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Working as a Dutchman in Poland

Understanding Polish cultural standards

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Abstract

In an era when increasingly more people come into contact with other cultures, it is also becoming increasingly important to be aware of cultural differences. The broad concept of culture refers to a specific way of thinking and a typical mentality that all Dutchmen share that distinguish them from the Poles. In fact, not being aware of cultural differences may lead to conflict and a deteriorating relationship. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify Polish behavioural patterns (cultural standards) which are causing clashes with Dutch culture, and understand the cultural logic (value) behind them.

This research is a qualitative study in which fifteen Dutchmen with work experience in Poland were interviewed. During these interviews, Dutchmen were asked about incidents on the work floor with their Polish colleagues. These incidents are known as 'critical incidents' and help to identify the clashing cultural standards of both cultures. The identified cultural standards are useful for Dutch individuals for understanding where potential clashes come from and thus helping them to cope with cultural differences in a Polish-Dutch cultural interaction.

After all, thirteen Polish cultural standards were identified in a Polish-Dutch cultural interaction and further analysed to understand the Polish cultural logic behind the incidents. The Polish values *Friends and Family*, *Respect for authority*, *Creative solution*, and *Nobleness*, clashed with the Dutch values *Work*, *Self-determination*, *Order and neatness*, and *Equality*. It is interesting to do further research on Polish-Dutch cultural interactions from a Polish point of view in order to explore cultural frictions that the Dutch are not aware of. As a result, communication and understanding of differences in way of thinking between people of these two cultures will be improved.

Keywords: Polish cultural standards, cultural logic, critical incidents, and underlying (cultural) values.

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1. Introduction

In 1993, the EU member states signed the Maastricht Treaty with the four freedoms of movement of goods, services, people, and money (Europa-EU, 2021). As a result of the removing trade barriers and border controls among the EU member states, the biggest single market in the world was born: the European market. However, compared to other big economic markets e.g. the USA and China, there is a big difference, namely the linguistic and cultural differences within this market. Therefore, research on the cultural differences between the European countries is extremely valuable and can help to further boost the trade and industrial collaboration within the European Union.

For this research, the cultural differences between the Netherlands and Poland is examined. Both countries are EU member states and Poland is by far the most important trading partner for the Netherlands in eastern Europe (RVO, 2021). In addition, the largest group of labour migrants in the Netherlands are from Poland and these migrants have held 180,000 jobs in the Netherlands in 2018 (Trouw, 2021). Polish labour migrants mainly fill low-skilled jobs but are very important to keep the Dutch economy going.

After all, the Netherlands and Poland have an important business relationship and the two cultures often come into contact with each other. However, their culture differs in many ways and a lack of knowledge of these differences can lead to deterioration within the relationship between the two business partners, as argued by researchers (Boski, Van de Vijver, Hurme, & Miluska, 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1997; Kolman, Noorderhaven, Hofstede, & Dienes, 2003). As a consequence, this may hamper productivity and profitability.

Several scholars have used quantitative research methods to find the root causes of the cultural frictions between the Dutch and the Poles. For example, current quantitative studies (Boski et al., 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1997; Kolman et al., 2003) found the biggest differences between the Dutch and the Poles in power distance and masculinity, based on the Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede, 2011). However, these dimensions are general categories and lack depth to explain these differences. To add more depth and details to previous studies, this study will make use of qualitative methods. Thus, the goal of the research is to fill this gap by examining cultural frictions in communication and collaboration between the Dutch and the Poles, especially in work situations. Furthermore, the cultural reasons that are the origin of these frictions are identified. The research illustrates how the Dutch and the Poles are dealing with these cultural frictions and what the cultural logic behind the frictions are. As a result, the research give outcomes to help the Dutch to improve their communication and collaboration with the Poles. To investigate the cultural reasons for the frictions between the Dutch and the Poles, the following central research question is formulated:

Which Polish cultural standards may clash with Dutch ones and what is the cultural logic behind them?

In order to answer this central question as clearly and specifically as possible, three sub-questions are drawn up:

1. What are the typical Polish behaviours causing clashes with the Dutch?
2. What are the Polish cultural standards of these typical behaviours?
3. What is the cultural logic behind the Polish cultural standards?

1.1 Academic relevance

The research is relevant and urgent to study because the world is becoming increasingly globalized and European countries are getting increasingly economically intertwined. However, detailed research on the cultural differences between the Dutch and the Poles is lacking, because current studies lack depth due to the sole use of quantitative methods (Boski et al., 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1997; Kolman et al., 2003). Additionally, most of the studies take more cultures into account rather than focusing solely on the differences between the Dutch and Polish cultures. Therefore, these studies do not give clear clues on how the Dutch and the Poles can bridge daily situations in the work environment. In the theoretical perspective, the current studies are one-sided and missing each other's complement. To resolve the lack of depth, this research will make use of the method of critical incidents (Thomas et al., 2010). This method investigates frictions (critical incidents) between people of different cultures and whether they are the result of a difference in cultural values. As a result, this qualitative research method will add depth to the current quantitative studies. An example of this approach is the study by Thesing (2016) who investigated Dutch-German cultural differences with qualitative research based on the critical incidents method. With the results of the study, Dutchmen were provided with in-depth knowledge to increase the understanding of German cultural values. This proves that it is relevant to conduct a similar study, with the aim of increasing the understanding of Polish cultural values for the Dutch.

1.2 Practical relevance

The research will also have practical relevance, because being aware of culture in dealing with one another is regarded as a requirement of successfully doing business or working in an international environment. Therefore, the research contributes to help Dutch managers, expats, and businessmen to improve their communication and interact effectively with the Poles. In addition, the critical incidents can be used to create cases and their interpretation could be constructed into a culture assimilator (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis, 1971), a training tool for Dutchmen who are planning to do business in Poland. This will provide Dutchmen coping mechanisms to overcome and even prevent cultural frictions.

1.3 Outline of the study

The thesis will start off with the theoretical background by defining the concept of culture and cultural standards, as well as presenting an overview of the current literature. Furthermore, the methodology is further described in the third chapter by explaining the data collection method and research instruments, data analysis, feedback from focus group and expert, and comparison with previous research. The fourth chapter describes the findings of the research. The fifth chapter is the conclusion of the research and will answer the central research question in order to reach the research goal. In closing, the sixth and last chapter will present the discussion in which limitations and future research are discussed.

2. Theoretical background

In this chapter previous research about intercultural research is discussed. In addition, cultural standards are defined and an overview of the literature regarding Dutch and Polish cultural standards presented.

2.1 Previous intercultural research

Before discussing previous intercultural research, it is important to give a clear definition of the concept culture. According to Thomas, Kinast, and Schroll-Machl (2010) culture is an orientation system that provides structures and sense to people's environment. Therefore, culture is not about the visible outside where art and literature, rituals or traditions differ between countries. Actually, culture is about an own 'way of thinking' and a typical mentality and behaviour which all people in a country generally share and distinguishes from people from other countries (Enklaar, 2007).

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, quantitative research methods are the predominant method in previous research to compare cultures and examine cultural differences. Many of these quantitative studies are supported by Hofstede's model (Hofstede, 2011). This model is the most popular, but the model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2004) is also often used internationally. Recently, Erin Meyer has created her own dimension model: The Culture map (Meyer, 2014). These models are useful to compare many cultures at once or quickly becoming aware of the main cultural differences, however as a result of the lack of depth within these models, specific clues to consultants and managers to deal with cultural frictions are lacking. In other words, these models give only generalizations about cultural differences and as a consequence are not precise enough for practical use.

The famous model of Hofstede compares different cultures and are given a score on the following dimensions: power distance, individualism vs collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity, and long vs short-term orientation. As pre-research, table 1 visualizes the results of the Hofstede dimensions from previous studies and is useful to perform a quick check of existing cultural differences between the Netherlands and Poland. This allows basic knowledge to be gathered on where the Dutch and the Poles are likely to clash with each other.

Poland and the Netherlands scored on the following five dimensions:

Hofstede dimensions	Poland score	The Netherlands score
Power distance	68	38
Individualism-collectivism	60	80
Uncertainty avoidance	93	53
Masculinity-femininity	64	14
Long versus short-term orientation	38	67

Table 1. Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

The first dimension, *power distance*, is defined as to what extent do less powerful people within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2011). The second dimension, *individualism vs collectivism*, is defined as the "I" versus "we" society. In individualistic countries the individual characteristic is mostly important, but on the contrary, in collectivistic countries it is considered especially important that you belong to a group (Hofstede, 2011). The third dimension, *uncertainty avoidance*, is defined as to what extent people of a culture feel threatened by unknown or ambiguous situations and to what extent they have strict rules, behavioural codes and laws to avoid these uncertainties (Hofstede, 2011). The fourth dimension, *masculinity vs femininity*, is defined as being masculine when a culture is based on assertiveness and competition, while on the

contrary feminine cultures are cooperative and caring (Hofstede, 2011). The fifth dimension, *long-versus short-term orientation*, is defined as where within cultures with a long-term orientation people are more willing to accept the fact that business results may take time before achievements are made. On the contrary, within cultures with a short-term orientation people are more likely to set results and achievements with the underlying assumption that these can be reached within a self-chosen timeframe (Hofstede, 2011).

It is clear that the Dutch and the Poles differ the most on the dimensions masculinity-femininity and power distance. Therefore it is expected that the Dutch regularly experience critical incidents in the field of power distance and masculinity with regard to the Polish culture. However, the aim of this research is to find out what these cultural differences between the Dutch and the Poles mean in practice and how they manifest themselves, and to offer clues on how to deal with them. In order to generate an in-depth empirical research on cultural differences, a qualitative research approach seems to be more appropriate. Yet, a disadvantage of qualitative research is that it is harder to validate than quantitative research. However, the critical incidents method (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010) fixed this disadvantage with two concepts: critical incidents and cultural standards. The critical incidents method is based on the Critical Incident Technique, that was actually used as technique to decrease the numbers of errors in military aviation;by studying (near) accidents they found ways for improving procedures. This research method was then converted to the description of cultural frictions. The researchers Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis (1971) started using the technique for describing intercultural interactions. They started with collecting stories about cultural clashes between the American culture and foreign cultures. Next, based on these stories they composed a 'culture assimilator', which is a programme where a participant is confronted with 50 cultural clashing situations. Subsequently, the participant must choose the correct interpretation from four different interpretation options. After choosing, all interpretation options provide a detailed explanation why this is working or not within the culture concerned. Afterall, the culture assimilator can be used to sentisize managers and consultants about the culture of the country in which they are going to work. As a result, the manager or consultant learns how to deal with situations in the same way the locals do in the specific country.

2.2 Defining cultural standards

The concept of cultural standards was established by the intercultural management researcher Alexander Thomas. According to him, behavioural patterns which are considered as normal and typical by the majority of the people in a culture, can be called 'cultural standards'. These cultural standards can be derived from critical incidents method. Where the cultural standards of two countries conflicts 'critical incidents' arise (Thomas et al., 2010). Studying these incidents, the clashing 'cultural standards' of both countries can be identified. Therefore, the results of qualitative research into the cultural differences between countries can be validated with the critical incidents method. After all, knowing these cultural standards of other people can help individuals to cope with different cultures.

