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,2	-1,1	
	My German coworkers	Count	18	11	30
		% within Nationality	51,40%	47,80%	50,00%
		Adjusted Residual	0,3	-0,3	
	Both groups	Count	16	6	22
		% within Nationality	45,70%	26,10%	36,70%
		Adjusted Residual	1,7	-1,3	
	None of my coworkers	Count	0	6	6
		% within Nationality	0,00%	26,10%	10,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-3,1	3,3	
... exaggerate documentation.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	7	1	9
		% within Nationality	20,00%	4,30%	15,00%
		Adjusted Residual	1,3	-1,8	
	My German coworkers	Count	9	5	14
		% within Nationality	25,70%	21,70%	23,30%
		Adjusted Residual	0,5	-0,2	
	Both groups	Count	11	3	14
		% within Nationality	31,40%	13,00%	23,30%
		Adjusted Residual	1,8	-1,5	
	None of my coworkers	Count	8	14	23
		% within Nationality	22,90%	60,90%	38,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,9	2,8	
... avoid to speak English.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	1	2
		% within Nationality	2,90%	4,30%	3,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,2	0,3	
	My German coworkers	Count	8	1	9
		% within Nationality	22,90%	4,30%	15,00%
		Adjusted Residual	2	-1,8	
	Both groups	Count	5	1	6
		% within Nationality	14,30%	4,30%	10,00%
		Adjusted Residual	1,3	-1,2	
	None of my coworkers	Count	21	20	43
		% within Nationality	60,00%	87,00%	71,70%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,4	2,1	

... work on one thing at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,90%	0,00%	1,70%
		Adjusted Residual	0,9	-0,8	
	My German coworkers	Count	18	5	24
		% within Nationality	51,40%	21,70%	40,00%
		Adjusted Residual	2,1	-2,3	
	Both groups	Count	8	3	12
		% within Nationality	22,90%	13,00%	20,00%
		Adjusted Residual	0,7	-1,1	
	None of my coworkers	Count	8	15	23
		% within Nationality	22,90%	65,20%	38,30%
		Adjusted Residual	-2,9	3,4	
… work on several things at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	18	5	23
		% within Nationality	51,40%	21,70%	38,30%
		Adjusted Residual	2,5	-2,1	
	My German coworkers	Count	1	2	3
		% within Nationality	2,90%	8,70%	5,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,9	1	
	Both groups	Count	14	14	30
		% within Nationality	40,00%	60,90%	50,00%
		Adjusted Residual	-1,8	1,3	
	None of my coworkers	Count	2	2	4
		% within Nationality	5,70%	8,70%	6,70%
		Adjusted Residual	-0,3	0,5	

Note: Own elaboration. The total population (N=60) includes moreover the two employees with other nationalities.

The analysis of residuals permits the comparison of the expected and the observed frequency (see for instance Everitt, 1992; Durrheim & Tredoux, 2002; George & Mallery, 2016) of a variable; "The residuals are the observed counts minus the expected counts." (George & Mallery, 2016, p. 351); "An adjusted residual (d) is a residual adjusted to have a (approximate) standard normal distribution." (Haberman, 1973, cited by Durrheim & Tredoux, 2002, p. 375). Any adjusted residual of the magnitude of "1.96 or greater (or, alternatively, less than -1.96) (…) is significant (…)." (Durrheim & Tredoux, 2002, p. 375). If the residual is less than -1.96, the cell's observed frequency is less than the expected frequency; greater than 1.96 means the

observed frequency is greater than the expected frequency (Everitt, 1992).

Table 11 indicates that the adjusted residuals in the present case vary between a minimum of - 3.1 and a maximum of 3.3 considering the nationality of the participants and their attribution of a characteristic to a group of coworkers. Positive adjusted residuals indicate more observed frequency than expected, while negative adjusted residuals indicate less observed frequency than expected, adjusted for sample size. 14 adjusted residuals have absolute values greater than 2 and 14 adjusted residuals have absolute values lower than - 2, the largest corresponding to the attribution of the need for formal meetings to the group "None of my coworkers": less observed frequency than expected by Mexican participants (adjusted residuals = - 3.1 < -1.96) and more observed frequency than expected by German participants (adjusted residuals = 3.3 > 1,96). In these 14 cases, the observed frequency is either more or less than the expected frequency which means that normal distribution is not followed; to the contrary, in all other cases with adjusted residuals between - 1.96 and 1.96, normal distribution is followed.
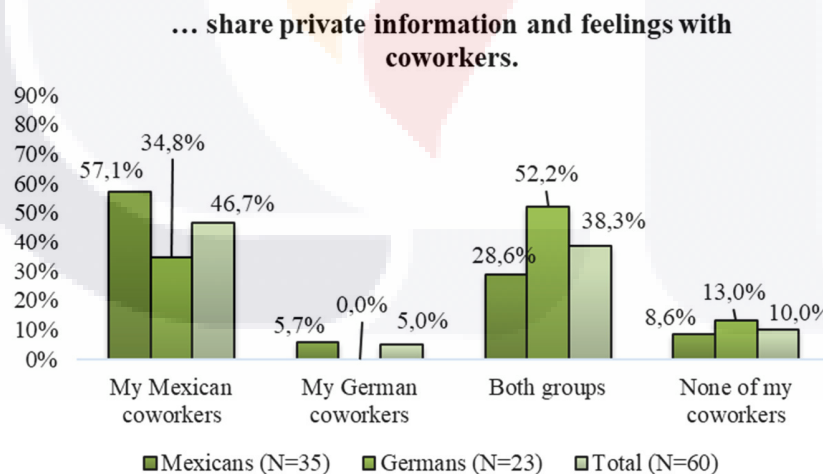
Figure 18. Attribution of the sharing of private information and feelings with coworkers to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Figure 18 indicates a clear tendency of the total population (mean 2.12; median 2.0) to attribute the sharing of private information and feelings with coworkers to their Mexican

coworkers; this result supports theoretical positions and the qualitative data. The consideration of the variable nationality indicates that most of the Mexican employees see it as a merely Mexican characteristic, whereas most of the Germans rather attribute it to both groups and only a smaller percentage to the Mexican coworkers. This discrepancy between the perceptions also supports the qualitative findings about the different perceptions of adaptation: The Germans think they are already involved in private conversations and have adapted themselves to the sharing of private information and feelings with coworkers; the Mexican employees however disagree by considering it a merely Mexican characteristic which means they do not perceive an adaptation whereas the Germans do.

In the qualitative approach, the preference to hide personal initiatives and mistakes was identified as a characteristic of the Mexican work culture that contradicts the need for transparency and an open sharing of problems and mistakes found in the German work culture. In the present study sample however, the total population (mean 2.62; median 3.0) tends to attribute the hiding of information to none of their coworkers and the contradicting characteristic communication of mistakes to both groups of coworkers (mean 2.927; median of 3.0).

Figure 19. Attribution of the preference to hide personal initiatives and mistakes to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

This attribution however differs when considering the nationalities of the participants: The largest group of the Mexican participants considers the hiding of personal initiatives and mistakes a characteristic of none of their coworkers, but other significant parts attribute it also to both groups and to their Mexican coworkers (see figure 19). In comparison, the majority of the German participants finds it to be a characteristic merely of their Mexican coworkers and only 30.4% attribute it to none of them. The results thus evidence a discrepancy between the Mexican and German employees as well as disagreement within both groups about the clear attribution to one or another group of coworkers. The hiding of personal initiatives and mistakes is interpreted as an aspect of high importance for the German employees of which their Mexican coworkers are not aware because they rather observe it in none of their coworkers. This interpretation was supported by the answers given to the open questions (see section five): The lack of information about problems is a difficult aspect from the German viewpoint that is however not considered significant by the Mexicans (it was only addressed by Rodrigo in the qualitative interview).

Figure 20. Attribution of the communication of mistakes to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Figure 20 indicates once more discrepancy in the comparison of the nationalities since the significant majority of the Mexicans attributes the communication of mistakes to both groups and only 20% to merely their German coworkers, whereas the German participants attribute it more strongly to their German coworkers as well as none of both groups (only 21.7% chose both groups). The quantitative results therefore do not support the qualitative findings by attributing the communication of mistakes to both groups of coworkers and not to the Germans only; this tendency is however expressed more significantly by the Mexicans than by the German participants since their answers are divided into an attribution to their German and to none of their coworkers. In accordance to the following results about the hiding of mistakes (see section five), the communication of mistakes is once again a characteristic that is perceived differently by the Mexican and German employees. Supported by the results of the open questions, the hiding and the communication of mistakes are interpreted as aspects that are considered difficult and essential by the Germans but not perceived as determining by the Mexicans.

The following statement *are unafraid of conflict* refers to the confrontation of conflict with which the German work culture was described by theoretical positions and qualitative data. In contrast, the avoidance of conflict as a characteristic of the Mexican culture was stated by theoretical positions and empirically detected in the qualitative interviews. In agreement with the previous findings, the whole population of the survey attributed the confrontation of conflict (mean 2.60; median 2.00) to their German coworkers and the avoidance of conflict to their Mexican coworkers (mean 2.12; median 2.00).

... are unafraid of conflict.

Figure 22. Attribution of the confrontation of conflicts to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

... tend to avoid conflicts.

Figure 21. Attribution of the tendency to avoid conflicts to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Discrepancies were however detected in the comparison of the nationalities because the Mexicans were divided into one group who see the confrontation of conflict as a characteristic of their German coworkers (40%), another of both groups and another of none of their coworkers (see figure 21). In comparison, the significant majority of the Germans (65.2%) consider it a characteristic merely of their German coworkers. Although the central tendency of both nationalities is in the group of merely German coworkers, the attribution of the Mexicans is more

disperse in comparison to the Germans, since more of them attributed it to both groups which includes themselves in the characterization of being unafraid of conflicts.

The results about the avoidance of conflicts in figure 22 similarly indicate a discrepancy between German and Mexican participants since the largest group of the Mexicans attributes it to both groups and only 31.4% consider it a merely Mexican characteristic (some even see it as a merely German attribute). The significant majority of the German participants however considers it a merely Mexican characteristic (only 17.4% chose both groups). The avoidance of conflicts is interpreted a further aspect that is very important to the German employees, since it was additionally mentioned numerous times in the answers to the open questions (see section five). The difference between this case and the previous ones is however that the Mexicans are aware of it, since a large group of them in accordance attributes it to their Mexican coworkers. The fact that a larger group nevertheless considers it to be a characteristic of both groups means that the avoidance of conflicts is not only observed in themselves but also in German coworkers which supports the qualitative description of Monica.

As another difference between communication forms, the German coworkers were described in the interviews as employees who express disagreement and criticism directly, whereas the Mexicans rather use sensitivity. The statements *express criticism (too) directly* and *express criticism (too) sensitively* were designed to capture both perceptions, both, directness/sensitivity itself as well as exaggerated directness/sensitivity. The total population (mean 2.47; median 2.00) clearly attributes directness to their German coworkers (the maximum

frequency 68.3% was the second highest among all the attribution questions) and sensitivity in

the expression of criticism to their Mexican coworkers (mean 2.03; median 1.00).

… express criticism (too) directly.
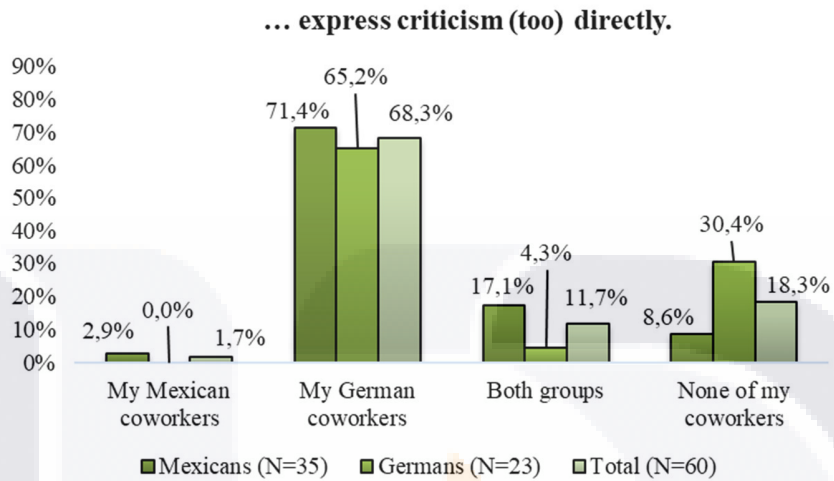
Figure 23. Attribution of the (too) direct expression of criticism to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

… express criticism (too) sensitively.
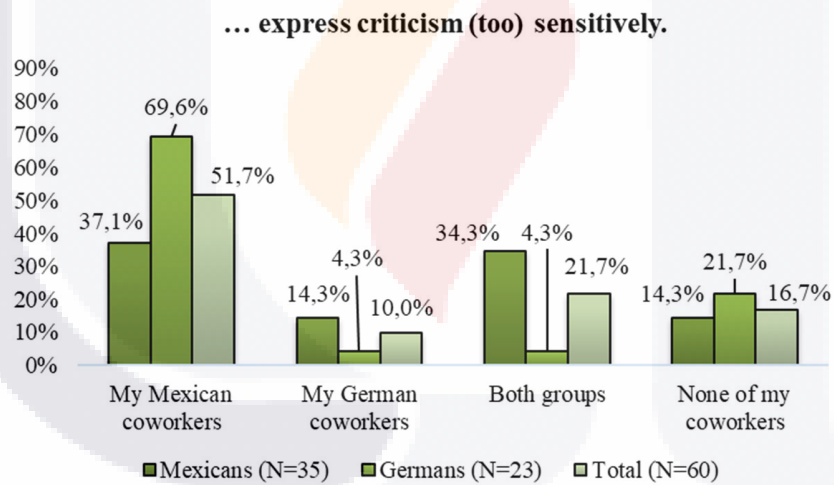
Figure 24. Attribution of (too) sensitive expression of criticism to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

The comparison of the nationalities (see figure 23) shows in agreement that the

significant majority of the Mexicans and of the Germans attribute directness to their German

coworkers. Discrepancy was however detected in the attribution to none of the coworkers which

was chosen by a larger group of the Germans (30.4%) and only 8.6% of the Mexicans. The

perceptions about sensitivity displayed in figure 24 also differ since only 37.1% of the Mexicans, but the significant majority (69.6%) of the Germans chose it to be a merely Mexican characteristic. The second largest group of the Mexican employees (34.3%) rather attributed the sensitive expression of criticism to both groups of coworkers. In support of the qualitative findings, in this work environment the expression of criticism of German employees is mostly considered (too) direct, but there is also a smaller amount of Germans who does not match this description and is even characterized with sensitivity. In comparison, the Mexican employees are mostly described as (too) sensitive in the expression of criticism, however more significantly by the German participants since part of the Mexicans finds it to be a characteristic of both groups.

Since the Germans were in the interviews characterized as *cuadrados* and the Mexicans as extraordinarily flexible, the statement *are inflexible and stubborn* was expected to be attributed to the group of German coworkers; the empirical results however do not support this perception since the total population attributed these adjectives with a tendency to none of their coworkers (mean 3.00; median 3.00) and only 28.3% merely to their German coworkers.
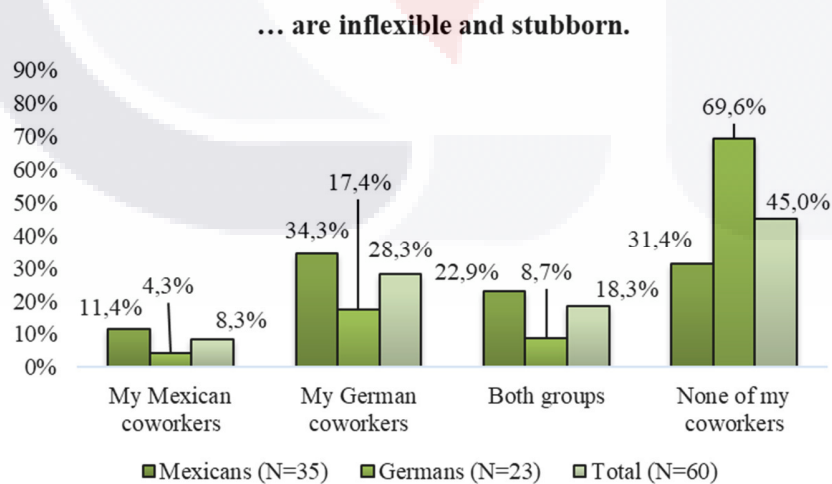
Figure 25. Attribution of inflexibility and stubbornness to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Figure 25 presents the comparison of nationalities showing that the largest group of the Mexican participants (34.3%) chose it to be a characteristic of their German coworkers, but also 31.4% of none of their coworkers and 22.9% of both. In comparison, the majority of the German participants (69.6%) stated that it is a characteristic of none of their coworkers and only 17.4% to their German coworkers. These results neither support the qualitative findings neither the following open questions (see section 5) since these clearly attribute inflexibility to the German and flexibility to the Mexican work culture. Although the respondents in this case do not include themselves by attributing it to a group of coworkers, the German participants stated that they perceive these adjectives in none of their coworkers. Inflexibility and stubbornness are therefore interpreted as negative characteristics of which the Germans are however not aware of.

The Mexican interview participants additionally described their German coworkers with a strong need for formal meetings and a need for documentation. With a mean of 2.53 and a median of 2.00, the participants of the present study sample tend to attribute the need for formal meetings to their German coworkers and the exaggeration of documentation to none of their coworkers (mean: 2.85; median 3.00).

Figure 26. Attribution of the need for formal meetings to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Figure 26 indicates that the group of Mexican participants is divided into one half who considers the need for formal meetings to be a characteristic merely of their German coworkers and another half who attributes it to both groups. Similarly, 47.8% of the German employees find it to be a merely German characteristic, the second half however attributes it equally to both and none of their coworkers. With the major attribution to the group of merely German coworkers, the quantitative results support the qualitative findings and additionally evidence that the need for formal meetings is also attributed it to both groups.
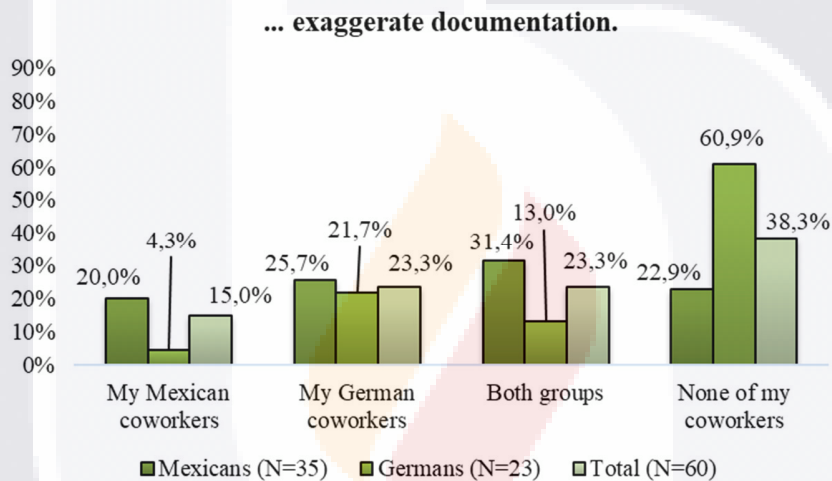
Figure 27. Attribution of the exaggeration of documentation to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

The differentiation of the answers about exaggerated documentation in figure 27 shows that only 22.9% of the Mexicans attributed this characteristics to none of their coworkers, but most of the Germans (60.9%). The largest group of Mexicans rather considers it a characteristic of both groups, others of merely their Mexican and German coworkers; this distribution differs to the clear image provided by the German participants. It is interesting that documentation was a main topic in the qualitative interviews that is considered by the Mexicans as an exaggerated and thus unnecessary aspect in the work environment - which the Germans however find necessary. It is interpreted that the Germans mostly chose none of their coworkers because they do not

perceive their emphasis on documentation as exaggerated and rather consider it an expression of insistency which is a solution strategy to unreliability.

A moderate positive correlation (Pearson R: .401) was identified between the variables *exaggerate documentation* and *leadership tasks* (see appendix 9). The group of subordinates (N=43) is divided into almost equal quarters between an attribution to the four groups of coworkers, whereas the leaders clearly tend to none of their coworkers (N=17). Documentation is interpreted as a more significant work task of subordinates in comparison to their leaders, which was expected since they report to their superiors. Nevertheless, these results do not provide evidence to the remaining doubt if documentation is a work task with less presence in the management level or if the leaders do not consider it exaggerated.

The avoidance of English was mentioned in the qualitative approach as a characteristic of German employees; the survey population attributes this characteristic (mean 3.50; median 4.00) to none of their coworkers with the is the highest maximum of all questions.
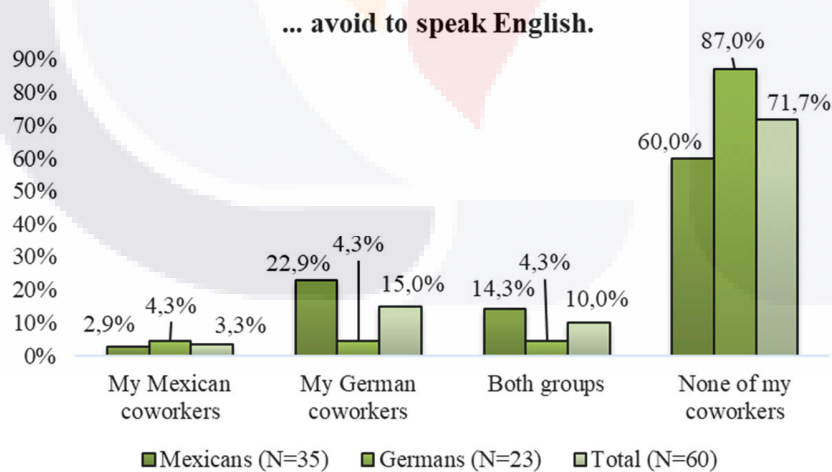
Figure 28. Attribution of the avoidance to speak English to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

The comparison of the nationalities (see figure 28) shows that the majority of the Mexicans (60%) and the even more significant majority of the Germans (87%) in agreement

consider the avoidance of English to be a characteristic of none of their coworkers. However, among the employees who observe this action, the largest group is 22.9% of the Mexicans who attribute it to their German coworkers and others who consider it to be of both groups. With the major attribution to none of the coworkers, the quantitative results thus do not support the qualitative results; nevertheless, the employees who perceive the avoidance of English are Mexicans who attribute it to their German coworkers (this result is supported with the answers given to the open questions). These findings lead to interpret that the Germans do not perceive the avoidance of English in their work environment.[105]

The last two statements address the two forms to treat time according to Hall (1959): The question *work on one thing at a time* represents the monochronic and its opposite *work on several things at a time* the polychronic perception of time. With a mean of 2.95 (median 3.00), the total study population tends to attribute the monochronic time perception to their German coworkers and the polychronic one to both groups (mean 2.25; median 3.00).

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[105] These results must be interpreted from a critical perspective given the formulation of the statement: Since English is the official business language, its avoidance would be a violation against the official business regulations; it is therefore possible that the study participants chose the neutral answer of none of their coworkers to avoid a denunciation with the selection of a certain group. Avoidance can moreover be intentional and unintentional: It is probable that the employees do not intentionally avoid English but actually exercise it without being aware of it. If this is the case, these study participants rejected the intentional avoidance by choosing "none of my coworkers" which does not mean that they reject the actual action.

.. work on one thing at a time.
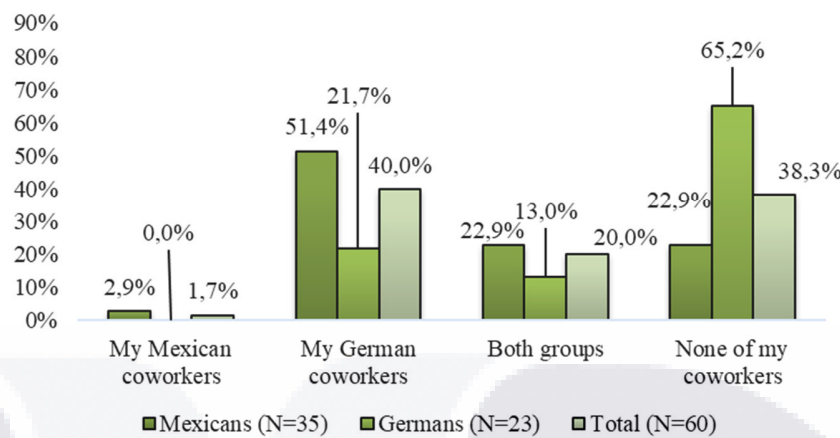
Figure 29. Attribution of monochronic work to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

The differentiation by the variable nationality (see figure 29) however indicates a discrepancy between the Mexican and German employees: The majority of the Mexican participants consider their German coworkers to work on one thing at a time, but others also attribute it to both and none of their coworkers. In comparison, most of the German participants rather consider it to be a characteristic of none of their coworkers and only 21.7% chose their German coworkers. These results thus show a different perception of both nationalities that only partly supports the qualitative results: Most of the Mexicans attributes the monochronic treatment of time to their German coworkers - which supports the qualitative findings - the majority of the Germans however attributes it to none of their coworkers.

In comparison, most of the Mexican participants (51.4%) chose their Mexican coworkers to work on several things at a time, but only 21.7% of the German participants who rather attributed it to both groups (60.9%) (see figure 30). Because 40% of the Mexicans selected both groups, the quantitative results partly support the qualitative findings: The Mexicans mostly consider themselves as polychronic whereas the Germans rather attribute it to both groups.

... work on several things at a time.
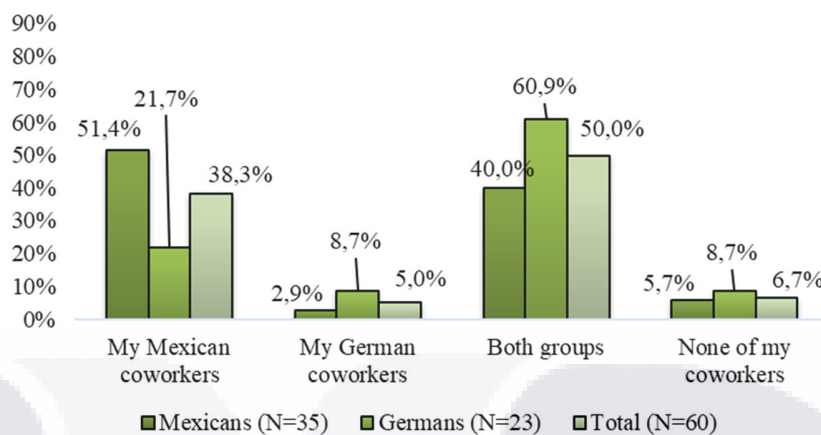
Figure 30. Attribution of polychornic work to a group of coworkers. Own elaboration.

