INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION IN EUROPEAN BUSINESS

Cultural Differences between the Dutch and Swiss on the Work Floor

Author: Natasha Gabriëlle Suijkerbuijk
Student ID: 2291886
Date: 5th of July, 2023

Graduation Committee:
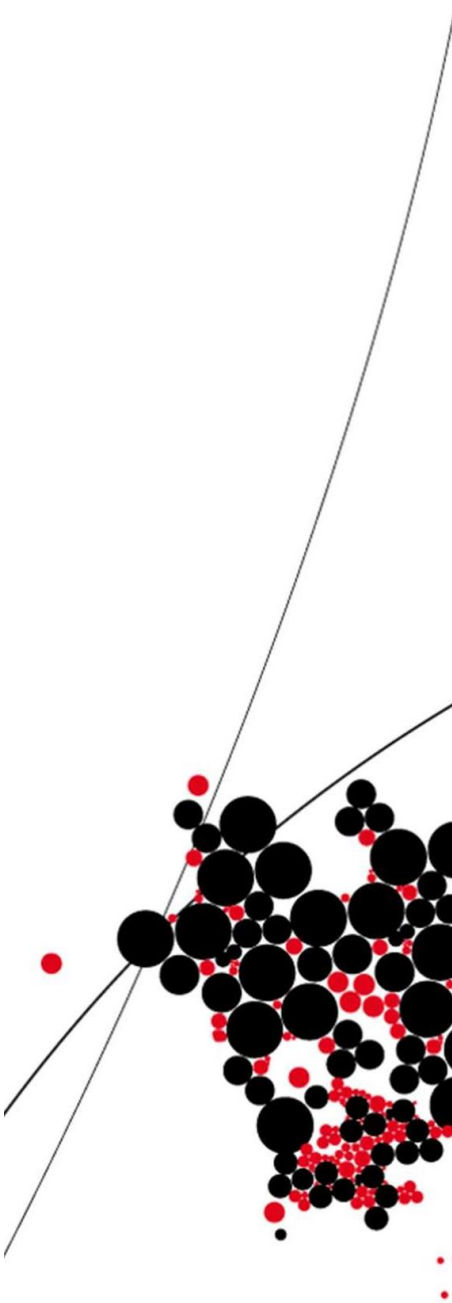1st Supervisor: Dr A. H. Enklaar
2nd Supervisor: Dr P. Weritz

University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede, The Netherlands

Faculty: Behavioural, Management & Social Sciences
Department: MSc Business Administration
Specialization: International Management & Consultancy

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

As a result of today's rise in the global marketplace, more organisations send their employees to work outside their home countries as expatriates. An issue expatriates may face when working and living abroad is adjusting to cross-cultural differences. These cross-cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Therefore, doing business and working with different cultures can be quite challenging, making research on cultural differences within Europe very valuable. For this reason, this master's thesis aims to compare the Dutch and Swiss cultures on the work floor from a Dutch perspective and to find the underlying values that explain the 'typical' Swiss behaviour. Due to the possible internal cultural diversity between the various regions in Switzerland, this study focuses on the German-speaking part of the country. Hence, the research question is: *"Which cultural differences do Dutch individuals living and working in the German-speaking region of Switzerland perceive, and how can they overcome these differences?"*

To answer this research question, an inductive qualitative research approach was used. Seventeen Dutch individuals who have lived and worked in the German region of Switzerland for at least six months were interviewed. Using the Critical Incident Technique, the interviewees were asked to recall moments in which the Dutch and German-Swiss cultures clashed. These situations, described as critical incidents, were analysed using the Thematic Analysis and structured by using the Gioia method, to establish Swiss cultural standards.

Eighteen cultural standards have been discovered, linked to five different underlying values: Professionalität, Gemeinschaft, Ordnung, Konsens and Gleichheit. The cultural standards and underlying values provide a thick description of the German-Swiss culture, as perceived by the Dutch. These thick descriptions can be used to understand and explain the behaviour of the Swiss from the German-speaking region. This should help prevent many misunderstandings and conflicts from occurring on the work floor.

Keywords: Critical Incidents, Cultural standards, Dutch cultural values, Dutch culture, Swiss cultural standards, Swiss culture, Underlying values

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES:

LIST OF TABLES:

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Goal and Research Question

As a result of today's rise in the global marketplace, more organizations are sending employees to work outside their home countries as expatriates (Setti et al., 2022). An issue expatriates may face when working and living abroad is adjusting to the cross-cultural difference. After all, when people from different cultural backgrounds meet, misunderstandings often occur (Lechner & Thomas, 2011). This is because culture influences perceptual processes (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005), as well as individual judgment and decision-making (Weber & Morris, 2010).