2.3 Dutch cultural standards

As mentioned earlier, current qualitative research into the cultural differences between the Netherlands and Poland is missing, thus no Polish cultural standards perceived by the Dutch have been formulated or vice versa. Therefore, the Polish and Dutch cultural standards perceived by Germans is used, as there is already in-depth qualitative research from a German point of view (Rosemann, 2021). However, the German and Dutch cultures are probably closer to each other than the Polish culture. Thus, it may be that cultural standards which the Dutch and German culture are sharing will be missing, due to the fact that cultural standards arise from critical incidents (and therefore from differences between cultures). Hence, future research into Dutch culture from a Polish point of view is needed.

The following Dutch cultural standards perceived by Germans are part of Rosemann (2021) research results:

Flexibility

Dutch culture is driven by improvement and is open to change. As a result, people focus on improving the results and easily change plans, working methods or the organization (Rosemann, 2021).

Collective decision-making

For the Dutch it is important that everyone is satisfied with a decision. That is why everyone is involved in a decision and the decisions are made in the team. All individuals are allowed to express their opinion and have a say (Rosemann, 2021).

(Technological) Innovativeness

The Dutch culture is very future-oriented, which leads to a strong urge to change. In order to work as effective as possible, outdated systems or approaches are examined to improve. As a result, the Dutch are always open for (technological) innovations (Rosemann, 2021).

Friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid)

The pursuit of a conflict-free atmosphere has a high priority in Dutch culture. People treat each other like good friends and strangers are also greeted kindly and warmly welcomed. A drink with your colleagues after work on Friday is also very common (Rosemann, 2021).

Flat hierarchy

Dutch culture is characterized by a flat hierarchy and people of different ranks treat each other as equals. As a result, titles do not have to be taken into account, nor do superiors need to be treated with extra respect. In fact, it is quite common for subordinates to give feedback and criticism to their superiors and their decisions, however this must be conveyed in a constructive manner (Rosemann, 2021).

Freedom of action

Responsibilities and organizing your own work is important for the Dutch in their urge to work independently. After all, freedom to chart your own path is a cherished value in Dutch culture. It is therefore natural that people can decide for themselves how to perform a task or handle a case, without too much involvement from the superior. On the other hand, the superior also expects a high degree of responsibility and has great confidence in the subordinate's abilities (Rosemann, 2021).

Work-life-balance

A good work-life balance is an ideal in Dutch culture, because private life is seen as just as important as professional life. Therefore, it is not considered strange that someone is working part-time in order to spend time on hobbies or the family (Rosemann, 2021).

Informality

Due to the flat hierarchy in the Dutch culture, people do not behave according to their positions or roles in the hierarchy. As a result, there is often an informal working atmosphere and informal communication channels are regularly used. Everyone addresses each other by first name without using any formal titles or the last name and superiors do not fulfil a status role (Rosemann, 2021).

Directness

Dutch culture is known for its directness. There is no need to give permission or ask for an opinion, because the Dutch are used to express it quickly to each other. In fact, if you do not give your opinion, it is judged as if you agree or do not care. Therefore, openness and to some degree confrontation is expected during negotiations. People appreciate it when an opinion is honest and truthful, and as a

result the Dutch do not easily feel hurt when someone else's opinion could be confrontational (Rosemann, 2021).

Approximate planning
The Dutch are quite flexible with their time schedule. Of course, the Dutch culture is known for being future-oriented and therefore planning ahead and sticking to deadlines is import, but as soon as something more important comes up, people do not shy away from deviating slightly from the deadline. Actually, meetings often start 5 minutes later so that everyone can get a cup of coffee first (Rosemann, 2021).

Anti-authoritarianism
In accordance with the cultural standard Collective decision-making, the Dutch value to have influence in decision making and therefore have difficulties with an authoritarian leadership style. As a result, people do not tolerate decisions and orders coming from the top management layer without explanation and without consulting the people who are most affected by this (Rosemann, 2021).

Pragmatism
In Dutch culture, pragmatism plays an important role in the decision-making process to continue or cancel a project or task. Therefore, when the Dutch do not think it is worth the time and effort, the project or task would probably be cancelled. In addition, people also regularly act on what is opportune at that time without a plan or procedure, due to the fact that it is then as efficient as possible (Rosemann, 2021).

Solution orientation
As soon as a problem arises, the Dutch have the urge to solve it as quickly as possible. As a result, examining for the causes or figuring out who was responsible has less priority. Thus, the Dutch culture has a solution-oriented character (Rosemann, 2021).

Job opportunity
The Dutch are flexible with the required criteria for a job opportunity. Therefore, as soon as an applicant does not fully meet the criteria, there is still a chance to get hired for the job. Actually, the Dutch give the applicant the opportunity to develop the missing skills (Rosemann, 2021).

2.4 Polish cultural standards
The Polish cultural standards perceived by Germans have been described by Fischer, Düstl, and Thomas (2007) in their study on Polish culture. The following culture standards were found by them:

Personal emotionality
Polish culture focuses on the people and their sensitivities and attaches less value to goals, rules, tasks and timetables (unless they are represented by a valued person). The emotional state of people is central and a relationship of mutual respect is the norm. Politeness, sensitivity and empathy are important virtues in Polish culture (Fischer et al., 2007).

Social relations
Forming and maintaining social relationships is very important in the Polish culture. The relationships are used in the form of networks for social security and to achieve personal goals. Therefore, the type and quality of a relationship is more important than an objective goal. It will take a while before the Poles know if they can trust you and if no positive relationship is established, the Pole will shut down and avoid further contact (Fischer et al., 2007).

Hierarchy orientation

Polish culture has hierarchical structures with a big distance between superiors and subordinates. Titles are used not only for addressing, but also when interacting with each other in general. Because tasks and rights are clearly divided between the different ranks, Polish superiors expect that subordinates will obey the orders without questioning them. Criticism or feedback to the Polish superiors is therefore seen as a personal attack and an insult on the authority (Fischer et al., 2007).

Flexible handling of control systems

Rules and structures are seen in Polish culture as rough guidelines that are used flexibly when circumstances make it necessary. The procedures are then spontaneously adapted to the situation in question. Because the future is uncertain, future-oriented plans are less common and it remains to be seen how everything will develop in order to be able to respond well to it. To some extent, it is in Poland accepted that the result deviates from the agreement, and sometimes even expected (Fischer et al., 2007).

Status and Etiquette

Courteous manners and behaviours are traditionally known for higher social positions in Poland. These are seen by all layers of the Polish population as a social ideal and determine the rules for general interaction with each other. The form of address in Poland is also special, in the past it was reserved for the nobility to address each other with Mr (Pan) and Mrs (Pani), but nowadays this is the usual form of address for everyone. Furthermore, women in Poland are treated with pronounced courtesy, for example, by holding the door or carrying heavy bags for them, and hand kisses are still common. In addition to the courteous behaviours, the generous hospitality is also traced back to these traditions (Fischer et al., 2007).

To repeat, previous research on Polish cultural standards were perceived by Germans, so it may be the case that there are Polish culture standards missing or are more specific from a Dutch point of view. On the other hand, it may of course also be the case that there are Polish cultural standards that have not been observed by the Dutch but only by the Germans. To illustrate, according to previous research on Dutch culture from a German perspective, German individuals experienced frictions with the Dutch cultural standards 'flexibility' and 'anti-authoritarianism' (Rosemann, 2021). Therefore, it may be the case that the Dutch experience little or no friction with the Polish 'flexible handling of control systems', because the Dutch are more flexible with plans and methods than Germans. On the other hand, it is also possible that the Dutch experience more friction with the Polish 'hierarchy orientation', because the Dutch have more difficulty with an authoritarian manager than the Germans. After all, these Polish cultural standards from previous research is compared with the results from this study to enrich research on Polish culture.

3. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of the research is explained. In addition, other considerations regarding the chosen methods are justified in order to conduct the research.

The methodology describes how intercultural interactions are examined and to identify cultural standards. To make it clear, the methodology is visualised in figure 1 and divided into four phases to collect data and to deal with possible biases that occur during the qualitative research: Data collection method and research instruments, data analysis, feedback from focus group and expert, and comparison with previous research.
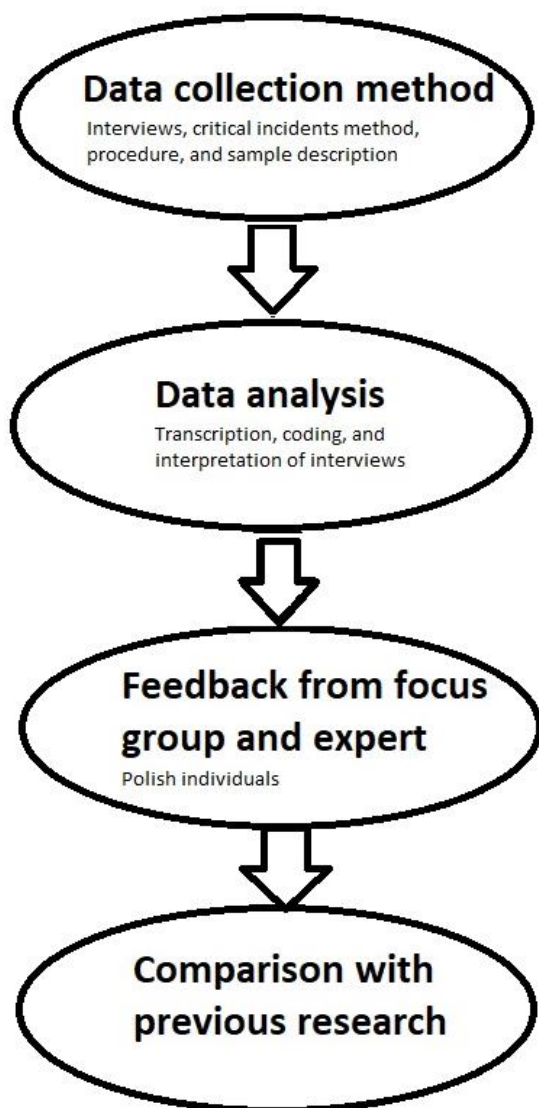
Figure 1. Research design

3.1 Data collection method and research instruments

Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with Dutchmen who are working in Poland with Polish people. The choice for interviews is because this method of data collection provides a lot of new and in-depth empirical data. Additionally, a major advantage over other methods is that interviews can take place anywhere, including online. Semi-structured interviews are the best type to investigate cultural differences, as more detailed information is obtained by allowing further questioning by the

researcher (Thesing, 2016). Although, unstructured interviews obtain detailed information as well, this option is not chosen because there is a risk that the researcher will influence the interviewee too much (Thesing, 2016). Furthermore, approximately 16 Dutch interviewees were interviewed, because in previous research 16 interviews proved to be sufficient to reach saturation of data (Thesing, 2016). Additionally, the research selects a sample that is as diverse as possible by interviewing respondents with different demographic characteristics. To be specific, the aim is to have a variation in gender, age, duration of work and location in Poland, and a supervisor/manager role. Especially the variation in gender is important, because the gender roles between the two countries are very different (Boski et al., 1999). Therefore, it is interesting to collect critical incidents from Dutch women and thus it is necessary to have enough female respondents.