Pearson correlations with sociodemographic variables indicate significant positive associations between the monochronic treatment of time and the variables *age*, *highest professional degree*, *type of labor contract* and *leadership tasks* (see appendix 9). A strong positive correlation exists between the variable *work on one thing at a time* and *age* (Pearson R: .484). The majority (64%) of the youngest group of employees (between 20 and 29 years) attributes this characteristic to their German coworkers, whereas in contrast the other three groups with an increasing percentage tend to none of their coworkers. The younger employees thus tend to consider their German coworkers with a monochronic treatment of time and the older ones rather do not observe it in their work environment.

The data also indicates a strong positive association with the variable *highest professional degree* (Pearson R: .466). In accordance to the results about polychronic time, the majority of the employees with Licenciatura/Bachelor attribute the characteristic to their German coworkers (63%) whereas most of the ones with Maestría/Master/Diplom (57.1%) to none of their coworkers. The correlation with the variable *type of labor contract* indicates furthermore a similar positive association (Pearson R: .415) that supports the previous results about the

nationalities: The employees with a local contract tend to attribute it to their German coworkers (51.4%) whereas the ones with expatriate contracts (65.2%) to none of their coworkers.

The positive association between the monochronic treatment of time and the variable *leadership tasks* (Pearson R: .419) additionally shows that the majority of the subordinates (51.2%) attributes this characteristic to their German coworkers whereas the group of leaders tends to none of their coworkers (70% of the leaders with Mexican subordinates and 85.7% of the leaders with Mexican and German subordinates). To occupy a position with or without leadership tasks is thus interpreted as an important influence on the perception of different treatments of time. In consideration of the positive correlation with the variable professional degree, it is possible to state that both the degree and the position (that usually depends on the degree) influence the perception of a specific treatment of time. It is assumed that that leaders are generally more aware of these differences since their tasks are more strategic and less detailed; however, in the present study unit, the majority of the leaders does not attribute the monochronic time treatment to their coworkers, it is rather the group of subordinates.

Positive correlations between the variable *work on several things at a time* and sociodemographic variables emphasize the role of the professional degree (Pearson R: .409) and leadership tasks (Pearson R: .316). The majority (59.3%) of the group of employees with Licenciatura/Bachelor attributes the polychronic treatment of time to their Mexican coworkers and another large group of 33.3% to both groups, whereas most of the employees (60.7%) with Maestría/Master/Diplom chose both groups. The professional degree is therefore interpreted as a distinguishing aspect that influences the perception of the different forms to perceive time.

The differentiation with the variable *leadership tasks* shows moreover that most of the subordinates (51.2%) attribute polychronic treatment of time to their Mexican coworkers,

whereas the high majority of the leaders (90% of the ones with Mexican subordinates; 71.4% of the ones with subordinates of different nationalities) attribute it to both groups. The variable *leadership tasks* is interpreted as determining the perception of differences to treat time. The first association with the professional degree interferes accordingly since the occupation of a leadership function is clearly determined by the qualification of the employee. Although it is assumed that leaders are more aware of these differences due to their strategic work tasks, most of the leaders in the present study unit however do not attribute a monochronic time treatment to their coworkers, but observe a polychronic time treatment of both their Mexican and German coworkers. The results to both questions evidenced no clear attribution of a monochronic and polychronic treatment of time to both work cultures, which contradicts the theoretical positions.

In summary, the quantitative findings of the attribution questions partly support and partly contradict the qualitative results: The characteristics that were attributed to merely the Mexican or the German coworkers support the previous findings, whereas the ones that were considered to be of both groups or none of them, contradicted them. The employees mostly consider the polychronic work to be a characteristic of both groups, which was previously considered a merely Mexican characteristic; additionally, both groups of coworkers were described with the communication of mistakes, which was expected to be attributed to the Germans. The four statements that were formulated critically were attributed to none of the coworkers: the hiding of personal initiatives and mistakes; exaggeration of documentation; inflexibility and stubbornness; avoidance of English. Because these statements clearly have a political influence, it is assumed that the employees chose "none of my coworkers" to maintain a neutral posture to avoid the attribution of negative aspects to a certain group of coworkers (see Holtgraves (2004) about the bias of social desirability).

4.2.5   Productive collaboration.

The last section of the questionnaire was designed to profound the results about the requirements of productive collaboration to respond particularly to the third research question. The introduction to the instructions explicitly asked for the general view of the participant about an ideal form of collaboration, based on his/her current work experience. In the first part, the respondents were asked to rank six requirements of productive collaboration between Mexican and Germans from one being the most important to six being the least important. The list of options represents the summarized requirements that were obtained in the qualitative approach (see chapter 4.1.2); the previously broader list was reduced to six requirements to be displayed on one page in a randomized pattern thereby avoiding a possible tendency to the first one on top of the list. The following results represent the opinion of 58 participants; their answers were analyzed with the following steps: At first, the frequency of each requirement was multiplied with 1 for rank 1, 2 for rank 2 etc.; secondly, the sums were ordered from low to high with the minimum representing the most important requirement and the maximum the least important requirement.[106] Table 12 displays the ranks given to the six requirements differed by nationality:

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[106] The descriptive statistics and frequency tables of each requirement are displayed in appendix 9.

Table 12 *Ranking of requirements for productive collaboration.*

	Mexicans (N=33)	Germans (N=23)	Total (N=58)
Rank 1	Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy (sum: 76)	Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy (sum: 47)	Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy (sum: 129)
Rank 2	Identification with the company and the product (sum: 111)	Consciousness about cultural and personal differences (sum: 62)	Consciousness about cultural and personal differences (sum: 204)
Rank 3	Trainings (e.g. teambuildings) (sum: 117)	Identification with the company and the product + Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German (sum: 86)	Identification with the company and the product (sum: 207)
Rank 4	Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German (sum: 122)	Clear expression of disagreement and criticism (sum: 94)	Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German (sum: 214)
Rank 5	Clear expression of disagreement and criticism (sum: 129)	Trainings (e.g. teambuildings) (sum: 108)	Clear expression of disagreement and criticism (sum: 229)
Rank 6	Consciousness about cultural and personal differences (sum: 138)		Trainings (e.g. teambuildings) (sum: 235)

Note: Own elaboration. The total population (N=58) includes moreover the two employees with other nationalities.

The total population and the Mexican and German participants chose with a significant distance to the second rank *Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy* as the most important requirement of productive collaboration. Recognizing that this expression includes a broad range of interpretation, communication is an effort that must be addressed by everyone in the work environment, regardless of the nationality, age, position or type of work. This result is an important reminder for each employee to be more aware of the messages that are - non-verbally or verbally, intentionally or unintentionally - sent during a work day.

The second most important requirement *Consciousness about cultural and personal differences* was mentioned numerous times with different dimensions in the qualitative

interviewees. The quantitative approach showed that only the German employees chose it to be

of high importance on the second rank, whereas the Mexicans placed it on the last rank with the

least importance. This discrepancy between the perceptions causes interesting doubts that are

suggested to be researched with a subsequent qualitative approach.

The requirement placed by the total population on rank three is *Identification with the*

company and the product which was mentioned in the qualitative interviews by a German

participant in reference to the importance of getting to know the headquarters in Germany. The

Mexican participants considered this requirement to be more important by placing it on the

second rank, whereas the Germans selected the third. Because the identification with the

company and the product is interpreted a consequence of work experience in the headquarters, it

is understandable that this requirement is more important for the Mexicans of whom only a small

group has already worked in the German headquarters.[107]

Business fluent knowledge of all three languages was ranked fourth by the total

population which indicates a medium importance among the requirements to which the group of

Germans agreed, whereas the Mexicans selected a higher importance with rank three. In

discussion with the previous results about the barriers constructed by the use of English as

official business language, the knowledge of all three languages seems to be an ideal solution. It

is nevertheless questionable if this represents a realistic requirement given the labor market

conditions of the highly qualified work force needed for these positions. The recommendations

about the use of language in the intercultural collaboration that were displayed in the qualitative

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[107] The identification with the company interpreted in the frame of organizational culture reveals interesting

research questions: Is the identification with the company different between the Germans and Mexicans? Exist

differences between the German headquarters and in the present Mexican subsidiary or the Mexican headquarters?

interviews are far more realistic to be employed by everyone.

Rank five was given to *Clear expression of disagreement and criticism* by the total population as well as the Mexican participants; the Germans consider it to be more important (rank four). This requirement is a characteristic of low-context-communication (prevailing in the German work culture) that was mentioned by German interviewees. The discussion about directness in the expression of disagreement and criticism is continued with the results of the open questions since it was identified as a difficult and appreciated of the German work culture.

The requirement with the least importance for the total population is *Trainings (e.g. teambuildings)*; the Mexicans (rank three) and the Germans (rank five) however see it as more important. As displayed by interview participants, the participation of employees as well as its prerequisite, the willingness to participate, are considered important aspects to improve productive collaboration particularly to assess and solve existing problems of collaboration. Training possibilities are nevertheless decided by the management and HR and rather depend on diverse economic factors than on the willingness to participate by employees.

The results of the ranking question are an excellent example of how qualitative data obtained by a situational analysis can be enriched with quantitative data. The interviews identified a list of numerous requirements of productive collaboration and their subjective dimensions; the quantitative data subsequently provided a broader perspective of a large population that evidences the importance of those.

The open question *Which action of your coworkers from the other cultural background is the most difficult to understand?* aimed to identify the aspects that are the most difficult to understand because those are supposed to be the most significant in the collaboration and therefore essential to elaborate the characteristics of productive collaboration. Additionally, the

open questions intended to detect new topics that have not been addressed previously.

The following results answers are displayed in dependence of the variable nationality and ordered by the similar categories that also guided the qualitative findings. Figure 31 presents the answers of the Mexican participants (N=29):

Category	Which action of your coworkers from the other cultural background is the most difficult to understand?
Communi-cation	Direct communication from the Germans.
	Very direct communication.
	In my personal experience is complicated to understand the point that my boss wanted to show to others, sometimes we have discrepancies because I understand one thing and my boss is referring to other different thing.
	Sometimes the talking/words are completely different to the actions.
	They don't express clearly what they expect from you. they wait for you to act like they want with no direction.
Work task approaches	Change the requirements suddenly.
	Definir prioridades; traducir situaciones o formas de trabajar.
	Los resultados que se esperan recibir.
	They make a lot planning to solve things that really not need this.
	To know which tasks are priority.
Lack of flexibility	Flexibility, priority to certain things or events.
	Lack of flexibility or understanding thereof. Of course it is important to keep your word, but one has to understand when things just don't work out as desired, and live with it.
	The conflict to accept change and adapt to it.
	The lack of flexibility when things change even if they where planned, it is really hard to change the plan.
	I guess the main reason would be is that everybody should understand that all the process are different in every country and the laws too so a same procedure could not be the same in China, Germany or Mexico
	Some of my German coworkers think we are in a country that must be the same as in Germany, rules and the people.
The under-standing of time	Respect time.
	They want everything immediately and sometimes they are impatient.
	Use non realistic timings just to avoid ask about it.
Language issues	The accent.
	Mother language and cultural behavior.
	The idea to avoid speaking in English when being with a few Germans.
	When coworkers switch to German even if Mexicans are in the same discussion. As not caring about Mexican colleagues.
Professional and private life	Considering that my role is Corporate Security, my biggest problem with them is to help them to find a balance about their initial fear of living in Mexico, and their later overconfidence. Also, in some cases, their lack of flexibility and criticism to Mexican culture.
	They are open but at the end always related just between Germans.

	Distancia y jerarquía, al principio es complicado entender la separación entre la vida privada y laboral así como el por qué toma tanto tiempo entrar al ámbito social/personal de alguien.
	Hablar de la muchacha de manera despectiva. Perder sentido de responsabilidad por creer que todo se resuelve con una mordida. Presunción por estilo de vida que les da el paquete de expatriado. Daño de neumáticos de autos pool.
Other topics	Inability to make simple day to day decisions. Complexity of structures which results in a lot of inefficiency and people only doing one thing, not only at a time, but in his/her whole role(s) of responsibility.
	Straight-forward thinking.

Figure 31. List of actions of Germans that are the most difficult to understand for the Mexicans. Own elaboration based on the answers given to the open question.

The first identified category was once again *communication*. Two participants stated very broadly that the "very direct communication" is the action that is the most difficult for them to understand; one person addressed more specifically the difficulty rooted in communication between him/her and his/her leader: "In my personal experience is complicated to understand the point that my boss wanted to show to others, sometimes we have discrepancies because I understand one thing and my boss is referring to other different thing." This participant finds it complicated to unambiguously detect the leaders' understanding of a topic which reveals problems in the transfer of perceptions. This result asks leaders to evaluate if their expression is clearly understandable and verify if their subordinates perceive the same idea; likewise, subordinates should ask if they are insecure about the accordance of the understandings to enable their bosses to detect discrepancies and adapt the communication.

For another Mexican participant, the discrepancy between the verbal communication and the actions is the action the most difficult to understand. Despite the vagueness of this answer, it contains the interesting doubt about the accordance of expressed promises and their corresponding actions in the daily work practices - a doubt that should be addressed by every employee. A more specific statement was the lack of clearness in expectations: "They don't express clearly what they expect from you. They wait for you to act like they want with no direction." The word "they" might be used to title the group of Germans or the group of German

leaders, since the statement addresses the communication of expectations and direction. This answer supports the interpretation of the qualitative data about the discrepancy between the freedom and responsibility with reduced direction given by the German leaders to their Mexican subordinates who partly expect clearer instructions.

The second category *work task approaches* summarizes the statements that refer to priority and planning; the participants mentioned among the actions that are the most difficult to understand (1) the sudden change of requirements; (2) the definition of priority; (3) the translation of work task approaches; (4) the expected results; and (5) exaggerated unnecessary planning. These answers once again direct to the transfer of company knowledge because priority and planning reasons are apparently not communicated understandably from the Germans to their Mexican coworkers: There is a discrepancy between the understanding of priority of the Germans and the concept they transmit to their Mexican coworkers which leads to different perceptions. The clarity of the expression of expectations is apparently not sufficient, which causes misunderstandings regarding priority and reasons for results and plans. This difficulty is thus not rooted in different concepts but instead in the transfer from one to another coworker and therefore once again emphasizes communication efforts.

The largest group of answers referred to the lack of flexibility which is considered the action that is the most difficult to understand for the Mexicans, who see it as a consequence of the discrepancy between understandings of expectations and priority of work tasks. The lack of flexibility was however not only mentioned about work tasks but moreover regarding the adaptation of plans when changes are necessary: "Lack of flexibility or understanding thereof. Of course it is important to keep your word, but one has to understand when things just don't work out as desired, and live with it." The statement emphasizes the advantage of Mexicans to flexibly

handle changes whereas the Germans are considered unable to easily adapt plans.

The third dimension of inflexibility focused on location has not been addressed previously, it is nevertheless a difficulty in the collaboration in reference to the general adaption to new circumstances and adherence to well-known proceedings: "I guess the main reason would be is that everybody should understand that all the process are different in every country and the laws too so a same procedure could not be the same in China, Germany or Mexico." The Mexican employees consider their German coworkers inflexible in adapting their processes to the new present conditions since they rather insist on the procedures used in Germany.

The Mexican participants furthermore listed three actions referring to the category *understanding of time* that support the previous findings about its importance in the collaboration: (1) the respect of their German coworkers for time; (2) their impatience expressed by wanting "everything immediately" as well as (3) unrealistic timings.

The avoidance of English was moreover repeated, however with a new dimension: "When coworkers switch to German even if Mexicans are in the same discussion. As not caring about Mexican colleagues." This statement is particularly valuable because it reveals the emotions caused by the use of German when coworkers are involved who do not speak the language: indifference. This statement enriches the discussion about the previous findings since it evidences that the use of German takes place in the present work environment. Regardless of the reasons and intention of the action, the fact to not use English causes negative emotions.

A newly mentioned refers to the borders of the professional and the private life: An employee in charge of security stated that the Germans need support "to find a balance about their initial fear of living in Mexico, and their later overconfidence." The interrelation between both life spheres causes interesting doubts to be approached qualitatively: How does the feeling

of security (insecurity) of the private life influence the professional practice of the employees? Another new aspect was mentioned by a Mexican about his/her German coworkers: "They are open but at the end always related just between Germans." This participant reveals doubts about the different forms to establish relationships between Mexicans and Germans and emphasizes the importance of personal relationships for the professional collaboration in Mexico. The statement evidences the difficulty of the Mexican employee to understand relationships among merely Germans.[108] The separation between the private and labor life was additionally addressed as a complicated action by a Mexican employee who considers it complicated to understand why "tanto tiempo" is needed to enter into the personal circle of a German. The Germans need to know, that their relationships with each other (even though in the private life) influence their professional collaboration with Mexicans; they should thus explain their reasons for the separation between both life spheres to clarify the long time needed for the establishment of private relationships among coworkers. The knowledge of the motives could make some actions more understandable for the Mexicans who are not used to this distance; nevertheless, at the moment, the separation of both life spheres is difficult.

One participant added further topics that are related to the borders between both life spheres and evidence once more the influence of private actions on professional work relationships. This list of difficult actions is particularly important for the Germans to know because it shows how social practices in the private life determine the professional relationship: to talk depreciatively about domestic employees (even in the private life), to not assume responsibility by using corruption, presumption behavior for having expatriate benefits as well as

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[108] This participant however does not express an evaluation: Would deeper personal relationships between Germans and Mexicans be preferred? Are the addressed relationships professional and/or private ones?

the damage of company belongings. These actions can also be interpreted as expressions of

arrogance and a feeling of superiority by the Germans for having labor benefits as well as the

possibility to take advantage of corruption instead of assuming responsibility.

Figure 32 displays the answers of Germans (N=22) about their Mexican coworkers:

Category	Which action of your coworkers from the other cultural background is the most difficult to understand?
Communi-cation	Early detection of problems and open communication and problem solving, reliability.
	Not being able to say: No, I did not understand, could you explain again?
	If they not understand everything, they do nothing instead to say the truth.
	Not communicating negative stuff.
	Telling the truth and committing mistakes.
	The wish to have an excuse for everything is not necessary, but usually in place. For my understanding it is quite normal in business and private life that undesired things happen, and there is no need to find an excuse for that. Say clearly if shit happens and Germans will understand.
	Unspoken communication.
Work task approaches	Denken nicht weiter/um die Ecke.
	Don't finish work as you them to do and don't know what is more important and has to be done first. They also talk a lot about private stuff.
	Gelassenheit wo wir Probleme sehen.
	Not keeping agreements or promises.
	The hesitance of taking tasks and responsibilities.
	The tendency to ignore tasks unless you constantly repeat the importance and remind them of completing it. The expectation to receive detailed work instructions.
	To accept any delay or non delivery of promised services, communication or results.
	Working without (visible) structure; personal relations required for doing business; punctuality (partially existing).
The under-standing of time	Lo que pasa...and being on time.
	Sometimes they are working on several topics in parallel and forgot about prioritising.
	Taking a lot of time and not responding.
	There are hardly any situations where Mexicans ask back (lack of understanding not communicated). Missing contingency or following up on tasks - a lot of things are started but not finished. Meeting are scheduled for a certain time, sometimes you need to invite extra before the meeting and can only hope that all are joining (meetings never start on time or are moved regularly).
	To procrastinate required escalation.
Other topics	In my opinion the respect for the management is a little bit to high.
	None.

Figure 32. List of actions of Mexicans that are the most difficult to understand for the Germans. Own elaboration based on the answers given to the question.

The list of actions that are the most difficult to understand by the German participants

about their Mexican coworkers follows a similar structure of topics. The central issue mentioned

with different dimensions was missing open communication: The Germans stated that they do not understand the lack to openly communicate a missing comprehension, committed mistakes and negative reports. The early detection of problems, reliability as well as to tell the truth about failure without the need for an excuse are considered actions that are complicated to comprehend. In agreement with the previous results, the participants stated that they prefer the open communication instead of the hiding of mistakes, problems in sight and misunderstandings. The following example evidences the value of direct communication in reference to reliability: "If they not understand everything, they do nothing instead to say the truth." From the German point of view, the hiding or open communication of problems in line with the non-fulfillment of requests (unreliability) is the principal difficulty in the interaction between both work cultures.

The second category includes the same aspects regarding work task approaches as mentioned by the Mexican participants: priority, urgency, expectations of detailed instructions as well as unreliability - which are listed as the reasons that obligate the Germans to use repetition and insistence. According to the answers, the Mexican coworkers have different understandings about the expected results, importance and priority of work tasks; they fail to think beyond a work task, expect detailed instructions and observe calmness when Germans see problems. An incomprehensive consequence of calmness is to "accept any delay or non-delivery of promised services, communication or results."

The category understanding of time includes for the Germans (1) unpunctuality regarding meetings; (2) simultaneous work on different tasks (multi-tasking); (3) prioritization; (4) long time needed; (5) and procrastination of required escalation. The temporary procrastination of escalation as well as the failure to respond relate the concept of time to the aspects mentioned about the open communication of problems in relation to the avoidance of conflicts. The

relationship between the role of time and the work task approach are expressed in the day-to-day social practices that are exemplified by the statement: "Missing contingency or following up on tasks - a lot of things are started but not finished." These actions are thus summarized as expressions of the avoidance of conflict which for them is the reason for unreliability.

The final question *I appreciate the most in the other work culture…* was designed to highlight the research objective to identify the characteristics of productive collaboration. Each work culture must know which are their most appreciated features in order to take advantage of them in the intercultural collaboration. The overall interesting result is that some of the answers given to this question resemble the actions that are the most difficult to understand and the characterization of the 3-words-question. Figure 33 displays the answers of Mexican participants (N=30) about the German work culture:

Category	I appreciate the most in the other work culture...
Communi-cation	Ability to express the ideas in a logical and clear way.
	Germans are really direct.
	El hablar directo. Saber diferenciar entre lo personal y laboral. Conocer expectativas.
	Share their mistakes to avoid similar mistakes in the team.
	The direct contact and direct communications between us.
Work task approaches	Commitment to fulfill tasks.
	Concrete actions.
	Discipline.
	I appreciate the experience that they have, as Germans help me to see the complete map and understand better each step we take. The only issue is that German way to teach is "I will tell you what I know if you ask" but my issue is that I cannot ask something that I don't even know exists.
	La organización, planeación disciplina y el hecho de que los roles de responsabilidades están bien definidos y son respetados.
	Organization in all the way!
	The willingness to help us and transfer the knowledge.
	Their willingness to get things properly done (not necessarily by them, though), and their commitment to existing agreements.
	They are very focused.
	Willingness to do their work as good as possible.
Honesty and trust	Honestidad. Comunicación directa. Organización y estructura. Procesos claros. Confianza.
	Honesty, Germans are very honest about everything and they are not afraid of telling how and what they feel about any problem or situation.
	Respect for everyone believes and trust on how to handle work because sometimes Germans don´t like to accept that a Mexican has a better idea of working which sometimes it´s better.

	Result driven and trust in your job.
	The flexibility in time and the give of responsibility.
	They let us work on our own pace.
Under-standing of time	Punctuality and Formality.
	Their order, straightforwardness, knowledge, respect of the timing of everything (meetings, tasks, responsibilities) and personal time.
Professional and private life	El respeto para el tiempo de la vida privada.
	Food :) and CARS!!!
	Open-minded.
	Open, direct, know how to separate business from friendly relations, avoid favoritisms, recognizes people who strive and value them, Honestly.
Other topics	Being treated as a family member as a person that contributes.
	They word.
	To be less emotional.

Figure 33. Aspects of the German work culture that the Mexicans appreciate the most. Own elaboration based on the answers given to the question.

The first category *communication* includes once again the aspect of direct communication as the most appreciated - which was previously considered an action difficult to understand. The statement "Share their mistakes to avoid similar mistakes in the team." is one of the examples. The Mexicans thus also value the direct expression of ideas as well as the communication of mistakes of their German coworkers. The direct form of communication is interpreted a characteristic of the German coworkers that divides the Mexicans since some of them consider it difficult to understand whereas others highly appreciate this aspect.

With regards to work task approaches, the Mexicans appreciate (1) the commitment to the fulfillment of work tasks as good as possible; (2) concrete actions; (3) discipline; (4) organization; (5) planning. From the Mexican point of view, reliability ("commitment to existing agreements") is valued in the German work culture, whereas from their perspective, it is a characteristic that they find missing in their Mexican coworkers. Since one work culture considers this aspect as appreciated and the other one as difficult, the commitment to existing agreements plays an important role in the productive collaboration between both groups.

Further aspects that the Mexicans appreciate in the German work culture are the

willingness to help, to transfer knowledge and experience, as well as the clear definition of roles
and the respect given to them. A further interesting statement represents however both an
appreciation and a problem regarding the transfer of knowledge:

> I appreciate the experience that they have, as Germans help me to see the complete map
> and understand better each step we take. The only issue is that German way to teach is "I
> will tell you what I know if you ask" but my issue is that I cannot ask something that I
> don't even know exists.

This Mexican participant reveals a problem with the proactive way of knowledge transfer
employed by the German coworkers who expect to be asked for help, since the possibility to
proactively ask requires the knowledge about the existence of an aspect. This difficulty explains
the lack of asking of the Mexican coworkers which was mentioned as a problem by the Germans
about (see previous question). The discrepancy between the expectation to ask and the possibility
to ask is considered a central issue in the knowledge transfer from the German expatriates to the
Mexican coworkers. The Mexican coworkers in this work environment need more information to
be able to express their doubts and questions - which is expected by the Germans who have the
company knowledge. In search of productive collaboration, it is recommended to the Germans to
reveal more context information, since otherwise, corresponding doubts cannot be expressed.
Likewise, the Mexicans are asked to clearly express their questions to solve misunderstandings
and enable the adequate transfer of knowledge.

