Working as a German in The Netherlands

Cultural standards and the impact of demographic characteristics

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Abstract

In the age of increasing globalization, communication and teamwork beyond one's own culture has become an important aspect in life for many people. The analysis of cross-cultural interactions is important to further develop research that entails the exploration of differences and commonalities between two or more cultures.

Therefore, the aim of this master thesis is to identify Dutch behavioural patterns (cultural standards) that are perceived by German individuals and furthermore if demographic characteristics influence that perception. The following research question was asked for these purposes: Which Dutch cultural standards are perceived by German individuals and to what extent are they influenced by demographic characteristics?

To answer the research question, a qualitative study by means of interviews with German individuals was carried out, which was aimed to identify critical incidents that can be analysed. Afterwards, Dutch cultural standards were established and examined whether demographic characteristics have an influence on the perception.

The findings of this study identified fourteen cultural standards: Flexibility, collective decision-making, (technological) innovativeness, friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid), flat hierarchy, freedom of action, work-life-balance, informality, directness, approximate planning, anti-authoritarianism, pragmatism, solution orientation, job opportunity. The evaluation of the qualitative study shows that the demographic characteristics (region in The Netherlands, age and duration of time working in The Netherlands) only have a minor influence on the occurrence of the perceived cultural standards, but it does not show a difference in the variety of cultural standards.

Keywords: niederländische Kulturstandards, deutsche Kulturstandards, kulturstandards and cultural standards.

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1. Introduction

In the age of increasing globalization, communication across national, linguistic and cultural borders has become part of everyday life for many people. The professional encounters between people of different countries and cultures have become an integral part to close important business deals as well as working in culturally diverse teams (Raju, 2017). Accordingly, it can be said that these cross-cultural interactions have become one of the most important economic, social and political challenges of modern society.

Cultural differences are seen even between countries that are bordering on each other, such as in the case of Germany and The Netherlands. Even if not seen as obvious as for example the cultural differences between Germany and Asian countries, these small differences can become increasingly relevant when accumulated. With trade relationships between the two countries being of strong relevance for both (Federal Foreign Office Germany, 2020), the focus of this research will be on the cross-cultural interaction between Germans and Dutch.

Research contributing to the German-Dutch interaction has been done by Schlizio, Schürings and Thomas (2009), who studied Dutch cultural standards perceived by German professionals. They identified a number of Dutch cultural standards and based on these they developed a training program for German managers, specialists and executives who are working in the Netherlands. Seven of the cultural standards are highlighted by the authors in their book and represent the cornerstones of the typical Dutch work and company culture as seen from a German perspective. A study of German cultural standards perceived by Dutch professionals working in Germany has been conducted by Thesing (2016). Thus, literature suggests that different individuals from the same culture, working in a foreign country encounter the same cultural standards and cultural differences, regardless of their demographic characteristics (Kutschker and Schmid, 2012). What has been missing up until now in cultural standard literature, is a study that not only establishes cultural standards, but analyses whether Germans with different demographic characteristics who are working in The Netherlands, encounter the same or different Dutch cultural standards. Thus, the main research question and sub-questions for this study are:

Which Dutch cultural standards are perceived by German individuals and to what extent are they influenced by demographic characteristics?

Sub-question:

1. Which cultural standards are perceived by German individuals living and working in The Netherlands?
2. Do Germans working in Overijssel (east) perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as Germans working in the Randstad (west)?
3. Do male Germans perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as female Germans?

4. Do young Germans perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as older Germans?
5. Do Germans who have worked for a short time in the Netherlands perceive the same cultural standards as Germans who have worked in the Netherlands for many years?
6. To what extent are the Dutch cultural standards described by Schlizio et al. (2009) supported by the current study?

In light of this, the aim of this study is to first establish which cultural standards are experienced by Germans and to expand already existing literature by analysing if demographic characteristics influence the perception of Dutch cultural standards made by Germans. Furthermore, the findings of the current study will be compared to the study of Schlizio et al. (2009) to see whether cultural standards have changed or stayed the same. Overall, this study will deliver a thick description (Geertz, 1973), including both typical Dutch behaviour and the values behind them, in order to understand and fully comprehend intercultural encounters.

1.1. Academic relevance

Cultural differences have been studied by many researchers using various models and dimensions. However, previous studies focused on comparative results rather than the cultural differences and intercultural interactions (Fink, et al., 2005). In addition, it is often criticized that previous studies provided a superficial comparison but no clear separation of cultural levels and no thick description (Kutschker & Schmid, 2012). There is a risk that, when dealing with other cultures, one will be guided more by stereotypes than by established knowledge. Following the researcher Smith (2006), it is also advisable to concentrate on a small number of countries and to analyse them in greater depth with thick descriptions.

Keeping this in mind, this study is expected to deliver the reader with a thick description of cultural standards and levels, that are raised from bicultural situations between Dutch and Germans. Furthermore, it can serve as a validation of existing literature regarding cultural standards established by Schlizio et al. (2009). Overall, this study will enhance the profound understanding of cultural characteristics that play an important aspect in bicultural situations and underlying values that regulate behavioural patterns, principles and beliefs.

1.2. Practical relevance

Openness to people from other cultures, tolerance and friendliness in dealing with one another is regarded as almost a natural requirement of a modern employee.

According to Thomas (1996), a successful cooperation lies in the development of a high degree of tolerance towards culturally determined behaviour, which may not easily be brought into agreement with one's own cultural standards.

Therefore, this study contributes to help German individuals to communicate comprehensively and interact effectively with Dutch people, in order to build trusting relationships and to adequately anticipate and interpret the behaviour of the Dutch. It should enable the reader to avoid prejudice or hasty judgments in bicultural encounters between Dutch and Germans.

1.3. Outline of the study

The remaining of this study is organized as follows. In the second chapter, the theoretical background will be introduced by defining culture and cultural standards as well as presenting an overview of the literature. In the third chapter, the methodology will be further explained by presenting the research design, sample description, data collection and analysis at the end. In the fourth chapter, the findings of the research will be given which is followed up by the fifth and last chapter, which will present the discussions and conclusions.

2. Theoretical Background

This chapter provides the reader with a definition of culture and previous literature on intercultural research. Furthermore, this chapter defines cultural standards and presents an overview of the literature regarding cultural standards and more in-depth, German and Dutch cultural standards.

2.1. Defining Culture

In regard to intercultural research, a definition of the term culture is required. Schein (2010) defined culture as

> *"[…]a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems".* (p. 18)

Thomas (2009, p. 22) defined the term culture as a "system of orientation". This system is shaped by certain cultural standards. They serve to avoid misunderstandings due to incorrect interpretation of values and behaviour in intercultural encounters. Culture is reflected in shared values, norms and practices by a group of people. According to Thomas (1996) culture is a universal phenomenon where all people live in a specific culture and develop it further, which means that cultures differ from one another in many ways. Therefore, culture always manifests in an orientation system typical of a nation, society, organization or group. This orientation system is made up of specific symbols (e.g. language, gestures, facial expressions, clothing, greeting rituals) and is passed on to the respective society, organization or next generation (Thomas, Kinast and Schroll-Machl, 2005).

Following Schein (2010), there are three different levels on which culture can be analysed and understood by – the level of artefacts, the level of espoused beliefs and values and the third level basic underlying assumptions. The first level of culture can be understood as artefacts and observable behaviour, that is visible at the surface, examples may be rituals or clothes. Below this, lies the second level, espoused beliefs and values, with the feelings of how things should be done; e.g. ideals or behavioural patterns resulting in attitudes that determine the behaviour of individuals. At the deepest level, basic underlying assumptions, are the things that are taken for granted in the way one reacts to the environment. These basic assumptions are not questioned or discussed. They are so deeply rooted in thought that members of the same culture are often not aware of them.

These cultural levels can be seen as the "collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 19). The level to which values and norms of two or more people from different countries separate each other can be a significant obstacle in intercultural

interactions and in successful cooperations (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Some cultural differences are expressed through actions and are therefore easily visible and noticeable. But there is also another, deeper cultural level, mostly more difficult to perceive, which is reflected in values, norms, ways of perceiving and thinking (Thomas and Schlizio, 2009).

The talent to handle cultural diversity is becoming increasingly important in society. Particularly in businesses that have international trade relationships or subsidiaries, as they employ individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds who regularly encounter cultural differences in their every-day work life (Raju, 2017). Therefore, researchers across the world publish intercultural research and establish theory and dimensions which is explained in more detail in the following.

2.2. Previous literature on intercultural research

To behave appropriately in intercultural situations, a good understanding of the values and norms of the others culture is important. Previous literature used two different approaches to study cultures and cultural understanding: The quantitative research and the qualitative research approach (Fink, Kölling, & Neyer, 2005).

Over recent years, a variety of researchers have come up with cultural frameworks and dimensions, based on quantitative research that deal with the classification of cultural differences (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Hall, 1969; Trompenaars, 1993; Lewis, 1996; Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). The approaches may differ in whether they are more culturally comparable or not comparable to a culture, or if they have uniform values and norms that can be described and measured based on cultural dimensions (Fink, et al., 2005). However, these frameworks have been criticized, amongst other things, for focusing too much on national cultures as a whole and not taking into consideration demographic characteristics that can also predominate within national borders (Thomas & Utler, 2013; Jones, 2007; Kutschker & Schmid, 2012; Reimer, 2005). Further criticism was raised by Glaser and Strauss (2008, p.12), stating that previous literature focused to establish theory first and in the second step explained certain observations based on the established theory. Fink, Kölling, and Neyer, (2005, p.5) stated that “understanding the dynamics of international encounters requires a fundamental shift from comparative studies of cultural differences to the study of intercultural interactions”.

This was accomplished by Thomas (1991), who developed a cultural standard concept that refers to cultural differences in perceiving, thinking and behaving, which can cause critical situations or incidents in intercultural interactions (Fink, et al., 2005). Thomas’s (1991) approach relates to specific cultural characteristics that become clear - especially in their culture-specific differences - when people from different cultures meet. Thus, when collecting the cultural standards, the focus is more on critical situations between people from different cultural backgrounds rather than isolating a set of attributes that are characteristic of a person without considering the influence of a situational effect.

Therefore, the preferred approach for this study is the qualitative research. It is detail-oriented and more descriptive in nature due to specific experiences from individuals that lead to cultural standards, that are explained in the following.

2.3. Defining cultural standards

Relating to the definition of culture made by Schlizio et al. (2008), as a system of orientation, is the concept of cultural standards. Alexander Thomas is an important German researcher of intercultural management, who established the concept of cultural standards (Fink et al., 2005). Behavioural patterns that he describes as cultural standards are shared by the majority of members of a culture. They serve the people of a cultural group not only as an orientation for their own behaviour, but also for those of others (Thomas, 1991). The purpose of cultural standards is to make one's own and foreign behaviour understandable and plausible in intercultural collaborations (Krewer 1996, p. 152).

To gain through understanding of cultural standards, a literature review for this thesis was conducted and following search terms were used among Web of Science, FINDUT, Scopus and Google Scholar: "niederländische Kulturstandards", "deutsche Kulturstandards", "kulturstandards" and "cultural standards" to find grounded theory that thoroughly explains the concept of cultural standards. From the originally identified 314 search results, only relevant literature for this thesis were selected that included the German and Dutch perspective or delivered general information about cultural standards. Search results with different focus were removed. However, one must notice that the term cultural standards is not as established in the English language than the German, since Alexander Thomas established the concept and it is broadly used in German literature. However, after a thorough examination, 11 remaining articles and books were left. Therefore only a limited number of search results focused exclusively on the content of cultural standards in general and in particular in the combination of German and Dutch cultural standards compared. A detailed list of relevant literature for this thesis can be found in appendix a.