The procedure of data collection goes as follows, the interviews were conducted by the researcher. To search for potential interviewees, the social media platform LinkedIn is used. Furthermore, the search engine is set on living in Poland and speaking fluently Dutch. Next, contact is made with these potential interviewees and as soon as the Dutchmen are interested to join the research, a virtual interview (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) is organized. The interviewees are asked about their experiences in working and communicating with Poles and give examples of frictions or miscommunications (critical incidents). Due to the fact that the interviews are semi-structured, the interviewees were then asked with follow-up questions to have more context of the critical incidents. This reduces the risk of possible biases and improves the interpretation of the data. The interviews with Dutch interviewees are carried out by the researcher himself, who is also Dutch. Therefore, it is possible to interview the interviewees in their native Dutch language. Afterwards, the recorded interviews are transcribed, with the help of the transcript software AmberScript, and content-analysed. The interview questions asked to the Dutch interviewees can be found in Appendix 1.

The sample description consists of collecting critical incidents to recognize Polish cultural standards. Therefore, the interviewees had to meet the following requirements: The first requirement is that the interviewees worked and lived in Poland for at least 3 months. Due to the fact that according to research, it is most effective to interview respondents who have lived in the new country for at least 3 months, because then they are about to start with serious cultural integration and might experience the first critical incidents (Bhawuk, 1998; Thesing, 2016). The second requirement is that the interviewees cooperate with Poles to ensure that the Dutch individuals are in contact with the Polish culture, which makes it possible to identify cultural differences. The third requirement is that the interviewees need to have different demographic characteristics in order to reach a diverse as possible sample. To illustrate, the demographic characteristics are: gender, age, duration of time working and location of work in Poland, and a supervisor/manager role. The differences in demographic characteristics may possibly show an effect on the perceived Polish cultural standards. After all, 15 of the 16 Dutch interviewees met the three requirements and are included in the research. The table 2 below presents the demographic characteristics of the interviewees.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of Dutch interviewees

Interviewee No.	Gender	Age	Duration of time working in PL (years)	Location of work in PL	Supervisor/manager
1	M	25	1,5	Wroclaw	Yes
2	F	26	2	Lodz	Yes
3	F	29	8,8	Krakau	No
4	M	55	2,7	Krakau	Yes
5	M	23	0,5	Lodz	No
6	F	26	3,2	Warschau	No
7	M	27	2,9	Warschau	Yes
8	F	33	9	Krakau	Yes
9	M	32	5,1	Warschau	Yes
10	M	35	7	Krakau	Yes
11	M	34	10,1	Krakau	Yes
12	M	40	2,5	Szczecin	No
13	M	30	5	Wroclaw	No
14	M	27	4,9	Gdansk	No
15	F	53	15	Krakau	No

3.2 Data analysis

To analyse the data, the transcripts of the interviews are coded based on inductive coding. This method of coding is preferable to deductive coding, because inductive coding supports providing in-depth data through the identifications of values (third order themes), which is the purpose of this qualitative research. To identify higher-order themes, the coding is performed based on the thematic analysis method of Braun and Clarke (2006). To transform the codes into higher-order themes, the Gioia methodology (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013) is used. To illustrate, within the transcripts all text passages that include possible critical incidents (First order codes) are highlighted. In order to have a better overview during the coding phase, all highlighted text passages from the interviews are sorted into an Excel sheet. Next, all highlighted incidents are coded, based on Braun and Clarke (2006), with concept Polish cultural standards (second order themes), which are explaining the strange Polish behaviour in the eyes of the Dutch. To better understand the Polish behaviour, the Dutch cultural standards are also taken into account in the table to clarify why the Polish behaviour is not-Dutch. Furthermore, the critical incidents concepts are analysed on similarities and differences, and reconsidered to establish a core of Polish cultural standards. Critical incidents which were mentioned by at least three interviewees are content analysed to develop the Polish cultural standards. As a result, the risk is minimized to analyse individual critical incidents which cannot be used to generalize the cultural standards. To conclude, a catalogue of cultural standards (behavioural patterns) of Polish culture perceived by Dutchmen is established. In Appendix 2, an example of a coding table is given.

3.3 Feedback from focus group and expert

The positive consequence of the fact that the researcher himself is also a Dutchman, is that it is clearer why a critical incident arises from Dutch culture perspective. However, the negative consequence is that there may arise a cultural interpretation bias during the process of establishing Polish cultural standards. To prevent this bias, a focus group of three Polish individuals and an expert in the field of cultural differences between the Netherlands and Poland are asked to assess the cultural standards

for assessment. In practise, the focus group of Polish individuals and expert are requested to explain and potentially elaborate on the Polish behaviour and whether the cultural standards are correctly interpretated from Polish culture perspective. With their comments, which partly confirmed the interpretation and partly added led to a better understanding, the description of Polish cultural standards was improved and enriched.

3.4 Comparison with previous research

Finally, the results of Polish cultural standards perceived by the Dutch are compared with previous research into Polish culture from a German point of view (Fischer et al.). As a result, it can be evaluated whether previous conclusions about the Polish culture still hold. This research results in a clear description of Polish values which differ from Dutch values, describing the sensitive points in the interaction, and a catalogue of the values that are involved in the critical incidents.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the research into cultural differences between the Dutch and the Poles are shown. First, typical Polish behaviours from a Dutch perspective are clarified with a definition. After this, the underlying Polish values, moral principles and ideals explaining the Polish cultural standards are clarified in more detail.

4.1 Polish cultural standards

After the data analysis and feedback from the focus group, thirteen Polish cultural standards perceived by the Dutch have been identified and defined in table 3. In the table are only cultural standards included that were mentioned by three or more interviewees. Therefore, the "past oriented" cultural standard was deleted because it did not meet the before mentioned requirement. As a result, the following table presents the perceived Polish cultural standards.

Table 3. Polish cultural standards

Cultural standards	Definitions	Number of interviewees mentioned cultural standard
Friendship	Building a relationship is necessary to trust each other and successfully work together.	15
Hierarchy	People formally behave on the basis of the position in the hierarchy or type of relationship.	13
Responsibility	The chef has full responsibility, subordinates follow instructions and do not show own initiative.	13
Decision	The chef exercises power by making decisions alone.	12
Respect	People try to keep their dignity high.	11
Male/female role patterns	Clear different traditional role patterns between men and women.	10
Indirectness	Opinions and feedback are not openly spoken towards non-friends.	10
Family ties	Spending time with family and friends is important and always be there to help them.	10
Work-to-live	Private life is more important than professional life.	10
Hospitality	Being hospitable by offering lots of food and drinks to guests.	9
Improvisation	Flexible handling of rules and procedures.	9

Time and agreement flexibility	People do not stick to pre-discussed time planning or agreements.	9
Low self-esteem	People have a low self-esteem.	7

Friendship

All fifteen Dutch interviewees mentioned critical incidents about the distant behaviour of the Poles towards strangers and outsiders. Specifically, this means that Poles are closed during the first meeting and do not approach unknown people to have small talks. During the analysis, it became clear that Polish people first need time to build up a relationship before they are able to trust you and be willing to cooperate. As a result, Polish people need more time to examine whether they want to build a relationship, but once this is established it will be stronger than the Dutch are used to.

Case:
"A Dutch employee is responsible for training new colleagues for their new work. Three new Polish colleagues have been hired and the Dutch employee is given the task of training the three newcomers. The Dutch employee notices that the three Polish colleagues get along well and that one of the three performs very well during the training sessions and remembers just about everything. During the training courses, the Dutch employee regularly repeats that if there are any questions, they can come to him. However, as soon as the two new Polish colleagues have questions, they do not go to the Dutch employee, but to the well-performing Polish colleague to ask him. The Dutch employee gets irritated, because he has been specially appointed for the training sessions and does not understand why the Polish colleagues do not come to him to ask." (Interviewee 14).

In this case it irritates the Dutchman that the Poles do not use his guidance, even though he has been appointed to do so. This is consequence of the Dutch pragmatism, in which work and tasks should be meaningful and have efficiency (Rosemann, 2021). However, the new Polish employees have not yet built up a relationship of trust with the more experienced Dutchman and therefore do not dare to approach him. Nevertheless, the Dutch often notice that the start of a collaboration is a bit more difficult, for example: "*Poles are very surly in working relations, so they are not always friendly and not so empathetic and jovial*" (Interviewee 7) and: "*Poles are generally very reserved when you meet them and they really need time to feel comfortable*" (Interviewee 2). The non-friendly Polish behaviour towards strangers and outsiders is clashing with the Dutch belief of creating a friendly and open atmosphere for everyone at work, even if you just met.

Hierarchy

The results show that also many of the incidents described by the Dutch interviewees are explained by the cultural standard 'hierarchy'. This means that Polish people start to behave in a formal way as soon as there are hierarchical level differences involved. As a result, managers and directors are always addressed with Sir/Madam (Pan/Pani) and (if applicable) their title. Consequently, the manager and directors are behaving according to their higher positions. Overall, Poles behave formally based on their social status and treat others with pronounced courtesy.

Case:
"A Polish employee receives a call from the manager and answers immediately. The manager asks if the Polish employee can transfer him to his Dutch colleague. The Polish employee sits opposite his Dutch colleague and says: "The manager wants to speak to you". The Dutch employee responds: "I'm busy right now, so I can't answer the phone". The Polish employee says: "It's a manager, it's a manager! You have to take that seriously". The Dutchman responds: "Even if it's the king, I'm busy so tell him I'll

call back later". The Polish employee is stunned and passes the message (in other words) on to the manager with great caution." (Interviewee 14).

In this case it is clear that the Pole behaved on the basis of his hierarchical level, while the Dutchman is used to treating his manager not fairly different from his colleagues. According to Rosemann (2021), Dutch superiors do not fulfil a status role due to the flat hierarchy in Dutch culture and described this behavioural pattern as '*informality*' cultural standard. Thus, the Polish cultural standard '*hierarchy*' is directly opposed to the Dutch cultural standard '*informality*'. During the analysis it was noticed that these incidents occur more often when the Dutchman is subordinate than superior. Apparently, the Dutch experience more friction as soon as they fulfil a subordinate role, as for example in the following genuine remark; "*All employees had to call the Polish CEO Mister Professor, while in the Netherlands I was used to call the CEO by his first name*" (Interviewee 10). Besides the formal forms of address, the Poles also look up to the superiors, for example: "*The CEO is really seen by the Poles as the very big boss, while he is still seen by the Dutch as the man who worked in his work suit on production 20 years ago*" (Interviewee 1). After all, it strikes the Dutch interviewees that Poles address and treat their superiors and subordinates in a different way.

Responsibility
Furthermore, the Dutch interviewees noticed that the Poles have a different distribution of responsibility between the chief and the subordinate. Which means that the chief is fully responsible and has a duty to supervise the subordinate's work. On the other hand, the subordinate carries out the work exactly as requested and does not come up with initiative or ideas to improve processes within the company. In addition, Poles prefer a superior who can make clear and fast decisions, which makes the Polish employees feel less responsible for their part in the company.