Another large list of answers was summarized with the category trust and honesty. The
Mexicans appreciate the honesty of their German coworkers which is expressed in direct
communication, clear processes and the sharing of feelings about problems. In support of the
qualitative results, the Mexicans perceive respect and trust of their German coworkers as well as

the belief that everyone knows how to handle work: they "trust in your job" and "let us work on our own pace" and give responsibility.

The Mexicans furthermore appreciate their coworkers' punctuality, formality, as well as "Their order, straightforwardness, knowledge, respect of the timing of everything (meetings, tasks, responsibilities) and personal time." A connection is thus detected between external work attitudes and the ones that are acquired in the current work place and transferred to private life spheres (the three dimensions of work culture by Reygadas, 2002). One Mexican even addressed the favoritism which is common in the Mexican labor market but avoided in the German one: "Open, direct, know how to separate business from friendly relations, avoid favoritisms, recognizes people who strive and value them". Another employee appreciates "Being treated as a family member as a person that contributes" which emphasizes the recognition of personal contribution in the productive collaboration and an identification with the employer by comparing the relationships at work with family relationships.

Figure 34 lists the answers of Germans (N=22) about the Mexican work culture:

Category	I appreciate the most in the other work culture...
Communi-cation	Flexibility, helpfulness.
	Freundlichkeit.
	Friendliness and being spontaneous.
	Friendliness and good mood.
	Openness, kindness.
	Very friendly people.
	The friendly, open and respectful way to communicate to all others and be in contact with the social environment.
Work task approaches	They really want to learn and understand all necessary things.
	Mexicans are open, friendly and very social. They try to solve problems in a team and try to overcome inter-personal issues.
	Mexicans are very fair and friendly coworkers. They are very interested, they are ready to go on learning and they ask if there are questions. I like that.
	Patience.
	The happy attitude and the motivation to start projects.
	The openness and the flexibility to adapt.

	Experience.
	Motivation.
	More relaxed.
	Mexicans are really flexible and willing to work hard to be successful.
Work values	Open mind set, willingness to learn, flexibility, clever, intelligence. I absolutely like the Mexican culture.
	Hard working, willing to learn.
	Helpfulness.
	Ihre Freundlichkeit, ihre Art sich um jemanden zu sorgen.
	The team spirit and the will to succeed.

Figure 34. Aspects of the Mexican work culture that the Germans appreciate the most. Own elaboration based on the answers given to the question.

The first category of aspects the Germans appreciate in the Mexican work culture is similar to the words they mentioned in the three-words-questions: (1) flexibility; (2) friendliness; (3) helpfulness; (4) spontaneity; and (5) openness. One person summarized these aspects in a single formulation: "The friendly, open and respectful way to communicate to all others and be in contact with the social environment." These most appreciated characteristics listed by the Germans are also highlighted in the theoretical discourse about the Mexican work culture and in comparison, they are also the ones that are found to be difficult in the German work culture (above all unfriendliness and inflexibility). In the strengths of their Mexican coworkers, the Germans found the weaknesses of their own work culture; they could therefore be used to balance each other out in the collaboration: For example, German inflexibility could be confronted with Mexican spontaneity and helpfulness.

With regards to work task approaches, the Germans furthermore appreciate the willingness to learn and understand the necessary processes as well as the patience, fairness and flexibility to adapt. One German participant - in disagreement with the previous opinions - considers his/her Mexican coworkers as open to ask questions: "Mexicans are very fair and friendly coworkers. They are very interested, they are ready to go on learning and they ask if there are questions. I like that." Since impatience and failure to adapt proceedings were

previously mentioned as weaknesses of the Germans, their opposites patience and adaptation to change are once again the appreciated strengths of the Mexican work culture.

Addressing emotions in the work place, the Germans consider sociability and friendliness as part of an appreciated team spirit of the Mexican work culture that positively influences collaboration: "Mexicans are open, friendly and very social. They try to solve problems in a team and try to overcome inter-personal issues." With regards to the focus on team harmony, another German values "The happy attitude and the motivation to start projects." In summary, the social atmosphere and the aspiration to team harmony in this work environment are considered effective with regards to collaboration, the spontaneous and patient solution of problems, the start of new tasks or projects and the motivation.

Further one-word-statements represent the work values that are particularly appreciated in the Mexican work culture: (1) experience; (2) motivation; (3) calmness; (4) flexibility; (5) hard-work to be successful; (6) open-mindedness; (7) willingness to learn; (8) intelligence; and (9) helpfulness. The Germans appreciate the willingness to work hard and learn (including long working hours) as forms of an aspiration to success that is based on team work: "The team spirit and the will to succeed." In these work patterns, the focus on the team spirit and group harmony as well as the feeling to be a contributing family member are interpreted as the necessary context conditions for the employees to be able to succeed. The related helpfulness (service attitude) is an expression of this social work environment that is particularly appreciated by the Germans.

In conclusion of both lists, the statement of one participant with another nationality summarizes well the strengths of both work cultures (see appendix 10): "From Mexican that they don't overcomplicate things and always try to find the easiest way to do things and from the

German that they appreciate straightforwardness making everything work faster also having a focus onto only one direction."

4.2.6   Conclusion.

In summary, the quantitative approach to the study unit offered a broader insight that enriched the qualitative data about the collaboration of the Mexican and German employees. The study sample represents the diverse characteristics of a global work force in which different nationalities and genders with different types of labor contracts work in specialized supporting functions that require a high level of qualification. The participation rate of 50.7% of the whole work force shows a significant interest of the employees in the research topic that will be thanked with the subsequent exchange of the study results.

The second part of the questionnaire showed the most significant characteristics of each work culture that evidenced the image of two different work cultures with an almost similar self- and others' perception. The Mexican work culture is considered friendly, relaxed and supporting, with a focus on the team and overall harmony; the German work culture is described as direct, honest and accurate, with an emphasis on individual responsibility, results as well as planning. Two basic discrepancies were detected between both work cultures: the focus on the team in the first and on the individual employee in the latter; as well as the flexibility in the first and inflexibility in the latter. These differences explain the first image of a friendly and social environment and the second one of a cold and task-oriented environment and several phenomena that refer to different forms of communication or work-task approaches.

The results of the third and fourth section of the questionnaire partly support and partly contradict the qualitative data with regards to the topics communication, work task approaches, knowledge transfer, understanding of time and language issues. The attribution questions

evidenced that the characteristics that were attributed to merely the Mexican or the German coworkers support the previous findings, whereas the ones that were considered to be of both groups or none of them, contradicted them. In summary, a broader evaluation of the specific aspects obtained in the qualitative interviews was achieved.

In the final section, the participants were first asked to rank the requirements of productive collaboration that were obtained with the qualitative approach as a mere list. The interviews indicated the different subjective understandings of these requirements and the quantitative data provided a broader perspective of the large population that evidences the importance of those. The survey finished with two open questions that indicate the actions that are the most difficult to understand as well as the most appreciated aspects of the other work culture. The final answers identified the differences that are - both negatively and positively - the most significant in the collaboration and thus essential for the elaboration of the characteristics of productive collaboration.

A general limitation of empirical results about culture is related to the bias of social desirability: "a tendency to respond to self-report items in a manner that makes the respondent look good rather than to respond in an accurate and truthful manner." (Holtgraves, 2004, p. 161), in other words, the overvaluation of positive characteristics and the undervaluation of negative ones. The possibility remains that the participants responded in the attempt to provide a favorable description with positive attitudes towards the own and the other work culture. In order to mitigate this possibility, the respondents were informed at the beginning of data collection that their answers would be kept totally confidential. To additionally encourage the honest participation, the participants were also informed about the use of the aggregated results to provide advice about the improvement of the collaboration in the study unit.

A further limitation of the results refers to the varying total number of the respondents (N) among the survey sections; this volatility is caused by the different number of missing cases in each section. The interpretation of the answers given by the total population must moreover consider the distinct proportion of Mexicans and Germans in the present study unit. Both considerations are explicitly expressed in the corresponding section of the results.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The final chapter of the thesis displays at first the conclusion of the qualitative and quantitative research findings and secondly their discussion.

5.1   Conclusion of the research findings.

Before presenting the summary of the research findings, the conclusion chapter starts with the consideration of the analytical tools that allowed the progress of the study. The theoretical framework of work culture developed by Reygadas (2002) was particularly helpful since it calls for the importance of comparative labor studies with the objective to evidence significant cultural differences in the encounter of two work cultures. The comparison of the intercultural misunderstandings emerging in the interaction of workers with two cultural backgrounds from the three-dimensional perspective of Reygadas (2002) allowed the articulation of the intersections between the productive space and other life spheres of workers, with the focus on the detection of symbolic meanings that are produced. The three-dimensional concept made it possible to part from the negotiations and conflicts in the interaction to understand the specific cultural expressions that are present in the local context about work at the administration level. In addition to the existence of a variety of organizational conditions, different national cultures associated with work were detected. In consequence, the spatial fragmentation of the work processes (including digital space) of a global work force involves a particular experience

as the result of the interaction between subjects who use their symbolic ability in an active

pattern. This theoretical framework allowed to find dissimilar ranges and effects regarding

integration, conflict and juxtaposition of the work cultures.

The basic assumptions of the concept of Reygadas (2002) are that the labor process

affects the production of meanings; culture influences the development of the productive activity

and the processes are mediated by conflict and negotiation that occur during the exercise of work

and are involved in much broader social and cultural structures. With regards to the influence of

work on the production of meanings, the empirical results of this study show that the discussion

about differences between work cultures is situated in distinct contexts of the work environment.

The presented dynamics involved in the daily work interaction allow to understand how the

encounter with actions that do not correspond to the well-known reference frame (see Goffman,

1974) of a worker causes misunderstandings that lead to the questioning of the reference, cause

different types of emotions and a strategy to react in a certain way that is based on the definition,

interpretation of the situation (see Blumer, 1969). From the contrary perspective, the influence of

culture on the work process (Reygadas' second assumption) was evidenced in the research by the

justifications the actors use to explain their thought, perceptions and actions at the work place. In

some cases, the misunderstandings regarding work processes were explained with different

cultural backgrounds and in other cases, they were transferred to another life sphere. The

analysis of the intercultural encounters made it possible to detect the daily negotiations of the

involved actors (Reygadas' third assumption).

Along with the employment in an intercultural work environment comes a mayor work of

coordination (see Strauss, 1985) that is constituted by the capacity of the involved social actors; a

mayor role is given to the workers in management positions that exercise the control mechanisms

of the company to assure collaboration with the objective of efficiency and profitability. The coherence of the theoretical model of work developed by Strauss (1993) is based on the rejection to see work from a rational point of view: The work place is not considered merely in terms of rational criteria like efficiency; to the contrary, stereotypes, social relationships, emotions, subjectivity and objective organizational conditions (overtly and covertly) interfere and must be negotiated day to day. Arrangements are needed to articulate the different people and different types of work with regards to the organization and completion of each work task. Productive collaboration is then reached with the negotiations at the workplace that are necessary to achieve an arrangement by overcoming cultural differences in order to achieve the common work goal. In the present context, these negotiation strategies are embedded in a retrospective reflection of the actors that is based on their search for comprehension, definition and interpretation of the situation (see Blumer,1969). This reflective capacity is influenced by previous work experience, biographical particularities, power positions, the social relationship between the subjects as well as structural conditions. These reflection processes were made visible in the present study by the interconnected use of the theoretical concepts of Reygadas (2002) about work culture and Goffman (1959; 1974, 1983) and Strauss (1978; 1985; 1993) within the sociological framework of symbolic interactionism.

The interaction at work in the present research is interpreted as a questioning of well-known reference frames (see Goffman, 1974) that occurs in the moment of encountering an action of a coworker that is not understandable. This questioning leads to the negotiation of strategies and counterstrategies and the decision to maintain, change partially or change completely a previously acquired social practice (see Goffman, 1983). It is furthermore interpreted that work task approaches are acquired in a similar way as "the standardization of

bodily and vocal behavior through socialization" (Goffman, 1983, p. 3); they are therefore considered a social practice that the actor interiorizes during the process of socialization; in consequence, each member categorizes them into conform and not conform to the known social order in the work environment.

The general research objective was to compare the work culture of Mexican and German employees in the automotive industry to identify characteristics of productive collaboration at the administration level. A mixed methods approach with an exploratory case study was realized to detect similarities and differences including their meaningful consequences on the collaboration to elaborate the characteristics of productive collaboration between both work cultures. In the following, the study results are displayed in the previously used order: communication; knowledge transfer; work task approaches; the understanding of time; language issues. Each topic is presented with its answers to the research questions *What are the similarities and differences between the Mexican and German work culture? How do the similarities and differences influence the collaboration of Mexican and German employees? What are the characteristics of productive collaboration of the two work cultures?*

Qualitative and quantitative data was obtained with eight in-depth interviews and a survey with 69 participants. In summary, the image of two different work cultures was constructed: The Mexican work culture is considered friendly, relaxed and supporting, with a focus on the team and harmony; the German work culture is described as direct, honest and accurate, with an emphasis on individual responsibility, results and planning. Two basic differences between the work cultures were identified that explain the first image of a friendly and social environment and the second one of a cold and task-oriented environment including its consequences on the daily interaction: the focus on the team in the first and on the individual

employee in the latter as well as the flexibility in the first and inflexibility in the latter.

The first topic *communication* includes similarities and differences that refer to the avoidance and confrontation of conflict, non-verbal communication and the need for instructions. Differences regarding the preference of a determined type of conflict communication are in academic research often explained with the cultural variables individualism-collectivism and power distance (Oetzel, 2002) and their consequences on the emphasis on personal relationships or on the task. These explanations will be critically discussed in the following.[109] In agreement with theoretical positions (see e. g. Hall & Hall, 1990; Schroll-Machl, 2016), the German work culture is characterized with a direct form of communication (low-context communication) which is visible in the direct expression of doubts, disagreement and criticism, requests, mistakes or problems in sight, the confrontation of conflicts and the separation between personal feelings and objective facts. In comparison, the Mexican work culture is characterized with an indirect form of communication (high-context communication) which is visible in "talking around things" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017), an emphasis on the tone of voice, politeness, sensitivity in the request of tasks and the avoidance to address problems in sight. Sensitivity in speech as opposed to directness was explained as requirement of trust in the

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[109] "Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its oppositve pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty." (Hofstede et al., 2010, chapter Measuring the Degree of Individualism in Society). The main consequence for intercultural conflict communication is that in collectivist societies the personal relationship prevails over the task and should therefore be established first, whereas in an individualist society, the task has priority over any personal relationship (Hofstede et al., 2010).

relationship between coworkers and an expression of an aspiration to harmony that is rooted in the importance of personal relationships in the Mexican society. The expression of criticism is mostly considered as (too) direct by German employees and in comparison, (too) sensitive by the Mexican employees.

The presented differences determine the day-to-day collaboration since they trespass basically every work task; the research evidenced for instance that employees make differences in the expression of requests directed to Mexican or German coworkers. The direct communication of the Germans in this work place is perceived as a problematic aspect that is difficult to understand and that causes discomfort in their Mexican coworkers. The Germans need to know that personal feelings can be hurt even with objective criticism; this difference is rooted in the connection between personal and professional relationships that is common in the Mexican work culture but separated in the German work place. On the other hand, the actions the Germans find difficult to understand were summarized as expressions of the avoidance of conflict which for them is the reason for unreliability. From the German point of view, unreliability is considered the most significant problem in the collaboration that is visible in the lack to openly communicate a missing comprehension, committed mistakes and negative report.

In search for productive collaboration, it is important to emphasize that the Mexican participants also appreciate the German direct form of communication and the Germans the focus on the team spirit including the relaxed and friendly atmosphere created by their Mexican coworkers. With the understanding of the connection between direct communication and reliability, the sharing of mistakes and problems in sight is a possibility for the study subjects. This sharing however must be realized with more sensitivity to avoid personal offense and contribute to the friendly work environment the Germans appreciate and the Mexicans need to

create the necessary trust in their coworkers. These communication efforts were detected as the most important requirement of productive collaboration that includes additionally the active addressing of a misunderstanding, the clarification of possible misunderstandings beforehand, the expression of respect with the tone of voice and service attitude.

The importance of non-verbal communication was empirically evidenced in the symbolic messages that are sent by hand gestures or greeting practices. As mentioned before, the Germans in this work place were described as rather cold and reserved and the Mexicans as warm and friendly. Differences in non-verbal communication influence the intercultural collaboration since they can either offend coworkers (in the case of rude hand gestures or the intrusion into physical space) or they can be appreciated as a cultural adaptation (in the case of greeting practices). The Germans are used to a larger physical distance in the work place in comparison to the Mexicans who are characterized with closer personal relationships at the work place that include physical closeness and the sharing of private information and emotions.

The important result of the study was that in the cases of non-verbal communication, the actors were not aware of the different meanings of the action, neither regarding offense nor appreciation. The Mexicans must know that the adaptation of the Germans to their greeting practices was difficult since they had to overcome the discomfort that is also related to the sharing of personal information and spending private time with coworkers. On the other hand, the Germans must consider the importance of personal relationships in the collaboration with their Mexican coworkers. The underlying cultural roots are the separation or connection of the private and professional life spheres in relation to different forms to create trust in collectivist and individualist societies. In comparison, Boedeker (2011) argues that the Mexican society is constituted essentially more collective than Germany; the importance of community is seen

particularly in a closer orientation towards family, considered as an important social instance.

Ferres et al. (2005) summarized collectivism in Mexico with three characteristics: (1) Strong and

closed we-groups; (2) Goals of the community are more important than individual goals; (3) The

family serves as social network. The outstanding meaning of informal networks of relationships

are one characteristic of the cultural identity of Mexico that has direct influences on the

economic acting of individuals and organizations (Rehner, 2003). The reason for their existence

in Mexico and its elemental meaning regarding the economic success are the scarceness of

capital; economic uncertainty as well as political instability (see Adler Lomnitz & Pérez Lizaur,

1988, cited by Rehner, 2003). Informal social networks fulfill an important function in the

protection of risks in socio-economic systems that offer insufficient institutional protection

(Rehner, 2003). The significance of the friendship- and family networks was proven above all

regarding the overcome of economic crises in the urban areas (see Lomnitz, 1996; Fuchs, 1999,

cited by Rehner, 2003), but these networks also play an important role in business transactions

(see Adler Lomnitz & Pérez Lizaur, 1987, cited by Rehner, 2003). According to Dávila and

Hartmann (2016), research has shown that corporate governance of large and old companies in

Mexico is exercised by members of the third and fourth generation of the founding families,

presenting successful businesses with family members as top managers who have been educated

in the most respected national and international universities.

With regards to the present study participants, it is important for both to respect the non-

verbal customs of each other; productive collaboration includes moreover the overcoming of

reservedness by the Germans in this Mexican subsidiary, the involvement in private

conversations at the work place and the respect of the larger physical boundaries in German

locations.[110] Nevertheless, as empirically evidenced in the qualitative approach, such changes are not easily realized since the social practices of every culture are interiorized and considered valid. For instance, the presented internal conflict of Hector caused by the greeting with a kiss evidences the emotions associated with cultural differences even in supposedly simple gestures of the daily work life (see chapter 4.1.1.1). Any suggestion from the research field administration regarding cultural diversity in the work place must therefore be critically discussed because the rational perspective of work often fails to focus on the human aspect (see e.g. Law, 2013).

Cultural adaptation - even referring to the question about the state of mind of a family member in the attempt to express interest in the life of a coworker - creates internal difficulties of the individual that belongs to a culture not used to this kind of interaction. As emphasized by Goffman (1983), the socialization process teaches each member of a culture to categorize social practices as conform or not conform to the used social order because social ritualization or "the standardization of bodily and vocal behavior through socialization" (p. 3) both simplifies and complicates the exploration of observations. According to Tomasello and Vaish (2013), in the moment of adopting the culture of a group, subjects insert themselves into a hierarchy and accept the combination of social norms including culturally imposed forms and roles that are implicit in the commitment acquired to respect the expectations of the group. The individuals assume roles, statuses, obligations and power in accordance to the ruled social norms by the institutions of the society; the collectivity determines the "correct" behavior within a culture and assigns the roles and social identity of the individuals.

On the own, well-known stage, the actor performs everyday actions that are not even

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[110] Physical distance at work plays an even larger role when different genders are involved since the behavior according to certain gender roles is socially constituted and sanctioned (see e. g. Bourdieu, 2000).

thought about; they are acted unconsciously because they are learned in the socialization process as referential frames (Goffman, 1974). However, if the same action is performed on a different stage, both, the other social actors and the audience might not understand its meaning and in consequence not know how to react to it. The actor then decides between the conservation, the partial change and the complete change of his well-known performance. Since all three reactions require the awareness of the differences, the definition and interpretation of the situation and the subjective decision made based on those (Blumer, 1969), the individuals' choice is quite complicated, and a suggestion is thus extremely difficult to implement. The role of the cultural mediator is essential with regards to non-verbal communication since these persons are capable to translate the meaning of a non-verbal action from one to another work culture; this translation however requires the expression of a doubt to avoid offense and grudge.

The third aspect of communication is the detected difference regarding the expectation of clear instructions and details that can be explained with the theoretical concept of high- and low-context-cultures (see Hall & Hall, 1990). The interviews as well as the survey indicated the rejection of micromanagement or the preference of a liberal leadership style as similarity between both work cultures. In the present work environment, the employees are provided with the responsibility and freedom to realize their work task with their own approach. Although this liberal style of leadership is appreciated of both work cultures, the appreciation is more significant among the Mexicans in comparison to the German participants due to contrary experience with authoritarian leaders in Japanese and Mexican companies. The freedom given in addition to the honesty of their German coworkers are perceived by the Mexicans as signs of respect and trust as well as the belief that everyone knows how to handle work.

Despite this joint preference of liberal leadership, a difference between the German and

Mexican employees was detected in the need for instructions: whereas the majority of the German employees is familiar with more personal responsibility and less instructions, half of the Mexicans requires clearer instructions to be able to fulfill the expectations and to ask questions. The clarity of the expression of expectations by German leaders or coworkers is not sufficient for all the Mexicans which causes the misunderstanding of priorities and reasons for results and plans. This difficulty is thus not rooted in different understandings of the concepts but instead in the transfer of one understanding to a coworker and therefore once again emphasizes communication efforts in the attempt to productively collaborate.

Hofstede et al. (2010) considers low and high power distance the cultural dimension in which different leadership expectations are rooted: Power distance measures the degree of social inequality considered as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed equally." (chapter power distance defined). The implications for the expectation of participation in decision-making processes are that in countries of low power distance, employees are used to disagree with their bosses and prefer a consultative style of decision-making whereas in countries of high power distance, bosses are seen as autocratic or paternalistic and employees are not used to disagree, preferring an autocratic or paternalistic decision-making. Their study indicates high power distance values for Latin America including Mexico and low values for German-speaking countries including Germany (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The present study results precisely evidence the insufficient nuances that are implied by this categorization from the field of administration. Reygadas (2002) criticized the too-dualist vision and the overestimation of cultural influences on work processes in academic research because work is not only determined by culture, but also by technical, economic and political

(and other) factors, and work culture is not a mere reactive response to labor conditions and cultural changes can or cannot modify the way of working. The present findings evidenced that most of the German employees are familiar with more personal responsibility and less instructions, whereas half of the Mexicans require clearer instructions. For the leaders it is essential to know that the need for clearer instructions is not prevailing in the Mexican work culture, but rather applies to only half of the employees. The quantitative and the qualitative findings moreover showed that responsibility and freedom are provided by the Mexican leaders and the ones with other nationalities (not only the German leaders) to their subordinates, which contradicts theoretical descriptions that characterize Mexican leadership as authoritarian. In the present case, the German interview participants have not mentioned aspects such as laziness and distrust in their Mexican coworkers and subordinates; even the previously discussed complaints about unpunctuality and unreliability were not explained with missing trust, motivation or commitment to work but rather contradicted with the emphasis on the trust expressed by the German leaders in their subordinates and the commitment to hard work the Germans appreciate in their Mexican coworkers.

These results are essential to avoid the dangerous consequences of the application of cultural stereotypes and prejudices in the environment of work. De la Cerda and Núñez (1996) argue that many managers exercise their leadership based on prejudices that are reflected in their professional practice: A manager who is convinced that the employees are lazy, will tend to be intolerant and distrusting, use punishment and watch his or her subordinates; and with this leadership behavior, the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecies is generated. For example, De Paula Leite (1994), Hernández (2012) and Lauring (2011) empirically evidenced differences in response to the expressed trust or distrust by leaders in their subordinates. In this discussion, the

present research results show that the theoretical description of a work force found in administration manuals is not applicable to every context. The concept of Strauss (1993) requires to consider the work place not merely in terms of rational criteria like efficiency; to the contrary, stereotypes, social relationships, emotions, subjectivity and objective organizational conditions (overtly and covertly) interfere and must be negotiated day to day. The contribution of the present thesis is thus based on the critical competence of the social sciences in comparison to the field of administration (see also Lauring, 2011; Law, 2013). Simplistic suggestions about behavior in cultural diverse work teams without critical scrutiny are not adequate because the subjectivity of the workers and every social actor in the work place leads to active participation with a frame of action to create and modify rules. This perspective relies on the fundamental assumptions of symbolic interactionism that incorporates the actors and their social contexts of interaction in the study of labor identities with a focus on the analysis of social relationships at work, the daily practice and the reflexive action of the social actors.

Productive collaboration includes in this case the evaluation of the clarity of the expressions by the Germans and the verification of the consistency with the perception of their coworkers. Furthermore, productive collaboration requires the provision of more context information by the Germans as well as the expression of insecurity about the accordance of the understandings by the Mexicans in the attempt to enable the detection of discrepancies and adaptation of communication. Once again, this kind of adaptation is however complicated to implement since the interactions between social subjects at work are not only influenced by their cultural backgrounds, but also by personalities and biographies, characteristics of occupations, complexity of work tasks, power games, control mechanisms of the company as well as external conditions related to the industry and the market (summarized by Strauss and Corbin (2008) as

macro- and micro-conditions). The strategies the actors use to play the game depend on their

capacity to play according to the rules but also to modify them and the actions are always based

on the frames of control that the subjects intent to maintain such as the differentiating strategies

used to establish exclusion for instance via the withholding of information that can also be

interpreted in the concept of symbolic violence. In every situation additionally interfere the

objectives of the company that establishes its own mechanisms to reach efficiency and

profitability despite any intercultural difficulties. These regulations of the work place are the

fundament on which the cooperation is produced; the production of collaboration thus takes

place in this environment in which the subjects act within their range of action.