According to Thomas et al. (2005), the term cultural standards covers all kinds of perception, thinking and acting which is used by most individuals of a specific culture. Own and strange behaviour is judged and regulated based on these cultural standards. Krewer (1996) mentioned that cultural standards deliver two aspects. On the one hand, cultural standards demonstrate fundamental cultural differences between nations concerning their action, thinking and feeling. On the other hand, cultural standards can be an indication for challenging situations in intercultural interactions. Besides, cultural standards are determined from particular experienced situations of cross-cultural interaction and take self-awareness and awareness of others into account by examining one culture from the perspective of another culture (Demorgon & Molz, 1996, p. 57).

Cultural standards can be understood as an orientation system that is typical of a nation, an organization or a group (Thomas, 1996). They make it possible to cope with living and environmental requirements by defining certain rules, standards, values and recommendations for action.

According to his theory, the perception, thinking and attitudes of the respective group are largely controlled by the cultural standards of their environment. Thomas (1996) emphasized that cultural norms show possibilities for action, create conditions for action and define limits for action. The cultural standards represent a common framework that guarantees individuals that their perspectives and ways of thinking are shared and understood by their fellow human beings.

In Thomas' theory (1996), cultural standards are a tool that can be used to deal with the strains of social reality. The origin of the cultural standards are learning processes, which usually take place on an unconscious level. The cultural standards usually create routine procedures that are considered as "normal" and "appropriate" in the respective culture. They describe, explain and predict what happens in concrete cross-cultural interaction situations, which might cause irritations, conflicts or communication breakdowns. This makes the concept of cultural standards more practice-based (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009).

Cultural standards are hierarchically structured and linked and can be defined at various levels of abstraction: from general values to very specific rules of conduct (Kühnel, 2014). Central cultural standards of one culture can be completely lacking in another. On the one hand, different cultural standards can have a behavioural effect, on the other hand, if there are identical cultural standards, the values may differ with regard to the tolerance range or the significance of the standards. How a person is perceived and how their behaviour is assessed, also depends on cultural standards of the other person involved (Thomas & Utler, 2013). Behaviour corresponding to German cultural standards (e.g. punctuality, order) for example is judged correct by Germans, while behaviour deviating from these standards is assessed negatively (Kühnel, 2014).

Therefore, cultural standards are subjective representations of critically experienced intercultural interactions. The results are deliberately dependent on the experience of the individual (Schlizio, et al., 2008). Cultural standards describe the critical points of a specific behaviour or action for cross-cultural cooperation, as they are perceived by those affected in the situation. Cultural-specific standards only become apparent when people from different cultures interact with each other. According to Schroll-Machl (2002) cultural standards are worked out from the results of empirical, scientific research and are therefore a result of reflection and analysis. They develop from real and everyday situations of action that are explained by members of a culture. Consequently, it is not about comparability of universal cultural aspects, which is one of the main differences compared to traditional cultural dimensions and models previously developed. Cultural standards only give a prognosis about the most likely behaviour. When people come together, they are on the one hand dependent on their familiar, cultural-specific orientation system, but at the same time are also actively maintaining and changing cultures and are involved in the creation of new cultures (Thomas, 1996). In summary, one can say that culture is an orientation system and cultural standards are the characteristics of the orientation system in a specific situation.

Cultural standards are raised based on intercultural situations or critical incidents, which connects them to a specific context or situation. Thomas et al. (2005, p.25), created categories of cultural standards that generally be defined by the following five characteristics:
Cultural standards are ways of perceiving, thinking, evaluating and acting that are considered normal or typical by a majority of members of a certain culture and are deliberated as binding for themselves and others. Own and foreign behaviour is controlled, regulated and assessed based on these cultural standards (Thomas et al., 2005, p.25).

Moreover, these cultural standards may help individuals on how to deal with people from different cultures. In the following are the Dutch and German cultural standards, that were established by Thesing (2016) and Schlizio et al. (2009), to nurture cultural understanding in bicultural encounters.

2.4. German cultural standards

These five characteristics are reflected in the German cultural standards perceived by Dutch that were part of Thesing (2016, p.40 ff) research results:

Fear of losing control

Germans take their work, their role, their task and their associated responsibilities very seriously. In the professional field, you are expected to correctly adhere to your responsibilities and perform your task. You need to have control over all important aspects, involving your responsibilities. Therefore, Germans try to avoid ambiguities, risks and situations in which they cannot keep full control.

Separation of living spheres

Germans make a strict distinction between their work and free time: they work during their working hours and “live” in their free time. At work, you are factually oriented, while you are relationship-oriented towards family and friends. Emotionality is more dominant in private life. A supervisor's power of disposal is limited to working hours; an employee would not intervene in private matters. Colleagues are not automatically involved in the private life, and the relationship usually stays work-related.

Task orientation

Dealing with facts is more important than dealing with people. In business meetings, you “get down to business” and exchange facts and figures. For Germans, “objective” behaviour means extensive control of emotions. This is also what Germans value as professionals. Whether colleagues know each other well or even like them is not primarily relevant, but the exchange of information is important.

Appreciation for rules and structures

A rule is required and expected for everything. Rules, regulations and laws in Germany are interpreted strictly and rigidly. All of these regulations are applied and little questioned. Compliance with them is

taken for granted and their violation is punished, sometimes even by completely uninvolved people. In their professional life, Germans are active in planning, structuring and organizing down to the last detail to be able to achieve a relatively high-quality standard.

Time planning

Time is a valuable good, it is worth money and must not be wasted. For Germans, time is a precious commodity: they organize things into clear time frames and do them in a "meaningful" order. In order to realize the time coordination between individuals, they make appointments. Disruptions in the planned agreements cause annoyance because there are a lot of obligations behind adhering to schedules. A full appointment calendar leaves no room for spontaneous, short-term encounters, conversations or visits. Reliability in time is important for building trust and contributes to a positive image as a reliable, interested and professional person.

Status orientation

Processes and personal relationships are shaped by a formal address "Sie" and the emphasis is on titles, functions and dependencies.

2.5. Dutch cultural standards

In comparison, Dutch cultural standards perceived by Germans were part of Schlizio et al. (2009) research and are reflected in the following characteristics:

Calimero

Teasing or critical comments towards Germans are not necessarily a sign of deep-seated rejection, but rather indicate the unequal proportions and the resulting desire for differentiation.

Flat hierarchy

All members of a team are equally important, they only differ in their tasks. The supervisor gives up competencies and, on the other hand, expects a high level of initiative from his employees. Work instructions are formulated as friendly requests across all hierarchical levels, a demanding appearance is counterproductive. Dutch employees are usually involved in decision-making processes.

Consensus culture

The working atmosphere is open and everyone is in regular contact with one another. You inform each other about the progress of projects and get the opinions of the others. This may happen in meetings in which all contributions are taken seriously and discussed, even if they are made by subordinate colleagues or interns.

Calvinist modesty

Dutch culture is characterized by restraint and humbleness. It is not necessary to emphasize one's own influence or status. It is more acknowledged to decrease one's own power and appear in a modest way.

Pragmatism

Processes are little regulated, the common goal is in the centre, how it is achieved is secondary. Flexibility and constant consultation make it possible to react quickly. The Dutch willingness to take risks is higher than in Germany, the approach is that people learn from mistakes and it is generally assumed that everyone is doing their best.

Relationship oriented

Getting to know the person, building and maintaining a trusting relationship is very important. Individual people count more than their function and the task to be done, as a good atmosphere is extremely important. Colleagues take an interest in the lives of others and illnesses or other problems can be discussed openly. Friendliness and personal interest are part of the job.

Informality

Dutch maintain an informal contact, addressing people with “du/ you”. Rules are handled less strictly than in Germany, they may be adapted according to the situation. The official channels are short. Written correspondence is generally less important than in Germany.

As Schein (2010) has mentioned, behavioural patterns (cultural standards) are part of the three levels of culture - the level of artefacts, the level of espoused beliefs and values and the level basic underlying assumptions. Misinterpretations of culture and the behavioural patterns happen when researchers do not differentiate and acknowledge these different levels (Schein, 2010) as seen in the study conducted by Schlizio et al. (2009).

For example, the cultural standards *fear of losing control* and *appreciation for rules and structures* are not separate standards but seem to be strongly connected. The second is a concrete observable behaviour and the first is the motivation to do so. The same can be seen for *flat hierarchies* and *Calvinist modesty*. These behavioural patterns are presented as two separate cultural standards, whereas in reality they are two sides of the same coin. *Flat hierarchies* is the description of a specific behaviour and *Calvinist modesty* is the explanation for this behaviour. Thus in the studies of Schlizio et al. (2009) and of Thesing (2016) cultural standards are not distinguished from the explanation of this behaviour (value, tacit assumption, cultural logic). For the remaining cultural standards they identify and refer to purely observable behaviour and the explanation of this is lacking. This account of Dutch and German cultural standards remains therefore a rather thin description.

3. Methodology

This chapter introduces and justifies the research design and explains other considerations regarding the methods chosen to conduct this research.

3.1. Research Design

The research design describes the method used to study intercultural interactions and to identify cultural standards. It is organized as follows: The methodology can be divided into four steps to collect data and to cope with various biases that might occur in the qualitative research approach: the data collection method, data analysis, feedback from focus group and lastly a comparison to previous studies.

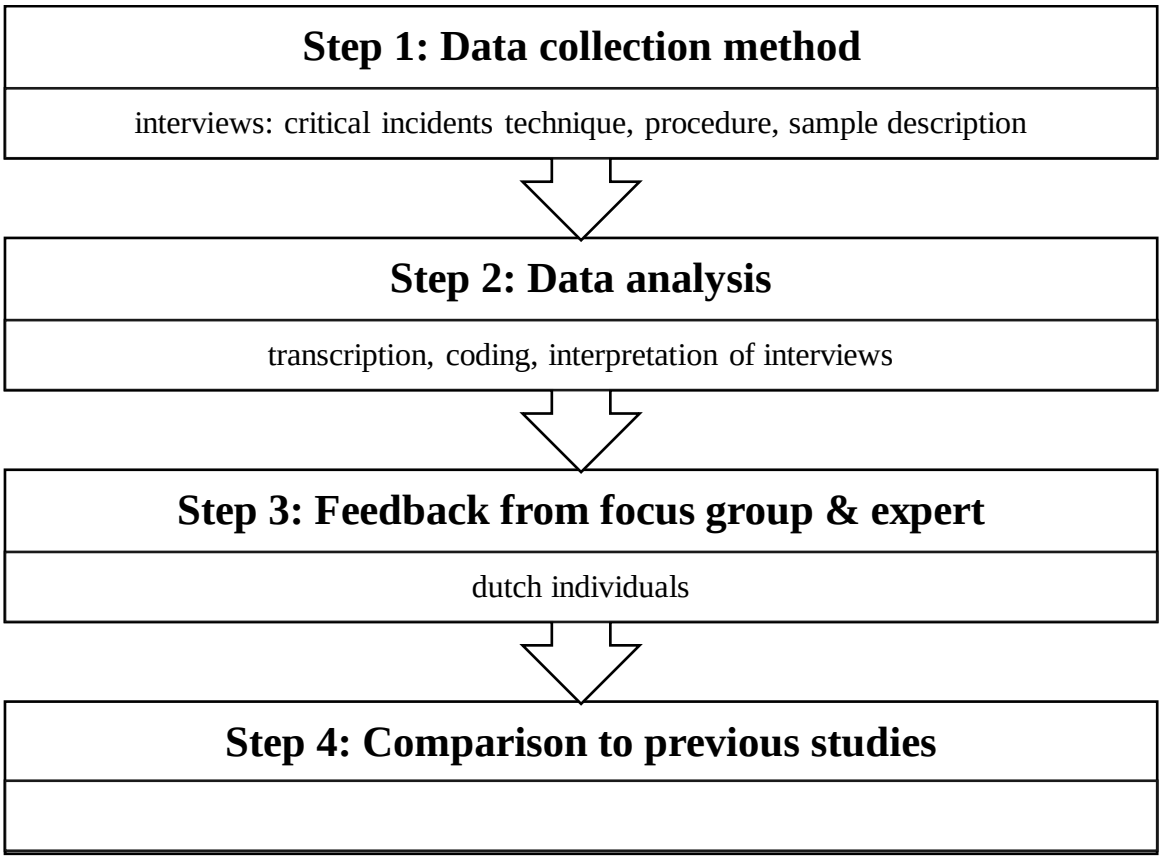

Figure 1. Visualization of the research design

Step 1: Data collection method

The data collection of this research is based upon the approach by Thomas (1991) suggested for recognizing cultural standards. It followed the inductive research approach, that uses primary data to derive theory through the analysis from raw data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Interviews: Critical Incidents Technique