Case:
"A machine manufacturing company has an order from a customer to deliver a machine on Wednesday. The Dutch manager agrees with his Polish employees to have the machine finished on Tuesday afternoon and the Polish employees immediately get to work. Then, the machine is delivered to the customer, but a little later the customer calls the Dutch manager and indicates that there are problems with the machine. The Dutch manager investigates and finds out that something went wrong in the production process. He is surprised because the Polish employees have not informed him about this and asks his Polish employees why it went wrong. The Dutch manager finds out that a supplier was late to deliver certain materials and that it is not because of a mistake from the Polish employees. The Dutch manager does not understand and wonders why the Polish employees did not come to him to indicate that Tuesday afternoon will unfortunately not work. It costs a lot of money to retrieve the machine and to investigate how it went wrong." (Interviewee 4).

In this case it appears that the Dutch manager is used to managing his employees more freely and not being involved in the entire process. In the Netherlands, it often happens that employees enjoy a lot of freedom and responsibility to decide for themselves how to handle a task or case without the involvement of a manager, which is described as 'freedom of action' (Rosemann, 2021). On the other hand, Poles find it common for the manager to identify the problems and is responsible to supervise the entire process. These two cultural standards regularly clash between Dutch managers and Polish subordinates, for example: "*Poles are hard workers, but I don't feel they are doing the right thing. They don't communicate where they are working on or how to successfully execute it.*" (Interviewee 1) and *"When the chef is not looking, the Poles will work slower. They really see work as time of the chef."* (Interviewee 3). Thus, the Dutch notice that the Polish subordinates have less responsibility and value for their own work and tasks.

Decision
In twelve of the fifteen interviews, the Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents that are related to the cultural standard of 'Decision'. This cultural standard means that the Polish subordinates do not contradict the chef or give their own opinion. On the other hand, the chef exercises power through autocratic decision making, showing overt authority and not accepting contradiction.

Case:
"A Dutch employee is in a team meeting with his Polish manager and colleagues. The Polish manager talks about his idea and new plans. The Dutch employee sees a number of negative aspects and mentions them with arguments why he thinks this is the case. The Polish manager does not agree and does not intend to change his ideas. Then, the Dutch employee notices that he stands alone, because his Polish colleagues are silently agreeing with the manager. So the Dutch employee accepts it and the team meeting is ended. Moments later, a Polish colleague comes to him and says: "You were right, our manager overlooks all kinds of problems". The Dutch employee does not understand and reacts irritated: "Yes, well if you think so, you should have opened your mouth"." (Interviewee 13).

This case shows that the Dutchman thinks it is conventional that everyone is involved in the decision-making and is allowed to express their opinion, even if there is a disagreement with the superior. This Dutch behaviour is described as 'Collective decision-making' (Rosemann, 2021) and clashes with the Polish 'Decision'. In addition, it clashes regularly with the Polish superiors, for example: "*The manager got angry when I requested a day off in the HR system without consulting him, he wanted to think about it first. But I don't get the anger, he can simply refuse the request in the system?*" (Interviewee 8) and "*The boss never liked it when I openly contradicted him. But my Polish colleagues never dared to do that, even though they knew better than the boss*." (Interviewee 10). Thus, it is clear that the dominance of superiors and the submissiveness of subordinates is therefore at odds with the Dutch cultural standards.

Respect
According to the results, Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents that Poles are not prepared to admit mistakes or make a compromise. This behaviour is described as 'Respect', and means that Poles think it is important to be respected (especially if they are a manager), which makes it difficult for them to admit or be openly critical of themselves.

Case:
"A company is hired to process woodwork at a theme park construction site. When the company arrived there was no wood ready, because the Polish construction manager had forgotten to order the wood. However, the Polish construction manager said: "Yes, but the designers did not provide the correct file". A Dutch employee of the design department is surprised and denies this. According to the Dutch employee, the Polish construction manager simply does not dare to admit her mistake and wrongly blames them." (Interviewee 2).

In this case it appears that the Dutch are used to recognizing mistakes, report them and trying to solve them yourself in the first place. According to Enklaar (2007), guilt and remission is one of the Christian values of the Dutch culture, whereby the Dutch believe that everyone should admit guilt that is within their responsibility. Because guilt and remission is a Christian value, the Polish and Dutch culture share this value, although the emphasis on admitting guilt or responsibility is stronger in cultures with a dominant Protestant mentality such as the Dutch culture (Enklaar, 2007). This Dutch 'Sense of responsibility' ensures that there is a clear culprit (cause) and will be forgiven by solving or apologizing for the mistake. Therefore, it frustrates the Dutch that Poles do not admit mistakes and thus take responsibility for the consequences. However, the Dutch simply do not recognize the loss of 'Respect'

in admitting mistakes or receiving negative feedback and often causes friction, as in the following genuine remarks: "*If I give feedback about a process that my manager has set up, they will never admit that they made a mistake or organized it inefficiently. I even have to adjust it myself or I get a contact person.*" (Interviewee 7) and "*The Poles do not like to admit their mistakes or say honestly that they could have done it differently. Not even if I, as a manager, first admit my mistake.*" (Interviewee 9).

Male/female role patterns
In ten of the fifteen interviews, the Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents about a clear difference in roles between Polish men and women. These Polish "male/female gender roles" mean that men behave courteously and masculine and that the women behave sweetly and feminine.

Case:
"*A Dutch woman works in Poland and she notices that International Women's Day is really celebrated in Poland. At work, all women in the team received a tulip from the male Polish colleague and Polish manager. The Dutch woman thinks that hardly anyone in the Netherlands knows exactly when it is International Women's Day, let alone that the women receive flowers from their male colleagues. The Dutch women notice more often that women are first allowed to queue for the coffee machine or keep the door open for women.*" (Interviewee 8).

In this case, the courteous behaviour of Polish men is clearly visible and the female interviewees noticed this more often such as: Women are allowed first in the queue for the coffee machine, and the men carry heavy bags from the women. The Dutch are not used to such large gender role differences which is the result of the value equality in Dutch culture (Enklaar, 2007), prompting equality between men and women as well. As a result, independence of emancipated woman is the norm for many Dutchmen and this behaviour is characterized by 'Equal male-female treatment'. The Dutch men did not experience many incidents with this Polish cultural standard and the women found it elegant in most cases, but it did lead to friction in the following situations: "*The male architect who is 20 years older than me is not willing to accept an order from me as a young woman, only when I call on the director he does it right away. But I notice this more often in the older male generation.*" (Interviewee 2) and "*When I replace the 10 kg water bottle of the machine, the Polish men come to me: 'Stop, that is way too heavy for a woman' and then I think; come on hey, i'm a bit emancipated after all.*" (Interviewee 3).

Indirectness
Furthermore, the Dutch interviewees noticed that Poles are reluctant to give opinions and feedback. Especially when a personal relationship had not yet been established, the Poles communicated very politely and carefully. This behaviour is described as 'Indirectness' and covers the cautious indirect communication style many Poles choose when asked for feedback.

Case:
"*A Dutch employee is new to a company and works in the HR department. After a while, the Dutch employee is curious whether she is doing her job well and whether she is meeting expectations. Her work mainly revolves around closing cases in the field of human resources, so she asks her Polish manager if she is doing her job well and closing enough cases. According to her, the Polish manager finds it difficult to tell whether she is doing well or closing too few cases. That is why the Dutch employee later tries to ask more directly: "If I close ten a day, is that enough? Do I meet expectations?". But according to the Dutch employee, the Polish manager tries to avoid the direct question again and said: "First let's see how you feel with this work". A while later, a team meeting takes place with the whole team and the Polish manager showed with the help of statistics how many cases the whole team closes on average and also how many everyone closes individually. The Dutch employee saw on the screen*

that she closes the fewest cases of the entire team and was surprised why her Polish manager never told her personally." (Interviewee 6).

This case shows that the Polish manager communicates cautiously and indirectly to the new Dutch employee. Which is in direct opposition to the Dutch cultural standard of 'Directness' (Rosemann, 2021). Therefore, it frustrates the Dutch when they later find out that, according to them, the Poles have not been honest. In addition, frictions arose between these two cultural standards in the following situations: "*When I ask for feedback I only get positive points, so you really have to ask a lot further because in the beginning the Poles are very polite. So it takes a while before you have an open/in-depth conversation.*" (Interviewee 9). "*Poles are less likely to tell you that something is bothering them and are more likely to tell another colleague than the bothered person. Actually, they would rather sit with their colleagues and complain about that person.*" (Interviewee 3).

Family ties
The strong ties that Poles maintain with their relatives is also noticeable in ten out of fifteen interviews. This is described as the 'Family ties' cultural standard, and covers the urge to always be ready to help family and friends and to spend time with them.

Case:
"It's a Dutchman's birthday and at her new job her Polish colleagues said: "Oh, let's go out for dinner with the team, will you also bring your brother or your friend?". The Dutchman thought it was a bit strange and it had never occurred to her to take her relatives with her, but all her Polish colleagues did this. A little later, the Dutchman suddenly sat at a very large table and thought it was a bit strange, but also very nice. The Dutchman often notice that it is not uncommon in Poland that colleagues take their family members on parties organized by work." (Interviewee 6).

In this case, the strong ties that Poles maintain with their relatives is clearly visible. For the Dutch, maintaining warm family ties is less important for social security and has less influence on their identity than for the Poles. In fact, hard work provides social security in the Netherlands and yields a lot of social appreciation, which according to Enklaar (2007) stems from the Dutch value of Work (Arbeid) originating in the strong Calvinist work ethic. In principle, these differences in thinking did not result in clashes, but the Dutch simply place less value on strong family ties. Therefore, the Dutch found it sometimes strange, but often appreciated these Polish 'Family ties'. For example in the following genuine remarks; "*My colleagues wanted to help me with my new house, such as installing a kitchen and laying the new floor. The Poles don't need anything in return for these friendship favours, except appreciation.*" (Interviewee 1). "*My Polish colleagues invited me to have dinner with their parents. Even though I didn't even know their parents but I liked it, very hospitable.*" (Interviewee 8).

Work-to-live
According to the results, Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents that Poles consider their private life more important than their professional life. This behaviour is described as 'Work-to-live', and means that Poles work for the obligation to earn money and support the family. On the whole, private life and social networks of friends and family are much more important than work and professional life.

Case:
"According to a Dutchman, many of her Polish colleagues come to the office early, so that they can also go home early. The Dutchman regularly saw that Polish colleagues started in the office at around 7 or 8 AM and then went home at around 3 or 4 PM. In the Netherlands, the standard working hours are more often nine to five, the Dutchman thinks." (Interviewee 8).

This case shows that Poles are willing to adjust their working hours to spend as much time as possible with the family. In principle, the Dutch also find a good work-life-balance important (Rosemann, 2021), but for many Dutchmen work is also of great importance for their happiness in life. According to Enklaar (2007), it stems from the Dutch value of work (Arbeid), whereby work is used to show and develop one's talents and it is not just about working for an income. Because the Dutch take an important part of their identity from their 'Professional life' and the Poles more from their private life with their family, it regularly leads to incidents such as the following genuine remarks; "*Poles are hard workers, but I have the feeling that they mainly want to show that to the boss. When the boss is gone, I regularly hear: 'No one is looking now!' and then they slow down. My Polish colleagues really see work as the time of the boss.*" (Interviewee 3). "*My Polish manager found it difficult to understand that I was leaving after she made me a very good salary offer. Poles believe that you should be happy with the work you have as long as your salary is high enough.*" (Interviewee 6).