The second category *knowledge transfer* continues with the discussion about the sharing

of information and includes the detected differences regarding the type of labor contract that are

not related with work culture per se, but certainly influence the collaboration since all the

Germans in the study have expatriate contracts and all the Mexicans have local contracts. The

research showed that the knowledge transfer from the coworker with work experience in the

company to the coworker with less or no experience can cause difficulties that are rather related

to personal differences (the prioritization of personal benefits over group benefits), language

barriers and the earlier described differences in the form to communicate. The qualitative

approach showed an example of a failed knowledge transfer that emphasizes the importance of

knowledge at the work place as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and the quantitative results then

indicated the sharing of knowledge for the teams' benefit.

The empirical results furthermore emphasized the role of work experience in the daily

interaction, indicating that the Mexicans highly appreciate the willingness of their German

coworkers to share their company knowledge and the Germans the willingness to learn of their

Mexican coworkers. Both highlighted the commitment to work hard in order to achieve the quality product about each other, which is interpreted as another similarity of the work cultures.

As displayed before, the Germans consider the lack of asking in case of a doubt as the largest problem in the collaboration, which was explained by the Mexicans with the lack of clarity and missing context information. The Mexican coworkers in this work environment need more information to be able to express their doubts and questions - which is expected by their German coworkers who have the company knowledge.

In order to enable the expected questions, once again the provision of more context information as well as the explicit expression of doubts are necessary characteristics of productive collaboration that allow the solution of misunderstandings and the transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, training activities such as teambuildings were mentioned as a requirement for productive collaboration in the intent to work on existing problems and as platform to express previously emerged questions.

The third topic *work task approaches* includes the consequences of the second significant distinction between both work cultures, the flexibility of the Mexicans and inflexibility of the Germans. The Germans indicated that their adherence to plans, documentation, reporting and the need for constant information flow and formal meetings are part of the - undesired - solution strategy insistence that is needed due to experience with unreliability and the non-fulfillment of requests.[111] The quantitative approach evidenced additionally that insistence is a strategy used by both nationalities, but however more significantly among the German employees than the Mexicans. This insistence of the Germans is perceived by the Mexicans as stubbornness and

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[111] Researchers explain these characteristics with a high uncertainty-avoidance and long-term orientation (Hofstede et al., 2010), monochronic treatment of time (Hall, 1959) and task-orientation (Schroll-Machl, 2016).

inflexibility that is present in diverse dimensions: (1) inflexibility to communicate understandings and expectations; (2) to adapt plans when changes are necessary; (3) to adapt to new circumstances; (4) to exaggerate formal documentation; (5) to adapt in the private life.

In comparison, the Mexican coworkers are characterized with an extraordinary flexibility, spontaneity, friendliness and helpfulness (service attitude). Issues are rather solved immediately with personal conversations between coworkers to avoid formal meetings with exaggerated documentation. The Mexicans - in contrast to the Germans – do not get upset when interrupted, do not unnecessarily discuss requests and show an extraordinary service attitude; these are characteristics that are explicitly appreciated by the Germans.

Hall and Hall (1990) explain differences regarding planning activities with the distinction between high- and low-context communication in line with mono- and polychronism. Monochronic and low-context cultures such as Germany display a compartmentalized approach to planning, depend on scheduled activities, are particularly sensitive to interruptions and therefore more vulnerable to changes of plans. On the other hand, workers from high-context cultures such as Mexico demonstrate a more elastic way of planning due to their intense involvement with each other and their extensive and cohesive networks; in line with a polychronic understanding of time, these workers are used to interrupt action plans in order to change the progress or to get a better achievement of the work goal (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Since the appreciated characteristics of one work culture are in the present case the opposite of the complicated ones of the other work culture, characteristics of productive collaboration are thus found in its intersection. Accordingly, impatience and failure to adapt proceedings were also mentioned as weaknesses of the Germans, whereas their opposites patience and adaptation to change are considered appreciated strengths of the Mexican work

culture. From the Mexican point of view, reliability expressed in the commitment to existing agreements is explicitly valued in the German work culture (discipline, organization and planning), whereas from their perspective, it is a characteristic they find missing in their Mexican coworkers. These pairs of opposites show the possibility of the Mexican and German employees to balance out the own weaknesses with the strengths of the other in the collaboration.

As evidenced by the example of Manuel's project team and their "internal eyes rolling" (see chapter 4.1.1.3) about the adherence to formal documentation, it is not that simple to adapt well-known procedures because every worker has a reason to realize a work approach in a certain way. These individual justifications depend on the qualification of each worker, the complexity of the work task and the required skills, as well as the previous work experience.[112] From this perspective, it is interpreted that work task approaches are acquired in a similar way as "the standardization of bodily and vocal behavior through socialization" (Goffman, 1983, p. 3). Work task approaches are thus considered a social practice that the actor interiorizes during the process of socialization; in consequence, each member categorizes them into conform and not conform to the known social order in the work environment. Academic research is therefore asked to investigate the professional trajectories in order to detect the distinct steps of acquirement that lead to a certain work task approach; this is one of the suggestions elaborated for future research (see chapter 5.2).

The qualitative results in the category *understanding of time* described the Germans with a tendency to monochronic work expressed in an emphasis on punctuality and compartmentalization of work tasks, and the Mexicans with a polychronic time treatment visible

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[112] These aspects are clearly different in comparison of German and Mexican workers due to the distinct economic, political, social and educational background. These conditions are discussed in chapter 5.2.

in flexibility, unpunctuality and multitasking.[113] The quantitative findings however evidenced no clear attribution of a monochronic and polychronic treatment of time to one work culture: Although the Mexicans mostly consider themselves polychronic and their German coworkers monochronic, the Germans see neither group as monochronic but both groups as polychronic. Additionally, different understandings of punctuality and unpunctuality were detected as well as the discrepancy between a separation of private and professional relationships (by the German employees) and a connection of those among the Mexican coworkers.

The findings moreover evidenced discrepancies between the perceptions of change and adaptation: The Germans assume they are already involved in private conversations and have adapted themselves to the sharing of private information and feelings with coworkers; their Mexican colleagues however disagree by considering it a merely Mexican characteristic. The Germans need to know that private relationships influence professional collaboration in Mexico; hence, productive collaboration requires more effort in the establishment and caring of personal relationships. Additionally, the Germans (more precisely the expatriates) must know how social practices in the private life determine the professional relationship as it was evidenced in the case of perceived arrogance for having labor benefits that allow a high life standard.

The second distinct perception of adaptation was detected regarding punctuality, because the Mexicans think they have adapted themselves to the German punctuality, with which the Germans disagree. In continuation of the results about direct communication, the Mexicans must

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[113] Differences between work cultures can partly be explained with the theoretical concept of monochronic and polychronic time treatment (Hall, 1959), the cultural standards task-orientation and separation of the private and personal life (Schroll-Machl, 2016) and the emphasis on personal relationships in the Mexican (see e.g. Rehner, 2003) and roles in the German society (see Thomas et al., 2007).

know that time is a valuable resource for the Germans since they use it as a measurement entity; this explains the negative feelings caused by unpunctuality which is considered a lack of respect. Since the Germans highly appreciate the politeness and respect they observe in the Mexican culture, they expect this respect also with regards to time agreements. Likewise, the Mexicans highly appreciate this respect the Germans give to time and their commitment to existing agreements. The social atmosphere and the aspiration to team harmony in this work environment is seen by the Germans as effective with regards to collaboration, the spontaneous and patient solution of problems, the start of new tasks or projects and motivation. Moreover, the Germans appreciate the willingness to work hard and learn (including long working hours) as forms of an aspiration to success that is based on team work. In these work patterns, the focus on the team spirit and group harmony as well as the feeling to be a contributing family member are interpreted as the necessary context conditions for the employees to be able to succeed. The corresponding service attitude and extraordinary helpfulness of the Mexican coworkers are expressions of this social work environment that are particularly appreciated by the Germans.

Although the research detected difficulties between the two work cultures regarding the perception of adaptation as well as the definition of punctuality causing complaints about unpunctuality, the lack of work motivation or compromise were not mentioned as their reasons but rather as values that are particularly appreciated from both perspectives about the other work culture. The Germans appreciate the willingness of their Mexican coworkers to work hard and learn (including long working hours) as forms of an aspiration to success that is based on team work. In these work patterns, the focus on the team spirit and group harmony as well as the feeling to be a contributing family member are interpreted as the necessary context conditions for the employees to be able to succeed. The related helpfulness (service attitude) is an expression of

this social work environment that is particularly appreciated by the Germans (see chapter 4.2.5).

These empirical results support the findings of different researchers that contradict the stereotype of the prioritization of personal and family relationships over efficiency and loyalty towards the superior as a definite value of the Mexican work culture (Reygadas, 1998). For instance, Noll (1992) described hard-working employees who are concerned to learn and to improve products, committed to enter early and collaborate to reach quality, thereby contributing to the breach of conventional ideas and prejudices (earlier called hegemonic fictions) about the Mexican work culture (cited by Reygadas, 1998). Although the family has the domain for the subjective well-being of Mexicans (Rojas, 2009), well-being depends on diverse factors which include (between many others) work-related factors such as the nature of the labor activity; availability and use of free time; income per household and per person; distribution of income; occupational and unemployment situation (Rojas, 2011).[114] Alduncin (2005) also suggests that the highest respect is observed in the nuclear family that is the central value of Mexicans and the center of society in all of Mexico's history, but work has risen in the hierarchy of values in the Mexican society and now occupies a fundamental location. Mendoza and Rositas (2011) elaborated a profile of Mexican workers that presents the prevalence of elements oriented towards the process to finish work, rather than towards the organizational results that are achieved with it. Similar to the present findings, in the study of Figueroa et al. (2012) the value "trabajador(a)" was identified as one of the values that best describes the Mexicans. The

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[114] The researcher makes three conclusions about the relationship between life domains and subjective well-being: (1) Every growth in satisfaction of whatever life domain has an affect on the growth in subjective well-being; (2) No life domain is determining/decisive in subjective well-being; (3) Not all the life domains are equally important because the importance of the family environment is highlighted (Rojas, 2009, 2011).

researchers also indicate that the value of work in life depends on the evaluating group, the occupation of the participants and the type of organization in which they are employed; all these variables determine the autoperception of workers.

The sequential combination of the qualitative approach that revealed the distinct meanings of time and the opinions about the present situation and the quantitative approach that provided a broad picture of the study population allowed to understand how the misunderstandings and conflicts are configured in the present study unit. These results permit to question the frame of action of the different actors that interfere in the starting phase of the Mexican subsidiary in which new processes must be established. In this relatively short collaboration (between the Mexican and German professionals interferes the fact that the involved participants enter from different positions regarding company knowledge as well as the recency of the work processes that are basically all new even though they are well-known in other subsidiaries and in the headquarters. The work experience of the expatriates and the inpatriates in the company provides them with an advantage regarding the establishment of the corporations' work processes; however, the new circumstances in the Mexican context require an adaptation of those. In the relational work, conflictive situations were presented based on the encounter of the action frames of the German employees, the Mexican employees, and the management - each of them with an interest in demonstrating a mayor control over the work activity. An example was presented with the management attention call regarding the arrival time to work (see chapter 4.1.1). Productive collaboration thus must be produced in the center of all the involved social actors that enter the situation with their individual reference frames and distinct control mechanisms.

The final topic *language issues* emerged with different dimensions in the intercultural

work interactions. Similar to the influence of the different types of labor contracts, language knowledge is not a characteristic of work cultures per se, but is interpreted as determining the Mexican-German relationships at work. In the present work environment, four problems in the collaboration were detected that are related to the use of English as the joint business language: (1) translation mistakes; (2) information that is lost in translation; (3) meaning mistakes (independent of the language translation); and (4) the avoidance of the use of English. The findings moreover emphasized the role of international work experience with regards to the creation of language awareness and the consequent obvious advantage of those employees who are fluent in all three languages (English, Spanish, German).

In addition, the symbolic meaning of the effort to learn and use a certain language influences professional relationships at the global work place. The qualitative approach indicated that the use of German is a problem in the collaboration because it stops the information by excluding the coworkers who do not speak the language. Although the quantitative approach showed that the majority of the employees does not observe the avoidance of English, some Mexican participants indicated in support of the qualitative findings the use of German as a difficulty in the collaboration (which was not addressed by Germans with regards to the use of Spanish). The German employees must know that the use of German represents (intentional or unintentional) avoidance of English which is an expression of indifference about the Mexican coworkers. Regardless of the reasons and intention of an action, to learn and use a joint language is a sign of caring and interest whereas its opposite is perceived as a lack of respect and distrust.

This interpretation is based on the findings of Lauring (2011) who evidenced the negative consequences of a line of communication in an organization that is based on exclusion via nationality. Lauring (2011) described the attempt of simplification of communication by the

segregation of hierarchical positions via nationalities in a Saudi-Arabian subsidiary of a Danish corporation. The involved managers considered intercultural dialogues and the sharing of knowledge as reduction of pace in decision making and the comprehension of cultural differences as "unnecessarily complicating the path to action" (Lauring, 2011, p. 247). With the objectives of fast decision making and the prevention of interruptions, the company excluded - apart from direct orders - other nationalities from the lines of communication due "The perception of other nationalities as untrustworthy and in need of firm management" (p. 247).

> This creation of social barriers only reproduced the segregation and maintained the ethnical hierarchy as the organizational principle that guided communication. Finally, a vicious circle was observed when mistrust and exclusion exercised by the management led to counteractions by the subordinates. (Lauring, 2011, p. 247).

These empirical results are relevant in the present description since they exemplify the negative consequences of exclusion via language that should be considered as a call for prevention for the present study unit. The consequent characteristic of productive collaboration is the business-fluent knowledge of all three languages which clearly depends on the conditions of the labor market. In a more practical attempt, general awareness of possible errors is required since translation as well as meaning mistakes are likely to occur even when speaking the shared language. Secondly, the use of neutral communication (the avoidance of figures of speech) and thirdly, the active addressing of doubts or misunderstandings are essential characteristics of productive collaboration. Since language knowledge is closely related to cultural adaptation and the establishment of private relationships, those aspects determine the trust between coworkers.

In conclusion, the research results indicate basic differences between the Mexican and German work culture that are visible in diverse work interactions and can partly be explained

with theoretical concepts about each national culture. The study also evidences similarities between the employees of this Mexican subsidiary that contradict theoretical descriptions about each culture. The presented intercultural encounters are perceived as a process of adjustment inserted in the starting phase of the operation of a new subsidiary in the context of the international expansion of a German OEM and the economic growth of the Mexican automotive industry. The elaborated characteristics of productive collaboration emphasize the awareness of the employees of the automotive industry in order to enable an actual benefit of cultural diversity in the common achievement of work goals.

The central thesis of this research was to show that the meaningful consequences of similarities and differences between two work cultures influence the collaboration because symbolic meanings are produced, actualized and transformed the interaction at work. This "generation, actualization and transformation of symbolic forms in the labor activity" (Reygadas, 2002, p. 106) is however not only based on cultural differences but also influenced by personalities and biographies, characteristics of occupations, complexity of work tasks, power games, control mechanisms of the company as well as external conditions related to the industry and the market (see Strauss & Corbin, 2008). A central part of the results are the strategies that the involved actors employ in the articulation of the difficulties at work in the attempt to reach the common work goal despite cultural misunderstandings. The strategies the actors use to play the game depend on their capacity to play according to the rules but also to modify them. Although every actor operates within his range of action, the involved managers enter from a distinct position due to the associated hierarchical power. The present findings evidenced that in this work environment, other forms of symbolic power interfere just as much, thereby modifying the initial social relationship. Confronting complicated encounters, the worker can take

advantage of symbolic resources associated with the ownership of information or linguistic competences (see cultural capital and symbolic violence by Bourdieu, 1990; 2000).

Multiple strategies to solve intercultural misunderstandings were described with the objective to avoid a conflict beforehand or to solve it afterwards. In every case, the role of the cultural mediator is particularly important because a clarification depends on the ability to notice a cultural aspect in contrast to others who either do not notice it or - after noticing it - do not ask for its meaning. Cultural mediation consists in the explanation of the others' action in the intent to avoid the creation of doubts, offense and grudge; the questioning must however be expressed either to the acting person or to a third person to enable the clarifying interference of a cultural translator. Three correlating characteristics were in summary emphasized about cultural translators: first, they have language knowledge; second, they have private social networks; and third, they have previous international work experience.

In every situation additionally interfere the objectives of the company that establishes its own mechanisms to reach efficiency and profitability despite any intercultural difficulties. These regulations of the work place are the fundament on which the cooperation is produced; the production of collaboration thus takes place in this environment in which the subjects act within their range of action. It is therefore argued that in the daily interaction in an intercultural work environment enter not only negotiation of cultural references and regulation of the organization in the shape of managerial mechanisms, but also symbolic and ideological resources. The presentation of the strategies evidences that the worker is not only an object of the politics of the company but also able to test the work process to reach adjustments of the activity.

5.2   Discussion of the research findings.

As always when dealing with cultural research, the present results must be interpreted critically in light of diverse limitations. The displayed characteristics that distinguish the Mexican and German work culture were developed by empirical research in a case study. The first limitation thus includes the agreement made between the researcher and the company as well as the general particularities of the case. The generalized elements of a work culture are typical for most of the persons of a group, but they certainly never apply to every single individual because they are influenced by the industry, geographic region, organizational culture, occupational culture, age, gender, power structures, individual personality, and many more. The generalizability of the empirical findings is limited by the exploratory, qualitative nature of the first approach to the study population which was enriched by a subsequent quantitative approximation. The chosen methodology within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism provided profound data about cultural differences at work, a field that has been subject to too generalizing explanations. The benefit of the sequenced mixed-methods approach is the enabled articulation of qualitative and quantitative data which provided a profound understanding of the intercultural interaction in the local setting. This approach is particularly valuable regarding the contrast of official and factual interaction patterns and the subjective meaning given to cultural differences.

Empirical research guided by the concept of Strauss is generally coined by the consideration of the influence of macro- and micro-conditions on daily work interaction (see conditional matrix in Strauss & Corbin, 2008) that asks the researcher to reflect on the findings from a wider sociological perspective: The presented interactions between the German and Mexican employees are embedded in a structure of relations with the macro-economic context of

Mexico that includes political, educational and social particularities and with the micro-economic context of the Mexican subsidiary as part of a multinational corporate group. The productive activity in the global automotive industry requires a certain work force to fulfill the technological demands of the product which leads to social conditions in the profile of the worker (see e.g. Lima, 2010; Lima & Pires, 2017). The presented interactions between the Mexican and German employees thus take place in the center of the required work force which is influenced by diverse context conditions.

The reflection on the results from a distant perspective was enabled with a third field work realized in the industrial region called "ABC Paulista" (Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007, p. 15) in Brazil. Visits of German OEM and the center of the labor union "Sindicato dos metalúrgicos do ABC" and qualitative interviews with employees were conducted to compare the local context to the present study.[115] The complementary data obtained was particularly useful to evidence the importance of the geographical context, which is also a limitation of the present research results because a broader description of the organization and its geographical location would enable the identification of the company and thus violate the confidentiality agreement.

The first aspect to consider in the discussion of the findings is the economic situation of the country which influences the daily work with regards to a feeling of security of employment or the fear of unemployment. In the research period 2016-2018, the automotive industry in Mexico experienced an extraordinary growth whereas the one in Brazil a productive crisis (Luis,

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[115] The region ABC Paulista is the most important industrial region in Brazil with an accumulation of companies of the automobile industry since the 1950s that is characterized with (in comparison to the rest of the country) extraordinary good labor conditions and strong labor unions (movimiento sindical) (Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007). The visited OEMs started their proadictive activity in the region in the 1950s.

personal communication, March 28, 2018). The industrial activity is closely related with

employment since the economic conditions demand the opening or expansion of plants (as it is

the current case in Mexico) or contrary measures such as outsourcing and the reduction of staff

or working hours. A significant difference regarding the feeling of security for the workers

however exists between the work levels since production employment is generally more volatile

in comparison to administrative positions (Joel, personal communication, March 28, 2018).

Interpreting the present structural changes of the automotive industry (see chapter 2.1) as

an indication of a fast-changing industry in the theoretical thought of Strauss (1985), new

customer requirements and demands as well as new specializations (segments of the total work

force) from within and outside the industry interfere in the division of labor and cause an

expansion that "contributes to the fluidity of the total division of labor, bringing about

uncertainties concerning who should be performing given tasks." (p. 13). In the present research

context, the technological innovations, customer demands and political regulations for instance

regarding the environment or autonomous driving are addressed not only by the established

OEMs but also by new competitors not originally associated with the automotive industry such

as Samsung, Google, Apple etc. (see e.g. Gibbs, 2017). The fact that task structures in rapidly

changing industries change in comparison more quickly than in more stable industries, leads to a

greater proportion of projects and arcs of work which are "unpredictable, subject to unforeseen

contingencies, more difficult to standardize (…) either the task structures or who are to do the

tasks." (Strauss, 1985, p. 13). In consequence, new tasks or tasks with new or unusual conditions

are realized with considerable debate and negotiation that substitute the well-known lines of

action (Strauss, 1985). In summary, all sources of structural impacts on division of labor

"contribute to ambiguities, uncertainties, overlapping terrains, and ad hoc task fulfillments in the

total divisions of labor." (Strauss, 1985, p. 13).

The present study was realized in the arrival phase of the company to the Mexican subsidiary which leads to question if the study participants are part of a work force that is already adequately qualified or still in need for training and if their employment was needed in the region or they applied from a different local context.[116] Each local work culture is coined by the industrial and labor history of the region and the selection of a locality by a company is influenced by the local labor union representation and political agreements with the local government (see e.g. Ramalho, 2006, 2010; Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007). Capital participation or the assumption of infrastructure costs are examples of the incentives of the local government of the State of Rio de Janeiro given for the arrival of two OEMs to the region (Ramalho, 2006). According to Cordeiro (2012), changes in the regional industrialization additionally impact the professional formation of the local labor market, the education system and family dynamics due to "an interface of the occupational system with the educational system (…)" (own translation, p. 183). The researcher evidenced effects of the arrival of two automotive companies related with the growth of the amount of classes and workers who work and study at the same time as well as the increasing importance of scholar certificates for recruitment (Cordeiro, 2012).

The arrival of a company to a determined location has furthermore internal consequences regarding the collaboration with the headquarters, because usually (as it is the case in the present study unit) plants are opened with a significant number of expatriates from the headquarters that is reduced with time. In contrast to the present study unit, the visited Brazilian plants of German OEMs are almost completely run by Brazilian employees and the collaboration with German

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[116] Rodrigues and Ramalho (2007) suggest a distinction between the arrival of a company to a location that provides the adequately qualified work force or if staff first must be searched and/or qualified.

coworkers is constituted by short project-specific or auditory visits (Cristiano, Ricardo, personal communication, March 27 and 28, 2018). The influence of the headquarters and intensity of the collaboration with Germans is furthermore reduced or increased in dependence of the local economic situation, for instance regarding the need for authorization or assimilation of global guidelines (Joel, personal communication, March 28, 2018).

The search for the adequately qualified work force is furthermore influenced by political, educational and social conditions that coin the labor market. Because the present research addresses a work force with superior academic and professional education including international work experience, the different reference points regarding the access to superior education must be considered when comparing Mexico and Germany. Social inequality is always present in the access to education which in Latin-America is generally limited to a small group of the societies with financial resources for private education. In addition to unequal labor conditions, the possibility of a Mexican worker to provide superior education for his family is clearly different than of a German worker who can moreover benefit from adequate public education. Because the education system also influences the age of entering the labor market, different aspirations to start with challenging and difficult work tasks are created.[117]

As evidenced in the present research, differences of labor conditions influence the daily collaboration in this intercultural work environment because benefits related to distinct labor contracts were detected as a symbolic impact on power positions in the present study unit. Since

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[117] Cristiano (personal communication, March 28, 2018) mentioned that Germans with academic education enter their first work position later than Brazilians. This disadvantage in age is compensated with professional and international experience during the study time which leads to the difference that Germans start their first position with an attempt to fulfill challenging and difficult work tasks in comparison to simpler activities.

labor conditions are not the present study object, the participants were not asked specifically about this dimension; the related results however provide indicators for future research. Interpreting work experience as a requirement to acquire a certain position with the corresponding labor contract, the influence of history on work is addressed. According to Strauss (1993), "history is embedded in both obvious and subtle ways in work relations and in work itself." (p. 85). History refers to the history of the organization, of sub-organizational units and the history (biography) of the workers. Strauss (1993) reflected about recompense and professional prestige that surgeons receive in comparison to nurses; an advantage based on the political skills of the medical profession maintaining economic and occupational dominance. Transferring this thought to the present discussion, it is interpreted that a similar reflection can be made about expatriates and inpatriates in comparison to the employees with local labor contracts. Their advantage regarding labor conditions is based on their work experience within the company, because the academic or professional qualification is high among all employees. This finding led to the suggestion of future research about workers' trajectories.