In order to establish Dutch cultural standards that are perceived by Germans, the critical incident technique by in-depth semi-structured interviews is used to collect the data.

The critical incident technique was originally developed by the American psychologist Flanaghan (1949, p. 1), who defined it as the following:

> *"The critical incident technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles. The critical incident technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria".*

Fiedler, Mitchell and Triandis (1971) were the first to apply the critical incident technique to cultural differences. The critical incident technique was then used by Thomas in 1991, to broaden the literature for intercultural research. He collected critical incidents through interviews with people, analysed the data and established cultural standards. According to Fangahan (1954, p. 1), critical incidents can be described as:

> "*Any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects*".

Thus, the critical incidents technique defines situations in which the specific behaviour of a person determines the success or failure of the intercultural interaction. It describes situations in which the behaviour of others, positively or negatively, diverts from their own. The critical incidents technique is particularly suitable to establish cultural standards (Thomas, 1996) and makes it a central analysis method in research with qualitative procedures (see e.g. Arthur 2001; Otten 2006). It is particularly suitable for questions that have intercultural differences in mind since culturally shaped actions and behaviours are usually not reflected (Schroll-Machl & Novy, 2000) and only reveal themselves as such in critical situations. A precise analysis of the critical incidents enables insight into the coping and processing strategies of those involved. This makes differences visible that have a strong influence on the respective activity. A collection of such incidents can be examined in a structured manner and conclusions can be drawn to promote desired processes and prevent undesirable processes (Bott & Tourish, 2016). As stated by Yukl and Van Fleet (1982), the critical incident technique delivers a more detailed outline of a situation that cannot be achieved with a questionnaire for example and therefore is less issue of biases. Recently, Bott and Tourish (2016) emphasized again that the use of this specific

technique promises to contribute comprehensive descriptions and uncovering differences that can expand and further develop existing theory.

For these reasons, the critical incident technique has been chosen for this research project to establish Dutch cultural standards that are perceived by Germans. During in-depth 30-60 minute interviews, participants were asked to talk about unfamiliar situations where the cooperation between German and Dutch is perceived as positive or negative at times due to cultural differences. The aim of the interviews is to identify in detail as many critical incidents as possible.

Procedure

The interviews were carried out by one person (the author). Contact with potential interview partners was established on the social media platforms LinkedIn and Facebook (e.g. Facebook groups: Deutsche in Amsterdam; Deutsche fachkräfte in den Niederlanden; Duitsers in NL and Deutsche in NL). Once German individuals had shown interest, they were contacted and a virtual interview was organized, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher explained what critical incidents are. After the opening statement, the interview partner was asked to talk about situations in which critical incidents occurred. After the interview partner has told a critical incident, he/she is asked in a first feedback-loop: "What triggered this event?", next: "How did you react?", and finally: “What makes this such a positive/ negative experience for you? Did you adjust your behaviour?”. The catalogue with questions to ask the Germans during the interview can be found in appendix b.

The researcher examined the previously mentioned critical incidents with these follow-up questions to accumulate information about value perceptions, potential stereotypes and learning behaviour of the interview partner. The additional information about the personal evaluation of critical incidents, potential stereotypes, value perceptions, and coping strategies might reduce possible bias in data collection and strengthen the interpretation of the gathered data (Fink et al., 2005).

The interviews with German individuals were conducted by the researcher herself who is also German, to comply with the recommendation and research conducted by Fink et al. (2005, p.14), who stated that in order “to deal with interviewer bias and construct bias it is strongly recommended that interviews are undertaken by members from the same culture as the interviewed persons”. The respondents are interviewed in their native language German. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, content-analysed and parts translated into English. A transcript of the interviews was produced by the software “AmberScript”. It is a transcription software that has a speech recognition engine to help in transcribing audio files. Once the transcripts of each interview were established by the software, the transcriptions of the interviews were refined and improved by the researcher.

Sample description

In order to collect critical incidents to recognize Dutch cultural standards, interviews were carried out with German interview partners who work and live in the Netherlands (an exception was made for two individual Germans who work in Enschede and live near the German/Dutch border within 10 km). Interview participants had to meet the following requirements:

Firstly, only interview participants who worked in The Netherlands for at least half a year, were chosen for the interviews, as the initial euphoria about the new country is over and greater efforts must be made towards cultural integration (Bhawuk, 1998, p. 630–655). Secondly, they had to fully be integrated and work with Dutch colleagues to guarantee that a certain level of adjustment or intense contact to the Dutch culture existed and possible cultural differences could be identified. Thirdly, to enhance previous literature and to answer the research question, interview participants had the following demographic characteristics. Interviews were held with Germans who work in the region of Randstad and Overijssel. These regions are geographically and economically diverse, Randstad being in the western part, made up of the most important cities in the country and Overijssel located in the eastern part with smaller cities, bordering to Germany. Further demographic characteristics were differences in gender, different age groups, as well as differences in the duration of time the German interviewees worked in The Netherlands. These different demographic characteristics, might show an effect on the perceived Dutch cultural standards.

Following the approach of Fink (2002, p. 13), the researcher also considered that "to be a worthwhile interview partner, the interviewee must a) have experienced something, b) still remember the incident, c) find it to be a worthwhile story, d) be willing to tell the interviewer" and e) the incident had to occur in a work environment. In total, 21 German individuals were interviewed for this study. However, only fifteen interviews were used, as six of them did not match the previously mentioned criteria to be considered a worthwhile interview partner. Table 2 presents the demographic background of the interviewees.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of German interviewees

Interviewee No.	Gender	Age	Duration of time working in NL	Location of work in NL	Occuptaion/ Industry
1	w	50	24	Randstad	Self-employed Translator and Author
3	w	29	2	Overijssel	Administration in Telecommunication; Supermarket
4	w	46	20	Randstad	Team Lead Hotel; Operations Manager at University
5	m	31	8,5	Overijssel	Agricultural Manager
8	w	41	16	Randstad	Managing Director - Trade Fair Industry
9	w	27	1	Overijssel	Employee Marketing Department
11	w	49	22	Randstad	Self-employed in Consulting and Research
12	w	32	6,5	Randstad	Supply Chain Manager
13	m	27	1,5	Overijssel	Acquisition Manager
14	m	48	19	Overijssel	Urban Planner
16	m	57	27	Randstad	Tax Auditor
17	w	34	4	Randstad	Social Engagement Manager
18	w	27	8	Overijssel	Marketing Manager
19	m	27	1,5	Randstad	Customer Service Agent
20	m	41	17	Randstad	(Male) Nurse in a Prison

Step 2: Data analysis

The data analysis and the identification of cultural standards was based on the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory approach is a repetitive process of data analysis, in which categories are successively created and related to each other and thus ultimately form into a pattern and theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The idea behind the grounded theory approach is to analyse primary data (for the current study the critical incidents derived from the interviews) by establishing categories and finding associations (coding).

Open Coding

In the beginning open coding is applied. All text passages that included critical incidents were highlighted and classified as significant to identify cultural standards. All highlighted incidents were assigned a category, which characterized the content or the topic of the section. The initial category was based and adhere on following questions: What is the incidents - what is it about? Who is involved What is the role of those involved and how do they interact? When does it occur? Where does it take place?

Overview of text passages and categories in a table

In order to have a better overview of relevant text passages and categories from all interviews, a table was created to give an overview that exposed central themes and reoccurring categories. An example of a table is given in appendix c.

Open coding changes to the axial coding phase

This process seeks to find similarities and differences among the previously established categories. During the axial coding, all categories are reconsidered, trying to connect them with each other. Cross-case categories became visible in the table and revealed that there were several critical incidents that seemed to be perceived by many interviewees. Critical incidents that were frequently mentioned were used for the content analysis to develop cultural standards in the later stage. This will minimize the risk that critical incidents are analysed that might only be individual cases that cannot be generalized to cultural standards.

Selective coding

The multiple naming of the critical incidents and categories were further developed and analysed to create core categories for situations that were mentioned by interviewees that offer a convincing explanation for the critical incidents (e.g. meetings, timing).

These processes are repeated to gain as much information as possible so that there are no gaps in the research. Once the researcher cannot identify new or reoccurring categories from interviews, theoretical saturation in the grounded theory approach is reached. This is *"the point in category development at which no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during analysis"*

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.143). This means that new interviews would not provide new cultural standards than the ones already found. Thus, for identifying the cultural standards the amount of interviews was sufficient.

Establishing cultural standards

The initial critical incidents were content analysed and categories were established. These categories were reviewed and combined. In the last stage, a catalogue of cultural standards (behavioural patterns) of Dutch culture perceived by German individuals was identified. The established cultural standards had to be perceived by at least three different interviewees, in order to assure that critical incidents were experienced by several and that it is not an individual perception. Consequently, the cultural standard "risk acceptance" was taken out. The complete catalogue of cultural standards can be found in Table 2.

Step 3: Feedback from focus group and expert on the field

The central problem to establish cultural standards is the cultural interpretation bias. The researcher's own culture, experiences, prejudices and stereotypes may influence the content analysis and the development of cultural standards (Fink et al, 2005). Therefore a focus group of three Dutch individuals and an expert on the field (Dr. A. H. Enklaar) were asked to comment on the incidents and the interpretation. The focus group and the expert helped to strengthen the qualitative research by further exploration and in-depth interpretation of findings in order to have a trustworthy outcome (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). It may lead to confirmation or refute from previously made interpretations and may enrich findings and descriptions. The application of the focus groups and the expert can contribute to understanding why and how previous findings were established and analysed (Nyumba, et al., 2018). The cultural standards were submitted to the focus group of Dutch individuals and the expert with the request to explain and potentially elaborate on the behaviour of their respective countrymen to the researcher. When looking for such explanations, the Dutch used their culture-specific orientation system and it can therefore be assumed that the attributions described by the Dutch focus group essentially represent concretizations of the situations and their cultural standards. Questions that will be raised to the focus group are the following:

1. Is the categorization in the characteristic elements/cultural standards correct?
2. Can you inform us about the cultural logic behind characteristic elements/cultural standards? Why do Dutch think or behave like this?
3. Can you tell us of each critical incident type what would be the correct way to deal with the situation and to avoid clashes?