Hospitality
In nine of the fifteen interviews, the Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents about a clear difference in hospitality. The Polish cultural standard 'Hospitality' means that the host will pamper the guests by overloading them with food and drinks.

Case:
"A Dutchman is invited by a Polish friend and asks if the Dutchman would like to come on Saturday. The Dutchman asks whether it is an invitation for a birthday or a regular visit. The Polish friend replied that it is nothing special and the Dutchman accepts the invitation. Once on a visit, the Dutchman is surprised, there are 2 or 3 bottles of wine and vodka on the table, the Polish woman has baked a cake, various breads from the bakery, large salads, and tables full of food and drinks. The intention is for the Dutchman to stay all day and then there will be soup and a warm dish. There is drinking, eating and chatting for hours." (Interviewee 15).

In this case, the generous hospitality of the Poles is clearly visible and the important role food and drinks play in the sense of community. This behaviour is strange, because the Dutch are less dependent on the community and unlike the Poles base their identity on it. Thus, as with 'Family ties' and 'Work-to-live', work is a much more important element for the Dutch identity, which stems from the Dutch value of Work (Arbeid) (Enklaar, 2007). Therefore, hospitality plays a much less important role for the Dutch, where there is just enough food and drinks for everyone and the roles of host and guest are much closer to each other. Additionally, the following genuine remarks also show the importance of food and drink and hospitality in Polish culture; "*During a barbecue I was offered a shot of vodka and I declined. The Pole didn't like that and a fist came on the table: "Come on, what's this? drink!". And so I did.*" (Interviewee 14). "*When you visit Polish people, they assume that you will stay for dinner. Even with an unexpected visit, then everyone gives a portion of their food to the guest*." (Interviewee 12).

Improvisation
Furthermore, the Dutch interviewees also noticed that Poles are flexible with rules and procedures, so that improvised solutions can be devised. It is striking that the Poles do this mainly to make work easier for themselves or that they feel the pressure of a deadline from the chef and solve it with a creative improvisation. Therefore, the Poles do not panic when getting into trouble and rather use their ability to improvise to solve problems spontaneously.

Case:
"A Dutchman hires a Polish masonry company to build a special wall for a theme park. The Dutchman gives detailed building plans and drawings to a Polish bricklayer and explains exactly how the Polish bricklayer should work. The Polish bricklayer has no questions and gets to work immediately. When the

wall was finished, the Dutchman found out that the wall is 5 centimetres short because the Polish bricklayer did not adhere to the building plans. The Dutchman is surprised that the Polish bricklayer has deviated from the building plans without asking or discussing and finds it strange. Actually, *the Dutchman wonders whether the Polish bricklayer has ever thought about what the future guests of the theme park will think of his 'special' wall, we have often indicated that we want to radiate quality."* (Interviewee 2).

This case shows that Poles are used to being flexible with plans and use their specialism to make the work easier and faster. The Dutch are not used to this behaviour and prefer structured and neat work to deliver high-quality service or products. In fact, the Dutch argue that good organization where everything is clean and tidy represents civilization, which stems from the value Order and neatness (Orde en netheid) in Dutch culture (Enklaar, 2007). Thus, order gives the Dutch clarity and certainty, and neatness results in status. Therefore, the Polish 'Improvisation' in the organization and a preference for faster and easier work over neatness is not much appreciated by the Dutch. In the following genuine remarks, the clash between the Dutch 'Order and neatness' and Polish 'Improvisation' is also visible; "*Polish painters found out that they were short of white paint, so they grabbed a different shade of white and finished the job. Now you can clearly see on the wall that there are streaks of a different colour of white on it.*" (Interviewee 15). "*Due to the corona crisis, the restaurants had to close and a restaurant owner then started giving drawing courses (which was allowed during the lockdown). All guests received a sheet of paper with drawing pencils and of course a delicious dinner.*" (Interviewee 3).

Time and agreement flexibility
According to the results, Dutch interviewees mentioned that the Poles easily change their plans and do not stick to agreed time planning or agreements. This behaviour is described as 'Time and agreement flexibility', and means that Poles see a big difference between 'what must be done' and 'what can be done'. Therefore, many Poles do not act according to a predetermined plan, but rather doing what seems most urgent first and delaying less urgent tasks. As a consequence, Poles accept minor delays in agreements and sometimes even expect it, however it should not be postponed indefinitely.

Case:
"A Dutch manager of a Polish machine manufacturing company agrees with a Polish customer to deliver a machine in 3 weeks. After the 3 weeks, the manager finds out that the machine is not ready due to delivery problems at the Polish suppliers. The Polish customer gets in touch and wonders why the machine hasn't been delivered yet. The Dutch manager apologizes and explains the cause, and tells that the delivery has been delayed by 4 weeks. The Polish customer does not find this a problem and the Dutch manager is surprised and thinks that he would not have gotten away with this so easily with a Dutch customer. The Dutch manager often notices that both Polish suppliers and customers are fairly flexible with agreements." (Interviewee 4).

In this case, the time and agreement flexibility of the Poles is clearly visible and that there is a greater tolerance for minor delays. This is strange for the Dutch, everything has to be planned according to the agenda so that there is clarity and certainty, and that unexpected surprises can be avoided. According to Enklaar (2007), it stems from the Dutch value Order and neatness (Orde en netheid), through which the Dutch want to create a stable environment and prevent an uncertain future. As a result, the Polish 'Time and agreement flexibility' clashes with the Dutch urge to plan time, as in the following genuine remarks; "*It is always easy to make short-term plans with Poles and it is very spontaneous. On the other hand, it is more difficult to plan something in the longer term, then the Poles do not want to be stuck with it because maybe something more important will come.*" (Interviewee 3). "*It is very difficult to*

make an appointment with the Poles to have something repaired in your house, for example. You should be happy if you get a day mentioned, but you will hardly ever get a time. In the end, there is also a very good chance that they will not show up. In Poland, the customer is not king, but the one who can deliver it." (Interviewee 10).

Low self-esteem
In seven of the fifteen interviews, the Dutch interviewees mentioned incidents that are related to the cultural standard of 'Low self-esteem'. This cultural standard means that Poles rate themselves lower than the Dutch, and it seems that expressing oneself in a pessimistic way is the norm. Overall, Poles value themselves lower and adopt a reserved attitude, while the Dutch and other wealthy Western people are more highly regarded.

Case:
"A Dutchman works together with his Polish colleagues on a project for an American client. The Dutchman notices that as soon as the customer comes from a Western country, his Polish colleagues become much less proactive and take a 'wait-and-see position'. The Dutchman thinks that his Polish colleagues estimate themselves lower than the American customer." (Interviewee 9)

This case shows that the Dutchman is used to equality and treat everyone the same, regardless of where the customer comes from. It stems from the Dutch equality and dictates that you should not rate yourself better nor less than anyone else (Enklaar, 2007). As a result of the Poles low self-esteem, the Dutch get the feeling that they look down on Poland. In the following genuine remarks, the clash between the Dutch equality and Polish low self-esteem is also clearly visible: "*Poles don't understand why in God's name you move from the rich Netherlands to poor Poland. They also see the Dutch as more professional, so you will get the benefit of the doubt in that regard; "That Dutchman will understand and we simple souls from Poland may be wrong."*" (Interviewee 10). "*Poles look up to me a lot because I'm Dutch and I get more respect than a Pole who also does a very good job. Poles also absolutely love my Dutch passport. Unjustly, of course there is nothing wrong with the Netherlands, but they attach a little too much value to it.*" (Interviewee 4).

4.2 Interconnections among cultural standards
Although, cultural standards provide a well-founded description of Polish behavioural patterns, not all of them can be considered as completely independent. Actually, sometimes cultural standards overlap or relate to each other and can be considered as belonging to one and the same domain (value). Therefore, it is tried to identify the cultural logic (value), which explains why Polish people behave according to these cultural standards. However, values are not observable and cannot be deduced directly from behaviour in the workplace. These values can only be derived indirectly from statements of Polish and from the relevant literature on Polish culture. Therefore, a typical Polish saying is associated with each value, describing the way of thinking of the Poles. As a matter of fact, these sentences are striking expressions of the values that Poles cherish. After all, with the help from the focus group and studying literature, the Polish cultural standards that have been identified are linked to the following values.

Bliscy (Friends and Family)
The underlying value *Friends and Family* expresses the preference of Poles to build strong relationships in the form of networks and to be hesitant towards strangers outside this network. The Poles cannot simply cooperate successfully with everyone in a business-like manner, because it must first be determined whether the stranger is trustworthy. Once a relationship is established and trust is gained, Poles are able to open up themselves and their relationship networks. Afterall, a strong relationship

network secures loyalty and trust in Poland and the core of it are friends and family. Therefore, Poles spent a lot of time with them and a typical Polish proverb connected to this value is:

Lepiej ze swoimi płakać niż z obcymi skakać
Better to cry with your own than to jump with strangers

Which means it is better to have misery among loved ones than fame among strangers, because the Poles argue that greater happiness will be felt when time is spent with your friends and family. This proverb clearly represents the importance of *Friends and Family* for the Poles.

Figure 2 visualizes the connection between *friendship, family ties, work-to-live* and *indirectness* that can be grouped together under the value *Friends and Family*. The Poles behave according to these cultural standards because there is a much bigger difference in the social interaction with friends and family, and with the people who are not part of this relationship network. This difference is clearly reflected in the cultural standards of *friendship* and *family ties*, as Poles are closed and not friendly when meeting them or in the start of a collaboration, but very kind and helpful to their friends and family. Furthermore, the *work-to-live* cultural standard covers that work is seen as an obligation to earn money in order to live, and so salary plays a much more important role for the Poles than the type of work. In contrast to Dutch culture, work is a lesser part of the identity of the Poles and friends and family a larger part. Therefore, Poles have a greater urge to work to support their friends and family, than working in order to show and develop their talent as the Dutch like to do.

Paraphrased quotations from interviews

- If they don't know you, they won't have a random chat with you
- They are not really open about their feelings, but when they are they don't hide anything anymore
- After some time my manager started to feel more comfortable with me and she stopped trying to be as polite as possible
- Colleagues with who I bonded are very helpful, but not to other colleagues.

- They will always be ready to help family and friends in need
- Friendships are much less superficial and more maintained, even if you no longer work together
- The contact with my Polish in-laws is very intense and can come to visit at any moment
- They think it is very important to visit their (grand) parents at least once a week

- They easily change jobs for a few hundred Zloty more
- During lunch breaks they will not talk about work, but rather about their weekend plans
- They do not stay for a drink to kick-off the weekend with colleagues
- Salary budget is leading for the Polish manager and therefore it is uncomfortable to negotiate

- They won't tell you when something is bothering them, rather they will send the manager
- They will say they respect your feedback, but they will take it personally
- When you ask for feedback, they will communicate it very politely
- They will never spontaneously give their opinion, you really have to ask about it

Cultural standards

Friendship

Family ties

Work-to-live

Indirectness

Underlying value

Bliscy
(Friends and Family)

Figure 2. Underlying value Bliscy (Friends and Family)

25

Szlachetność (Nobleness)

The value *Nobleness* expresses the Polish conviction that everybody should behave courteous and be treated according to their status in the hierarchy. Therefore, Poles do not treat each other as equals and there are clear role patterns between for example; the elderly and the young, the chef and employee, and men and women. For this reason, titles and functions need to be taken into account when interacting with each other. After all, Poles are used to gentry thinking and that status differences are obvious between the higher and the lower. Therefore, a typical Polish proverb referring to this value is:

Szlachcic na zagrodzie równy wojewodzie
A nobleman in the yard is equal to the voivode

This proverb represents the urge of the Poles with a small privileged social position to behave as nobly as the Voivode. Therefore, even a small boss should be obeyed like a prince. It is clearly an expression of a thought that status differences should be preserved and represents the value of *Nobleness* in Polish culture.