Western European managers may try to concentrate operations and business on 'local' European markets to avoid the difficulties of working with cultural diversity. However, Western European countries differ a lot culturally from Eastern European Countries. If Western European managers want to avoid issues related to cultural diversity, it would be best to concentrate operations in Western Europe. Nevertheless, even though West European countries share many similarities regarding their cultures, there are still variations within the region (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). Hence, thought patterns, perceptions, judgments, and actions may differ even between employees from two different Western European cultures.

Switzerland is not a European Union (EU) member and has also rejected European Economic Area (EEA) membership. However, the country is part of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), therefore having access to the Single Market through several bilateral agreements (Avery, 2012). Trade between Switzerland and the Netherlands is increasing in import and export (Rijksdients voor Ondernemend Nederland, 2013). With growing trade between the two countries, expatriates will be considered indispensable by both Dutch and Swiss multinational companies (MNCs) (Setti et al., 2022). Although the Netherlands and Switzerland are situated quite far from each other, Enklaar (2007) suggests that Swiss and Dutch cultures cherish the same cultural values. This would mean that Dutch expatriates can quickly adjust to the Swiss workplace culture.

However, in Switzerland, culture is not as uniform as some may think. Switzerland has four official languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), two main religions (Protestantism and Catholicism), three main geographical areas, and topographically distinct language regions, which create a significant amount of contrast, difference, and diversity within the country

(Dunkel, 2011; Enklaar, 2007; Siegfried, 1950). By reviewing other literature, Dunkel (2011) found that Swiss from the German- and French-speaking regions differed in culture. Nevertheless, these findings are based on studying existing literature. Empirical research and evidence may show different results.

Suter and Kauffeld (2013) have researched whether Germans and Swiss interact differently in meetings by simulating problem-solving sessions with German and Swiss teams. These were recorded on video, and the recordings were then analysed quantitatively. Etic researchers, such as Hall (1966), Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) and Meyer (2014), have compared the Dutch and Swiss cultures in terms of generalizable dimensions. However, the etic approach has received criticism (Helfrich, 1999; Lu, 2012). A qualitative emic approach to cross-cultural research is preferred, as it tries to discover how attitudes and behaviour make sense to the people of a specific group (Enklaar, 2022).

Chevrier (2002) studied a German-Swiss company, focusing on misunderstandings within the management of Franco-Swiss project teams through an interpretive qualitative (emic) approach. Another qualitative approach was elaborated by Thomas (1996), in which he used the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to study differences between two cultures. Using his CIT method, Brück (2002) identified eight Swiss cultural standards from an Austrian point of view, while Lechner and Thomas (2011) identified eight Swiss cultural standards from the German perspective. Still, Swiss cultural standards identified by the Austrians and Germans may differ from Swiss cultural standards perceived by the Dutch due to differences between the Dutch, Austrian and German cultures. Moreover, Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) do not provide a thick description of Swiss culture. Rather, they focus on the concrete behaviours of the Swiss, while failing to describe the cultural logic which guides these behaviours.

This thesis is an inductive qualitative study using CIT to determine the cultural differences between the Dutch and the German-Swiss on the work floor. In contrast to Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011), it aims to provide a thick description of Swiss behaviour from a Dutch perspective, thus providing clues for Dutchmen on how to interact with, behave, and manage the Swiss on the work floor. Because of the internal cultural diversity between the various language regions in Switzerland, this study focuses on the German-speaking part of the country. Hence, the main research question is:

"Which cultural differences do Dutch individuals living and working in the German-speaking region of Switzerland perceive, and how can they overcome these differences?"

The main research question has been divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What are typical German-Swiss cultural standards perceived by Dutch expatriates?
2. What is the cultural logic behind these German-Swiss cultural standards?
3. In which business situations do cultural differences become most apparent?
4. How can Dutch expatriates in the German-speaking part of Switzerland bridge these cultural differences?

This study aims to determine the Swiss concrete behaviours experienced by Dutch expatriates working in the German part of Switzerland with the help of CIT. This study will provide a thick description of the German-Swiss culture by including typical Swiss behaviour and the values behind those behaviours, explaining and interpreting critical incidents which Dutch expatriates may face in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. It should provide suggestions and answers to enhance cooperation and communication between the Dutch and the German-Swiss, resulting in more efficient collaborations.

1.2 Academic Relevance

This study contributes to the existing literature on cross-cultural differences by bridging three research gaps.

Gap 1: No emic and rigorous in-depth studies have investigated the cultural differences between the Dutch and German-Swiss on the work floor.