Despite social and educational differences in the different countries, the phenomenon of loss of talents is a global condition that influences the present study since the employees belong to the needed highly qualified experts in their fields. The multinational automotive companies nowadays require higher qualification including language knowledge in all levels of workers (Joel, personal communication, March 28, 2018), nevertheless, in the case of Mexico, the immigration of talents to the United States is common (see e.g. Coletta, 2018). In consequence, employers are obligated to incentive the career development within the company and avoid the loss of qualified staff. From the employees' perspective, different career aspirations and work motives are present in this highly qualified work force that are related with age generations and

the need for employment and labor conditions rooted in distinct labor markets.[118]

Work in the automotive industry is nowadays characterized with a diversity of dimensions: different age generations, a higher percentage of female workers, sexual and racial diversity, physical and digital presence, different languages and nationalities as well as the interaction with artificial intelligence (Luis, personal communication, March 28, 2018). The required new global work force thus includes a broader diversity with an emphasis on "autonomy, freedom, risk, mobility, flexibility, entrepreneurship, and innovation" (Lima & Pires, 2017, p. 774); this profile was titled by Lima (2010, p. 158) "new culture of work" in summary of the changes in work relations and conditions arising from technological and organizational changes in the era of flexible capitalism in the neoliberal logic (Lima & Pires, 2017).[119]

Differences between the distinct dimensions are for instance visible in the relationships between subordinates and leaders and their collaboration with the labor union. According to Cristiano, Rosi and Joel (personal communication, March 27 and 28, 2018), the companies experience an increase of the proximity between subordinates and their leaders as well as with members of the workers' council. Both relationships were previously described with distance and rather fear of the subordinate to reach out to leaders or members of the workers' council; the present proximity allows the subordinates to participate in decisions and the sharing of responsibility. The enabled access to leaders and the workers' council influences work culture since it provides workers with security and trust to be protected by the labor law. The role of the

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[118] The interviews with production workers identified different work motives in comparison to the ones of the highly qualified administration workers in the present case: the simple need for income due to previous unemployment; stable work conditions (in comparison to informal work); to make the family proud; retirement in the company (Carina, Denise, Elaine, Fernando, Jennifer, Mauro, personal communication, March 27, 2018).

[119] Sennet (2006) coined the expression "a culture of the new capitalism" (p. 13, own translation).

security provided by the application of the collective negotiations of the labor union is even more important considering the political differences between the countries: expatriate contracts framed by a strong German labor union and local contracts in the Mexican political context of flexibilization, outsourcing and growing precarity of work to attract foreign investment by selling a cheap work force (see e.g. Mendonça, 2017; Mendoza, 2017; Rodrigues & Ramalho, 2007; Ramalho, 2010; Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2017).

In accordance to the present research findings, the stronger proximity between leaders and subordinates with more participation was one of the characteristics with which the interviewees described the German work culture (Cristiano, Joel, personal communication, March 28, 2018). Similarly, Brazilian subordinates experienced difficulties to understand the objective feedback they received about their performance from German leaders due to the lack of explanations and details (context information). In accordance to the Mexican work culture existed a discrepancy between a more generalist profile to approach work issues with the need for details and flexibility and the objective communication focusing on one aspect. This difficulty was overcome by time due to an unconscious evolution of the collaboration between Germans and Brazilians in the plant rooted in personal adaptation and the joint feeling of belonging to one multinational company. Joel interpreted a change from a period with "myths" (Joel, own translation, personal communication, March 28, 2018) and fear of the Brazilians caused by an image of a German coworker who cannot be contradicted simply because he works in the headquarters. This image was constructed since the German coworkers expressed an owner role of the power about the work process which led to a cultural shock and political problems because both did not show any effort to understand each others' approaches.

This experience in the Brazilian plant is an example of the dangerous consequences the

application of cultural stereotypes and prejudices in the environment of work can have due to their unconscious influence on an individual's behavior.[120] De la Cerda and Núñez (1996) concluded about 40 reviewed academic studies about the Mexican worker that "The words creative, lazy, improvising or spontaneous, playful and imaginative, unpunctual, irresponsible and submissive are part of a popular image of the Mexican worker." (p. 174, own translation). Some of these characteristics will probably be evidenced in the reality of certain Mexican workers, however many managers (including those with academic education) exercise their leadership based on prejudices, which are reflected in their professional practice: A manager who is convinced that the employees are lazy, will tend to be intolerant and distrusting, use punishment and watch his or her subordinates; and with this leadership behavior, the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecies is generated (De la Cerda & Núñez, 1996).

Precisely this problem was empirically evidenced by Hernández (2012) in her case study about a German director of a Mexican maquiladora (of a German company) who acted in response to the cultural reference of the Mexican "workforce as "passive", easy to manage, although with little initiative and potentially lazy." (p. 235, own translation). According to her research findings, the foreign directors (including the German one) defined Mexican workers as potentially lazy and without aspirations which is interpreted as racism and a feeling of

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[120] According to Reygadas (1998), the formulation of stereotypes is one approach to the Mexican work culture that was enriched with empirical studies since no stereotype can reflect the diversity and complexity of opinions and attitudes revealed in numbers. Nevertheless, cultural variables are difficult to operationalize, and it is never possible to avoid the frame of subjectivity in the construction or interpretation of cultural data. Characterizing the work culture of a society is a very difficult task due to the internal diversity of each nation, experienced changes, mixtures and intersections in different national cultures and the subjective character of every cultural phenomenon.

superiority of a developed country.[121] Study findings like the ones of Hernández (2012) evidence why foreign investment of capital is seen critically in Mexican academic research in the field sociology of work. Negative stereotypes of foreigners about Mexicans, the cultural reference of "an indigenous person sitting under a tree with a large sombrero" (Hernández, 2012, p. 236, own translation) are searched and found in the discourse of foreign professionals.

Returning to the present research results, the German interview participants have not mentioned aspects such as laziness and distrust in their Mexican coworkers and subordinates; even the expressed complaints about unpunctuality and unreliability were not explained with missing trust, motivation or commitment to work. The quantitative approach rather contradicted such arguments by emphasizing the trust expressed by the German leaders in their subordinates as well as the commitment to hard work the Germans observe in their Mexican coworkers.

The study findings can be compared with the consideration of two fundamental implications: The present research participants represent a small portion of each society and merely the administration level of work is addressed. The high educational level of the participants implies that the Mexican part of the research unit is only a small share of the whole Mexican society which is the same case with the German part, however to a less significant degree due to the access to free superior education. In consequence, the work motivation of the employees is not found in the lowest level of satisfaction of basic needs (see Maslow's pyramid of needs, Maslow, 2012); this work force is rather characterized with the power to almost select employment in comparison to the rest of the labor market in Mexico characterized with informal

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[121] According to Bartra (1987), the national character of the Mexican is an invention, a fictive creation that was elaborated by diverse groups of power and dominant classes using it to exploit of the idea of a Mexican society characterized with indiscipline, idleness, distrust and inferiority.

employment and formal employment with precarious labor conditions.

Another determining aspect for comparisons is that most of the studies about work in the automotive industry merely analyzed manual work, in which *obreros* are seen as a different social class than foreign managers in leadership functions. However, in the present research unit, both groups (Mexican and German workers) represent only small portions of their respective societies who have superior education, come from medium to high social classes (always in relation to their respective societies) and occupy highly specialized professions.

Nevertheless, although both groups represent a rather privileged level of each respective society, the comparison needs to always keep in mind the different labor realities: Germany - in comparison - with good and stable labor conditions in the automotive industry rooted in the historical strength of labor unions and a social security system that includes valuable public superior education, medical and unemployment protection; and Mexico with labor conditions that do not adequately value high qualification due to the lack of strength of collective action and the political economic strategy to attract foreign investment with a low-cost work force, in addition to a disadvantage of public education in comparison to private education.

The different points of reference can explain the presented difficulties of a global work force. In the Brazilian case, the created difference between belonging to the Brazilian plant or to the headquarters was overcome because nowadays both see themselves as part of the multinational corporation and try to adapt and understand (including the language) one another. In the opinion of Joel (personal communication, March 28, 2018), this change was possible because of the joint feeling to belong to a global work force that is more diverse but has better relationships that are not determined by myths and that are necessary for everyone to reach the common goal (the quality product). This example of an evolution in the Brazilian plant is

essential for the present recommendations: The Brazilians and Germans had problems in the intercultural collaboration caused by the arrival of Germans insisting on their own approach and a supposed impossibility to disagree by the Brazilians. The difficulties were overcome by an effort of both to understand the others' perspective (including the others' language). Since this adaptation took its time in the Brazilian location, the present study unit is now asked to learn from their mistakes by addressing these similar problems right from the start.

Finally, this thesis itself was elaborated in a transnational space since the researcher is a German migrant who studied and researched in Mexico. The researcher is conscious about the influences of her nationality as well as language abilities; it is therefore possible that the researcher herself caused a bias in the study which is hereby presented and minimized with the constant discussion and academic exchange with German, Mexican and Brazilian researchers and employees of the automotive industry to include diverse points of view.

The academic exchange with two universities in Brazil made it possible to embed the findings in the diverse conditions that coin interactions at work. To profound the influence of each context condition, subsequent research is suggested to compare the results. Since the present study unit is a German OEM operating in Mexico, it is recommended to ask the same research questions in other subsidiaries in Mexico and Germany of the same OEM or in a Mexican company operating in Germany. The analysis of career paths with life history research (see e.g. Dunpath & Samuel, 2009) offers the possibility to get insight about the interrelations between the context conditions and intercultural work; narratives about the arrival to a position in a multicultural work environment as in the example of Rombaldi and Tomizaki (2017) can inform about differences and similarities between Mexican and German professionals and the opportunity of a social ascent. It is furthermore suggested to study the German expatriates in

Mexico and the Mexican inpatriates in Germany following the example of Padilla-DelaTorre

(2010). A further perspective can be provided by research about work culture at the production

level to analyze relationships between Mexican and German production workers. A research

approach to representatives of the labor unions in Mexico and Germany offers the possibility to

profound the information about the different labor conditions in the countries.

In conclusion, the empirical results in this case study partly confirm and partly contradict

theoretical descriptions about the Mexican and German work culture. The theoretical perspective

of symbolic interactionism enabled to analyze the symbolic messages that are sent in the daily

interactions at work. The three-dimensional concept of work culture developed by Reygadas

(2002) made it possible to part from the negotiations and conflicts in the interaction to

understand the specific cultural expressions that are present in the local context about work at the

administration level. In addition to the existence of a variety of organizational conditions,

different national cultures associated with work were detected. In consequence, the spatial

fragmentation of the work processes (including digital space) of a global work force involves a

particular experience as the result of the interaction between subjects who use their symbolic

ability in an active pattern.

In conclusion, the contribution of the present thesis is based on the critical competence of

the social sciences in comparison to the field of administration (see also Lauring, 2011; Law,

2013). Simplistic suggestions about behavior in cultural diverse work teams without critical

scrutiny are not adequate because the subjectivity of every social actor in the work place leads to

active participation within a frame of action to create and modify rules. This perspective relies on

the fundamental assumptions of symbolic interactionism that incorporates the actors and their

social contexts of interaction in the study of labor identities with a focus on the analysis of social

relationships at work, the daily practice and the reflexive action of the social actors. The present thesis thus contributes to Lauring's (2011) call "(…) for a more nuanced and dynamic conception of culture than is seen in much literature on intercultural communication and international business and management (…)." (p. 232). This research includes the discussion about how the local organizational reality forms the understanding and use of cultural differences in work interactions and evidences that the formal work organization and the factual work practices might differ (see Strauss, 1985).

The presented results demonstrate the different dimensions of intercultural collaboration since the interactions between social subjects at work are not only influenced by their cultural backgrounds, but also by personalities and biographies, characteristics of occupations, complexity of work tasks, power games, control mechanisms of the company, as well as external conditions related to the industry and the market. The displayed dimensions are - rather than the negotiation of stereotypes - part of the game that exists between rigidity and flexibility, between transparency and opacity, between frankness and ambiguity; they are part of the continuum and the negotiations. In every company, the social games constructed in its interior assure its continuity because the emerging adjustments avoid its paralysis. The deviations including distrust, disagreements and misunderstandings are also part of the dynamics that regulate the productive space and the strategies the actors use to play the game depend on their capacity to play according to the rules but also to modify them. In every situation additionally interfere the objectives of the company that establishes its own mechanisms to reach efficiency and profitability despite any intercultural difficulties. These regulations of the work place are the fundament on which the cooperation is produced; the production of collaboration thus takes place in this environment in which the subjects act within their range of action.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Structure of the In-Depth interviews (November 15, 2017)

Interview number:

Name:

Anonymized name:

Date:

Time:

Introduction and consent form

Personal information (as in the questionnaire):

- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Highest academic / professional degree
- Current work position and starting date
- Disciplinary leadership tasks: yes or no
- Nationality of your boss
- Work/study experience in a different culture: yes or no (country, duration)

Thinking in your daily work activities, where do you observe distinct forms of work between Mexicans and German employees?

- Focus on examples / anecdotes that reflect cultural differences
- What do these differences and similarities mean for you?

How did you solve intercultural misunderstandings?

- Are there "cultural translators" (mediators) in your experience?
- What do you think is required for a productive collaboration between Mexican and German workers?

Appendix 2

Description of the In-Depth interviews

Time period: 4/12/17 – 22/12/17

Duration: 20-25 minutes per person

Number of persons: 8

- 1 Mexican manager
- 1 German manager
- 3 Mexican subordinates
- 3 German subordinates

Desired characteristics of the participants:

- Willingness to share opinion, interest in the topic
- No language difficulties in the expression of opinions in English
- Same proportion of Mexicans and Germans
- Different positions: managers and subordinates
- With and without work/study experience in cultures different from the origin
- Short and long experience in this office
- Different ages
- Both genders

Interview structure:

(1) Introduction Magdalena:
   - o   Confidentiality statement.
   - o   Agreement to the recording of voice (the transcription of the interview will be reviewed by the participant and if necessary corrected until the approval of the participant)
   - o   Research interest; objectives of the thesis
   - o   Interview objective: to know the personal opinion, not a generalization

(2) Personal information (as in the questionnaire):
   - o   Age, gender, nationality
   - o   Highest academic / professional degree
   - o   Current work position and starting date
   - o   Disciplinary leadership tasks
   - o   Nationality of your boss
   - o   Work/study experience in a different culture

(3) Differences and similarities between both work cultures:
   - o   Which ones do you observe in your day-to-day interaction (examples)?
   - o   What do they mean for you?

(4) Requirements of productive collaboration
   - o   What do you think is needed?

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your agreeing to participate in this academic research about the Mexican and German work culture in the automotive industry. The interview aims to obtain your opinion about both work cultures in order to identify characteristics of productive collaboration between employees from both cultural backgrounds.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from academic institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used.

Please initial the boxes below and sign this consent form to confirm that you agree with each statement:

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time from the interview without giving any reason. In addition, should I not wish to answer a particular question, I am free to decline my answer. ☐

- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential and that my name will be anonymized. My real name will not be linked with the research materials and will not be identified or identifiable in the reports that result from the research. ☐

- I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for the transcription and analysis of the interview which will be realized by the principal researcher Magdalena Zeth. ☐

- I will receive the transcript of the interview and I have the opportunity to correct any errors. ☐

- The access to the interview transcript will be limited to me, the principal researcher Magdalena Zeth and the academic researchers that collaborate in the study. ☐

- I agree to the use of my anonymized answers for the exclusive purpose of academic research conducted by Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes. The study results may be published in academic theses, articles and presentations; maintaining the anonymity of its respondents. ☐

Name of participant	Date	Signature

Principal researcher	Date	Signature

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the responsible researcher Magdalena Zeth: Blvd. Miguel de la Madrid #98, Cerrada Puerta Norte #116, 20900 Jesús María; 449 3413414; lena_zeth@web.de; as well as the department of sociology at Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, Av. Universidad # 940, 20131 Aguascalientes.

The participant receives a copy of this consent form.

Appendix 4

Structure of the questionnaire

Introduction and privacy and confidentiality statement

Section 1: Personal information.
- Age in years
- Gender
- Nationality
- Highest professional / academic degree
- What languages do you speak on a business-fluent level?
- In which department do you currently work?
- When did you start your current work position?
- What is the type of your labor contract?
- Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?
- What is the nationality of your boss?
- Have you worked before in a country different from your origin?

Section 2: Work culture in three words.
- What are the first three words that spontaneously come to your mind thinking about the Mexican work culture?
- …and about the German work culture?

Section 3: My work environment.

Thinking about your current work situation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
• I always know the current status of my work tasks.				
• I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.				
• I need clearer instructions from my boss.				
• I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach.				
• I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability.				
• I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans.				
• Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit.				
• Expatriates hold back company knowledge for personal benefits.				
• The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates and locals influence our daily collaboration.				
• During a regular work day I speak my mother tongue more than English.				

▪ I fulfill tasks from Mexican coworkers differently than from German coworkers.				
▪ I express requests differently to Mexican than to German coworkers.				

Section 4: My coworkers.

Please decide, if the statement describes your Mexican or German coworkers, both groups or neither one of them.

	My Mexican coworkers…	My German coworkers…	Both groups…	None of my coworkers…
… work on one thing at a time.				
… prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.				
… are inflexible and stubborn.				
… express criticism (too) sensitively.				
… have a need for formal meetings.				
… are unafraid of conflict.				
… exaggerate documentation.				
… tend to avoid conflicts.				
… communicate their mistakes.				
… express criticism (too) directly.				
… work on several things at a time.				
… share private information and feelings with coworkers.				
… avoid to speak English.				

Section 5: Productive collaboration.

Please rank with a click each of the following items from 1 being the most important to 6 being he least important requirement of productive collaboration between Mexicans and Germans.

- ▪ Identification with the company and the product
- ▪ Consciousness about cultural and personal differences
- ▪ Clear expression of disagreement and criticism
- ▪ Trainings (e.g. teambuildings)
- ▪ Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German
- ▪ Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy

Which action of your coworkers from the other cultural background is the most difficult to understand?

I appreciate the most in the other work culture:

Appendix 5

Structure of the In-Depth interviews (March 27 and 28, 2018)

Interview number:
Name:
Anonymized name:
Date:
Time:

Introduction and consent form

Personal information (as in the questionnaire):

- Nationality

- Current work position and starting date

- Work tasks of this position

- Work/study experience in different countries / with different work cultures?

- Experience with the German and the Mexican work culture?

Labor conditions Brazil:

- Labor market of the highly-qualified work force

- What labor conditions apply to the groups of employees? (local and expatriate contracts)

- Responsibilities and representation: who represents whom?

- Recruiting of the highly qualified work force?

- Distribution of Germans and Brazilians in the company? Expatriates and local employees? Leaders and subordinates?

- Opening of the plant / start of the collaboration?

Interaction of the employees (administration level):

- What can you tell me about the German work culture?

- Thinking in your daily work activities, where do you observe distinct forms of work between Brazilians and German employees? (examples / anecdotes)

- How do the Germans and the Brazilians collaborate (administration level)?

- What are difficulties in the intercultural collaboration?

Appendix 6

Descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic variables

		Age in years	Gender	Nationality	Highest professional/academic degree	Do you speak English on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak Spanish on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak German on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak another language on a business-fluent level?	In which department do you currently work?	Start of the current work position	Type of labor contract	Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	Nationality of the boss	International work experience
N	Valid	69	64	69	67	69	69	69	69	66	60	66	66	66	66
	Missing	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	9	3	3	3	3
Mean		2,04	1,80	1,46	1,61	1,00	,67	,57	,14	4,56	4,27	1,38	1,52	2,08	2,14
Median		2,00	2,00	1,00	2,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	,00	5,00	4,00	1,00	1,00	2,00	2,00
Mode		1	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	5	3	1	1	2	1
Std. Deviation		1,104	,406	,558	,602	,000	,475	,499	,355	1,025	1,413	,489	,996	,474	1,080
Variance		1,219	,164	,311	,362	,000	,225	,249	,126	1,050	1,995	,239	,992	,225	1,166
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	6	7	2	4	3	4

Other Nationality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Brazilian	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	Mexican and German	1	1,4	1,4	2,9
	No other nationality	67	97,1	97,1	100,0
	Total	69	100,0	100,0	

Other degree

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dr.-Ing.	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	No answer given	3	4,3	4,3	5,8
	No other degree	65	94,2	94,2	100,0
	Total	69	100,0	100,0	

Other language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	French	5	7,2	7,2	7,2
	No other language	59	85,5	85,5	92,8
	Portuguese	4	5,8	5,8	98,6
	Russian	1	1,4	1,4	100,0
	Total	69	100,0	100,0	

Other department

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Claim Management	1	1,4	1,5	1,5
	Corporate Security	1	1,4	1,5	3,0
	Head of Company	1	1,4	1,5	4,5
	Logistics	1	1,4	1,5	6,1
	No answer given	1	1,4	1,5	7,6
	No other position	57	82,6	86,4	93,9
	Product Cost Engineer	1	1,4	1,5	95,5
	Project Management Localization	1	1,4	1,5	97,0
	Ramp Up	1	1,4	1,5	98,5
	TF	1	1,4	1,5	100,0
	Total	66	95,7	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	3	4,3		
Total		69	100,0		

Other nationality of the boss

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Brazilian	9	13,0	13,4	13,4
	French	1	1,4	1,5	14,9
	No other nationality	57	82,6	85,1	100,0
	Total	67	97,1	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	2	2,9		
Total		69	100,0		

International work experience

Yes, in total less than 1 year in: * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Yes, in total less than 1 year in:	Chile	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	China	Count	1	1	0	2
		% within Nationality	2,6%	4,0%	0,0%	3,0%
	Country not mentioned	Count	4	1	0	5
		% within Nationality	10,3%	4,0%	0,0%	7,6%
	Dominican Republic, United States	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	France	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Germany	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	India	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Japan	Count	1	1	0	2
		% within Nationality	2,6%	4,0%	0,0%	3,0%
	Korea	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Mexico, South Africa	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	N/A	Count	25	17	2	44
		% within Nationality	64,1%	68,0%	100,0%	66,7%
	United States	Count	2	1	0	3
		% within Nationality	5,1%	4,0%	0,0%	4,5%
	United States, China	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	United States, Singapore, China, Malaysia, Argentina	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	United States, Thailand	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
Total		Count	39	25	2	66
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Yes, in total between 1 and 3 years in: * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Yes, in total between 1 and 3 years in:	Brazil	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Country not mentioned	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Germany	Count	4	0	0	4
		% within Nationality	10,3%	0,0%	0,0%	6,1%
	Germany, Poland	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	2,6%	0,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	Italy	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	N/A	Count	34	20	2	56
		% within Nationality	87,2%	80,0%	100,0%	84,8%
	South Africa	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	United States, China, Dubai, England	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
Total		Count	39	25	2	66
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Yes, in total more than 3 years in: * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Yes, in total more than 3 years in:	China	Count	0	3	0	3
		% within Nationality	0,0%	12,0%	0,0%	4,5%
	Country not mentioned	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within Nationality	0,0%	8,0%	0,0%	3,0%
	Germany	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	1,5%
	Mexico	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality	0,0%	4,0%	0,0%	1,5%
	N/A	Count	38	16	1	55
		% within Nationality	97,4%	64,0%	50,0%	83,3%
	United States	Count	1	1	0	2
		% within Nationality	2,6%	4,0%	0,0%	3,0%
	United States, China	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within Nationality	0,0%	8,0%	0,0%	3,0%
Total		Count	39	25	2	66
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Pearson correlations

		Age in years	Gender	Nationality	Highest professional / academic degree:	Do you speak English on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak Spanish on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak German on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak another language on a business-fluent level?	In which department do you currently work?	Start of the current work position	Type of labor contract	Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	Nationality of the boss	International work experience
Age in years	Pearson	1	,164	,492**	,486**	.c	-,421**	,328**	,096	-,096	-,168	,546**	,550**	,178	,507**
	Sig.		,196	,000	,000		,000	,006	,431	,444	,199	,000	,000	,154	,000
Gender	Pearson	,164	1	,132	,184	.c	-,257*	,338**	,073	-,207	-,370**	,232	,086	,024	,192
	Sig.	,196		,299	,149		,041	,006	,564	,106	,005	,070	,508	,854	,134
Nationality	Pearson	,492**	,132	1	,435**	.c	-,574**	,629**	,027	-,007	-,025	,790**	,472**	,163	,461**
	Sig.	,000	,299		,000		,000	,000	,826	,956	,847	,000	,000	,191	,000
Degree:	Pearson	,486**	,184	,435**	1	.c	-,439**	,269*	-,008	-,177	-,111	,508**	,308*	,108	,215
	Sig.	,000	,149	,000			,000	,028	,946	,158	,403	,000	,013	,393	,086
Spanish	Pearson	-,421**	-,257*	-,574**	-,439**	.c	1	-,496**	,029	,089	,002	,741**	-,269*	-,167	-,247*
	Sig.	,000	,041	,000	,000			,000	,812	,479	,990	,000	,029	,181	,046
German	Pearson	,328**	,338**	,629**	,269*	.c	-,496**	1	-,054	-,215	-,218	,713**	,353**	,147	,485**
	Sig.	,006	,006	,000	,028		,000		,658	,083	,095	,000	,004	,239	,000
another language	Pearson	,096	,073	,027	-,008	.c	,029	-,054	1	,099	,087	-,069	,207	,427**	,025
	Sig.	,431	,564	,826	,946		,812	,658		,427	,510	,584	,095	,000	,841
department	Pearson	-,096	-,207	-,007	-,177	.c	,089	-,215	,099	1	,311*	-,123	,165	,133	,055
	Sig.	,444	,106	,956	,158		,479	,083	,427		,015	,324	,186	,288	,661
Start of the current work pos	Pearson	-,168	-,370**	-,025	-,111	.c	,002	-,218	,087	,311*	1	-,052	-,129	-,087	-,344**
	Sig.	,199	,005	,847	,403		,990	,095	,510	,015		,692	,327	,511	,007

ition n															
Type of labor contract	Pearson	,546**	,232	,790**	,508**	.ᵉ	-,741**	,713**	-,069	-,123	-,052	1	,415**	,206	,484**
	Sig.	,000	,070	,000	,000		,000	,000	,584	,324	,692		,001	,097	,000
disciplinary leadership tasks?	Pearson	,550**	,086	,472**	,308*	.ᵉ	-,269*	,353**	,207	,165	-,129	,415**	1	,339**	,391**
	Sig.	,000	,508	,000	,013		,029	,004	,095	,186	,327	,001		,005	,001
Nationality of the boss	Pearson	,178	,024	,163	,108	.ᵉ	-,167	,147	-,427**	,133	-,087	,206	,339**	1	,310*
	Sig.	,154	,854	,191	,393		,181	,239	,000	,288	,511	,097	,005		,011
International work experience	Pearson	,507**	,192	,461**	,215	.ᵉ	-,247*	,485**	,025	,055	-,344**	,484**	,391**	,310*	1
	Sig.	,000	,134	,000	,086		,046	,000	,841	,661	,007	,000	,001	,011	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Type of labor contract * Age in years Crosstabulation								
			Age in years					Total
			20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	over 60	
Type of labor contract	Local	Count	24	13	3	1	0	41
		% within Age in years	85,7%	65,0%	33,3%	12,5%	0,0%	62,1%
	Expatriate	Count	4	7	6	7	1	25
		% within Age in years	14,3%	35,0%	66,7%	87,5%	100,0%	37,9%
Total		Count	28	20	9	8	1	66
		% within Age in years	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? * Age in years Crosstabulation								
			Age in years					Total
			20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	over 60	
Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	No.	Count	26	16	3	3	0	48
		% within Age in years	92,9%	80,0%	33,3%	37,5%	0,0%	72,7%
	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Count	2	3	3	1	1	10
		% within Age in years	7,1%	15,0%	33,3%	12,5%	100,0%	15,2%
	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Count	0	1	3	4	0	8
		% within Age in years	0,0%	5,0%	33,3%	50,0%	0,0%	12,1%
Total		Count	28	20	9	8	1	66
		% within Age in years	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