Figure 3 pictures the perceived Polish cultural standards *respect, male/female role patterns* and *hospitality* belong to the underlying value *Nobleness*. The Poles behave according to these cultural standards because they see the nobility (Szlachta) as a social ideal, so courteous and noble behaviour represents a high social status. In order to be not looked down upon as simple boors, Polish adopt polite behaviour derived from the manners of the former gentry. In superior-subordinate relations the interactive behaviours of lord and serf are the model. The Polish *Nobleness* is reflected in a hierarchical status, meaning that there is more emphasis on formal titles and functions, and in general all Poles use Pan/Pani (Sir/Madam). Which is very formal in the Netherlands and would never be used between colleagues or employer and employee. However, in Poland it is important to show respect and treat each other with courtesy. At last, the Poles like to be generous to guests, and food and drinks play an important role in this. Actually, it is a great honour and provides status to be a generous host by offering plenty of food and drinks.

Paraphrased quotations from interviews

- They will never admit their mistakes, not even if you admit it yourself first
- In a discussion they find it important to prove your own right and not to be convinced by the arguments of the other person
- The manager will never admit that he/she does not know the answer on a question
- If you give feedback to the manager, you have to solve it yourself or you get a new contact to solve it with

- As a female, they would always let me first to get coffee or hold the door open for me
- The men all shake hands with each other, but not with the women
- As soon as a watertank of 8-10 kg needed to be replaced, the women would always ask the men to help lifting
- The men sometimes find it difficult to accept a woman as a manager

- When you come to visit, it goes without saying that you stay there for dinner or (extensive) lunch
- They invite you more quickly in the private sphere and it is always very informal
- The more souls the merrier and you don't have to bring your own meat to a bbq, everyone does bring a bottle of vodka
- If they invite you then make sure you come hungry, because the whole table will be filled with food and snacks.

Cultural standards

Respect

Male/Female role patterns

Hospitality

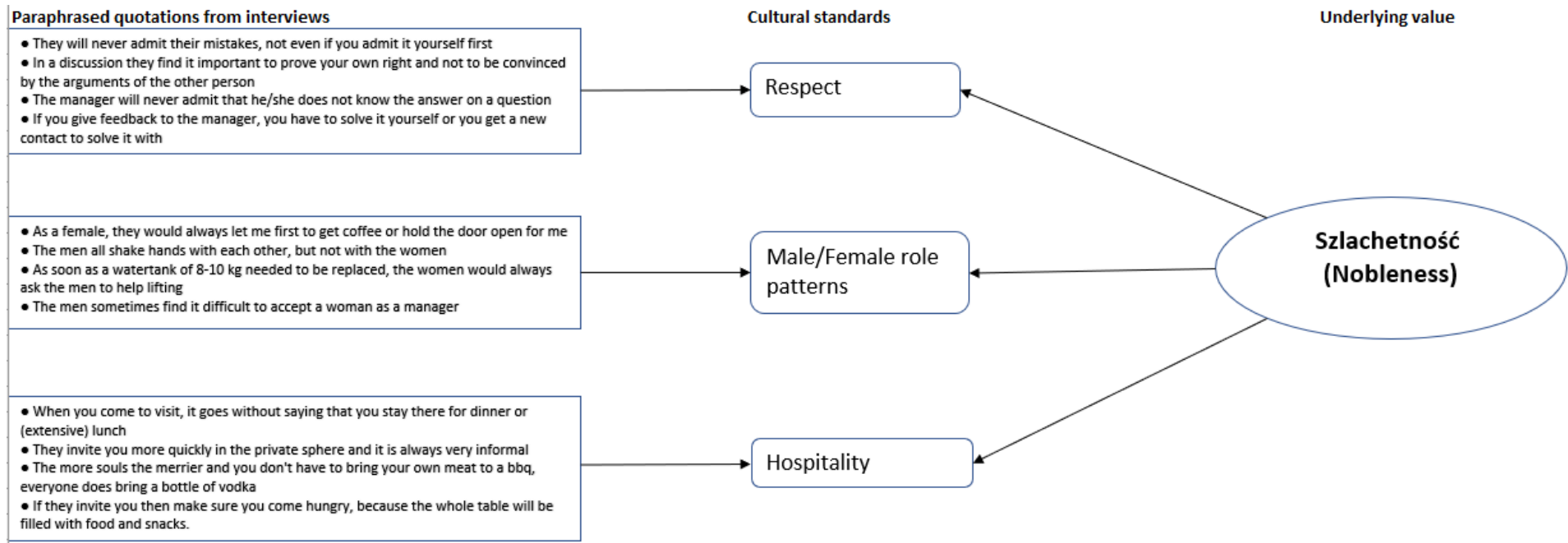**Underlying value**

Szlachetność (Nobleness)

Figure 3. Underlying value Szlachetność (Nobleness)

27

Szacunek dla władzy (Respect for authority)

The value *Respect for authority* expresses the need of the Poles to have a superior in charge and decide for the subordinate what to do. They pursue a large power distance and communication goes through a top-down hierarchical way. The Poles are averse to an open exchange of views that affects the authority of the superior. A typical Polish proverb connected to this value is:

Jak Pan Bóg przykazał
As the Lord God has commanded

Co wolno wojewodzie, to nie tobie (mały) smrodzie
What is allowed for the Voivode (warlord), is not for you (little) stench

This proverb means that it is clear that the superior (Voivode) has more power and rights than the subordinate (little stench). It is an expression of a thought that power distance should be preserved and represents the value of *Respect for authority* in Polish culture.

Figure 4 represents the Polish cultural standards *responsibility, decision, low self-esteem* and *hierarchy* that can be explained by the underlying value *Respect for authority*. The Poles value *Respect for authority*, because authority gives a sense of security and by strictly complying with it an individual cannot be held personally liable for mistakes. This is also reflected in the cultural standard of *responsibility*, as employees will carry out exactly what the manager asks and do not take initiatives beyond their responsibility. Therefore, the Poles do not strive for autonomy, but rather for authority that makes decisions and solves problems that are beyond the responsibility of the subordinate.
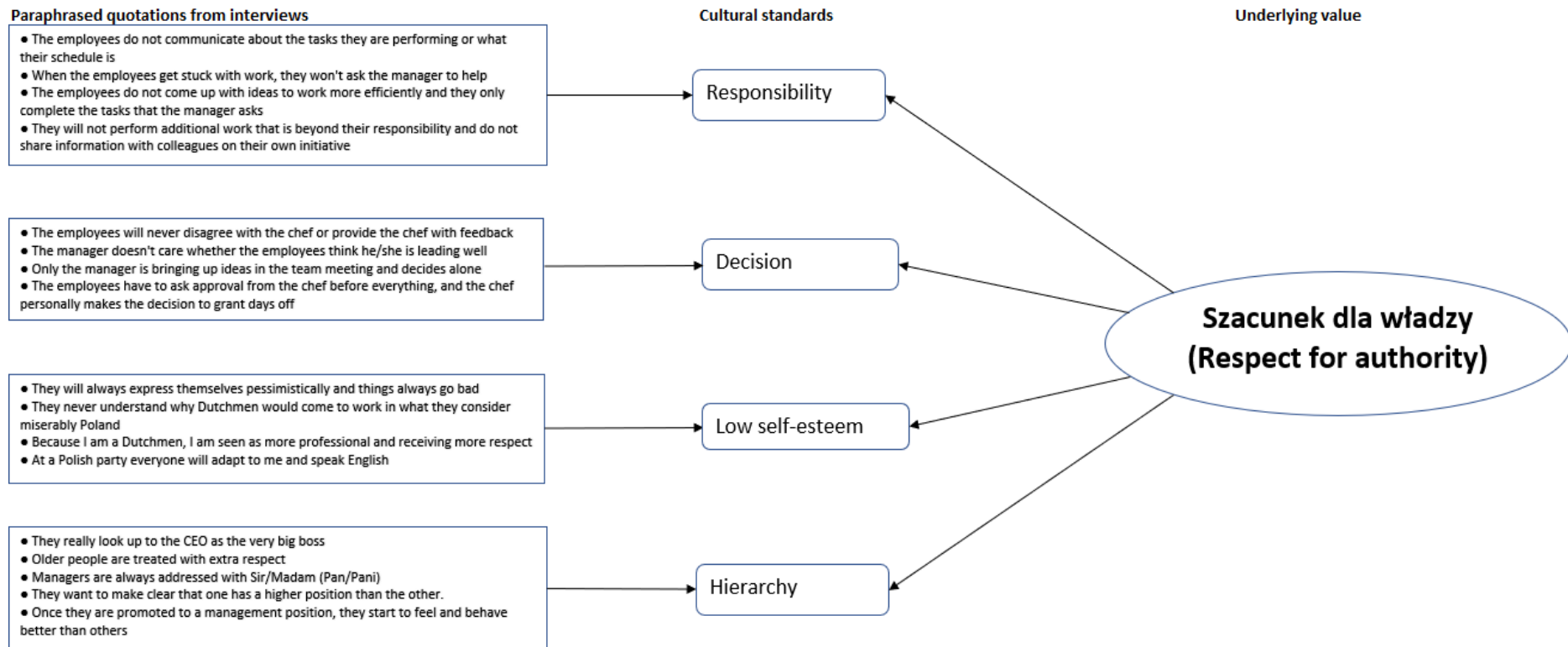
Paraphrased quotations from interviews

Cultural standards

Underlying value

● The employees do not communicate about the tasks they are performing or what their schedule is
● When the employees get stuck with work, they won't ask the manager to help
● The employees do not come up with ideas to work more efficiently and they only complete the tasks that the manager asks
● They will not perform additional work that is beyond their responsibility and do not share information with colleagues on their own initiative

Responsibility

● The employees will never disagree with the chef or provide the chef with feedback
● The manager doesn't care whether the employees think he/she is leading well
● Only the manager is bringing up ideas in the team meeting and decides alone
● The employees have to ask approval from the chef before everything, and the chef personally makes the decision to grant days off

Decision

Szacunek dla władzy
(Respect for authority)

● They will always express themselves pessimistically and things always go bad
● They never understand why Dutchmen would come to work in what they consider miserably Poland
● Because I am a Dutchmen, I am seen as more professional and receiving more respect
● At a Polish party everyone will adapt to me and speak English

Low self-esteem

● They really look up to the CEO as the very big boss
● Older people are treated with extra respect
● Managers are always addressed with Sir/Madam (Pan/Pani)
● They want to make clear that one has a higher position than the other.
● Once they are promoted to a management position, they start to feel and behave better than others

Hierarchy

Figure 4. Underlying value Szacunek dla władzy (Respect for authority)

Kombinować (Finding a creative solution)

The value *Creative solution* expresses the Polish conviction that the future is uncertain and that strict adherence to schedules and procedures does not meet the complex reality. Instead, it is better to use schedules and procedures as rough guidelines and adjust them if the situational circumstances make it necessary. There is an unique word for this way of thinking; *'Kombinować'* and means to get the seemingly impossible done, somehow. This creative way of finding solutions makes following fixed structures and principles impractical and not very useful. Therefore, a typical Polish proverb referring to this value is:

Kombinować jak koń pod górę
to try tricks like a horse up a hill

Which means that someone is not entirely honest and tries to contrive out of a messy situation. This proverb shows that *Kombinować* is a well-known concept and represents an important value that covers the flexibility and improvisation in Polish culture.