Many etic researchers in the past have come up with frameworks containing several cultural dimensions to explain cultural differences (Fink et al., 2005). The Dutch and Swiss cultures can be compared using etic approaches, but all cultures have elements which defy universal qualifications (Steers et al., 2017). To understand the dynamics of international business encounters, researchers need to shift their focus from comparative, etic studies of cultural differences to the study of intercultural interactions using the emic approach. This approach establishes culture-specific aspects of concepts and behaviour, which are not comparable across all cultures (Lu, 2012). Hence, using an emic approach, this study offers an in-depth look into behavioural patterns between the Dutch and German-Swiss at work in bicultural situations.

Gap 2: No emic studies have investigated how Dutch expatriates living and working in the German-speaking part of Switzerland view the German-Swiss cultural standards.

As noted before, the Dutch and Swiss cultures have many similarities. Some researchers have used emic approaches to study Swiss culture. Regardless, an emic empirical study on the

differences between German-Swiss and Dutch cultures is still missing. This study will further elucidate to what extent German-Swiss culture in the workplace is as similar to Dutch workplace culture as earlier literature suggested.

Gap 3: No emic studies have given a thick description of the German-Swiss cultural standards by interpreting the cultural values behind the standards.

This study follows the qualitative approach of Thomas (1996) by using CIT to identify the typical behaviour of the Swiss. However, Thomas' description does not distinguish concrete behaviour from underlying cultural logic. Also, his method often results in describing cultural differences in terms of binary oppositions, which are very much like the dimensions used by etic researchers. Hence, the typical Swiss concrete behaviours Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) identified may have been misconstrued. This study also uses Thomas' approach but extends it by including an interpretive part. Hence, apart from describing concrete Swiss behaviours, this study aims to discuss the meaning (the cultural logic) behind these concrete behaviours more rigorously than Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011). By including the cultural logic behind concrete behaviours, thick descriptions can be established of the intercultural interactions between the Dutch and German-Swiss (Geertz, 1973).

1.3 Practical Relevance

Some cultural challenges expatriates may face in bicultural situations are managing conflicts across members' national cultural boundaries, dealing with coordination and control issues, maintaining communication richness, and creating and sustaining team cohesiveness (Hong, 2010). This study provides the reader and businessmen with a better understanding of the cultural differences between the Dutch and German-Swiss from the perspective of a Dutch expat. It shows what a Dutch person can expect when they decide to operate in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. By displaying the cultural standards of the German-Swiss and the cultural logic behind those standards, it can provide Dutch expatriates with more awareness of bicultural situations they may be confronted by. The awareness of how cultural differences are perceived, interpreted, and managed by members from different national cultures is one of the factors that could determine the success or failure of an intercultural interaction and the business (Raju, 2017). This study can lower the barriers that may arise in bicultural situations and increase trust in mutual relationships between the Swiss and Dutch. As a result, it can make bicultural collaborations more efficient. This is key to the efficient and effective operation of organisations.

1.4   Outline of the Thesis

First, the theoretical foundation is given in Chapter 2. After reviewing all relevant literature, the data collection and analysis methodology is described in Chapter 3. Following this, the results collected during the research are presented in Chapter 4, Results. Once the results have been presented, they are compared against existing emic studies on Swiss culture in Chapter 5. In this chapter, the paper also goes over this study's theoretical and practical contributions and its limitations. Additionally, Chapter 5 also gives some recommendations for future research. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn at the end, which provides an answer to the research question.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter starts by explaining the two different approaches in cross-cultural literature. Next, this chapter details Thomas' qualitative approach, where the Critical Incident Technique and the concept of cultural standards are explained. Finally, Swiss cultural standards and Dutch cultural values are examined.

2.1 Research Approaches in Cross-Cultural Literature

Scholars have developed the etic and emic approaches to describe intercultural differences between countries. In the following sections, both approaches are examined more closely.

2.1.1 Etic Approach to (Inter)cultural Research

The etic approach to intercultural differences requires a descriptive system that is equally valid for all cultures and can show the similarities and differences between individual cultures. The standard of comparison is the scale on which the individual levels of the variable under study can be represented. Comparisons do not explain culture but examine the susceptibility of individual actions and thinking to cultural influences. Thus, in the etic approach, culture is seen as a factor of influence which can explain differences in cognition, learning and behaviour (Helfrich, 1999). Every culture can be distinguished from others along various parameters. However, given the variety of existing cultures and the fact that variations may be present within a national culture, it is hard to define a globally applicable concept (Moser et al., 2011).

Several frameworks and theories have been created based on the etic approach to understand cultural differences between several countries. To name a few, frameworks have been introduced by Hall (1966), Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) and Meyer (2014). Among the different frameworks named, the framework of Hofstede (1980) has been one of the most influential contributions to cross-cultural studies (Lu, 2012). For this reason, a closer look will be taken at the cultural differences between the Netherlands and (the German-speaking part of) Switzerland using Hofstede's framework first.