International work experience * Age in years Crosstabulation								
			Age in years					Total
			20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	over 60	
International work experience	No.	Count	12	8	3	0	0	23
		% within Age in years	42,9%	40,0%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	34,8%
	Yes, in total less than 1 year in:	Count	11	7	2	2	0	22
		% within Age in years	39,3%	35,0%	22,2%	25,0%	0,0%	33,3%
	Yes, in total between 1 and 3 years in:	Count	5	3	1	1	0	10
		% within Age in years	17,9%	15,0%	11,1%	12,5%	0,0%	15,2%
	Yes, in total more than 3 years in:	Count	0	2	3	5	1	11
		% within Age in years	0,0%	10,0%	33,3%	62,5%	100,0%	16,7%
Total		Count	28	20	9	8	1	66
		% within Age in years	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Type of labor contract * Highest professional / academic degree: Crosstabulation			Highest professional / academic degree:			
			Licenciatura, Bachelor	Maestría, Master, Diplom	Other:	Total
Type of labor contract	Local	Count	27	13	1	41
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	90,0%	41,9%	25,0%	63,1%
	Expatriate	Count	3	18	3	24
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	10,0%	58,1%	75,0%	36,9%
Total		Count	30	31	4	65
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
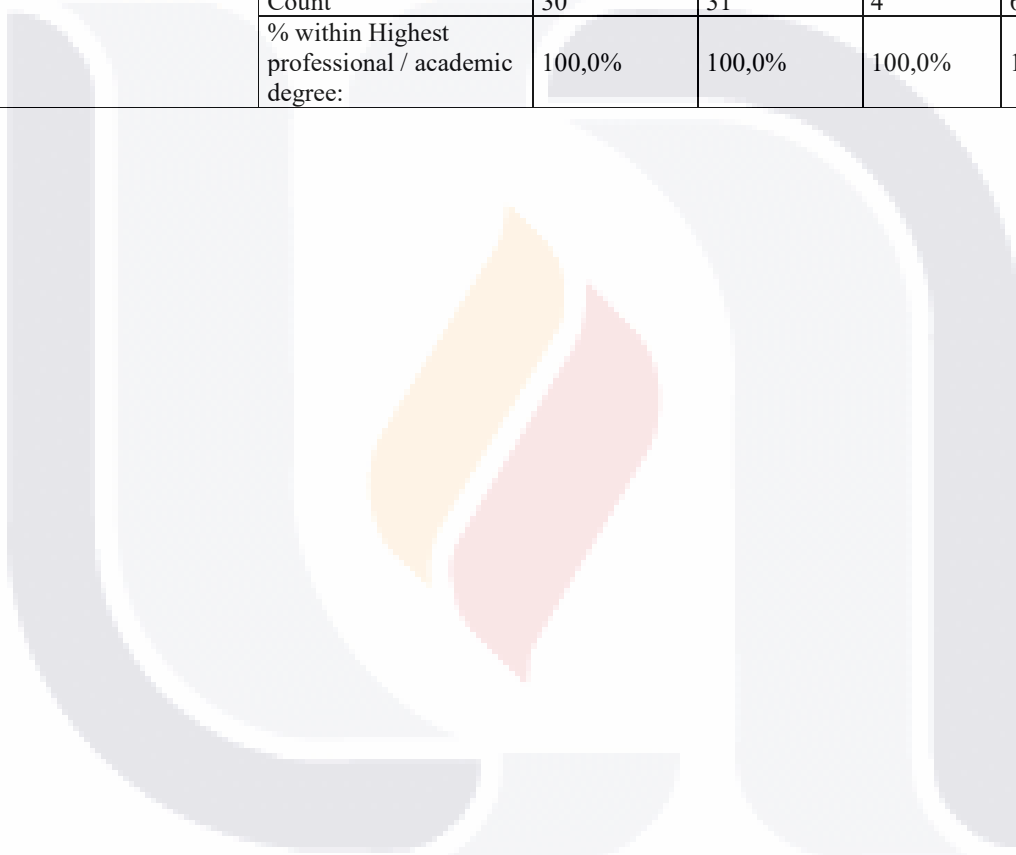
Appendix 7

First word about the Mexican work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation					
		Nationality			
		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
First word about the Mexican work culture	Arduo	1	0	0	1
	Arriving too late	0	1	0	1
	Boss oriented	0	1	0	1
	Chatty; group-oriented	0	1	0	1
	Clever/interested/open	0	1	0	1
	Commited	1	0	0	1
	Commitment	1	0	0	1
	Courage	1	0	0	1
	Creative	1	0	0	1
	Creativo	1	0	0	1
	Dedicated workers	1	0	0	1
	Fast	1	0	0	1
	Flexible	1	2	0	3
	Friendly	1	5	0	6
	Friendly guys	1	0	0	1
	Fun	1	0	0	1
	Hard & long working	0	1	0	1
	Hard work	2	0	0	2
	Hardworking	2	0	0	2
	Improvisado	1	0	0	1
	Kind	1	1	0	2
	Lazy	2	0	0	2
	Long time	0	1	0	1
	Long working hours	1	0	0	1
	Mañana	0	1	0	1
	Messy	1	0	0	1
	Motivated	0	1	0	1
	Nice	1	0	0	1
	Not efficient, but flexibel	0	1	0	1
	Open mind	1	0	0	1
	Optimist	1	0	0	1
	Passionate	1	0	0	1
	Practical	1	0	0	1
	Proactive	1	0	0	1
	Punctuality not first priority	0	1	0	1
	Quality	1	0	0	1
	Reactive work culture	0	1	0	1
	Relaxed	0	1	0	1
	Sloppiness	0	0	1	1
	Sluggish	0	1	0	1
	Spontaneous	3	0	0	3
	Team	1	0	0	1
	Together	0	1	0	1
	Trabajadores	1	0	0	1
	Unpuenktlich	0	1	0	1
	Unreliability	0	0	1	1
	Warmth	1	0	0	1
Total		35	23	2	60

Second word about the Mexican work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation				
		Nationality		Total
		Mexican	German	Other:	
Second word about the Mexican work culture	Burocracy	0	0	1	1
	Compromise	1	0	0	1
	Creative	2	1	0	3
	Creativity	1	0	0	1
	Desorganizado	1	0	0	1
	Distracted	0	1	0	1
	Enthusiastic	1	0	0	1
	Fast	2	0	0	2
	Flexible	1	0	0	1
	Flexible in time	0	1	0	1
	Friendly	1	0	0	1
	Hard work	4	0	0	4
	Hardworking	2	0	0	2
	Hierarchical	1	0	0	1
	Honest	1	0	0	1
	Impuntual	2	0	0	2
	Inteligencia	1	0	0	1
	Interested and willing to learn	0	1	0	1
	Long working day incl.long breaks	0	1	0	1
	Missing initiative to take responsibility	0	1	0	1
	Nearly chinese culture style	0	1	0	1
	Never on time	1	0	0	1
	Nobody cares	0	1	0	1
	Noisy	1	0	0	1
	Open	0	1	0	1
	Passion	3	0	0	3
	Patient	0	1	0	1
	Personal relations	0	1	0	1
	Practic	1	0	0	1
	Procrastination	1	1	0	2
	Professional	0	1	0	1
	Relaxed	0	1	0	1
	Reminder	0	1	0	1
	Shortterm	0	1	0	1
	Slow	0	0	1	1
	Socializing	0	1	0	1
	Specialized skills	1	0	0	1
	Spontaneous	0	1	0	1
	Talkative	1	0	0	1
	Top down culture	0	1	0	1
	Unproductivity	1	0	0	1
	Unpunctual	1	0	0	1
	Unreliable	1	1	0	2
	Unstrukturiert	0	1	0	1
	Unverbindlichkeit	0	1	0	1
	Warm people	1	0	0	1
	Willingness	0	1	0	1
	Work hard	1	0	0	1
Total		35	23	2	60

Third word about the Mexican work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation				
		Nationality		
		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Third word about the Mexican work culture	Always an excuse...lo que pasa...	0	1	0	1
	Cheap	1	0	0	1
	Cheerful	1	0	0	1
	Commitment	2	0	0	2
	Considered	1	0	0	1
	Creative	1	0	0	1
	Dedicated	1	0	0	1
	Dynamic	1	0	0	1
	Easygoing	1	0	0	1
	Enthusiast	1	0	0	1
	Everytime friendly	0	1	0	1
	Extra workload	1	0	0	1
	Eyperienced	0	1	0	1
	Flexibility	0	0	1	1
	Freundlichkeit	0	1	0	1
	Friendly	1	0	0	1
	Friends	0	1	0	1
	Funny	1	0	0	1
	Helpful	0	1	0	1
	Hierarchical	0	1	0	1
	Hierarchy-oriented	0	1	0	1
	High Context	1	0	0	1
	Ingenioso	0	0	1	1
	Interpersonal	1	0	0	1
	It wasn't me	0	1	0	1
	Late	1	0	0	1
	Learn willing	0	1	0	1
	Mañana	0	1	0	1
	Mikromanagement	0	1	0	1
	Multitask	1	0	0	1
	No lead	0	1	0	1
	No negative reports	0	1	0	1
	Nobody says something	0	1	0	1
	Not efficient	1	0	0	1
	Not result driven	0	1	0	1
	Old style	1	0	0	1
	Overtime	1	0	0	1
	Passion	1	0	0	1
	Poco productivos	1	0	0	1
	Problem solving	1	0	0	1
	Productive	1	0	0	1
	Quality	1	0	0	1
	Relax	1	0	0	1
	Service oriented	1	0	0	1
	Short term oriented	0	1	0	1
	Slow	0	1	0	1
	Smart	1	0	0	1
	Spontaneous	0	2	0	2
	Structured	1	0	0	1
	Supporting people	1	0	0	1

	Talachero	1	0	0	1
	Team spirit and harmony is important	0	1	0	1
	Thirsty for knowledge	0	1	0	1
	Trabajador	1	0	0	1
	Trouble fixer	1	0	0	1
	Unpunctual	1	0	0	1
	We have no problems	0	1	0	1
Total		34	23	2	59

First word about the German work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation					
		Nationality			
		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
First word about the German work culture	Boss	1	0	0	1
	Boss is leader	0	1	0	1
	Cold people	1	0	0	1
	Cuadrados	1	0	0	1
	Direct	1	0	0	1
	Discipline	6	4	0	10
	Done in short time	0	1	0	1
	Efficient	0	2	0	2
	Focus	1	0	0	1
	Focus on problem	0	1	0	1
	Friendly	0	2	0	2
	Hard to communicate	1	0	0	1
	Methodical	1	0	0	1
	On time	1	1	0	2
	Open	1	0	0	1
	Organization	2	0	0	2
	Organized	2	0	0	2
	Planning to the details	0	1	0	1
	Political	1	0	0	1
	Precision	1	0	0	1
	Preciso	1	0	0	1
	Proactive	0	1	0	1
	Punctual	1	1	0	2
	Punctuality	1	0	0	1
	Puntuales	1	0	0	1
	Responsbility	1	0	0	1
	Rigid	1	0	0	1
	Self learning	1	0	0	1
	Straight	1	0	0	1
	Straightforward	1	0	0	1
	Stress	1	0	0	1
	Strict	3	1	1	5
	Stronger communication	0	1	0	1
	Structured	1	0	0	1
	Struktur	0	1	0	1
	Strukturiert	0	1	0	1
	Trust	0	0	1	1
	Unflexible	0	1	0	1
	Unfriendly	0	1	0	1
	Very detailed even where it is not neccessarry	0	1	0	1
	Work result more important than to be a nice colleague	0	1	0	1

Total		35	23	2	60

Second word about the German work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation					
		Nationality			
		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Second word about the German work culture	Say also no, if its not possible	0	1	0	1
	Accomplish	1	0	0	1
	Accurate	0	1	0	1
	Close mind	1	0	0	1
	Complex	1	0	0	1
	Correct	0	1	0	1
	Deadline	1	0	0	1
	Dedicated	1	0	0	1
	Detail	1	0	0	1
	Direct	0	1	0	1
	Directness	1	0	0	1
	Discipline	1	0	0	1
	Disciplined	1	0	0	1
	Do it now	0	1	0	1
	Efficiency	0	1	1	2
	Efficient	0	3	0	3
	Effizienz	0	1	0	1
	Estrictos	1	0	0	1
	Estructurado	1	0	0	1
	Experienced	0	2	0	2
	Fast	1	0	1	2
	Focus	1	0	0	1
	Focused	1	0	0	1
	Freedom to work	1	0	0	1
	Hard working and focused on results	0	1	0	1
	Harsh	0	1	0	1
	High focus	1	0	0	1
	Insisting on agreements made	0	1	0	1
	Long term oriented	0	1	0	1
	Not open for other opinions	0	1	0	1
	On time with all	1	0	0	1
	Open	1	1	0	2
	Order	1	0	0	1
	Organizados	1	0	0	1
	Own responsability	0	1	0	1
	Perfección	1	0	0	1
	Plan	1	0	0	1
	Planification	1	0	0	1
	Planning	0	1	0	1
	Precise	1	0	0	1
	Prioritised	0	1	0	1
	Puenktlich	0	1	0	1
	Punctual	1	0	0	1
	Quality	2	0	0	2
	Responsible	1	0	0	1
	Rude	1	0	0	1
	Serious	2	0	0	2
	Solution oriented	0	1	0	1

		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
	Square mind	1	0	0	1
	Strict	1	0	0	1
	Transparent	2	0	0	2
Total		35	23	2	60

Third word about the German work culture * Nationality Crosstabulation					
		Nationality			
		Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Third word about the German work culture	Accurate	0	1	0	1
	Arriving and leaving on time	0	1	0	1
	Cero doble caras	1	0	0	1
	Cold	1	0	0	1
	Commitment	1	0	0	1
	Communicative	0	1	0	1
	Concrete	1	0	0	1
	Demanding	1	0	0	1
	Detalle	1	0	0	1
	Difficult	1	0	0	1
	Direct	2	0	0	2
	Direktheit	0	1	0	1
	Discipline	1	0	0	1
	Efficency	1	0	0	1
	Efficient	0	0	1	1
	Exact	0	1	0	1
	Familia	1	0	0	1
	Fast	0	1	0	1
	Flexible	1	0	0	1
	Hard headed and stubborn	0	1	0	1
	Honest	1	0	0	1
	Honesty	1	0	0	1
	I need to succeed	0	1	0	1
	Independent	0	1	0	1
	Individual	1	0	0	1
	Inflexibility	0	0	1	1
	Inflexible	0	1	0	1
	Lack of flexibility	0	1	0	1
	Loyalty	1	0	0	1
	Meetings	0	1	0	1
	Name of the company (confidential)	0	1	0	1
	More trustful	0	1	0	1
	Non-hierarchical	0	1	0	1
	Not so supporting	1	0	0	1
	On schedule	0	1	0	1
	Organized	1	0	0	1
	Planeador	1	0	0	1
	Planning	1	0	0	1
	Productivos	1	0	0	1
	Punctual	1	0	0	1
	Punctuality	1	0	0	1
	Quality	1	0	0	1
	Quiet	1	0	0	1
	Respect	1	0	0	1
	Responsible	2	0	0	2

	Result driven	0	2	0	2
	Right-way	1	0	0	1
	Rule driven	0	1	0	1
	Self managed	1	0	0	1
	Serious	0	1	0	1
	Square thinking	1	0	0	1
	Stressed people	1	0	0	1
	Strong	0	1	0	1
	Target oriented	0	1	0	1
	Timing	1	0	0	1
	Vacations	1	0	0	1
	Zuverlaessig	0	1	0	1
Total		35	23	2	60

Appendix 8

Descriptive statistics of the agreement questions (questionnaire section 3)

Statistics

		I always know the current status of my work tasks.	I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.	I need clearer instructions from my boss.	I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach.	I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability.	I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans.	Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit.	Expatriates hold back company knowledge for personal benefits.	The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates and locals influence our daily collaboration.	During a regular work day I speak my mother tongue more than English.	I fulfill tasks from Mexican coworkers differently than from German coworkers.	I express requests differently to Mexican than to German coworkers.
N	Valid	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Missing	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Mean		3,28	2,65	2,25	3,45	2,73	2,62	3,32	1,80	2,43	2,00	1,87	2,47
Median		3,00	3,00	2,00	4,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,50
Std. Deviation		,691	,954	,932	,649	,861	,783	,701	,755	,871	,864	,650	,929
Variance		,478	,909	,869	,421	,741	,613	,491	,569	,758	,746	,423	,863

I always know the current status of my work tasks.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1,4	1,7	1,7
	Disagree	5	7,2	8,3	10,0
	Agree	30	43,5	50,0	60,0
	Strongly agree	24	34,8	40,0	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I always know the current status of my work tasks.

Mean = 3,28
Std. Dev. = ,691
N = 60
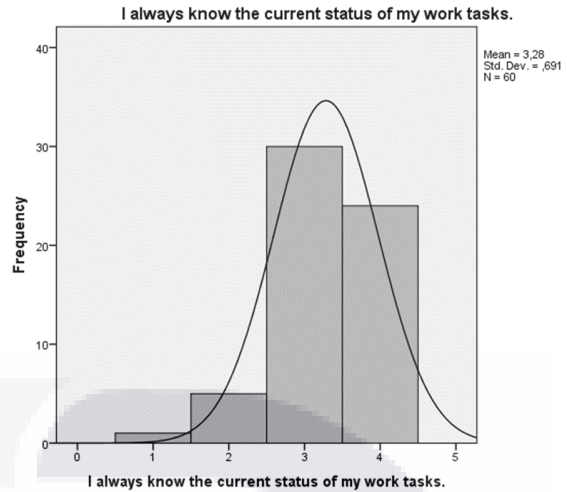
I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	10,1	11,7	11,7
	Disagree	20	29,0	33,3	45,0
	Agree	20	29,0	33,3	78,3
	Strongly agree	13	18,8	21,7	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.

Mean = 2,65
Std. Dev. = ,954
N = 60
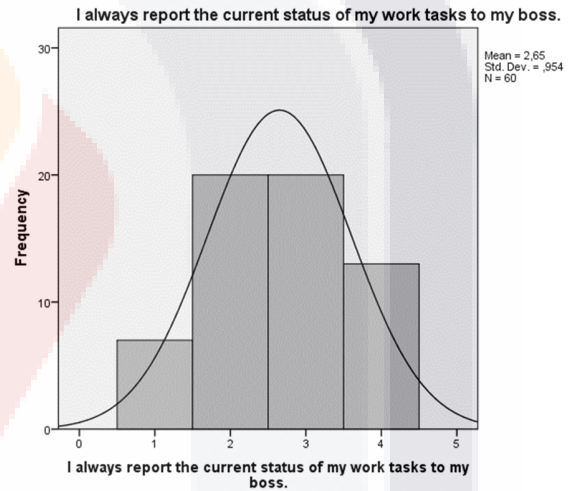
I need clearer instructions from my boss.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	13	18,8	21,7	21,7
	Disagree	26	37,7	43,3	65,0
	Agree	14	20,3	23,3	88,3
	Strongly agree	7	10,1	11,7	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I need clearer instructions from my boss.

Mean = 2,25
Std. Dev. = ,932
N = 60
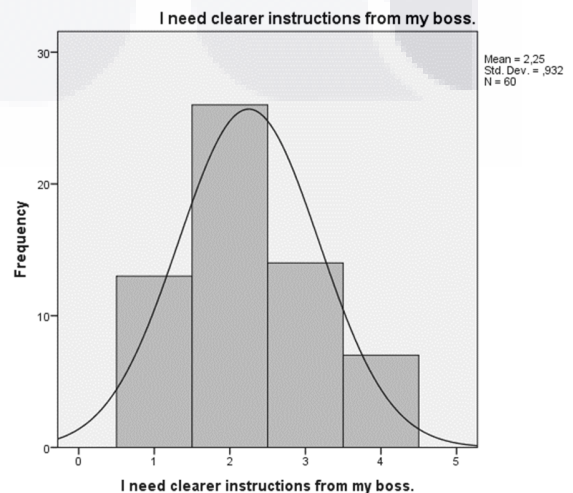
I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1,4	1,7	1,7
	Disagree	2	2,9	3,3	5,0
	Agree	26	37,7	43,3	48,3
	Strongly agree	31	44,9	51,7	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach.

Mean = 3,45
Std. Dev. = ,649
N = 60
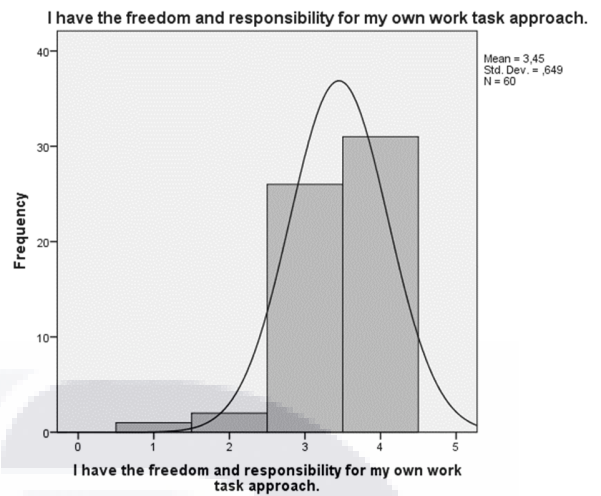
I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	7,2	8,3	8,3
	Disagree	17	24,6	28,3	36,7
	Agree	27	39,1	45,0	81,7
	Strongly agree	11	15,9	18,3	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I need to be insistent due to experiences with unreliability.

Mean = 2,73
Std. Dev. = ,861
N = 60
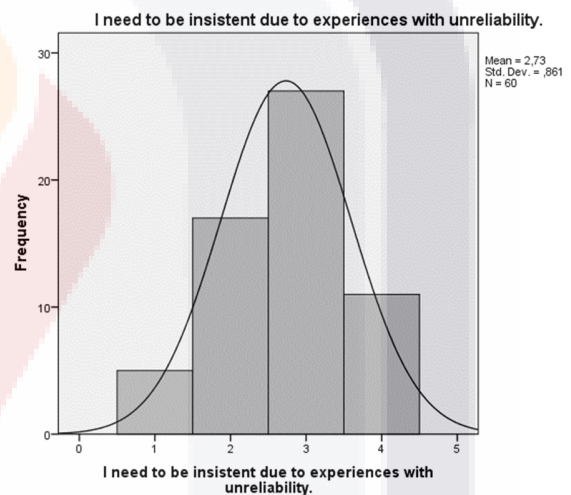
I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	5,8	6,7	6,7
	Disagree	22	31,9	36,7	43,3
	Agree	27	39,1	45,0	88,3
	Strongly agree	7	10,1	11,7	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I have coworkers who are "cultural translators" between Mexicans and Germans.

Mean = 2,62
Std. Dev. = ,783
N = 60
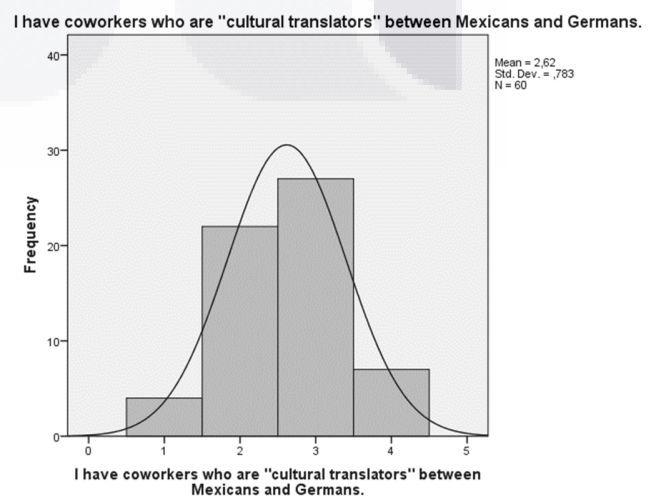
Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1,4	1,7	1,7
	Disagree	5	7,2	8,3	10,0
	Agree	28	40,6	46,7	56,7
	Strongly agree	26	37,7	43,3	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit.