Figure 5 focuses on the Polish value of *Creative solution*, which can be an explanation for *improvisation* and *time and agreement flexibility*. The creative Poles want to respond as well as possible to uncertainty, so being flexible and improvising thinking is important in critical situations. Time and agreements are respected flexibly, as Poles are very spontaneous with time and accept small delays in agreements according to the interviewees. The Poles believe that following a plan is good, but it is unrealistic to deviate from it without any improvisation.
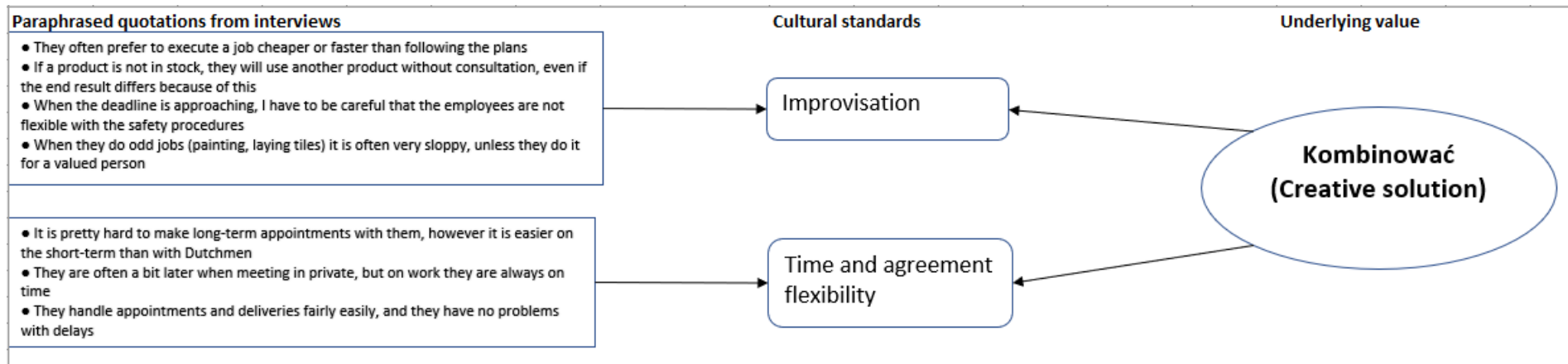
Paraphrased quotations from interviews	Cultural standards	Underlying value

Paraphrased quotations from interviews

- They often prefer to execute a job cheaper or faster than following the plans
- If a product is not in stock, they will use another product without consultation, even if the end result differs because of this
- When the deadline is approaching, I have to be careful that the employees are not flexible with the safety procedures
- When they do odd jobs (painting, laying tiles) it is often very sloppy, unless they do it for a valued person

Improvisation

- It is pretty hard to make long-term appointments with them, however it is easier on the short-term than with Dutchmen
- They are often a bit later when meeting in private, but on work they are always on time
- They handle appointments and deliveries fairly easily, and they have no problems with delays

Time and agreement flexibility

**Kombinować
(Creative solution)**

Figure 5. Underlying value Kombinować (Creative solution)

5. Discussion and conclusions

The goal of the research is threefold: Examining which typical Polish behaviours deviate from Dutch culture; to describe Polish cultural standards; and explaining the cultural logic behind the Polish cultural standards. To accomplish the research goal, the following central research question will be answered:

Which Polish cultural standards may clash with Dutch ones and what is the cultural logic behind them?

The following sub-questions help to deal with the threefold research goal:
Firstly, what are the typical Polish behaviours causing clashes with the Dutch?
Secondly, what are the Polish cultural standards of these typical behaviours?
Thirdly, what is the cultural logic behind the Polish cultural standards?
The sections following address these sub-research questions.

5.1 Polish cultural standards perceived by the Dutch

In total, 393 critical incidents were experienced by the Dutch interviewees during their work in Poland. These critical incidents are typical Polish behaviours from a Dutch perspective and have to be transformed into cultural standards. Therefore, thirteen different typical Polish behaviours are identified that differed from Dutch cultural behaviour and transformed into cultural standards.

1. *Friendship*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that they are very closed to strangers/outsiders and always a little shy at first before they trust you. However, as soon as a relationship has been built up, the relationship is stronger than with Dutch colleagues. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Building a relationship is necessary to trust each other and successfully work together.

2. *Hierarchy*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that people with status are greatly looked up to and are always addressed as Mr/Mrs (Pan/Pani). People with status like to show that they are higher in the hierarchy. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: People formally behave on the basis of the position in the hierarchy or type of relationship.

3. *Responsibility*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that the employees exactly carry out the tasks as requested and leave work at 5 o'clock precisely. Everything must be done in consultation with the chef. Full responsibility lies with the supervisor, subordinates do not have or take responsibility. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: The chef has full responsibility, subordinates follow instructions and do not show own initiative.

4. *Decision*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that employees are silent during team meetings and do not come up with ideas to improve work. Only the chef speaks in team meetings and controls the subordinates' work as a micro manager. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: The chef exercises power by making decisions alone.

5. *Respect*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that errors are not admitted and questions that cannot be answered are given vague answers. Polish managers will never admit that their process is wrong or inefficient and feedback is always taken personally. Everyone is eager not to lose the respect of the others. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: People try to keep their dignity high.

6. *Male/female role patterns*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that the men behave in a very masculine way and the women in a very feminine way. In public, the men hold the

doors open for the women and carry heavy bags, and, at home, the women do the housework. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Clear different traditional role patterns between men and women.

7. *Indirectness*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that comments or feedback are never expressed directly and communication is very polite. If the Poles have a problem with each other, they do not discuss it openly with each other, but rather complain to another colleague or use the manager as a mediator. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Opinions and feedback are not openly spoken towards non-friends.

8. *Family ties*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that friends and family are very important and always be ready to help them. Contact with friends and family is much more intensive than in the Netherlands. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Spending time with family and friends is important and always be there to help them.

9. *Work-to-live*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that they only work to earn money and support the family. They spend their time outside of work with family and friends rather than having a Friday afternoon drink with colleagues. During breaks work is never (or rarely) discussed and used to tell what they did with their family and friends over the weekend. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Private life is more important than professional life.

10. *Hospitality*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that as a guest you are pampered with lots of food and drinks and they really do their best to make you feel comfortable. People may spontaneously visit you and they have the mentality the more souls the merrier. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Being hospitable by offering lots of food and drinks to guests.

11. *Improvisation*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that they deviate from plans or procedures without consultation, and give their own interpretation to these. Finishing quickly or in a cheaper way is more important than the quality of the final product. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: Flexible handling of rules and procedures.

12. *Time and agreement flexibility*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that time and agreements are not strictly or precisely adhered to. Spontaneous appointments or short-term plans are more common than long-term planning based on an agenda. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: People do not stick to pre-discussed time planning or agreements.

13. *Low self-esteem*. According to the Dutch, the typical Polish behaviour is that the Dutch are greatly looked up to and are treated extra politely. They estimate themselves lower and complain a lot about the failures in Poland. This typical Polish behaviour has the following definition: People have a low self-esteem.

These Polish cultural standards are useful to define, describe and forecast Polish behaviour in Polish-Dutch interactions, so that can be predicted where potential cultural incidents might occur.

Comparison with previous research
In this chapter, the research findings from the current study are compared with findings from Fischer et al. (2007). In table 4, the Polish cultural standards identified by Fischer and those identified in the current study are compared.

Table 4. Comparison with findings Fischer et al. (2007)

Polish cultural standards in Fischer et al. (2007)	Polish cultural standards from current study	Underlying Polish values

Social relations	Friendship	Friends and Family
	Family ties	
	Indirectness	
	Work-to-live	
Hierarchy orientation	Hierarchy	Respect for authority
	Responsibility	
	Decision	
	Low self-esteem	
Flexible handling of control systems	Improvisation	Creative solution
	Time and agreement flexibility	
Status and Etiquette	Male/female role patterns	Nobleness
	Hospitality	
Personal emotionality	Respect	

The table shows which Polish cultural standards from the current study correspond with the findings of Fischer et al. (2007), and which cultural standards did not. The comparison makes clear that the current study distinguished more cultural standards and described them in more detail, and tried to discover the underlying value. These underlying values are useful to explain the identified cultural standards and visualize the interconnections between them. These different outcomes are the result of a fundamental difference in approach between the two studies. This study makes a distinction between concrete behaviours (cultural standards) and the explanation for this standard (value), whereas Fischer's cultural standards are a category in between concrete behaviour and value.

According to Fischer et al. (2007), the logic behind the *social relations* cultural standard may come from the fact that social relations are necessary for individuals to achieve certain goals and thus have a bigger role in Polish culture. These social relations are used in the form of networks that have been important throughout Poland's history to cope with scarcity and low social security (Fischer et al., 2007). Friends and family are the basis of this network and therefore key in securing social security in Poland. This logic explains the importance of Friends and Family in Polish culture and why private life and social networks of friends and family have emerged as a more important element than work and their professional life. However, Fischer et al. (2007) did not described this behavioural pattern and thus lacks the cultural standard *work-to-live* from the current study. This Polish cultural standard has been added to the group of behavioural patterns, which is explained by the underlying value *Friends and Family*.

Moreover, Fischer et al. (2007) argues that the logic behind the *hierarchy orientation* cultural standard stems from the Polish history where Poland has been oppressed by foreign powers for 2 centuries. In addition, the Catholic Church also contributed to the hierarchical structures in Poland (Fischer et al., 2007). This seems logical explanations, however the influence of the feudal system on authority is missing here. According to Hryniewicz (2014), the feudal system can still be seen in Polish organizations where the manager takes the role as the dominant lord and the employee the role as servant. This explains why Fischer et al. (2007) did not described the behavioural pattern *low self-esteem* from the current study. This Polish cultural standard has been added to the group of behavioural patterns, which is explained by the underlying value *Respect for authority*.

Furthermore, Fischer et al. (2007) argues that the logic behind the *Flexible handling of control systems* cultural standard stems from the long-standing instability and uncertainty in Poland. As a consequence, future planning was impossible and flexibility necessity to earn a living. Therefore, many Poles do not act according to a predetermined plan, but rather according to the constraints of time,

doing what seems most urgent first and delaying less urgent tasks (Fischer et al., 2007). This cultural standard was also found in the current study, however it is split into *improvisation* and *time and agreement flexibility*. In the current study there is a clear difference between being flexible in time schedules and agreements, and being flexible in handling procedures in order to improvise.