The judgment of the focus group is making the cultural standards more complete and enriches the description.

Step 4: Influence of demographic characteristics

Once the Dutch cultural standards were identified and the focus group and the expert evaluated the findings, the aim was to analyse whether different demographic characteristics have an influence on the perception of cultural standards. The evaluated demographic characteristics were: Different regions, in this study Randstad and Overijssel, differences in gender and age groups as well as differences in the duration of time working in The Netherlands.

Therefore, numerical data in forms of tables (section 4.3.) were created to evaluate the influence of demographic characteristics. With this content analysis, marked differences can be highlighted to present potential differences in the perception of Dutch cultural standards.

Step 5: Comparison to previous studies

At the end, the results were compared to previous literature by Schlizio et al. (2009) to evaluate whether the cultural standards analysed by the previous research still hold. A table, summarizing the differences and similarities can be found in table 7.

4. Findings

In this part, the findings of the study are shown. The cultural standards are presented with a definition and further explanation of underlying values. The influence of demographic characteristics on the perception of cultural standards is analysed and a comparison with previous literature is done.

4.1 Cultural standards

After a thorough analysis and further evaluation of a focus group and an expert on the field, fourteen Dutch cultural standards from a German perspective were identified, presented in table 2.

Table 2. Dutch cultural standards

Cultural Standards	Definitions	Number of interviewees mentioned cultural standard
Flexibility	People easily change plans, methods or the organization in order to improve results, are open to changes	13
Collective decision-making	Decisions are being made in the team, everybody is involved and has a say	12
(Technological) innovativeness	Always in for (technological) innovations	11
Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)	People behave like actual friends to create a conflict-free atmosphere	11
Flat hierarchy	People of whatever position in the hierarchy treat each others as equals	11
Freedom of action	Having a lot of freedom to determine how to accomplish a task or handle a case without a manager involved	10
Work-life-balance	Private life is considered just as important as professional life	10
Informality	People do not behave according to formal roles or positions in the hierarchy	10
Directness	Quickly expressing their own opinion without being asked	8
Approximate planning	Not coming exactly on time/not keeping exactly to the planning	7
Anti-authoritarianism	Not tolerating that orders are simply being imposed from above	6
Pragmatism	Acting according to what is opportune at the moment (without using a plan or procedure)	6
Solution orientation	People try to solve the problem as soon as possible (instead of looking for the causes or who was responsible)	6
Job Opportunity	Giving job opportunities to people with growth potential (but not fully fitting job description)	3

Flexibility

The results show that many of the critical incidents described by the interviewees can be explained by the Dutch *flexibility*. In thirteen out of the fifteen interviews, this cultural standard was described and considered as very important in the bicultural interaction. According to the interviewees, Dutch people easily change plans, methods or the organization in order to improve results and are open to changes. The analysis of the critical incidents from the focus group and the cultural standard suggest, that the Dutch have a strong affection to be flexible and improvise in challenging situations.

> "*Here in my company in The Netherlands for example, compared to Germany, I often have the feeling that meetings are not entirely organized and structured. Even though the Dutch have a guideline, they quickly adjust it when needed in order to talk about a more urgent topic or other things that were not planned beforehand*." (Interviewee 9)

Collective decision-making

In twelve of the fifteen interviews, interviewees mentioned critical incidents related to the cultural standard of *collective decision-making*. From a German perspective, most of the decisions in the Dutch culture are being made in the team and everybody is involved, at least in the process. This is in line with responses from the focus group, who agreed that people in The Netherlands like to contribute in discussions, which might be nurtured by the friendly atmosphere and less hierarchical structures, since people feel comfortable enough to speak up and voice their opinions.

> *"I had the same at my previous job, where I was responsible for a Dutch team. You have to respect that Dutch want to get involved and that there are discussions and that you are available and that you listen to it and take the time. You have to adapt your own strategy accordingly."* (Interviewee 8)

(Technological) innovativeness

Furthermore, eleven out of fifteen interviewees mentioned critical incidents correlating to the cultural standard *(technological) innovativeness*. It became apparent that Dutch are very future-oriented and that the urge to change is strong. They do not use outdated systems or approaches, instead examining what can be adjusted and improved to work most effective. As stated by the focus group, Dutch people are change oriented and eager to develop further due to the small country size, to stay competitive and go with the changes, including technology.

> *„In Germany, we had a lot of forms for everything. They no longer exist in The Netherlands, everything is digitized and takes place online, but in Germany they still work with pen and paper, as I still know from former colleagues."* (Interviewee 20)

Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)

Furthermore, five interviewees describe the work atmosphere in The Netherlands as friendly and welcoming. People behave like actual friends to create an open atmosphere in which a close partnership can be shaped. In this context, the focus group also mentioned Dutch humbleness, which can contribute to a welcoming and *friendly atmosphere*.

> *"I often have the feeling that the atmosphere in the Netherlands is also more welcoming. We always have a variety of drinks and different snacks, and when I have an appointment with a client in Germany, you might be asked whether you want a coffee or tea and that's it. In the Netherlands the setting is simply more welcoming and warm. There are small Hapjes with a large selection of drinks and more effort is simply made to show customers or partners that they are valued and that they have made an effort. In the Netherlands you get a warm welcome, that's how I always felt and there was also feedback from Germans who I looked after and who worked in the Netherlands. At the beginning there is always a nice chat and this inviting atmosphere then contributes to the fact that the customers feel more comfortable."* (Interviewee 16)

Flat hierarchy

According to the interviewees, Dutch culture includes a *flat hierarchy*. People of diverse positions and levels in the hierarchy treat each other's as equals and even subordinates can criticize superiors and their decisions in a constructive manner without the fear of consequences. Everyone is seen as equally important for the team, as goals can only be reached together.

> *„So I think what I really valued in the Netherlands, especially at my workplace in the office of the telecommunications service provider is the flat hierarchy. That means that I could talk to everyone and not only did I have my manager as a contact person, but I also sat around the lunch table next to the CFO or CEO. They do not mind at all, talk about private life and just blend into the team. I have never experienced anything like this with a German manager."* (Interviewee 3)

Freedom of action

The interviewees reported critical incidents regarding the Dutch urge to work independent. The appreciation to decide how to accomplish a task or handle a case without a manager involved, seems to be very important for the Dutch, as ten out of fifteen interviewees mentioned the cultural standard *freedom of action*. The focus group agree that Dutch people value freedom of action and superiors trust employees that they are capable to decide by themselves and value their ability.

"I was actually involved in the project on my own and therefore I was a bit nervous because I didn't know what they expect from me and how they did it before. So I went to my supervisor's office and asked if he had just 5 minutes. I was able to briefly explain the concept to him and got positive feedback from him. However, he also said that of course he hired me, because he believed in me and my abilities and that I am able to carry out such projects on my own. Here in The Netherlands, the superior is not behind you all the time and looks at what you are doing. I often had the impression in Germany, that you always have to present your superiors what you've done, which projects you have completed and that is completely different here." (Interviewee 5)

Work-life-balance

Besides, interviewees described critical incidents related to work-life-balance. According to ten interviewees, private life is considered just as important as professional life and needs to be in balance. Furthermore, it was frequently mentioned during the interviews that it is more common to work part-time in The Netherlands in order to have time for hobbies and family.

*"Work-life-balance is from great value to the fact that if something is planned for the weekend or in the evening, that you can just go and are not expected to work longer hours. They don't work overtime here in the Netherlands as much, whereas in Germany it is normal to work overtime, so you somehow show that you are important to the company. So in my office there are actually no more colleagues after 6 p.m. At 6 p.m. sharp, they get up and leave, and I might finish something which might take additional 20 minutes so I don't have to start again tomorrow. The Dutch really care about getting home on time." (*Interviewee 16)

Informality

Nine interviewees mentioned that Dutch are more informal compared to the German culture. Many Dutch people do not behave according to formal roles or positions in the hierarchy and fulfil a status role. This also influences the use of informal communication channels and to call colleagues, superiors and business partners by first name without the use of any formal titles or the last name.

"I remember it wasn't that long ago, in a large discussion group, I introduced my company director and said: This is our director and she has a high position and knowledge. Later she said to me that I didn't have to go into such detail when introducing her, just simply saying: This is Yvette and she works with me, is enough. And for me, this is impossible for me, this distance to my boss is so deeply rooted in myself, it is difficult to let go off. But this importance and status does not exist in the Netherlands at all.

This is simply someone who has a different work environment and maybe has a little more responsibility. And it has nothing to do with one another in social interaction." (Interviewee 14)

Directness

During the interviews, the Dutch *directness* was also frequently mentioned. Dutch just say directly what they think in that moment to communicate their opinion on a topic. It is expected that one is open and sometimes a bit confrontational in negotiations. If the opposite does not say anything, it is actually assumed that everything is okay. Interviewees opinion on whether it can be regarded as a more negative or positive, was divided, as some faced the same cultural standard of directness in the German culture and experienced it as positive. Others considered it to be rather harsh and confrontational.

According to the focus group, the Dutch do not know such thing as Losing Face (which is the case in Asian countries). If one asks for an opinion, an honest answer is given in most cases without taking somebody's emotions into account.

"In principle, the Dutch like to be direct. Some may call them rude, it's just a matter of interpretation. At that time I had to create an email, one of the newsletters we sent out had worked on it for a long time. I showed it to my colleague and then he said: "This is super ugly, it looks shit, we can't send it that way". And I really thought if he meant it as seriously as he said it. I worked on it for hours and then there comes a reaction from. He could have said it differently. I have the feeling that there are generally more situations like this with Dutch people than with other international people or Germans. Because the Dutch like to say what they think directly without thinking about it beforehand. I also like to be direct myself and when I want something, I want to get to the point, of course, but if I compare that with American, Spanish or German colleagues, for example, it's just a different matter because you stop and always think: Do I have a the right to have a say or are allowed to express my opinion in a very direct way." (Interview 18)

Approximate planning

Critical incidents were also related to *approximate planning*. According to interviewees, Dutch people are not as strict when it comes to the time management, as meetings often start five to ten minutes later because people took their time to get a coffee. Dutch plan ahead and stick to deadlines, but if something important comes up, they do not fear to divert from the initial deadline.

"But for the Dutch, it stops where it is no longer feasible. Things are always taken into account, like when someone suddenly gets sick or when something else come up, then that's the way it is. Then you just can't make the deadline. I notice that my Dutch contact person are more

understanding and are okay if I miss a deadline and hand in my work two days later. But I feel bad, for me this appointment is an appointment and it is fixed. This is a date and it must deliver on the date and time." (Interviewee 1)

Anti-authoritarianism

Six of the fifteen interviewees also described situations in which the Dutch behaved *anti-authoritarianism*. According to the experiences of Germans working The Netherlands, Dutch do not tolerate that orders are simply being imposed from above.