Mean = 3,32
Std. Dev. = ,701
N = 60
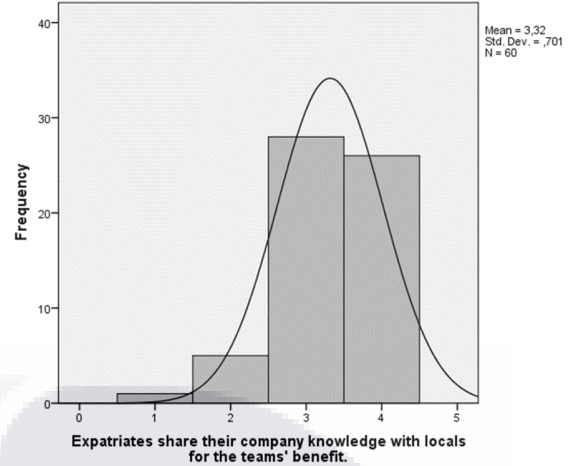
Expatriates hold back company knowledge for personal benefits.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	22	31,9	36,7	36,7
	Disagree	30	43,5	50,0	86,7
	Agree	6	8,7	10,0	96,7
	Strongly agree	2	2,9	3,3	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

Expatriates hold back company knowledge for personal benefits.
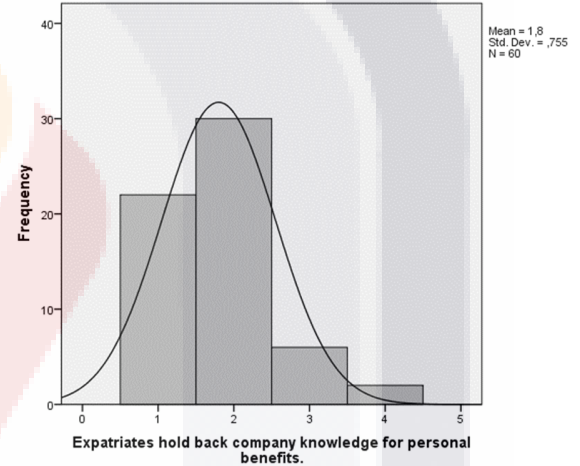
Mean = 1,8
Std. Dev. = ,755
N = 60

The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates and locals influence our daily collaboration.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	10,1	11,7	11,7
	Disagree	28	40,6	46,7	58,3
	Agree	17	24,6	28,3	86,7
	Strongly agree	8	11,6	13,3	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

The different labor conditions between expatriates, inpatriates and locals influence our daily collaboration.

Mean = 2,43
Std. Dev. = ,871
N = 60
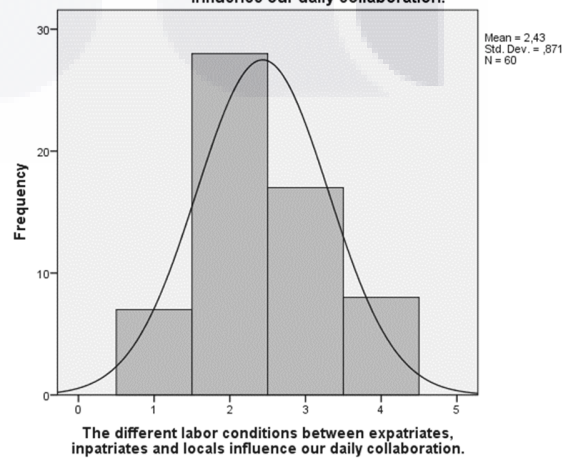
During a regular work day I speak my mother tongue more than English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	26,1	30,0	30,0
	Disagree	28	40,6	46,7	76,7
	Agree	10	14,5	16,7	93,3
	Strongly agree	4	5,8	6,7	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

During a regular work day I speak my mother tongue more than English.
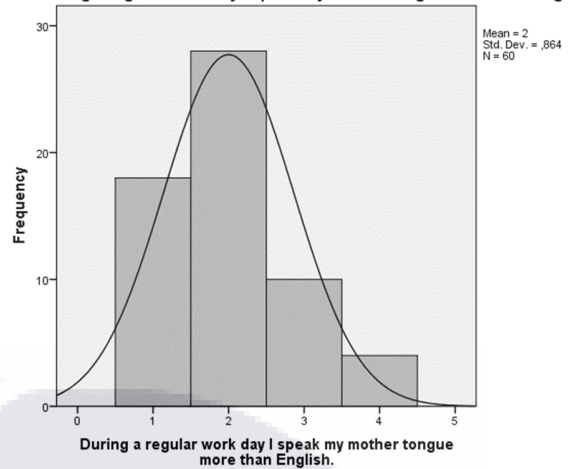
Mean = 2
Std. Dev. = ,864
N = 60

I fulfill tasks from Mexican coworkers differently than from German coworkers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	17	24,6	28,3	28,3
	Disagree	34	49,3	56,7	85,0
	Agree	9	13,0	15,0	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I fulfill tasks from Mexican coworkers differently than from German coworkers.
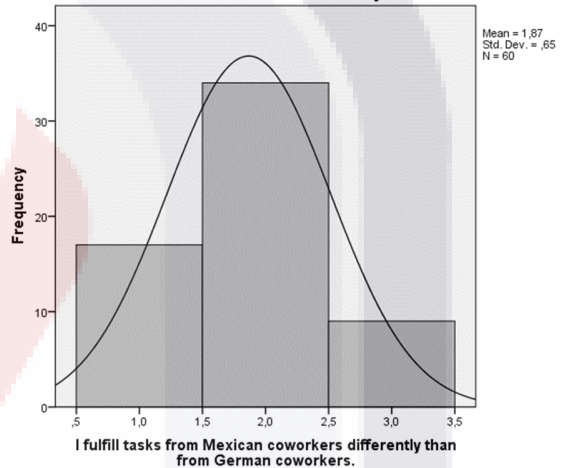
Mean = 1,87
Std. Dev. = ,65
N = 60

I express requests differently to Mexican than to German coworkers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	14,5	16,7	16,7
	Disagree	20	29,0	33,3	50,0
	Agree	22	31,9	36,7	86,7
	Strongly agree	8	11,6	13,3	100,0
	Total	60	87,0	100,0	
Missing	Missing value	9	13,0		
Total		69	100,0		

I express requests differently to Mexican than to German coworkers.

Mean = 2,47
Std. Dev. = ,929
N = 60
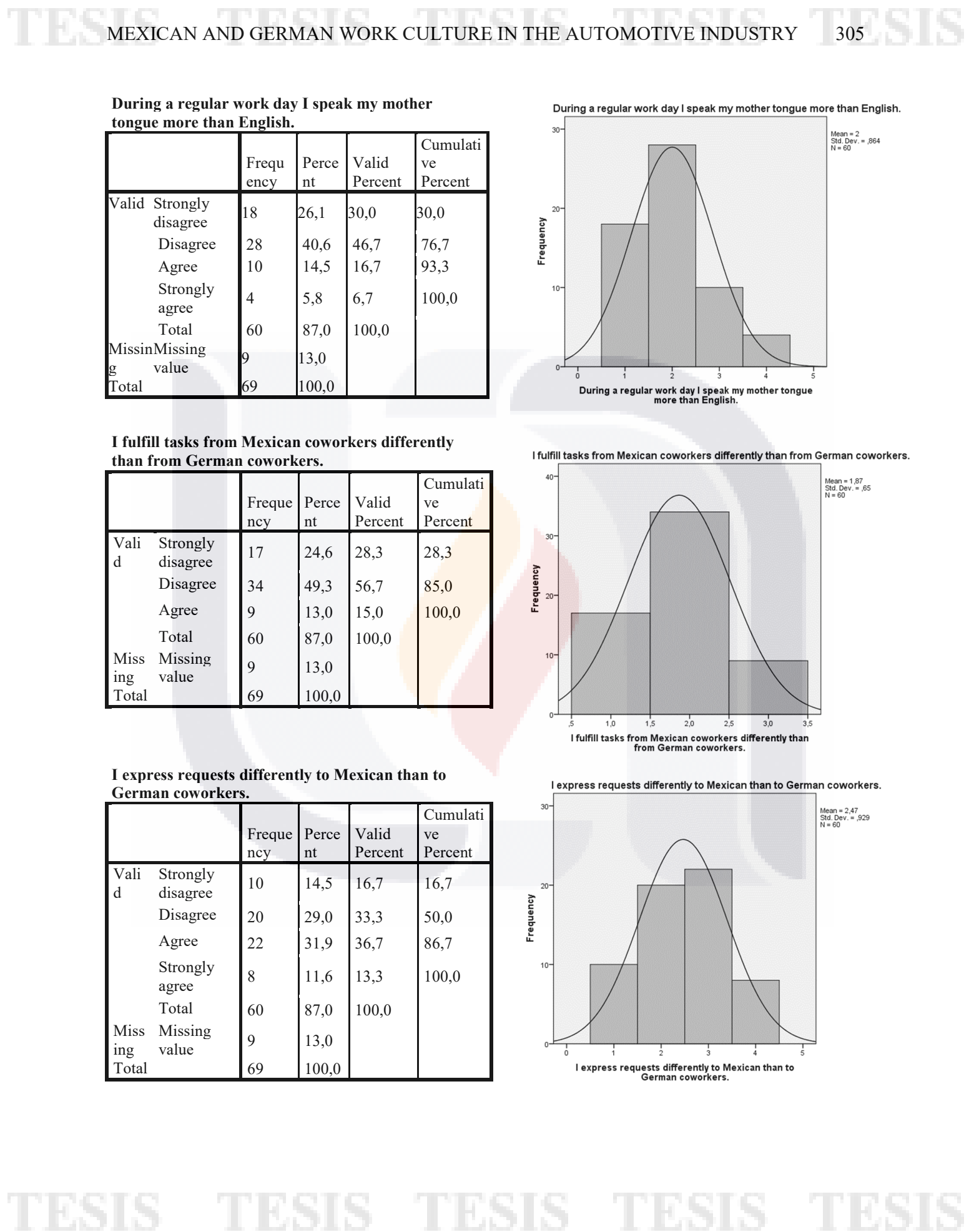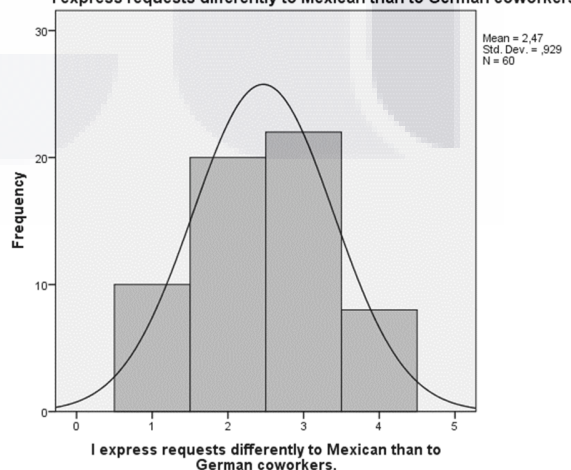
I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss. * Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? Crosstabulation

			Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?			
			No.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Total
I always report the current status of my work tasks to my boss.	Strongly disagree	Count	6	1	0	7
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	14,0%	10,0%	0,0%	11,7%
	Disagree	Count	15	2	3	20
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	34,9%	20,0%	42,9%	33,3%
	Agree	Count	12	6	2	20
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	27,9%	60,0%	28,6%	33,3%
	Strongly agree	Count	10	1	2	13
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	23,3%	10,0%	28,6%	21,7%
Total		Count	43	10	7	60
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach. * Nationality of the boss Crosstabulation

			Nationality of the boss			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
I have the freedom and responsibility for my own work task approach.	Strongly disagree	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Nationality of the boss	0,0%	2,1%	0,0%	1,7%
	Disagree	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within Nationality of the boss	0,0%	4,3%	0,0%	3,3%
	Agree	Count	3	19	4	26
		% within Nationality of the boss	60,0%	40,4%	50,0%	43,3%
	Strongly agree	Count	2	25	4	31
		% within Nationality of the boss	40,0%	53,2%	50,0%	51,7%
Total		Count	5	47	8	60
		% within Nationality of the boss	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit. * Type of labor contract Crosstabulation

			Type of labor contract		Total
			Local	Expatriate	
Expatriates share their company knowledge with locals for the teams' benefit.	Strongly disagree	Count	1	0	1
		% within Type of labor contract	2,7%	0,0%	1,7%
	Disagree	Count	4	1	5
		% within Type of labor contract	10,8%	4,3%	8,3%
	Agree	Count	19	9	28
		% within Type of labor contract	51,4%	39,1%	46,7%
	Strongly agree	Count	13	13	26
		% within Type of labor contract	35,1%	56,5%	43,3%
Total		Count	37	23	60
		% within Type of labor contract	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Appendix 9

Descriptive statistics of the attribution questions (questionnaire section 4)

Statistics

		... work on one thing at a time.	... prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.	... are inflexible and stubborn.	... express criticism (too) sensitively.	... have a need for formal meetings.	... are unafraid of conflict.	... exaggerate documentation.	... tend to avoid conflicts.	... communicate their mistakes.	... express criticism (too) directly.	... work on several things at a time.	... share private information and feelings with coworkers.	... avoid to speak English.
N	Valid	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
	Missing	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Mean		2,9500	2,6167	3,0000	2,0333	2,5333	2,6000	2,8500	2,1167	2,9167	2,4667	2,2500	2,1167	3,5000
Median		3,0000	3,0000	3,0000	1,0000	2,0000	2,0000	3,0000	2,0000	3,0000	2,0000	3,0000	2,0000	4,0000
Mode		2,00	4,00	4,00	1,00	2,00	2,00	4,00	1,00	3,00	2,00	3,00	1,00	4,00
Std. Deviation		,92837	1,30308	1,04151	1,19273	,72408	,80675	1,10200	1,16578	,82937	,81233	1,05163	1,12131	,87333
Variance		,862	1,698	1,085	1,423	,524	,651	1,214	1,359	,688	,660	1,106	1,257	,763
Minimum		1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Maximum		4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00

Correlations		... work on several things at a time.	... share private information and feelings with coworkers.	... avoid to speak English.	... work on one thing at a time.	... prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.	... are inflexible and stubborn.	... express criticism (too) sensitively.	... have a need for formal meetings.	... are unafraid of conflict.	... exaggerate documentation.	... tend to avoid conflicts.	... communicate their mistakes.	... expresses criticism (too) directly.
... work on several things at a time.	Pearson Correlation	1	,190	,397**	,655**	-,077	,279*	,169	0,000	-,100	,340**	,128	,083	,298*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,145	,002	,000	,557	,031	,197	1,000	,448	,008	,330	,530	,021
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... share private information and feelings with coworkers.	Pearson Correlation	,190	1	,164	,136	,194	-,044	,174	,319*	-,022	,193	,119	,248	,311*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,145		,209	,300	,138	,741	,182	,013	,865	,140	,365	,057	,015
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... avoid to speak English.	Pearson Correlation	,397**	,164	1	,324*	,127	,093	,065	,080	,120	,255*	,042	,035	,191
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	,209		,012	,335	,479	,621	,541	,360	,049	,752	,790	,144
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... work on one thing at a time.	Pearson Correlation	,655**	,136	,324*	1	,012	,386**	,109	,192	-,163	,374**	-,010	,149	,121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,300	,012		,928	,002	,408	,142	,214	,003	,938	,257	,356
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.	Pearson Correlation	-,077	,194	,127	,012	1	,200	,314*	,131	,303*	-,135	,220	-,030	,204
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,557	,138	,335	,928		,126	,015	,320	,019	,303	,092	,820	,118
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... are inflexible and stubborn.	Pearson Correlation	,279*	-,044	,093	,386**	,200	1	,205	,067	,020	,162	-,070	-,157	,160
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,031	,741	,479	,002	,126		,117	,609	,878	,215	,596	,231	,221
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... express criticism (too) sensitively.	Pearson Correlation	,169	,174	,065	,109	,314*	,205	1	-,060	,137	,043	,485**	,106	,369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,197	,182	,621	,408	,015	,117		,648	,295	,747	,000	,422	,004
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... have a need for formal meetings.	Pearson Correlation	0,000	,319*	,080	,192	,131	,067	-,060	1	,052	,166	,086	-,038	,146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1,000	,013	,541	,142	,320	,609	,648		,692	,206	,515	,775	,266
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... are unafraid of conflict.	Pearson Correlation	-,100	-,022	,120	-,163	,303*	,020	,137	,052	1	-,145	,447**	,025	,109
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,448	,865	,360	,214	,019	,878	,295	,692		,269	,000	,848	,409
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... exaggerate documentation.	Pearson Correlation	,340**	,193	,255*	,374**	-,135	,162	,043	,166	-,145	1	-,171	,042	,117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,008	,140	,049	,003	,303	,215	,747	,206	,269		,192	,752	,372
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

... tend to avoid conflicts.	Pearson Correlation	,128	,119	,042	−,010	,220	-,070	,485**	,086	,447**	-,171	1	,080	,353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,330	,365	,752	,938	,092	,596	,000	,515	,000	,192		,542	,006
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... communicate their mistakes.	Pearson Correlation	,083	,248	,035	,149	-,030	-,157	,106	-,038	,025	,042	,080	1	,084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,530	,057	,790	,257	,820	,231	,422	,775	,848	,752	,542		,524
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
... express criticism (too) directly.	Pearson Correlation	,298*	,311*	,191	,121	,204	,160	,369**	,146	,109	,117	,353**	,084	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,021	,015	,144	,356	,118	,221	,004	,266	,409	,372	,006	,524	
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		Age in years	Gender	Nationality	Highest professional / academic degree:	Do you speak English on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak Spanish on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak German on a business-fluent level?	Do you speak another language on a business-fluent level?	In which department do you currently work?	Start of the current work position	Type of labor contract	Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	Nationality of the boss	International work experience
... work on several things at a time.	Pearson Correlation	,334**	,239	,292*	,409**	.c	-,283*	,145	-,150	,015	,004	,238	,316*	,181	,104
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,009	,076	,023	,001		,028	,269	,252	,907	,976	,067	,014	,166	,427
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... share private information and feelings with coworkers.	Pearson Correlation	,288*	,042	,237	,207	.c	-,186	,031	,034	-,054	,268*	,226	,129	-,076	,211
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,026	,761	,069	,115		,154	,813	,799	,683	,050	,083	,326	,563	,106
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... avoid to speak English.	Pearson Correlation	,186	,126	,258*	,296*	.c	-,186	,078	-,052	,259*	,035	,218	,247	,187	,287*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,155	,353	,047	,023		,154	,555	,695	,046	,802	,095	,057	,152	,026
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... work on one thing at a time.	Pearson Correlation	,484**	,350*	,302*	,466**	.c	-,348**	,208	-,024	,097	-,101	,415**	,419**	,084	,176
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,008	,019	,000		,006	,110	,854	,459	,469	,001	,001	,523	,179
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60

... prefer to hide personal initiatives and mistakes.	Pearson Correlation	-,043	-,246	-,268*	-,133	.c	,380**	-,338**	-,040	,177	,308*	-,244	-,213	-,024	-,059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,745	,067	,038	,314		,003	,008	,759	,176	,023	,061	,102	,857	,652
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... are inflexible and stubborn.	Pearson Correlation	,326*	,000	,230	,177	.c	-,278*	,065	,087	,031	,101	,332**	,265*	,139	,181
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,011	1,000	,077	,179		,032	,621	,511	,814	,469	,010	,041	,288	,167
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... express criticism (too) sensitively.	Pearson Correlation	-,013	-,167	-,249	,144	.c	,080	-,317*	-,126	-,123	,132	-,167	-,145	,119	-,135
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,919	,220	,055	,275		,545	,014	,337	,350	,343	,202	,269	,366	,304
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... have a need for formal meetings.	Pearson Correlation	,266*	,310*	,066	,042	.c	-,093	,087	,228	,043	-,054	,274*	,130	-,130	,211
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,040	,020	,615	,754		,479	,506	,079	,743	,700	,034	,321	,321	,106
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... are unafraid of conflict.	Pearson Correlation	-,146	-,105	-,342**	-,344**	.c	,331**	-,395**	-,056	,156	,067	-,377**	-,141	,054	-,093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,267	,440	,007	,008		,010	,002	,671	,233	,630	,003	,282	,682	,478
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... exaggerate documentation.	Pearson Correlation	,381**	,344*	,246	,358**	.c	-,323*	,249	,061	,114	-,013	,328*	,401**	-,018	,188
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003	,009	,058	,005		,012	,055	,641	,384	,925	,011	,001	,891	,151
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... tend to avoid conflicts.	Pearson Correlation	-,333**	-,085	-,313*	-,093	.c	,224	-,465**	-,006	-,024	,096	-,346**	-,275*	-,167	-,322*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,009	,534	,015	,483		,086	,000	,961	,855	,489	,007	,033	,203	,012
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... communicate their mistakes.	Pearson Correlation	,039	,259	,081	,158	.c	-,069	-,007	-,227	-,143	-,104	,080	-,154	-,033	-,025
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,768	,054	,537	,231		,601	,959	,082	,276	,453	,544	,239	,803	,848
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60
... express criticism (too) directly.	Pearson Correlation	-,028	,108	,236	,168	.c	-,095	-,078	-,093	,001	,284*	,182	-,159	-,063	-,072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,832	,426	,069	,203		,471	,554	,482	,992	,037	,165	,226	,635	,584
	N	60	56	60	59	60	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

c. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

... work on one thing at a time. * Age in years Crosstabulation								
			Age in years					
			20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	over 60	Total
... work on one thing at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
		% within Age in years	0,0%	5,6%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,7%
	My German coworkers	Count	16	5	2	1	0	24
		% within Age in years	64,0%	27,8%	22,2%	14,3%	0,0%	40,0%
	Both groups	Count	6	4	2	0	0	12
		% within Age in years	24,0%	22,2%	22,2%	0,0%	0,0%	20,0%
	None of my coworkers	Count	3	8	5	6	1	23
		% within Age in years	12,0%	44,4%	55,6%	85,7%	100,0%	38,3%
Total		Count	25	18	9	7	1	60
		% within Age in years	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,484	,098	4,207	,000[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,493	,104	4,311	,000[c]
N of Valid Cases		60			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

... work on one thing at a time. * Highest professional / academic degree: Crosstabulation						
			Highest professional / academic degree:			
			Licenciatura, Bachelor	Maestría, Master, Diplom	Other:	Total
... work on one thing at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	3,7%	0,0%	0,0%	1,7%
	My German coworkers	Count	17	7	0	24
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	63,0%	25,0%	0,0%	40,7%
	Both groups	Count	5	5	2	12
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	18,5%	17,9%	50,0%	20,3%
	None of my coworkers	Count	4	16	2	22
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	14,8%	57,1%	50,0%	37,3%
Total		Count	27	28	4	59
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,466	,094	3,981	,000[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,484	,101	4,178	,000[c]
N of Valid Cases		59			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

... work on one thing at a time. * Type of labor contract Crosstabulation					
			Type of labor contract		
			Local	Expatriate	Total
... work on one thing at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	1
		% within Type of labor contract	2,7%	0,0%	1,7%
	My German coworkers	Count	19	5	24
		% within Type of labor contract	51,4%	21,7%	40,0%
	Both groups	Count	9	3	12
		% within Type of labor contract	24,3%	13,0%	20,0%
	None of my coworkers	Count	8	15	23
		% within Type of labor contract	21,6%	65,2%	38,3%
Total		Count	37	23	60
		% within Type of labor contract	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,415	,114	3,476	,001[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,414	,115	3,468	,001[c]
N of Valid Cases		60			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

... work on one thing at a time. * Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? Crosstabulation						
			Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?			
			No.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Total
... work on one thing at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	2,3%	0,0%	0,0%	1,7%
	My German coworkers	Count	22	1	1	24
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	51,2%	10,0%	14,3%	40,0%
	Both groups	Count	10	2	0	12
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	23,3%	20,0%	0,0%	20,0%
	None of my coworkers	Count	10	7	6	23
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	23,3%	70,0%	85,7%	38,3%
Total		Count	43	10	7	60
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,419	,104	3,514	,001[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,476	,104	4,119	,000[c]
N of Valid Cases		60			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

… work on several things at a time. * Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? Crosstabulation						
			Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?			
			No.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Total
… work on several things at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	22	0	1	23
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	51,2%	0,0%	14,3%	38,3%
	My German coworkers	Count	2	1	0	3
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	4,7%	10,0%	0,0%	5,0%
	Both groups	Count	16	9	5	30
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	37,2%	90,0%	71,4%	50,0%
	None of my coworkers	Count	3	0	1	4
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	7,0%	0,0%	14,3%	6,7%
Total		Count	43	10	7	60
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,316	,108	2,534	,014[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,368	,105	3,011	,004[c]
N of Valid Cases		60			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

... work on several things at a time. * Highest professional / academic degree: Crosstabulation						
			Highest professional / academic degree:			
			Licenciatura, Bachelor	Maestría, Master, Diplom	Other:	Total
... work on several things at a time.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	16	7	0	23
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	59,3%	25,0%	0,0%	39,0%
	My German coworkers	Count	1	2	0	3
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	3,7%	7,1%	0,0%	5,1%
	Both groups	Count	9	17	3	29
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	33,3%	60,7%	75,0%	49,2%
	None of my coworkers	Count	1	2	1	4
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	3,7%	7,1%	25,0%	6,8%
Total		Count	27	28	4	59
		% within Highest professional / academic degree:	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,409	,107	3,388	,001[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,401	,114	3,300	,002[c]
N of Valid Cases		59			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

... exaggerate documentation. * Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks? Crosstabulation			Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?			
			No.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican subordinates.	Yes, I lead a team of Mexican and German (and other) subordinates.	Total
... exaggerate documentation.	My Mexican coworkers	Count	9	0	0	9
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	20,9%	0,0%	0,0%	15,0%
	My German coworkers	Count	12	1	1	14
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	27,9%	10,0%	14,3%	23,3%
	Both groups	Count	12	2	0	14
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	27,9%	20,0%	0,0%	23,3%
	None of my coworkers	Count	10	7	6	23
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	23,3%	70,0%	85,7%	38,3%
Total		Count	43	10	7	60
		% within Do you have disciplinary leadership tasks?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,401	,090	3,338	,001[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,474	,097	4,100	,000[c]
N of Valid Cases		60			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

Appendix 10

Statistics		Identification with the company and the product	Consciousness about cultural and personal differences	Clear expression of disagreement and criticism	Trainings (e.g. teambuildings)	Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German	Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy
N	Valid	58	58	58	58	58	58
	Missing	11	11	11	11	11	11
Mean		3,57	3,52	3,95	4,05	3,69	2,22
Median		4,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	3,50	2,00
Mode		4ª	3	4	6	6	1
Range		5	5	5	5	5	5
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		6	6	6	6	6	6
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown							