Comparing Dutch and Swiss cultures using Hofstede's dimensions

The most recent version of the Hofstede model for comparing national societies consists of six independent dimensions: power distance, individualism (vs collectivism), masculinity (vs femininity), uncertainty avoidance, long- (vs short-) term orientation, and indulgence (vs restraint). The cultural dimensions of a country are scored on a scale of 0 to 100 (Hofstede,

2011; Hofstede et al., 2010). The scores are based on average values given by IBM employees on questionnaire items (Venaik & Brewer, 2013). Figure 1 shows how the Netherlands and Switzerland score on these six dimensions and the differences (Hofstede Insights, 2022). The Netherlands and Switzerland score quite similarly on most of Hofstede's dimensions. Both the Netherlands and Switzerland have low power distance (38 and 34), are long-term oriented (67 and 74), and are moderately risk averse (53 and 58). It is worth mentioning that the German-speaking part of Switzerland has a lower score than 58, as it is not as risk-averse as its other linguistic regions. Lastly, both countries score relatively high on indulgence (68 and 66). In the case of the dimension individualism, both the Netherlands and Switzerland score relatively high (80 and 68). However, although both countries are individualistic, the Netherlands is far more individualistic than Switzerland.

While the Netherlands and Switzerland scored similarly on the previously mentioned dimensions, this is not the case with the dimension masculinity. According to Hofstede, the Netherlands scores 14 on this dimension and is, therefore, a feminine society. In feminine countries, keeping the life/work balance is essential. Effective managers support their people, and decision-making is achieved through involvement. Managers strive for consensus, and people value equality, solidarity and quality in their professional lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation, and Dutch are known for their long discussions until a consensus has been reached. Switzerland scores 70 in masculinity, meaning the country is highly success-oriented and driven. In Masculine countries, people live to work rather than work to live. Managers are expected to be decisive, and the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance. Conflicts are resolved by fighting them out rather than through reaching a consensus (Hofstede Insights, 2022). However, the description of Swiss culture as more masculine than feminine is contradicted by qualitative studies, which will be discussed later.
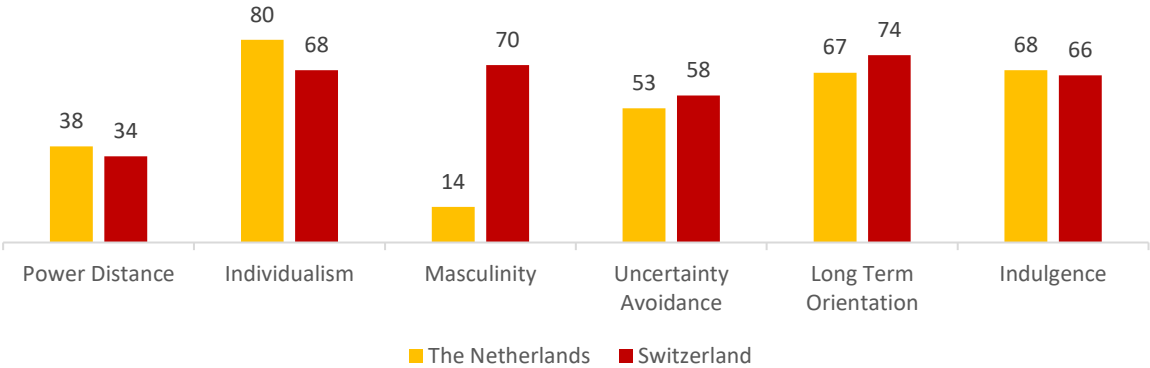
Figure 1: Index Scores of the Netherlands and Switzerland on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2022)

Comparing Dutch and Swiss cultures using Meyer's Country Tool

Hofstede used questionnaire items that reflect cultural dimensions at the national level. His dimensions represent people's attitudes from a specific culture (Venaik & Brewer, 2013). Hence, some attention will also be given to Meyer's taxonomy to provide a more complete picture of the Swiss culture through the etic approach. Her framework represents the behaviours of individuals who belong to a particular culture. Figure 2 compares the Dutch and Swiss cultures using Meyer's framework.