"*The authoritarian leadership style, that comes out with me sometimes or the command tone. Of course I don't notice it, but then I get a reaction from the Dutch straight away and you are given immediate feedback, and that is sometimes difficult for me. The Dutch, especially employees who are subordinate to you, do not want you to authoritatively determine what to do and when to do it. I experienced, in everyday life when I talk about things and I want to have it my way and the employees have a different opinion, we have to discuss it. So they are not satisfied with my demand just because the manager said something, they want an explanation. It's kind of anti-authoritarianism that the Dutch bring with them. They want to make independent decisions and are almost allergic to it, when I say what to do and what not to do.*" (Interviewee 8)

Pragmatism

Besides the anti-authoritarianism behaviour, critical incidents regarding the Dutch *pragmatism* were described. Acting according to what is opportune at the moment without using a plan or procedure is common in The Netherlands. The effort should be relatively simple and involve little obstacles to reach a goal, it must be feasible and realistic to achieve. This is in line with the focus group stating that if something takes up too much time and the effort is not worth it, it is more likely that a project or task is not fulfilled, because the Dutch does not believe it is worth the effort and time.

"As an example, we also need to get certain data from the Dutch about product XY. Then we get product details that are simply not sufficient in the German market and then you just have to check back three or four times until you really have all the information together. The Dutch colleague says for his customer, it was only important what colour it is, what size and what price. But for my customer in Germany, if the chair has any certificates, I have to state these or the guarantee, but also the exact composition of the material and whether there are special features such as ergonomically adjustable seat backs etc. The German customer or the German market is much more detailed than the Dutch market, for them such details are not as relevant and mean a lot of effort." (Interviewee 13)

Solution orientation

An additional cultural standard which was described by interviewees was the Dutch solution orientation. People in The Netherlands try to solve the problem as soon as possible instead of looking at the causes or who was responsible.

> *"Here in the Netherlands the finger is not pointed at someone, so no matter whether it is a mistake from one person or from several, it does not matter at that moment, it is important to get the problem out of the world quickly. And that is different in Germany, they look okay am I involved, it is my problem, if not then it's the problem of the others. That's how I've always felt. Here, a solution is searched for very quickly and action is taken quickly, maybe even a little too quickly, that now turns into negative, as it can also be too impulsively. But overall I think it's very good because it is approached directly, without large two-hour meetings."* (Interviewee 12)

Job Opportunity

Three of the fifteen interviewees mentioned critical incidents regarding better *job opportunities* within the Dutch market. In The Netherlands, the German interviewees perceived a higher change to get hired for a job, even though you do not fully meet the necessary criteria, such as speaking the language or relevant experience, as the opposite rather gives the applicant the chance to proof his or her ability to develop and acquire the missing skills.

> *"The opportunity to orientate yourself to a different direction in your career, to set other priorities, for example when you realize that you might also be a good in a different position, even though you are absolutely not in the field of work. That you get the chance to develop into is great. If you want to be in a different position in Germany, then you often need an apprenticeship or other position relate requirements, otherwise I am not even eligible for a higher career."* (Interviewee 14)

4.2. Associations among cultural standards: Underlying Values

However, cultural standards cannot all be regarded independently. In some cases they overlap or relate to one another and might be considered as belonging to one group.

What the study discovered is an additional layer of cultural values, that can serve as an explanation for cultural standards and therefore why individuals behave according to these standards. Values are tacit assumptions, often moral principles or ideals, that are used by the members of a cultural community to justify their behaviour. Cultural values cannot be observed and directly deduced from behaviour on the work floor. They can only be indirectly derived from statements of Dutch and from the relevant literature on Dutch culture (Enklaar, 2007). Values help to understand why the Dutch keep these cultural standards. After studying literature and using the input from the focus group, cultural standards that have been found were linked to the following underlying values.

Self-determination ('Zelfbeschikking')

This underlying value expresses the Dutch preference for determining for themselves what they do and not depending on others, their parents, their boss or the authorities. They do not just accept that someone from above sets a standard that they have to adhere to. The Dutch are allergic to coercion that affects their freedom of choice. A typical Dutch saying connected to this value is:

Iedereen moet zelf bepalen wat hij doet (als ik er maar geen last van heb)

Everyone must decide for himself what he does (if only he does not bother me)

Figure 2 visualizes the connection between *freedom of action, approximate planning, anti-authoritarianism, directness* and a good *work-life-balance* that can be grouped together under the value *self-determination*. Dutch people behave according to these cultural standards because they like to have freedom in their choices and the trust from superiors that decisions can be made on individual levels when necessary and do not like to be told what they have to do. This is also reflected in the cultural standard of *approximate planning*, as meetings and deadlines may not be as strictly followed compared to the German culture due to inflicting factors that may equally be important according to the individual Dutch person. So the Dutch do not force themselves by the strict planning (as a kind of higher authority) but allow some tolerance in dealing with the deadlines.

Furthermore, Dutch like to have the freedom to live as one decides for themselves without consulting others relating to a work life balance that allows freedom for private activities and minimal overtime.

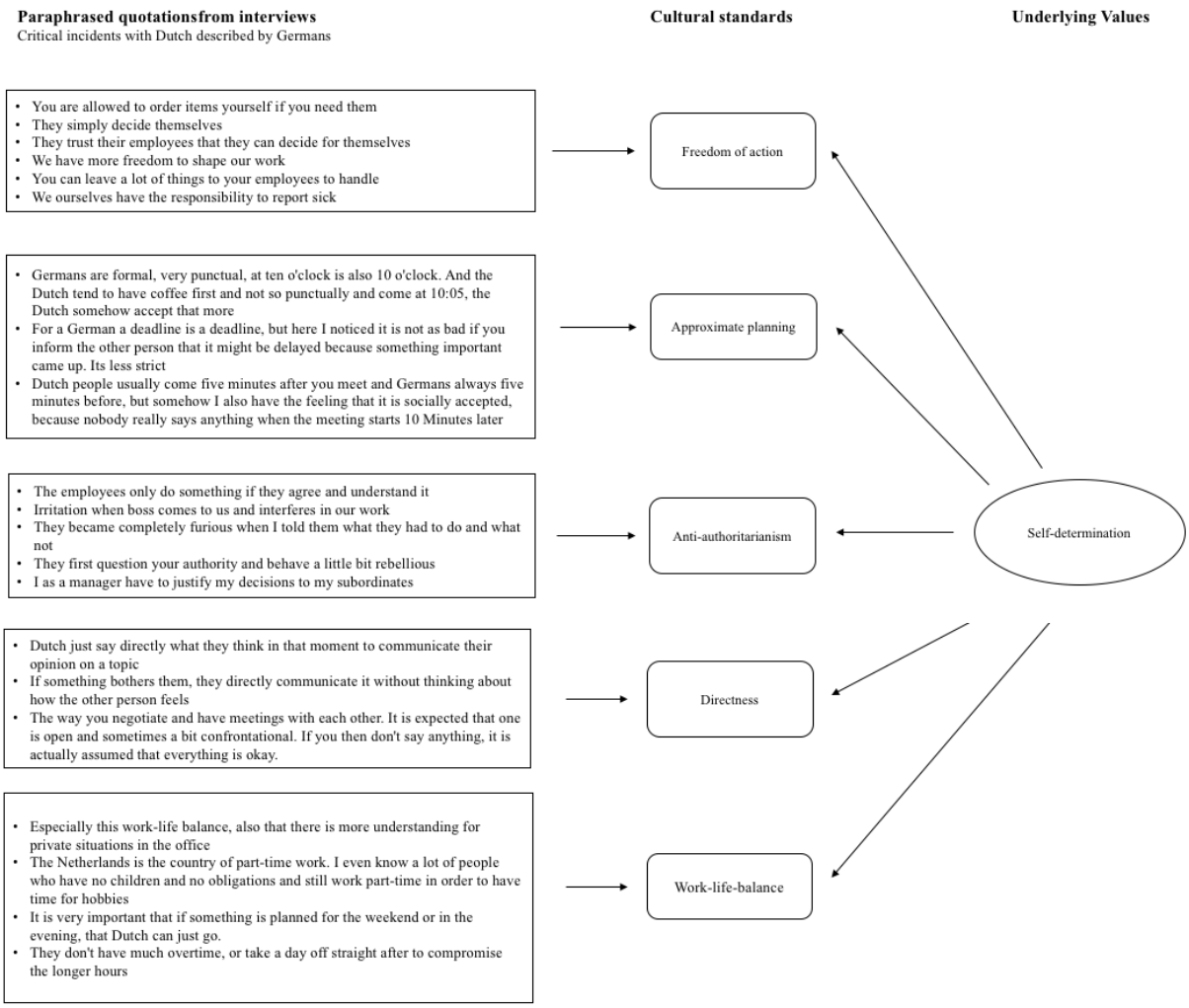

Figure 2. Underlying value self-determination

Efficiency ('Nut')

This value expresses the need the Dutch feel that every effort should yield a benefit. Otherwise it would be a waste of time, money or any other scarce resource, which is a shame. A typical question Dutchmen may ask their boss when he introduces a new method is:

Wat voor nut heeft dat?

What is the use of this?

Figure 3 pictures the perceived cultural standards *flexibility*, *pragmatism, (technological) innovativeness and solution orientation* belong to the underlying value *efficiency*. Dutch people want to be as efficient as possible, therefore being flexible and solution orientated in critical situations is important. Things have to be feasible and practical with a realistic goal, since Dutch people are very pragmatic according to the interviewees. The willingness to save time and adapt new technologies is equally important for the Dutch to constantly improve their performance.

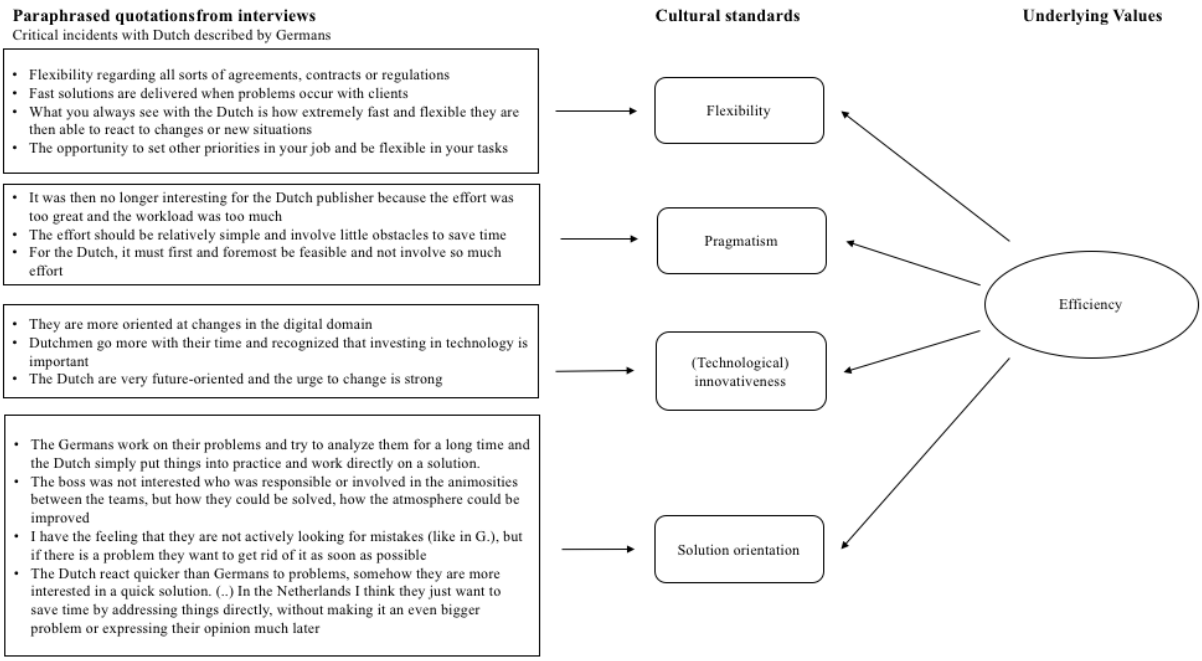

Figure 3. Underlying value efficiency

Consensus (Consensus)

This value expresses the strong Dutch conviction that disagreements must be resolved in a peaceful way and that aggression and violence should be avoided at all prices. Instead, it is good to let each side talk but to reach an agreement at the end. This is the normal state of affairs: a pleasant atmosphere without hostility: It must remain cosy (gezellig). A typical saying referring to this value is:

Je moet er met elkaar samen uit zien te komen

You have to meet each other halfway, make a compromise

Figure 4 focuses on the Dutch value of *consensus*, which can be an explanation for a *friendly atmosphere (gezelligheid)* at work and the *collective decision-making*. The Dutch are used to exercise the power through dialogue and consensus among the team, which involves people to be ready for open-ended discussions and seek compromises for the team. Dedicating much of their time to meetings in order to discuss and find a compromise is an everyday situation for most people working in The Netherlands. A *friendly atmosphere* creates the opportunity to speak up and discussions can be raised without the fear of giving an honest opinion that can lead to a better outcome for everyone involved.