Identification with the company and the product * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Identification with the company and the product	Rank 1	Count	6	3	0	9
		% within Nationality	18,2%	13,0%	0,0%	15,5%
	Rank 2	Count	6	3	0	9
		% within Nationality	18,2%	13,0%	0,0%	15,5%
	Rank 3	Count	5	3	0	8
		% within Nationality	15,2%	13,0%	0,0%	13,8%
	Rank 4	Count	5	6	1	12
		% within Nationality	15,2%	26,1%	50,0%	20,7%
	Rank 5	Count	8	4	0	12
		% within Nationality	24,2%	17,4%	0,0%	20,7%
	Rank 6	Count	3	4	1	8
		% within Nationality	9,1%	17,4%	50,0%	13,8%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Consciousness about cultural and personal differences * Nationality Crosstabulation			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Consciousness about cultural and personal differences	Rank 1	Count	1	5	0	6
		% within Nationality	3,0%	21,7%	0,0%	10,3%
	Rank 2	Count	7	4	2	13
		% within Nationality	21,2%	17,4%	100,0%	22,4%
	Rank 3	Count	4	10	0	14
		% within Nationality	12,1%	43,5%	0,0%	24,1%
	Rank 4	Count	3	2	0	5
		% within Nationality	9,1%	8,7%	0,0%	8,6%
	Rank 5	Count	9	1	0	10
		% within Nationality	27,3%	4,3%	0,0%	17,2%
	Rank 6	Count	9	1	0	10
		% within Nationality	27,3%	4,3%	0,0%	17,2%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Clear expression of disagreement and criticism * Nationality Crosstabulation						
			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Clear expression of disagreement and criticism	Rank 1	Count	2	1	1	4
		% within Nationality	6,1%	4,3%	50,0%	6,9%
	Rank 2	Count	4	3	0	7
		% within Nationality	12,1%	13,0%	0,0%	12,1%
	Rank 3	Count	6	3	0	9
		% within Nationality	18,2%	13,0%	0,0%	15,5%
	Rank 4	Count	10	6	0	16
		% within Nationality	30,3%	26,1%	0,0%	27,6%
	Rank 5	Count	5	6	1	12
		% within Nationality	15,2%	26,1%	50,0%	20,7%
	Rank 6	Count	6	4	0	10
		% within Nationality	18,2%	17,4%	0,0%	17,2%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Trainings (e.g. teambuildings) * Nationality Crosstabulation						
			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Trainings (e.g. teambuildings)	Rank 1	Count	4	1	0	5
		% within Nationality	12,1%	4,3%	0,0%	8,6%
	Rank 2	Count	5	2	0	7
		% within Nationality	15,2%	8,7%	0,0%	12,1%
	Rank 3	Count	8	1	0	9
		% within Nationality	24,2%	4,3%	0,0%	15,5%
	Rank 4	Count	6	4	1	11
		% within Nationality	18,2%	17,4%	50,0%	19,0%
	Rank 5	Count	5	6	0	11
		% within Nationality	15,2%	26,1%	0,0%	19,0%
	Rank 6	Count	5	9	1	15
		% within Nationality	15,2%	39,1%	50,0%	25,9%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German * Nationality Crosstabulation						
			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Business-fluent knowledge of English, Spanish and German	Rank 1	Count	5	3	0	8
		% within Nationality	15,2%	13,0%	0,0%	13,8%
	Rank 2	Count	5	5	0	10
		% within Nationality	15,2%	21,7%	0,0%	17,2%
	Rank 3	Count	7	2	2	11
		% within Nationality	21,2%	8,7%	100,0%	19,0%
	Rank 4	Count	3	3	0	6
		% within Nationality	9,1%	13,0%	0,0%	10,3%
	Rank 5	Count	4	5	0	9
		% within Nationality	12,1%	21,7%	0,0%	15,5%
	Rank 6	Count	9	5	0	14
		% within Nationality	27,3%	21,7%	0,0%	24,1%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy * Nationality Crosstabulation						
			Nationality			
			Mexican	German	Other:	Total
Communication with respect, patience, focus and empathy	Rank 1	Count	15	10	1	26
		% within Nationality	45,5%	43,5%	50,0%	44,8%
	Rank 2	Count	6	6	0	12
		% within Nationality	18,2%	26,1%	0,0%	20,7%
	Rank 3	Count	3	4	0	7
		% within Nationality	9,1%	17,4%	0,0%	12,1%
	Rank 4	Count	6	2	0	8
		% within Nationality	18,2%	8,7%	0,0%	13,8%
	Rank 5	Count	2	1	1	4
		% within Nationality	6,1%	4,3%	50,0%	6,9%
	Rank 6	Count	1	0	0	1
		% within Nationality	3,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,7%
Total		Count	33	23	2	58
		% within Nationality	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Which action of your coworkers from the other cultural background is the most difficult to understand? * Nationality Crosstabulation				
Count				
	Nationality			Total
	Mexican	German	Other:	
Change the requirements suddenly.	1	0	0	1
Considering that my role is Corporate Security, my biggest problem with them is to help them to find a balance about their initial fear of living in Mexico, and their later overconfidence. Also, in some cases, their lack of flexibility and criticism to Mexican culture.	1	0	0	1
Definir prioridades; traducir situaciones o formas de trabajar.	1	0	0	1
Denken nicht weiter/um die Ecke.	0	1	0	1
Direct communication from the Germans.	1	0	0	1
Distancia y jerarquía, al principio es complicado entender la separación entre la vida privada y laboral así como el por qué toma tanto tiempo entrar al ámbito social/personal de alguien.	1	0	0	1
Don't finish work as you them to do and don't know what is more important and has to be done first. They also talk a lot about private stuff.	0	1	0	1
Early detection of problems and open communication and problem solving, reliability.	0	1	0	1
Flexibility, priority to certain things or events.	1	0	0	1
Gelassenheit wo wir Probleme sehen.	0	1	0	1
Hablar de la muchacha de manera despectiva. Perder sentido de responsabilidad por creer que todo se resuelve con una mordida. Presunción por estilo de vida que les da el paquete de expatriado. Daño de neumáticos de autos pool.	1	0	0	1
I guess the main reason would be is that everybody should understand that all the process are different in every country and the laws too so a same procedure could not be the same in China, Germany or Mexico	1	0	0	1
I've been involved in both backgrounds and think that the Mexican are more complicated since they hide more things and if they have fear to express the problems that they have or what they are thinking it only complicates everything and takes longer rather than if you just say directly and a once what you think and think should be done.	0	0	1	1
If they not understand everything, they do nothing instead to say the truth.	0	1	0	1
In my opinion the respect for the management is a little bit too high.	0	1	0	1
In my personal experience is complicated to understand the point that my boss wanted to show to others, sometimes we have discrepancies because I understand one thing and my boss is referring to other different thing.	1	0	0	1
Inability to make simple day to day decisions. Complexity of structures which results in a lot of inefficiency and people only doing one thing, not only at a time, but in his/her whole role(s) of responsibility.	1	0	0	1
Lack of flexibility or understanding thereof. Of course it is important to keep your word, but one has to understand when things just don't work out as desired, and live with it.	1	0	0	1

Lo que pasa...and being on time.	0	1	0	1
Los resultados que se esperan recibir.	1	0	0	1
Mother language and cultural behavior.	1	0	0	1
None.	0	1	0	1
Not being able to say: No, I did not understand, could you explain again?	0	1	0	1
Not communicating negative stuff.	0	1	0	1
Not keeping agreements or promises.	0	1	0	1
Respect time.	1	0	0	1
Some of my German coworkers think we are in a country that must be the same as in Germany, rules and the people.	1	0	0	1
Sometimes the talking/words are completely different to the actions.	1	0	0	1
Sometimes they are working on several topics in parallel and forgot about prioritising.	0	1	0	1
Straight-forward thinking.	1	0	0	1
Taking a lot of time and not responding.	0	1	0	1
Talking about Mexican Culture: 1) The hiding of problems that actually could be dealt with easier if communicated previously. 2) The fact that none of the deadlines given to a task can be trusted (it always delays from any reason) and you only receive information once it is already delayed. I cannot judge if it is done on purpose due to being afraid of losing their face...like moved by proud and don't wanting to show a mistake; or due to lack of experience about recognizing the consequences of some problems.	0	0	1	1
Telling the truth and committing mistakes.	0	1	0	1
The accent.	1	0	0	1
The conflict to accept change and adapt to it.	1	0	0	1
The hesitance of taking tasks and responsibilities.	0	1	0	1
The idea to avoid speaking in English when being with a few Germans.	1	0	0	1
The lack of flexibility when things change even if they where plan, it is really hard to change the plan.	1	0	0	1
The tendency to ignore tasks unless you constantly repeat the importance and remind them of completing it. The expectation to receive detailed work instructions.	0	1	0	1
The wish to have an excuse for everything is not necessary, but usually in place. For my understanding it is quite normal in business and private life that undesired things happen, and there is no need to find an excuse for that. Say clearly if shit happens and Germans will understand.	0	1	0	1
There are hardly any situations where Mexicans ask back (lack of understanding not communicated). Missing contingency or following up on tasks - a lot of things are started but not finished. Meeting are scheduled for a certain time, sometimes you need to invite extra before the meeting and can only hope that all are joining (meetings never start on time or are moved regularly).	0	1	0	1
They are open but at the end always related just between Germans.	1	0	0	1
They don't express clearly what they expect from you. they wait for you to act like they want with no direction.	1	0	0	1
They make a lot planning to solve things that really not need this.	1	0	0	1

They want everything immediately and sometimes they are impatient.	1	0	0	1
To accept any delay or non-delivery of promised services, communication or results.	0	1	0	1
To know which tasks are priority.	1	0	0	1
To procrastinate required escalation.	0	1	0	1
Unspoken communication.	0	1	0	1
Use non realistic timings just to avoid ask about it.	1	0	0	1
Very direct communication.	1	0	0	1
When coworkers switch to German even if Mexicans are in the same discussion. As not caring about Mexican colleagues.	1	0	0	1
Working without (visible) structure; personal relations required for doing business; punctuality (partially existing).	0	1	0	1
Total	29	22	2	53

I appreciate the most in the other work culture... * Nationality Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Nationality		Total
	Mexican	German	Other:	
Ability to express the ideas in a logical and clear way.	1	0	0	1
Being treated as a family member as a person that contributes.	1	0	0	1
Commitment to fulfill tasks.	1	0	0	1
Concrete actions.	1	0	0	1
Discipline.	1	0	0	1
El hablar directo. Saber diferenciar entre lo personal y laboral. Conocer expectativas.	1	0	0	1
El respeto para el tiempo de la vida privada.	1	0	0	1
Experience.	0	1	0	1
Flexibility, helpfulness.	0	1	0	1
Food :) and CARS!!!	1	0	0	1
Freundlichkeit.	0	1	0	1
Friendliness and being spontaneous.	0	1	0	1
Friendliness and good mood.	0	1	0	1
From Mexican that they don't overcomplicate things and always try to find the easiest way to do things and from the German that they appreciate straightforwardness making everything work faster also having a focus onto only one direction.	0	0	1	1
Germans are really direct.	1	0	0	1
Hard working, willing to learn.	0	1	0	1
Helpfulness.	0	1	0	1
Honestidad. Comunicación directa. Organización y estructura. Procesos claros. Confianza.	1	0	0	1
Honesty, germans are very honest about everything and they are not afraid of telling how and what they feel about any problem or situation.	1	0	0	1
I appreciate the experience that they have, as Germans help me to see the complete map and understand better each step we take. The only issue is that German way to teach is "I will tell you what I know if you ask" but my issue is that I cannot ask something that I don't even know exists.	1	0	0	1

Ihre Freundlichkeit, ihre Art sich um jemanden zu sorgen.	0	1	0	1
La organización, planeación disciplina y el hecho de que los roles de responsabilidades están bien definidos y son respetados.	1	0	0	1
Mexicans are open, friendly and very social. They try to solve problems in a team and try to overcome inter-personal issues.	0	1	0	1
Mexicans are really flexible and willing to work hard to be successful.	0	1	0	1
Mexicans are very fair and friendly coworkers. They are very interested, they are ready to go on learning and they ask if there are questions. I like that.	0	1	0	1
More relaxed.	0	1	0	1
Motivation.	0	1	0	1
Open mind set, willingness to learn, flexibility, clever, intelligence. I absolutely like the Mexican culture.	0	1	0	1
Open-minded.	1	0	0	1
Open, direct, know how to separate business from friendly relations, avoid favoritisms, recognizes people who strive and value them, Honestly.	1	0	0	1
Openness, kindness.	0	1	0	1
Organization in all the way!	1	0	0	1
Patience.	0	1	0	1
Punctuality and Formality.	1	0	0	1
Respect for everyone believes and trust on how to handle work because sometimes Germans don´t like to accept that a Mexican has a better idea of working which sometimes it´s better.	1	0	0	1
Result driven and trust in your job.	1	0	0	1
Share their mistakes to avoid similar mistakes in the team.	1	0	0	1
The direct contact and direct communications between us.	1	0	0	1
The flexibility in time and the give of responsability.	1	0	0	1
The friendly, open and respectful way to communicate to all others and be in contact with the social environment.	0	1	0	1
The happy attitude and the motivation to start projects.	0	1	0	1
The hard work and wish to learn, as weel as the flexibility.	0	0	1	1
The openness and the flexibility to adapt.	0	1	0	1
The team spirit and the will to succeed.	0	1	0	1
The willingness to help us and transfer the knowledge.	1	0	0	1
Their order, straightforwardness, knowledge, respect of the timing of everything (meetings, tasks, responsibilities) and personal time.	1	0	0	1
Their willingness to get things properly done (not necessarily by them, though), and their commitment to existing agreements.	1	0	0	1
They are very focused.	1	0	0	1
They let us work on our own pace.	1	0	0	1
They really want to learn and understand all necessary things.	0	1	0	1
They word.	1	0	0	1
To be less emotional.	1	0	0	1
Very friendly people.	0	1	0	1
Willingness to do their work as good as possible.	1	0	0	1
Total	30	22	2	54

Appendix 11

Suggestions for the study unit based on the summarized research results

Category:	What are the similarities and differences between the Mexican and German work culture?	How do these similarities and differences influence the collaboration of Mexican and German employees?	What are the suggestions for productive collaboration of the two work cultures?
Communication: avoidance and confrontation of conflict	In agreement with theoretical positions, the German work culture is characterized with a direct form of communication (low-context communication) which is visible in the direct expression of doubts, disagreement and criticism, requests, mistakes or problems in sight, the confrontation of conflicts and the separation between personal feelings and objective facts. In comparison, the Mexican work culture is characterized with an indirect form of communication (high-context communication) which is visible in "talking around things" (Rodrigo, personal communication, November 15, 2017), an emphasis on the tone of voice, politeness, sensitivity in the request of tasks and the avoidance to address problems in sight. Sensitivity in speech as opposed to directness was explained as requirement of trust in the relationship between coworkers and an expression of an aspiration to harmony that is rooted in the importance of personal relationships in the Mexican society. The expression of criticism is mostly considered as (too) direct by German employees and in comparison, (too) sensitive by the Mexican employees.	The presented differences determine the day-to-day collaboration since they trespass basically every work task; the research evidenced for instance that employees make differences in the expression of requests directed to Mexican or German coworkers. The direct communication of the Germans in this work place is perceived as a problematic aspect that is difficult to understand and that causes discomfort in their Mexican coworkers. The Germans need to know that personal feelings can be hurt even with objective criticism; this difference is rooted in the connection between personal and professional relationships that is common in the Mexican work culture but separated in the German work place. On the other hand, the actions the Germans find difficult to understand were summarized as expressions of the avoidance of conflict which for them is the reason for unreliability. From the German point of view, unreliability is considered the most significant problem in the collaboration that is visible in the lack to openly communicate a missing comprehension, committed mistakes and negative reports.	In search for productive collaboration, it is important to emphasize that the Mexican participants also appreciate the German direct form of communication and the Germans the focus on the team spirit including the relaxed and friendly atmosphere created by their Mexican coworkers. With the understanding of the connection between direct communication and reliability, the sharing of mistakes and problems in sight is a recommendation for the study subjects. This sharing however must be realized with more sensitivity to avoid personal offense and contribute to the friendly work environment the Germans appreciate and the Mexicans need to create the necessary trust in their coworkers. These communication efforts were detected as the most important requirement of productive collaboration that includes additionally the call to actively address a misunderstanding, to clarify possible misunderstandings beforehand, to express respect with the tone of voice and service attitude.

Communi-cation: non-verbal communi-cation	The importance of non-verbal communication was empirically evidenced in the symbolic messages that are sent by hand gestures or greeting practices. As mentioned before, the Germans in this work place were described as rather cold and reserved and the Mexicans as warm and friendly. Differences in non-verbal communication influence the intercultural collaboration since they can either offend coworkers (in the case of rude hand gestures or the intrusion into physical space) or they can be appreciated as a cultural adaptation (in the case of greeting practices). The Germans are used to a larger physical distance in the work place in comparison to the Mexicans who are characterized with closer personal relationships at the work place that include physical closeness and the sharing of private information and emotions.	The important result of the study was that in the cases of non-verbal communication, the actors were not aware of the different meanings of the action, neither regarding offense nor appreciation. The underlying cultural roots are the separation or connection of the private and professional life spheres in relation to different forms to create trust in collectivist and individualist societies (see e.g. Hofstede et al., 2010; Rehner, 2003).	The Mexicans must know that the adaptation of the Germans to their greeting practices was difficult since they had to overcome the discomfort that is also related to the sharing of personal information and spending private time with coworkers. On the other hand, the Germans must understand the importance of personal relationships in the collaboration with their Mexican coworkers. It is important for both to respect the non-verbal customs of each other; the Germans in this Mexican subsidiary are nevertheless asked to overcome reservedness and get involved in private conversations at the work place and the Mexicans to respect the larger physical boundaries in German locations. The role of the cultural mediator is essential with regards to non-verbal communication since these persons are capable to translate the meaning of a non-verbal action from one to another work culture; this translation however requires the expression of a doubt in order to avoid offense and grudge.
Communi-cation: instructions	The interviews as well as the survey indicated the rejection of micromanagement or the preference of a liberal leadership style as similarity between both work cultures. In the present work environment, the employees are provided with the responsibility and freedom to realize their work task with their own approach. Although this liberal style of leadership is appreciated of both work cultures, the appreciation is more significant among the	Despite this joint preference of liberal leadership, a difference between the German and Mexican employees was detected in the need for instructions: whereas the majority of the German employees is familiar with more personal responsibility and less instructions, half of the Mexicans requires clearer instructions to be able to fulfill the expectations and to ask questions	These results ask the Germans to evaluate if their expression is clearly understandable and verify if their coworkers perceive the same idea; at the same time, more context information must be provided. Likewise, Mexicans should ask if they are insecure about the accordance of the understandings to enable their coworkers to detect

	Mexicans in comparison to the German participants due to contrary experience with authoritarian leaders in Japanese and Mexican companies. The freedom given in addition to the honesty of their German coworkers are perceived by the Mexicans as signs of respect and trust as well as the belief that everyone knows how to handle work.	The clarity of the expression of expectations by German leaders or coworkers is not sufficient for all the Mexicans which causes the misunderstanding of priorities and reasons for results and plans. This difficulty is thus not rooted in different understandings of the concepts but instead in the transfer of one understanding to a coworker and therefore once again emphasizes communication efforts in the attempt to productively collaborate.	discrepancies and adapt their communication.
Knowledge transfer	The second category continues with the discussion about the sharing of information and includes the detected differences regarding the type of labor contract that are not related with work culture per se, but certainly influence the collaboration since all the Germans in the study have expatriate contracts and all the Mexicans have local contracts. The research showed that the knowledge transfer from the coworker with work experience in the company to the coworker with less or no experience can cause difficulties that are rather related to personal differences (the prioritization of personal benefits over group benefits), language barriers and the earlier described differences in the form to communicate. The qualitative approach showed an example of a failed knowledge transfer that emphasizes the importance of knowledge at the work place as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and the quantitative results then indicated the sharing of knowledge for the teams' benefit. Both highlighted the commitment to work hard in order to achieve the quality product about each other, which	The empirical results furthermore emphasized the role of work experience in the daily interaction, indicating that the Mexicans highly appreciate the willingness of their German coworkers to share their company knowledge and the Germans the willingness to learn of their Mexican coworkers. The Germans consider the lack of asking in case of a doubt as the largest problem in the collaboration, which was explained by the Mexicans with the lack of clarity and missing context information. The Mexican coworkers in this work environment need more information (high-context-communication by Hall & Hall, 1990) to be able to express their doubts and questions - which is expected by their German coworkers who have the company knowledge (low-context communication by Hall & Hall, 1990).	In order to enable the expected questions, it is recommended to the Germans to reveal more context information and the Mexicans are asked to clearly express their questions to solve misunderstandings and allow the transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, training activities such as teambuildings were mentioned as a requirement for productive collaboration in the intent to work on existing problems and as platform to express the doubts emerged in intercultural encounters.

	is interpreted as another similarity of the work cultures.		
Work task approaches	The Germans indicated that their adherence to plans, documentation, reporting and the need for constant information flow and formal meetings are part of the - undesired - solution strategy insistence that is needed due to experience with unreliability and the non-fulfillment of request. The quantitative approach evidenced additionally that insistence is a strategy used by both nationalities, but however more significantly among the German employees than the Mexicans. In comparison, the Mexican coworkers are characterized with an extraordinary flexibility, spontaneity, friendliness and helpfulness (service attitude).	This insistence of the Germans is perceived by the Mexicans as stubbornness and inflexibility that is present in diverse dimensions: (1) inflexibility to communicate understandings and expectations; (2) to adapt plans when changes are necessary; (3) to adapt to new circumstances; (4) to exaggerate formal documentation; (5) to adapt in the private life. Issues are rather solved immediately with personal conversations between coworkers to avoid formal meetings with exaggerated documentation. The Mexicans - in contrast to the Germans – do not get upset when interrupted, do not unnecessarily discuss requests and show an extraordinary service attitude; these are characteristics that are explicitly appreciated by the Germans.	Since the strengths of the Mexicans are in this case the opposite of the weaknesses of the German work culture, they should be taken advantage of to balance each other out in the collaboration. Accordingly, impatience and failure to adapt proceedings were also mentioned as weaknesses of the Germans, whereas their opposites patience and adaptation to change are considered appreciated strengths of the Mexican work culture. From the Mexican point of view, reliability expressed in the commitment to existing agreements is explicitly valued in the German work culture (discipline, organization and planning), whereas from their perspective, it is a characteristic they find missing in their Mexican coworkers. These pairs of opposites show that the Mexican and German employees have the possibility in the intercultural collaboration to balance out the own weaknesses with the strengths of the other.
The under-standing of time	The qualitative results in the category described the Germans with a tendency to monochronic work expressed in an emphasis on punctuality and compartmentalization of work tasks, and the Mexicans with a polychronic time treatment visible in flexibility, unpunctuality and multitasking. The quantitative findings however evidenced no clear attribution of a monochronic and polychronic treatment of time to one work culture: Although the Mexicans mostly consider	The findings moreover evidenced discrepancies between the perceptions of change and adaptation: The Germans assume they are already involved in private conversations and have adapted themselves to the sharing of private information and feelings with coworkers; their Mexican colleagues however disagree by considering it still a merely Mexican characteristic.	The Germans need to know that private relationships in Mexico influence the professional collaboration, they should thus show more effort in this aspect or at least explain their reasons for the separation between both life spheres to make it more understandable for the Mexicans. In continuation of the results about direct communication, the Mexicans must know that time is a valuable resource

themselves polychronic and their German coworkers monochronic, the Germans see neither group as monochronic but both groups as polychronic. Additionally, different understandings of punctuality and unpunctuality were detected as well as the discrepancy between a separation of private and professional relationships (by the German employees) and a connection of those among the Mexican coworkers.

The second distinct perception of adaptation was detected regarding punctuality, because the Mexicans think they have adapted themselves to the German punctuality, with which the Germans disagree.
Additionally, the Germans (more precisely the expatriates) must know how social practices in the private life determine the professional relationship as it was evidenced in the case of perceived arrogance for having labor benefits that allow a higher life standard.

for the Germans since they use it as a measurement entity; this explains the negative feelings caused by unpunctuality which is considered a lack of respect. Since the Germans highly appreciate the politeness and respect they observe in the Mexican culture, they expect this respect also with regards to time agreements. Likewise, the Mexicans highly appreciate this respect the Germans give to time and their commitment to existing agreements.
The social atmosphere and the aspiration to team harmony in this work environment is seen by the Germans as effective with regards to collaboration, the spontaneous and patient solution of problems, the start of new tasks or projects and motivation. Moreover, the Germans appreciate the willingness to work hard and learn (including long working hours) as forms of an aspiration to success that is based on team work. In these work patterns, the focus on the team spirit and group harmony as well as the feeling to be a contributing family member are interpreted as the necessary context conditions for the employees to be able to succeed. The corresponding service attitude and extraordinary helpfulness of the Mexican coworkers are expressions of this social work environment that are particularly appreciated by the Germans.

Language issues	Similar to the influence of the different types of labor contracts, language knowledge is not a characteristic of work cultures per se, but is interpreted as determining the Mexican-German relationships at work. In the present work environment, four problems in the collaboration were detected that are related to the use of English as the joint business language: (1) translation mistakes; (2) information that is lost in translation; (3) meaning mistakes (independent of the language translation); and (4) the avoidance of the use of English. The findings moreover emphasized the role of international work experience with regards to the creation of language awareness and the consequent obvious advantage of those employees who are fluent in all three languages (English, Spanish, German). The qualitative approach indicated that the use of German is a problem in the collaboration because it stops the information by excluding the coworkers who do not speak the language. Although the quantitative approach showed that the majority of the employees does not observe the avoidance of English, some Mexican participants indicated in support of the qualitative findings the use of German as a difficulty in the collaboration (which was not addressed by Germans with regards to the use of Spanish).	The symbolic meaning of the effort to learn and use a certain language influences professional relationships at the global work place. The German employees must know that the use of German represents (intentional or unintentional) avoidance of English which is an expression of indifference about the Mexican coworkers. Regardless of the reasons and intention of an action, to learn and use a joint language is a sign of caring and interest whereas its opposite is perceived as a lack of respect and distrust.	The consequent requirement for productive collaboration is the business-fluent knowledge of all three languages which clearly depends on the conditions of the labor market. In a more practical attempt, the employees are asked to generally be aware of possible errors since translation as well as meaning mistakes are likely to occur even when speaking the shared language. Secondly, the use of neutral communication (the avoidance of figures of speech) is suggested; and thirdly, the active addressing of doubts or misunderstandings. Since language knowledge is closely related to cultural adaptation and the establishment of private relationships, those aspects determine the trust between coworkers.

Note: Own elaboration