Fischer et al. (2007) argues that the logic behind the *status and etiquette* cultural standard is centuries old and stems from the old Polish nobility the Szlachta. It represents the importance of noble status in Polish culture, which dictates that Polish men and women should interact in a traditional way (Fischer et al., 2007). In addition, Fischer et al. (2007) states that the generous hospitality is traced back to the hospitable Szlachta. Therefore, hospitality is not just an expression, it is a tradition in Polish culture and gives a lot of honour to the host. These cultural standards were also found in the current study.

At last, the cultural standard *personal emotionality* identified in the study by Fischer et al. (2007), was perceived as *respect* in the current study. According to Fischer et al. (2007), Poles are strongly emotional people and thus the emotional state of individuals should be observed and protected. As a result, Poles are anxious to hurt feelings of other people. This Polish cultural standard was perceived from a German perspective, and therefore it could be that Dutchmen interpret this behaviour in a different way. Future research into Dutch culture from a Polish perspective could reveal whether incidents of personal emotionality indeed occurs differently or that it mainly occurs in a German-Polish interaction.

5.2 The cultural logic behind Polish cultural standards

The Polish cultural standards *friendship*, *family ties*, *work-to-live*, and *indirectness* are interconnected and based on the value **Bliscy** (Friends and Family). This underlying value expresses the importance of Poles to have strong social relations with friends and family for their happiness in life. In contrast, for many Dutchmen, **Work** (Arbeid) is important for happiness in life and giving a direction and sense to life. The Dutch are less dependent on social relations in their work and put a work goal above a personal relationship. However, the Poles need personal relations in order to work professionally, and therefore the Dutch should be aware that Poles find it more difficult to work with strangers or unsympathetic people.

The Polish cultural standards *responsibility*, *decision*, *hierarchy* and *low self-esteem* are interconnected and based on the value **Szacunek dla władzy** (Respect for authority). This underlying value expresses the Polish preference to be dependent on authorities in order to organize work and accept that decisions are decided from above. This Polish value is clearly clashing with the Dutch value **Self-determination** (Zelfbeschikking), which expresses the Dutch conviction that everyone should have their own opinion and freedom of choice in order to operate independently. Therefore awareness is required among the Dutch that there is a completely different relationship between a manager and an employee.

The Polish cultural standards *time and agreement flexibility*, and *improvisation* are interconnected and based on the value **Kombinować** (Creative solution). This underlying value expresses the conviction that the Poles prefer rules and schedules as rough guidelines to handle the uncertain future with flexibility and improvisation. This Polish value is clashing with the Dutch value **Order and neatness** (Orde en netheid), which expresses the Dutch belief that life should be structured and that things should be arranged and planned well in advance (Enklaar, 2007). Therefore, the Dutch should be aware that orderly schedules and well-organized plans with procedures are less important for the Poles.

The Polish cultural standards *male/female role patterns*, *hospitality*, and *respect* are interconnected and based on the value **Szlachetność** (Nobleness). This underlying value expresses the Polish

conviction that everyone should behave courteously and that people of status are treated with extra respect. According to Zarycki, Smoczyński, and Warczok (2017), a civic sphere dominated by the intelligentsia developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Poland, which saw itself as a successor to the Polish Szlachta. As a result, Polish citizenship is based on the Lord-Boor (Pan-Cham) binary opposition and the ideal citizen is one who pursues the noble ideals and lifestyle. This Polish value is clashing with the Dutch value **Equality** (Gelijkheid), which expresses the Dutch belief that everyone should be treated equally and behave modestly (Enklaar, 2007). Therefore, the Dutch have to be prepared for the fact that women, elderly and people in high positions are not seen as equal with others and that there is more emphasis placed on formal forms of address and titles.

5.3 Limitations and future research

The research identified Polish cultural standards from analysing critical incidents the Dutch perceive. Therefore, the research is from a Dutch point of view and incidents/frictions from a Polish point of view in the Dutch-Polish collaboration are not taken into account. To be more specific, cultural frictions which the Poles perceive and the Dutch not, are missing. For example, interviewee 9 said the following:

"Humor works very well and especially self-mockery is what the Poles like. Because they look very much at position and when I am a project manager or director they think 'oh oh that's someone oh, we have to respect that'. And that's when I use self-mockery to break down that barrier, because nobody's going to break that barrier for you until you do." (Interviewee 9).

From a Dutch point of view, the Dutch manager wants to break down the barrier between him and the Polish employee. However, it is possible that a barrier must be maintained with the Polish employee for a successful collaboration. As a consequence, the Polish employee may regard his leadership as weak and the Dutch manager may not realize that it is diminishing his authority. Therefore, future research should examine the Dutch culture from a Polish point of view to identify cultural frictions which the Poles do experience and the Dutch do not. As a result, more coping mechanisms or interventions can be devised to bridge the cultural frictions during the cooperation and communication between the Poles and the Dutch.

Furthermore, several interviewees noted that the younger generation of Poles adapt more easily to new ways of working or different leadership styles. This was not included in this study, but it would be interesting whether age plays a role. Therefore, future research may examine whether Poles of the older generation value strong leadership and put your own spin on your work more than the younger generation does. At last, Polish values were only shortly described in this study. For elaborating them and better understanding Polish cultural logic, a profound literature study should be carried out.

5.4 Academic relevance

The academic contribution of this study lies in the validation of previous research regarding Polish cultural standards described by Fischer et al. (2007). Researching from a Dutch cultural perspective provided new insights into Polish culture, in addition to existing literature from a German perspective. Nevertheless, the study goes a step further by identifying underlying Polish values to explain the cultural logic behind the cultural standards, which was missing in previous research.

The comparison with previous research showed that current research identified new Polish cultural standards, which were linked to the values *Friends and Family* and *Respect for authority*. However, the comparison also showed that the cultural standard *personal emotionality* identified by Fischer et al. (2007), was interpreted differently by the Dutch. These differences show that it is a relevant addition to examine a culture from different cultural perspectives.

After all, the study adds value by extending existing literature with thick described Polish cultural standards and underlying values, to understand cultural logic in bicultural situations. In addition, these underlying Polish values are useful, for example, for future research on leadership or change management that should take Polish behaviour in organizations into account.

5.5 Practical relevance

The practical contribution of this study lies in the established thirteen Polish cultural standards, which give insights into Polish behavioural patterns which were perceived by the Dutch. These Polish cultural standards provide Dutchmen a better understanding of the cultural logic behind cultural clashes when experiencing Polish-Dutch interactions. Therefore, this study provides Dutch managers, expats, and businessmen coping mechanisms to understand and overcome cultural frictions.

5.6 Conclusions

In conclusion, as the study shows, there are considerable cultural differences between the Poles and Dutch which may lead to cultural clashes. Therefore, it is important to understand the cultural logic behind the 'strange' Polish behaviour in order to cope with the cultural differences as a Dutchman. Thus, the study identified thirteen Polish cultural standards in a Polish-Dutch cultural interaction: *Friendship, Family ties, Work-to-live, Indirectness, Responsibility, Decision, Low self-esteem, Improvisation, Time and agreement flexibility, Hierarchy, Male/female role patterns, Hospitality,* and *Respect*. These Polish cultural standards are explained by the following underlying values: *Friends and Family, Respect for authority, Creative solution,* and *Nobleness*. The Polish cultural standards and underlying values are described with extensive descriptions and therefore provide a valuable insight into the Polish culture and the way Poles think and behave.

The comparison with Fischer et al. (2007) made clear that different Polish cultural standards have been found in the two studies. This may be because the previous study conducted research from a German cultural perspective and the current research from a Dutch cultural perspective. As a result, Polish behavioural patterns that have been observed from a German perspective are missing and vice versa. On the other hand, it may also be the case that Fischer et al. (2007) did not described the cultural standards concretely enough and as a consequence was not able to give the correct label. Therefore, the current study described and labelled the Polish cultural standards more concrete and precise, resulting in more accurate findings in Polish behavioural patterns.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview questions

1. Wat is volgens jou het meest typisch voor Polen? Vind je dat positief of negatief? Heb je moeite om hiermee om te gaan?
2. Wat vind je beter aan werken in Polen dan in Nederland? En wat vind je minder?
3. Heb je verschil gemerkt tussen een Nederlandse of Poolse baas of Nederlandse of Poolse ondergeschikte?
4. Wat is volgens jou goed leiderschap? (wat voor rol verwacht je van een manager) en hoe anders kijken ze hier naar in Polen? Hoe gedragen Poolse managers zich?
5. Komen Polen hun afspraken na en komen ze op tijd?
6. Vertellen Polen eerlijk aan je als er iets dwars zit? Praten ze over gevoelens?
7. Wat zijn de verschillen tussen Poolse en Nederlandse mannen?
8. En vrouwen?
9. Is het makkelijk om een vriendschap op te bouwen in Polen?
10. Zijn Polen in het openbaar vriendelijk?
11. Zijn Polen open over hun privé leven? BBQ moet gastheer dan extra vlees inkopen??
12. Zijn Polen behulpzaam?
13. Staan Polen open voor nieuwe ideeën?
14. Wat vinden Polen belangrijker; het werk op tijd afkrijgen met een paar foutjes of niet op tijd maar wel foutloos?
15. Heb je verschil gemerkt in de besluitvorming of vergaderingen? Wie neemt de beslissingen en worden deze door iedereen gerespecteerd?
16. Hoe is de werk-leef-balans in Polen en merk je hierin verschil met Nederland?
17. Is er een verschil in werksfeer?
18. Heb je verschil gemerkt in gastvrijheid?
19. Hoe gaan Polen met regels om en hoe worden ze gecontroleerd/nageleefd?
20. Tonen Polen initiatief?
21. Geven Polen hun eigen mening?
22. Merk je verschil in een groepsdynamiek?
23. Merk je verschil in een begroeting?
24. Vind je Polen koppig? Nemen ze iets van je aan? Staan ze open voor feedback?

# of interviewee	# of Critical Incident	Quote	Polish cultural standard	Dutch cultural standard
14	21	You can't turn down a shot of vodka and I said no once during a barbecue, and a fist came on the table: "Come on, what's this? drink!". And so I did.	Hospitality	Freedom of action
14	22	Poles are not very open at the first meeting, but after a second or third meeting when they start to get to know you a little, they become more open. First contact is often a bit cautious, especially if you are a foreigner, but once you have that trust, you stick with it and then that trust doesn't go away. At the first meeting, Poles often talk a bit about general topics and not very personal, and the following meetings are then a bit more personal, which could already be the first contact with the Dutch. Poles may say where you come from at the first meeting and a bit generally about their job, but never really substantive. And information about your family has really never been brought up with a Pole.	Friendship	Friendly atmosphere
14	23	I was busy with something and some manager called my Polish colleague and he had to speak to me. So my colleague said, "You have to pick this up now, it's a manager" and I said, "Even if it's the King, I'm busy and can't take it, you tell him I'll call back later". But I also knew that manager, so it wasn't a problem for him, but my Polish colleague said: "It's a manager, it's a manager. You have to take that seriously". So I'd say they might be a little more attached to a certain hierarchy and if someone's in a certain position they take it more seriously than where we can just joke around with each other. And then they are a bit more careful with it, because it is someone with a higher position.	Hierarchy	Flat hierarchy