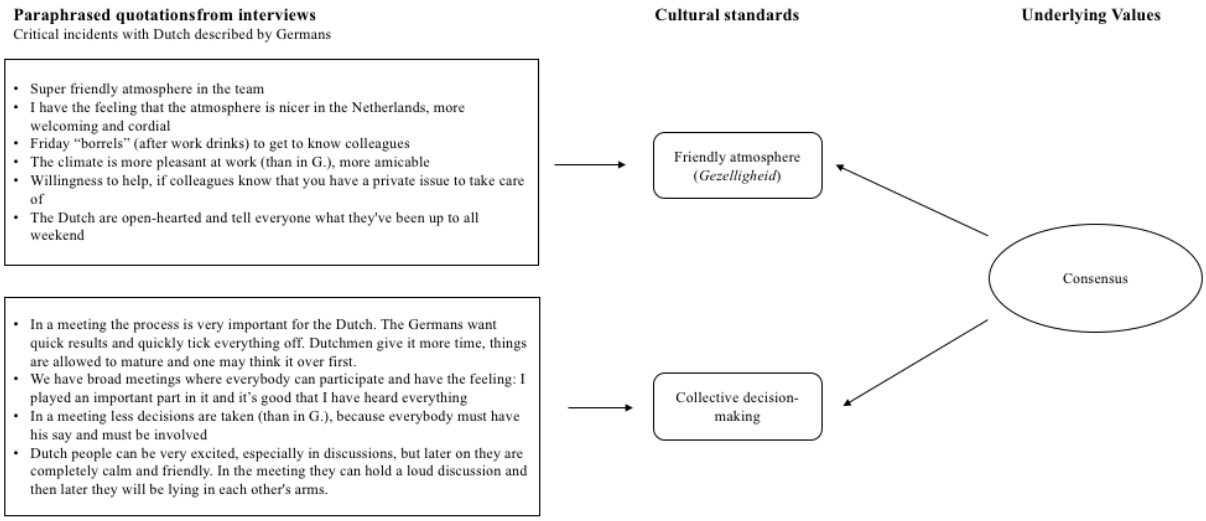

Figure 4. Underlying value consensus

Equality (‘Gelijkheid’)

This value expresses the Dutch conviction that everybody should be treated as an equal and nobody should receive a preferential treatment. It is bad to look down on someone else. You should not put on airs. Modesty is a virtue. A typical Dutch saying connected to this value is:

Je moet niet denken dat je meer bent dan een ander

Do not think that you are more important than anyone else

Figure 5 represents the cultural standards *flat hierarchy*, *job opportunity* and *informality* that can be explained by the underlying value *equality*. Dutch people value *equality* at the workplace, which is reflected in a hierarchy that values fairness and teamwork. Everyone is seen as equally important with different skills and tasks. Opportunities are given to people to show who they are and what they can do. The Dutch *informality* is reflected in an equal status, meaning that there is less emphasis on formal titles than in Germany and in general, everybody uses “du” (you), which is informal in Germany and would never be used in a formal business context. But in The Netherlands, it is important to show modesty and humbleness by treating people as equal partners.

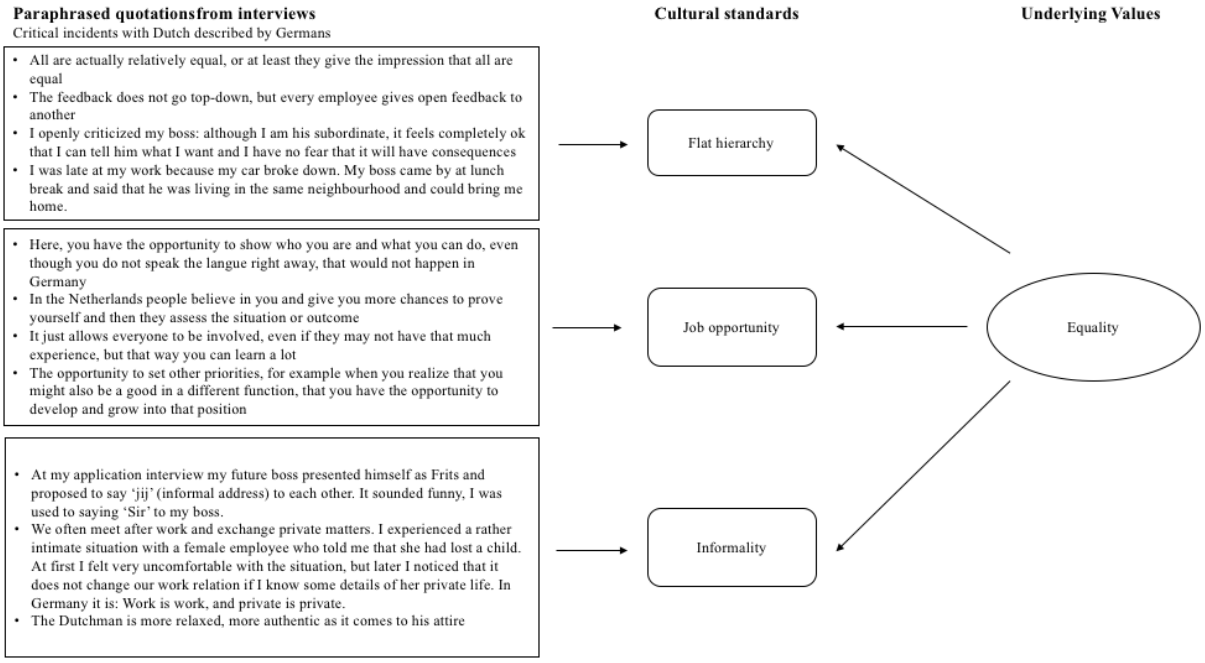

Figure 5. Underlying value equality

4.3. Influence of demographic characteristics

After having identified the Dutch cultural standards from a German perspective, the aim was to analyse whether different demographic characteristics influence the perception of cultural standards. Therefore, numerical data in forms of tables were created to evaluate the influence of demographic characteristics. With this content analysis, marked differences can be highlighted to present potential differences in the perception of Dutch cultural standards.

Table 3 summarizes the distinction between German individuals who work in the regions of Randstad and Overijssel. In total, fifteen interviews were conducted, with nine Germans working in the region of Randstad. Additional six interviewees work in the Overijssel region, close to the German border. The numbers in both columns indicate the percentage of interviewees who mentioned critical incidents involving the cultural standards on the left side. The criterium for a noticeable difference in the occurrence of Dutch cultural standards was set by 40%.

Table 3. Influence of regional aspect on the perception of Dutch cultural standards

Cultural standards	Randstad %	Overijssel %	Difference
Flexibility	89%	83%	6%
Collective decision-making	78%	83%	-6%
(Technological) innovativeness	67%	83%	-17%
Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)	78%	67%	11%
Flat hierarchy	67%	83%	-17%
Freedom of action	56%	83%	-28%
Work-life-balance	78%	50%	28%
Informality	67%	67%	0%
Directness	33%	83%	-50%
Approximate planning	67%	17%	50%
Anti-authoritarianism	33%	50%	-17%
Pragmatism	33%	50%	-17%
Solution orientation	33%	50%	-17%
Job Opportunity	11%	33%	-22%

Table 3 illustrates that individuals from both Randstad and Overijssel perceive the same cultural standards regardless of the region. However, differences in the occurrence can be seen with *directness*, as it was mentioned by 33% of the interviewees from Randstad compared to 83% from Overijssel, which accumulates to a difference in the perception of 50%. Further differences regarding regional aspects can be noticed with the cultural standard *approximate planning*, since 67% of the interviewees in Randstad have mentioned the cultural standard compared to 17% of German individuals in Overijssel.

The second demographic characteristic, which is further investigated is whether differences in gender, female and male, have a different outcome on perceived Dutch cultural standards by German individuals. Involved in the interviewees were six males and nine females. The criterium for a noticeable difference in the occurrence of Dutch cultural standards was set by 40%.

Table 4. Influence of gender on the perception of Dutch cultural standards

Cultural standards	Male %	Female %	Difference
Flexibility	67%	100%	-33%
Collective decision-making	83%	78%	6%
(Technological) innovativeness	100%	56%	44%
Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)	83%	67%	17%
Flat hierarchy	100%	56%	44%
Freedom of action	83%	56%	28%
Work-life-balance	33%	89%	-56%
Informality	83%	56%	28%
Directness	50%	56%	-6%
Approximate planning	33%	56%	-22%
Anti-authoritarianism	50%	33%	17%
Pragmatism	50%	33%	17%
Solution orientation	33%	44%	-11%
Job Opportunity	33%	11%	22%

Table 4 visualizes only small differences in the perception of cultural standards, when taking gender into consideration. These small differences occur in the perception of cultural standards between males and females when considering *(technological) innovation.* All male interviewees have mentioned critical incidents leading to this cultural standard and just above half, with 56% of females perceived this cultural standard. This can also be noted in the perception of a *flat hierarchy*, with all males recognizing the cultural standard to 56% of all women. The biggest difference in the occurrence can be seen with *work-life-balance*, only 33% of males indicated critical incidents leading to this cultural standard compared to 89% of females.

Besides the previously mentioned demographic characteristics, the influence of age on perceived cultural standards was also one of the aspects of this research. Table 6 presents two extreme groups within the conducted interviews, the youngest interviewees in the age group of under 30 years (total of five interviewees) compared to the oldest age group of over 45 years (total of 5 interviewees). The criterium for a noticeable difference in the occurrence of Dutch cultural standards was set by 40%.