The Netherlands and Switzerland are on similar sides of the scales of 'communicating' (low-context), 'evaluating' (direct negative feedback), 'leading' (egalitarian), 'trusting' (tasked-based), 'disagreeing' (confrontational) and 'scheduling' (linear in time). However, when it comes to the scale 'deciding', Switzerland leans more towards top-down, while the Netherlands is very consensual. This means that in the Netherlands, decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement, while in Switzerland, higher-ups make decisions. Also, regarding the scale persuading, the Swiss lean more towards principles first, while the Dutch more towards application first. Meaning, Swiss individuals first develop the theory or concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion, while the Dutch begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back it up.
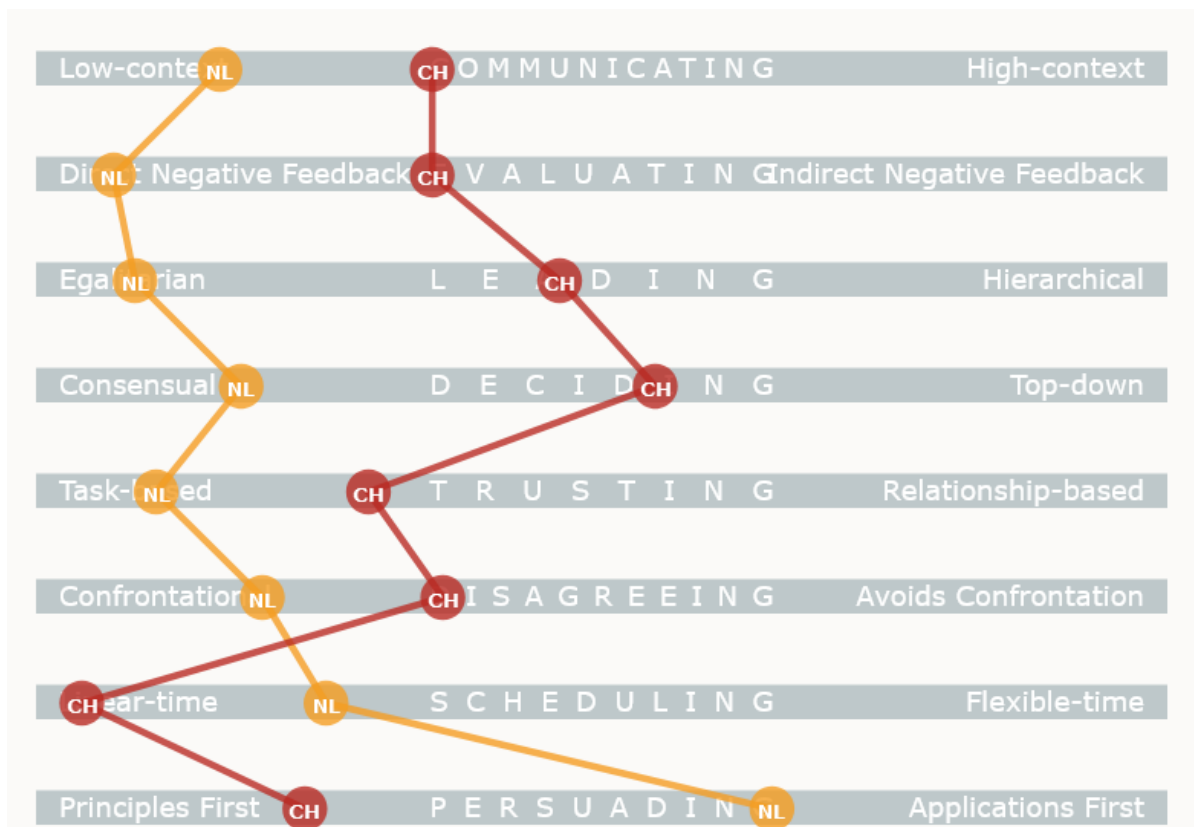
Figure 2: Culture map scales comparing the Netherlands and Switzerland (Meyer, 2014)

Etic approaches assume that all cultures can be compared in terms of generalizable phenomena. However, cross-cultural studies using these types of approaches have received criticism. Studies using the etic approach tend to view culture as a static phenomenon, and they thus ignore the fact that culture can change. Also, researchers of this approach assume that the concept of culture can be objectively studied, while it may be subjective in nature (Lu, 2012). Finally, to mention one last criticism, descriptions of culture using a limited set of dimensions may lead to the impression that these limited set of parameters can capture a culture completely. Yet, all cultures contain elements that defy universal qualifications (Steers et al., 2017). An alternative to the etic approach is the emic approach, which is discussed next.

2.1.2 Emic Approach to (Inter)cultural Research

Contrary to the etic approach, the emic approach to intercultural differences tries to identify culture-specific aspects of concepts and behaviour, which cannot be compared across all cultures. Emic researchers assume that the best way is to understand a culture as an integrated system (Lu, 2012). The emic approach suggests that culture is not an external factor whose impact on an individual must be studied, but culture is more like an integral part of human behaviour. Hence, human behaviour cannot be detached from their cultural setting. They are determined by reasons that are under the acting person's control and must be understood through their perspective. Therefore, the emic approach attempts to reconstruct the experiential world of the individual through an individual's reports and explanations. It is worth mentioning, however, that there are two possible issues related to the emic approach:

1) Systematic bias: arises when individuals misrepresent or misinterpret their behaviour. This is often the case because self-reports tend to be biased by actions' social and personal desirability (Helfrich, 1999).