Table 5. Influence of age on the perception of Dutch cultural standards

Cultural standards	<30 (%)	> 45 (%)	Difference
Flexibility	80%	100%	-20%
Collective decision-making	100%	60%	40%
(Technological) innovativeness	80%	40%	40%
Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)	60%	80%	-20%
Flat hierarchy	80%	60%	20%
Freedom of action	80%	60%	20%
Work-life-balance	40%	100%	-60%
Informality	60%	80%	-20%
Directness	60%	40%	20%
Approximate planning	40%	60%	-20%
Anti-authoritarianism	40%	40%	0%
Pragmatism	60%	20%	40%
Solution orientation	60%	40%	20%
Job Opportunity	0%	40%	-40%

Table 5 demonstrates that different age groups perceive more or less the same cultural standards, apart from the cultural standard *job opportunity*, as this was only recognised by 40% of individuals over 45 years, but not by the age group under 30. Additional differences can be seen in the occurrence of the cultural standard *collective decision-making,* as all the younger Germans perceived this cultural standard compared to only 60% of older Germans. Similar can be seen for *(Technological) innovativeness,* as the younger generation perceived it twice as much (80%) compared to the older generation (40%). Further differences can be seen for *pragmatism,* as 60% of younger Germans noticed this cultural standard compared to 20% of older Germans. However, the biggest difference in the occurrence is to be seen with the cultural standard *work-life-balance*. Everybody above 45 years perceived a good *work-life-balance* compared to only 40% of Germans below 30. The remaining cultural standards only show a small differences in the occurrence.

To better understand an influence of duration of time that a person is working in The Netherlands on perceived cultural standards, two extreme groups were compared with each other in table 8. One the one side are German interviewees who worked under two years in The Netherlands (total of four) and on the other side German interviewees who worked in The Netherlands for twenty or more years (total of four). The criterium for a noticeable difference in the occurrence of Dutch cultural standards was set by 40%.

Table 6. Influence of duration of time working in The Netherlands on the perception of Dutch cultural standards

Cultural standards	< 2 years (%)	> 20 years (%)	Difference
Flexibility	75%	100%	-25%
Collective decision-making	100%	75%	25%
(Technological) innovativeness	75%	25%	50%
Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)	50%	75%	-25%
Flat hierarchy	75%	50%	25%
Freedom of action	75%	50%	25%
Work-life-balance	25%	100%	-75%
Informality	75%	75%	0%
Directness	50%	25%	25%
Approximate planning	50%	75%	-25%
Anti-authoritarianism	50%	25%	25%
Pragmatism	25%	50%	-25%
Solution orientation	75%	25%	50%
Job Opportunity	0%	25%	-25%

Noticeable differences to be made regarding this demographic characteristic and the occurrence in the perception of cultural standards can be seen with *(Technological) innovativeness* and *solution orientation.* For both cultural standards, 75% of German interviewees who stayed under 2 years in The Netherlands had noticed critical incidents regarding these cultural standards, compared to 25% of interviewees who stayed twenty years or longer. An even bigger difference of 75% in the perception of cultural standards can be seen with *work-life-balance* in The Netherlands. One interviewee (25%) from the group of recently arrived had noticed critical incidents regarding this cultural standard, compared to four interviewees (75%) who have already worked for a long period of time in The Netherlands. Similar can be seen in findings from table 6, which indicate that the older an individual is, the more likely he or she perceived critical incidents regarding the cultural standard *work-life-balance.*

The remaining shows that both groups of recently arrived Germans (under two years) and long stay Germans (over twenty years) perceive more or less the same cultural standards indicating only small differences.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The goal of the present paper is threefold: to investigate which Dutch cultural standards are perceived by German individuals. Additionally, the researcher's ambition was to examine whether demographic characteristics influence the perception of Dutch cultural standards by German individuals. Lastly, research results will be compared to previous literature and findings presented by Schlizio et el. (2009). To accomplish the goal, the following research question has been formulated:

Which Dutch cultural standards are perceived by German individuals and to what extent are they influenced by demographic characteristics?

Sub-question:

1. Which cultural standards are perceived by German individuals living and working in The Netherlands?
2. Do Germans working in Overijssel (east) perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as Germans working in the Randstad (west)?
3. Do male Germans perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as female Germans?
4. Do young Germans perceive the same Dutch cultural standards as older Germans?
5. Do Germans who have worked for a short time in the Netherlands perceive the same cultural standards as Germans who have worked in the Netherlands for many years?
6. To what extent are the Dutch cultural standards described by Schlizio et al. (2009) supported by the current study?

5.1. Dutch cultural standards perceived by German interviewees

The first goal to identify Dutch cultural standards from a German perspective was reached. Section 4.1. identified fourteen cultural standards:

1. Flexibility/ improvisation
2. Collective decision making
3. (Technological) innovation
4. Flat hierarchy
5. Freedom of action
6. Work-life-balance
7. Informality
8. Directness
9. Approximate planning
10. Anti-authoritarianism

11. Pragmatism
12. Solution orientation
13. Friendly atmosphere
14. Job Opportunities

This study resulted in 205 critical incidents related to these fourteen Dutch cultural standards, that were perceived by the interviewees and can further be explained by the underlying values that have been established (section 4.2). The cultural standards and underlying values can be used to define, describe and forecast characteristics of Dutch behaviour that are significant in Dutch-German interactions.

5.2. The influence of demographic characteristics

The secondary goal of this study was to analyse the influence of demographic characteristics on the perception of cultural standards from German interviewees (section 4.3).

According to Kaasa, Vadi, and Varblane (2014) it is often expected that there are differences in the behaviour of individuals from the same culture, when focusing on different regions, e.g. Randstad and Overijssel, making it challenging to perceive cultural standards that are shared by the majority of the population in these regions. However, findings of this study indicate that it is possible to recognise a pattern of Dutch cultural standards that are perceived by German individuals in different regions. In Randstad and Overijssel, two regions contemplated to have different mentalities, German interviewees from this study recognised the same cultural standards, with only small differences in the occurrence. This indicates that Dutch individuals who live in these regions show similar behavioural patterns according to the German interviewees. However, this may be misleading, as it does not mean that Dutch inhabitants from different regions actually behave in the same way. Instead, German individuals perceive Dutch behaviour from the outside, identifying possible commonalities, while the Dutch compare behaviour in different regions from the inside, focusing on differences but overseeing all the similarities. What this study has shown is that even though there might be differences in the behaviour of inhabitants from different regions, it is still achievable to analyse what all of them have in common, which is reflected in table 3. All interviewees identified the same cultural standards, regardless of the region. Differences in the occurrence of *directness* can be seen, as German individuals working in Overijssel have perceived this cultural standard more compared to Germans working in the region of Randstad. Additional difference can also be seen in *approximate planning*, as more Germans working in Randstad seem to experience this cultural standard. Nevertheless, the comparison of two Dutch regions with different mentalities has shown that German interviewees identify the same cultural standards, regardless of the place.

Analysing the influence of gender on the perception of Dutch cultural standards from a German perspective established that the impact of either a male or female view is small. Table 4 showed the biggest differences in the occurrence of the cultural standard *work-life-balance*.

This might be of bigger importance to females, which is reflected in the percentages, as they still look after children and the household nowadays and need part-time jobs to organise both living spheres simultaneously.

Considering the demographic characteristic age in table 5, one can notice the biggest difference of 60% in the occurrence that is perceived by Germans under 30 compared to over 45 years, when looking at *work-life balance*. The origin might be that younger Germans are at the beginning of their career and have not yet founded a family and do not care as much about long working hours as the older interviewees, who are settled and may have also social obligations. The findings suggest that even after twenty years of working in The Netherlands, German individuals still identify more or less the same cultural standards compared to individuals who have been there shorter.

Similar can be seen in the analysis of the duration of time working in The Netherlands (table 6). Small differences in the occurrence of *work-life balance* can be observed, as all the long stay Germans (over twenty years) have mentioned critical incidents relating to this cultural standard compared to only 25% of recently arrived Germans (under two years), making up a difference of 75%. This might coincide with the findings from the group of Germans individuals above forty-five years. The older an individual is, the more they focus on a balance between work and private life. The findings and comparison of the *duration of time working in The Netherlands* dismiss the concern by Thomas (1996, p. 119-121), that interviewees who stayed for a longer period of time in a host country, adapt to their culture and may not be able to perceive cultural standards from their own culture.

5.3. Comparison with previous literature

The last aim of this study was to compare research findings from the current study with findings from Schlizio et al. (2009). Table 7 compares the Dutch cultural standards identified by Schlizio et al. (2009) with the Dutch cultural standards perceived by German interviewees from the current study at hand.

Table 7. Comparison with findings from Schlizio and Thomas (2009)

Dutch cultural standards by Schlizio & Thomas (2009)	Dutch cultural standards from current study	Underlying value
Calimero effect		
Relationship orientation	Friendly atmosphere	Consensus
Consensus culture	Collective decision-making	
Informality	Informality	Equality
Flat hierarchies	Flat hierarchy	
Calvinist modesty		
	Job Opportunity	
Pragmatism	Pragmatism Flexibility (Technological) innovativeness Solution orientation	Efficiency
	Freedom of action Approximate planning Anti-authoritarian Directness Work-life-balance	Self-determination

The comparison pointed out the cultural standards which corresponded with findings from Schlizio et al. (2009) and others which did not. But it also showed that the current study identified more cultural standards and went a step further by delivering a thick description with an additional aspect of underlying values, explaining the identified behavioural patterns (cultural standards). The differences in the amount of cultural standards in the first place derives from a more specific labelling of concrete behaviour from the current study and a precise description of cultural standards.

The current study did not identify the cultural standard *calimero effect*, which was presented in the study by Schlizio et al. (2009). The *calimero effect* and the accompanying taunts or critical comments from Dutch regarding Germans in the past, may be caused by the Dutch feeling of underappreciation due to the small country size and the urge to be different from the neighbouring country. However over time, growing economic relations and strong connections in educational and political aspects, fostered a feeling of being equal partners on both sides (Van Oudenhoven, 1997; Pekelder, 2013). This could be a reason why this cultural standard was not identified in the current study, as views have changed in time.

Additional differences in the interpretation and description for cultural standards becomes apparent when looking at the interpretation for *consensus.* Schlizio et al. (2009) mix up cultural standards with underlying values at times, which can be seen in the interpretation for *consensus*. Due to the misinterpretation by Schlizio et al. (2009), underlying values serve as cultural standards instead of explaining behavioural patterns. Results from the current study demonstrate the feeling for *consensus* (underlying value) in the Dutch society, that explains the behavioural patterns (cultural standards) to create an environment for *collective decision making* and a *friendly atmosphere*.

However, the comparison also demonstrates similarities in both studies for the cultural standards *informality* and *flat hierarchy*. When taking a closer look at the findings from the current study, one can notice that the additional cultural standard *job opportunity* is added, to this group of behavioural patterns, that can be explained by the underlying value *equality*. Schlizio et al. (2009) also established *Calvinist modesty* as an independent cultural standard. However it is connected to *flat hierarchies* and not to be mistaken as an independent cultural standard, according to A. Enklaar (personal communication January 20, 2021).

Another similarity in research finding can be seen with *pragmatism.* Interviewees from both studies have recognised this behavioural pattern, although the current study found significant more cultural standards belonging to this group of cultural standards, which is reflected in the *flexibility, (technological) innovativeness* and *solution orientation*. This group of cultural standards can be explained by the Dutch urge to work efficient.

Schlizio et al. (2009) overlooked cultural standards that derive from the underlying value *self-determination* and the associated cultural standards *freedom of action, approximate planning, anti-authoritarianism, directness* and *work-life-balance* that are linked to it. The German individuals mentioned during the interviews that they experience a greater *work-life-balance* in The Netherlands compared to their home country, which is also in line with data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019), which found that in comparison with a total of forty countries, The Netherlands ranks first when it comes to work-life-balance. Hence, it must have an important status in Dutch culture and should be recognised.

5.4. Academic relevance

The contribution of this study lies in the validation of existing literature regarding Dutch cultural standards established by Schlizio et al. (2009). It also goes one step further by identifying different cultural levels, which was previously missed.

On the one hand, the comparison showed that the current study identified new cultural standards, all linked to the value *self-determination*. On the other hand it also showed that cultural standards that were detected by Schlizio et al. (2009), e.g. *Calimero effect*, could not be identified in this study. This is in line with previous literature, stating that some behavioural patterns change over time (Van Oudenhoven, 1997; Pekelder, 2013).

The investigation of a potential influence of demographic characteristics on the perception of Dutch cultural standards made by Germans, refined and expanded established findings by Schlizio et al. (2009) and took previous recommendations into consideration to add demographic characteristics into the analysis of culture (Jones, 2007; Kutschker & Schmid, 2012).

Overall, this study adds value to existing literature by delivering a thick description of both the cultural standards and established values and offers a profound explanation and a comprehensive analysis of behavioural patterns in bicultural situations.

5.5. Practical relevance

This study and the fourteen established cultural standards give insights into Dutch behavioural patterns that were perceived by German individuals. It provides the reader with a better understanding of what to expect when working in bicultural situations and fosters a high degree of tolerance in these situations, as one can better interpret and understand the Dutch behaviour. Therefore, this study can be used to reduce barriers that may arise in bicultural situations and foster trusting relationships between Dutch and Germans.

5.6. Limitations and future research

The goal of this research was to identify Dutch cultural standards from a German perspective and to see whether demographic factors have an impact on the perception. This was accomplished by means of fifteen interviews with German individuals. The critical incidents and resulting cultural standards are the reflection of those interviews and describe a specific experience an individual had, while working in The Netherlands. Therefore, findings and conclusions cannot be generalized, but they can nonetheless provide a good insight into the experiences individuals have had while encountering bicultural situations.

One aspect which became apparent during the analysis of the interview data was that there may be a difference between individuals who are subordinates or superiors, a factor which was not further analysed in this study due of the small number of managers involved. Future research could analyse additional demographic characteristics complementing the current study at hand.

5.7. Conclusion

To conclude, this study identified fourteen cultural standards: Flexibility, collective decision-making, (technological) innovativeness, friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid), flat hierarchy, freedom of action, work-life-balance, informality, directness, approximate planning, anti-authoritarianism, pragmatism, solution orientation, job opportunity. These cultural standards can be explained by underlying values: self-determination, efficiency, consensus and equality. It showed that over time, cultural standards change and adjust according to the environmental changes individuals from the same culture face. The thick descriptions with the acknowledgement of various levels, such as the Dutch cultural standards and underlying values, provides valuable insights into the Dutch culture and the way individuals behave.

Besides, the aim was to investigate the influence of demographic characteristics on the perception of cultural standards. Based on the qualitative analysis, findings suggest that the demographic characteristics (region, gender, age and duration of time worked in The Netherlands) only have minimal influence on the occurrence of cultural standards. Consequently, the chosen demographic characteristics for this study do not influence the perception of cultural standards, as findings have shown that the interviewees perceived the same cultural standards, regardless of the analysed demographic characteristics.

The comparison with Schlizio et al. (2009) exposed that the two studies have found different cultural standards at times, due to differences in labelling and describing cultural standards. It also showed that Schlizio et al. (2009) mixed up cultural standards with underlying values. Therefore, the current study at hand, describes and categorizes the cultural standards more precisely, leading to accurate findings.

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Appendices

Appendix a – literature review table

Year	Author	Title	Source	Reasons
1991	Thomas	Kulturstandards in der internationalen Begegnung	Book	Cultural standards
1996	Thomas	Psychologie interkulturellen Handelns	Book	Cultural standards
2005	Thomas, Kinast & Schroll-Machl	Handbuch Interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kooperation, Band 1: Grundlagen und Praxisfelder	Book	Cultural standards
2007	Thomas, Kammhuber & Schroll-Machl	Handbuch Interkulturelle Kommunikation und Kooperation, Band 2: Länder, Kulturen und interkulturelle Berufstätigkeit.	Book	Cultural standards
2008	Schlizio, Schürings & Thomas	Beruflich in den Niederlanden. Trainingsprogramm für Manager, Fach- und Führungskräfte	Book	German & Dutch Cultural standards
2010	Utler & Thomas	Critical Incidents und Kulturstandards	Book Chapter	Cultural standards
2010	Barmeyer	Kulturdimensionen und Kulturstandards	Book Chapter	Cultural standards
2014	Von Bose	Kulturstandards und Kulturdimensionen	Book Chapter	Cultural standards
2014	Fink, Neyer & Kölling	Understanding Cross-Cultural Management Interaction: Research into Cultural Standards to Complement Cultural	Article	Cultural standards & cultural value

		Value Dimensions and Personality Traits		
2014	Kühnel	Kulturstandards – woher sie kommen und wie sie wirken	Article	Listing various culture models
2016	Thesing	Intercultural communication in German-Dutch business contexts	PhD	German & Dutch Cultural standards

Appendix b – Catalogue with questions for the interviews

Liebe/r ….

Mein Name ist Juliane und ich bin ein Masterstudent der Fakultät für Verhaltens-, Management- und Sozialwissenschaften an der Universität Twente. Vielen Dank, dass Sie an dieser Forschungsstudie für meine Masterarbeit teilnehmen!

Der Zweck dieser Forschungsstudie ist es herausfinden, die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Niederländern und Deutschen zu analysieren. Diese Studie besteht aus mehreren Interviews die mit Deutschen geführt werden die in den Niederlanden wohnen und leben. Jedes Interview dauert ca. 60 Minuten. Ich werde Ihnen den einen oder anderen Impuls geben oder die eine oder andere Frage stellen. Bitte erzählen Sie möglichst frei und ungezwungen.

Vertraulichkeit und freiwillige Teilnahme

Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Studie ist völlig freiwillig und Sie können jederzeit zurücktreten. Mit dieser Forschungsstudie sind keine Risiken verbunden. Ihre Antworten in dieser Studie bleiben vertraulich. Das Interview wird auf Band aufgezeichnet, aber Ihre Antworten bleiben anonym und werden nicht mit Ihrer Identität verbunden. Die Daten werden nur zu Forschungszwecken verwendet. Ich würde gerne mit einige Daten zu Ihrer Person beginnen und dann zum eigentlich Thema meiner Forschungsarbeit kommen.

Haben Sie noch Fragen zum Interview oder zum Ablauf? Sie können mich andernfalls unter j. rosemann @student.utwente.nl jederzeit kontaktieren.

INTERVIEW FRAGEN

Name
Geburtsdatum
Schul/Ausbildungsabschluss
Wohnort in DE
Wohnort in NL
Wie viele Jahr in NL
Arbeitssektor
Position

So, nachdem wir nun die Formalitäten erledigt haben möchte ich gerne mit dem eigentlichen Interview beginnen. Wie Du bereits wissen interessiere ich mich für Kultur „kritische Vorfälle“ die zwischen Deutschen und Niederländern passiert sind sprechen, basierend auf Ihren eigenen Erfahrungen.

Ich verstehe, dass Sie regelmäßig Kontakt zu niederländischen Kollegen haben.
Woraus besteht der Kontakt?
Was ist Ihre Position und wie ist die Position des / der Niederländer?
In welcher Sprache sprechen Sie?
Ist die Kommunikation gut?
Was wird dort besprochen?
Wie sind Ihre Erfahrungen mit Niederländern im Allgemeinen?
Welche Unterschiede sehen Sie zwischen der Niederländern und der Deutschen?

Was war die positivste Erfahrung, die Sie mit Niederländern gemacht haben?
Was ist genau passiert? Was macht dies für Sie zu einer so positiven Erfahrung?
Was hat dieses Ereignis ausgelöst?
Wie hat diese Erfahrung zu einer erfolgreichen Zusammenarbeit beigetragen?
Haben Sie noch weiterer solcher Beispiele?

Können Sie auch eine weniger angenehme Erfahrung erwähnen, die Sie mit Niederländern gemacht haben?
Was ist genau passiert? Was hat dies für Sie zu einer unangenehmen Erfahrung gemacht?
Was hat dieses Ereignis ausgelöst?
Wie hat diese Erfahrung eine erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit behindert?
Wie haben Sie reagiert?
Wie ist es ausgegangen?
Warum hat sich der niederländische Kollege wohl so verhalten?
Haben Sie noch weiterer solcher Beispiele?

Haben Sie jemals Missverständnisse zwischen Deutschen und Holländern erlebt?
Haben Sie jemals erlebt, wie Sie von niederländischem Verhalten überrascht wurden?
Haben Sie jemals erfahren, dass Sie die Niederländer nicht verstanden haben?
Haben Sie jemals erfahren, dass Sie mit Ihrem niederländischen Kollegen nicht einverstanden sind?
Haben Sie jemals einen Konflikt mit einem niederländischen Kollegen gehabt?
Haben Sie jemals andere Probleme mit Niederländern gehabt?
Wie hast du dich verhalten wenn du Probleme mit den Niederländern gemerkt hast?
Wie hast du über die Niederländische Arbeitskultur vor deinem Umzug gedacht und wie ist es jetzt bzw. hat sich deine Einstellung verändert?

Ein guter Manager: Wie soll er sich verhalten? Unterscheiden sich Niederländer und Deutsche in dieser Hinsicht?
Ein guter Kollege: Wie soll er sich verhalten? Unterscheiden sich Niederländer und Deutsche in dieser Hinsicht?
Ein guter Mitarbeiter: Wie soll er sich verhalten? Unterscheiden sich Niederländer und Deutsche in dieser Hinsicht?

Aussage: Ist es einfacher, mit einem Deutschen oder mit einer niederländischen Person zusammenzuarbeiten?
Was ist deine Meinung und warum ist das so?

Kennst du noch weitere Personen aus deinem Umkreis (MÄNNLICH) die bereit wären mit mir zu sprechen?

Möchten Sie mehr über Ihre Erfahrungen mit Niederländern erzählen? Haben wir alles besprochen?
Wenn Ihnen etwas über die Unterschiede zwischen Niederländern und Deutschen einfällt, können Sie mir jederzeit eine E-Mail senden: j.rosemann@student.utwente.nl

Appendix c – Coding table extract

Interviewee number	Transcript page	Number of critical incident	Topics- Critical Incident	Section
8	2	63	antiauthoritarian	About half a year ago, I wanted to changed some work processes and steps in the company and in the team, because in my opinion they should be set up differently. I then communicated this to my employees and explained exactly what it was about, why I think it was important and so on. They completely freaked out and couldn't understand why I am now intervening in their work and tell them what to do and what not to do.
8	12	79	work life balance	But more part-time or reduced work is more common. So I myself have two employees who only work 30 hours each because they feel like it. They don't want to work full-time for 40 hours and would like to have time for other things and they areable to afford it financially. And that's common, even if you don't have children. That has a lot to do with a higher work-life balance. The willingness for overtime is less here in my company in the Netherlands. There was also a situation where I asked an employee to stay longer because something wasn't quite finished. And his answer back then was that he could start but only had 15 minutes before work ended and he would like to leave on time. And then of course you don't know exactly what to say as a boss, because of course he's right, but on the other hand I want things to be done.