2) Arbitrariness: involves the subjective status of scientific knowledge (Helfrich, 1999). People tend to respond even if they do not understand a question or answer options. A researcher may interpret the results as "cultural differences" while the findings result from participants' confusion (Hansen & Heu, 2020).

A researcher who utilized the emic approach to study interactions of Franco-Swiss project teams in a German-Swiss company was Chevrier (2002). Through a qualitative interpretive approach, she found that harmonisation of interests, overcoming differences, achieving consensus and working hard are necessary for the Swiss to maintain competitiveness. Nevertheless, the pressure of consensus did not prevent autonomy, as consensus only applied

to a minimum number of decisions which were crucial to the whole group. The Swiss were attached to autonomy and required a clear definition of tasks and responsibilities so everyone could work within their sphere of competence. Following the rules and procedures was also considered very typical of the Swiss. Chevrier (2002) also found that the French and Swiss perceive high technical quality solutions differently. On the one hand, Swiss technical quality means using the best supply and paying a lot of attention to detail and the precision of the workmanship. On the other hand, the French associate quality mostly with the coherence of the chosen solution and emphasises a global approach. The value of a global vision for French engineers means that competence lies more in the ability to establish coherence and correspondence between specific solutions or separate fields. To the French, a 'good solution' is a cleverly solved problem.

This section took a look at the different approaches in cross-cultural literature. Both etic and emic approaches have their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Although cultural differences have often been explained using etic approaches (Fink et al., 2005), this study will use the emic approach to offer a deep look into behavioural patterns in bicultural situations on the German-Swiss work floor from the perspective of Dutch expatriates. In the next section, Thomas' qualitative approach will be discussed in-depth.

2.2   Thomas' Qualitative Approach

Thomas' qualitative approach to culture describes typical behaviours in a country as seen by a foreigner. Thomas (1996) views culture as a system of orientation which provides all members with a sense of belonging and inclusion within a society or group. A system of orientation consists of specific symbols such as language, body language, mimicry, clothing or greeting rituals. Culture influences perceptual processes, thought patterns, judgements, decision-making and action of all members of a given group, as well as individual judgment and decision-making (Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005; Thomas et al., 2010; Weber & Morris, 2010). Additionally, in cultures, human interactions develop through rules of conduct and regulations. Not knowing the rules, or understanding how to apply them, could result in misunderstandings and cultural clashes. These rules constitute a generally accepted mode of behaviour in a given culture, which should be respected and adhered to (Thomas et al., 2010). Two concepts are central in the approach described by Thomas (1996): Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) and cultural standards. Thomas (1996) used the Critical Incident Technique to find out where the cultures of two countries clash. From these 'critical incidents', both countries' conflicting 'cultural

standards' can be deduced. Thomas' approach can be seen as emic, as his qualitative approach describes typical behaviours seen by foreigners.

2.2.1 Critical Incident Technique

The CIT was first introduced by Flanagan (1954) as a procedure for gathering specific important facts concerning behaviour in defined situations. CIT was also regarded as a spin-off from studies in the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. This program was established to develop procedures for selecting and classifying aircrews. One of the first studies carried out in this program was the analysis of the specific reasons why pilots failed to learn how to fly. This study provided the basis for the research program on selecting pilots (Flanagan, 1954).

CIT should be seen as a flexible set of principles that can be changed and adapted to meet the researcher's specific situation. Since its inception, the CIT approach has expanded into many disciplines (Butterfield et al., 2009), including studies on intercultural interactions. The first to include CIT in studies on cultural differences were Fiedler et al. (1971). They collected several stories on cultural clashes between Americans and foreign cultures. These cultural clashes were used to create a 'culture assimilator', a program in which the participant is confronted with 50 situations where cultures clash. The participant must then choose a correct answer from four different interpretation options. If a less accurate interpretation is chosen, the participant receives an extensive explanation of why that answer would not work in that specific situation. The assimilator intended to make the participants interpret situations in a similar manner as the locals. Likewise, Thomas et al. (2010) use the CIT to investigate where different cultures clash. Based on critical incidents, conflicting 'cultural standards' from differing cultures can be deduced.

The question now is, what would qualify as a critical incident in the context of intercultural communication studies? Thomas et al. (2010, pp. 172-173) qualify an incident as critical if it fulfils five criteria: 1) The incident must be an everyday interactive encounter between visitors and members of a given host country. 2) The visitor must experience the situation as conflict-prone and confusing. 3) The cultural aspects inherent in the encounter will probably be misinterpreted by visitors to the host country. 4) With sufficient background knowledge about the host culture, the encounter should lend itself to a culturally appropriate interpretation. 5) The incident should be relevant to visitors' tasks and requirements.

2.2.2 Defining Cultural Standards

Using CIT, the cultural standards of a country can be identified (Thomas, 1996). Thomas et al. (2010) explain that cultural standards can be generally seen as forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behaviour as normal, typical and binding. Someone's unfamiliar behaviour is directed, regulated and judged based on a group's or nation's cultural standards, as these standards provide a regulatory function for handling certain situations and dealing with people. The individual and group-specific ways of applying cultural standards to adjust behaviour can fluctuate within a range of tolerance. If one's behaviour goes beyond this specific tolerance range, the majority will not accept or sanction their behaviour.

It is important to note that cultural standards are in no way indicative of a whole culture, nor can a network of such cultural standards offer a complete insight into what makes up the respective culture entirely. Nevertheless, cultural standards can help guide and collect knowledge about the other-culture orientation system. Additionally, cultural standards can help explain unexpected and unfamiliar behaviour from an interaction partner (Thomas et al., 2010).

2.3   The Dutch and Swiss Culture

To describe the intercultural differences and similarities between the Netherlands and the German-speaking region of Switzerland, this paper discusses Swiss cultural standards found by Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011), and the Dutch cultural values found by Enklaar (2007). Afterwards, the Swiss cultural standards and Dutch cultural values are compared against each other.

2.3.1 Swiss Cultural Standards

Using CIT and the concept of cultural standards, Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) conducted research to create a culture assimilator, a training program for managers, professionals and executives, so they can act appropriately when staying and working in Switzerland. In their research, eight Swiss cultural standards were identified from an Austrian perspective and another eight from the German perspective, which one could face in the work context. The text below goes briefly over the standards found by these authors. Although the German-Swiss cultural standards from the Dutch perspective, which this study tries to identify, will likely differ from those found from the Austrian and German perspective due to cultural differences between the Austrians, Dutch and Germans, it is still worth discussing these standards. Findings from this study can be compared against the standards identified by Brück

(2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) to see if there is alignment. Additionally, a more complete picture of Swiss culture can be illustrated by including several perspectives.

Brück (2002) found eight Swiss cultural standards from the Austrian perspective (see Table 1). These cultural standards are the following:

1. Propensity to efficiency (Streben nach Effizienz): When the Swiss are confronted with inefficiencies, they feel uneasy about not being able to implement possible improvements. They do not like having to tolerate suboptimal conditions when many things could easily be done in a better way.

2. Future Orientation (Zukunftsorientierung): The Swiss proceed in a very planned manner. Plans are worked out in great detail to include all contingencies, making the future more tangible.

3. Pursuit towards order (Ordnungsstreben): Disorder makes Swiss people uncomfortable and must therefore be eliminated as quickly as possible. Once the necessary order is established, work can be done precisely. Additionally, according to this standard, order also means that guidelines are to be adhered to.

4. Group Formation (Gruppenbildung): The Swiss are used to form groups. The composition of these groups reflects the diversity of Swiss society and more or less separates them from one another to ensure the continuity of traditional cultural characteristics.

5. Compliance with rules (Regeltreue): Rules are essential to maintain order in Switzerland. Rules, therefore, make sense and are sensible in principle, and it is also sensible to strictly comply with these rules. A breach of rules must therefore be punished in order not to endanger order.

6. Patriotism (Patriotismus): Questioning Swiss structures, whether political or social, is strongly rejected.

7. Client centricity (Kundenorientierung): Especially in services, the pronounced Swiss politeness and patience are repeatedly mentioned. The Swiss show a lot of courtesy to customers. Nonetheless, a certain distance is maintained when looking after guests.

8. Directness (Direktheit): Even if politeness and patience are important, topics are discussed very clearly. Meetings start immediately, and it is considered good if the meetings are quickly and efficiently concluded.

Table 1: Swiss Cultural Standards (Brück, 2002)

Nr.	Swiss Cultural Standards (German Translation)
1	Propensity towards efficiency (Streben nach Effizienz)
2	Future Orientation (Zukunftsorientierung)
3	Pursuit towards order (Ordnungsstreben)
4	Group Formation (Gruppenbildung)
5	Compliance with rules (Regeltreue)
6	Patriotism (Patriotismus)
7	Client centricity (Kundenorientierung)
8	Directness (Direktheit)

Lechner and Thomas (2011) also identified eight Swiss cultural standards, but from the German perspective (see Table 2). These standards are the following:

1. Consensus orientation (Konsensorientierung): Swiss people try to hold discussions with all participants before holding meetings or making decisions. The majority determines the direction of a decision, but the interests of minorities are taken into account when implementing a decision. Because the Swiss try to take several perspectives into consideration, decision-making takes a lot of time. Priority is given to the reconciliation of interests and avoiding internal conflict.

2. Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch): Swiss German has a higher social prestige than High German. High German is even considered a foreign language by the Swiss. Swiss German is considered a means of demarcation from Germany.

3. Save Face (Gesicht wahren): The Swiss try not to insult others in any circumstances. Criticism is only voiced in private and is formulated very carefully. This is because the Swiss do not wish to destroy the peaceful coexistence between them and others. Therefore, they try to respect and appreciate every person and opinion.

4. Etiquette (Etikette): People are polite towards fellow human beings and when dealing with each other. No orders are given, but pending tasks are communicated in a friendly and neutral manner. Mistakes must not be addressed directly.

5. Restraint (Zurückhaltung): Swiss do not brag about their achievements or possessions. Also, they are friendly towards strangers, but approach strangers with a certain detachment and discretion. This is sometimes mistaken as distrust. However, building close relationships with the Swiss simply takes some time.

6. Appreciation (Wertschätzung): This standard is associated with respect, benevolence and recognition, and is expressed through interest, attention and kindness. Every business conversation starts with an exchange on personal topics. Invitations should not be refused.

7. Mentality on Responsibility (Zuständigkeitsdenken): Activities, responsibilities and tasks are clearly defined for employees. As a result, everyone is responsible only for their clearly defined are of responsibility. Tasks are only processed by the responsible person, and only the responsible person is accountable.

8. Patriotism (Patriotismus): Swiss people have an emotional attachment to their own country and canton. They have a lot of respect and appreciation for Switzerland, its people and its products. Additionally, traditions are highly valued.

Table 2 lists the Swiss cultural standards as perceived by the Germans. The Dutch cultural values are discussed in the next section.

Table 2: Swiss Cultural Standards (Lechner & Thomas, 2011)

Nr.	Swiss Cultural Standards (German Translation)
1	Consensus Orientation (Konsensorientierung)
2	Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch)
3	Save Face (Gesicht wahren)
4	Etiquette (Etikette)
5	Restraint (Zurückhaltung)
6	Appreciation (Wertschätzung)
7	Mentality on Responsibility (Zutständigkeitsdenken)
8	Patriotism (Patriotismus)

2.3.2 Dutch Cultural Values

Sagiv and Schwartz (2022) describe cultural values as shared conceptions of what is good and desirable. Not only do cultural values shape and justify individual and group beliefs, actions and norms, but they also shape the goals and policies of institutions. One's cultural values are not created by oneself but are acquired early on in one's upbringing (Enklaar, 2007; Hofstede, 2011). Hence, cultural values are not easily discussed, nor can outsiders directly observe them.

One's cultural standards are evaluated or explained in terms of one's underlying cultural values, which can be seen as one's central theme or reference, their cultural logic (Enfield, 2000; Leung

& Cohen, 2011). Hence, cultural standards are based on cultural values as well as on traditional modes and rules of behaviour that comply with cultural values. For a complete thick description, the description must include the cultural logic, or the underlying cultural values, behind a concrete behaviour. Through thick descriptions, a person outside a culture is provided with enough context to make sense of a concrete behaviour. On the contrary, thin descriptions are stating facts and describe concrete behaviours (Geertz, 1973). In this study, cultural standards are viewed as concrete behaviours which have to be understood or explained through underlying cultural values, the cultural logic.

The underlying values of the Dutch culture have been studied before by Enklaar (2007). It is essential to explain them, as they influence the perceptions of Dutch expatriates working on the German-Swiss work floor. Enklaar (2007) found that Dutch culture rests on twelve underlying values or ideals. These values influence people's attitudes and behaviours. The first four underlying values originate from the Christian religion. The Dutch share these underlying values with other European countries like Switzerland. However, despite sharing these values with other European countries, it is worth noting that these four values have taken their own "Dutch" shape (Enklaar, 2007).

1. Salvation (Heil): making the right choices that lead to a happy future. One may not be happy about the current situation they are in. Still, the current situation is not the final destination. By making proper decisions, one could achieve a better future. This strongly ties to believing that 'new is good'. Moreover, this value makes the Dutch more likely to sympathise with those who fight and make sacrifices for ideals.

2. Guilt and remission (Zonde & Schuld): recognizing and taking responsibility for mistakes and deeds. Those who make a mistake are responsible and must be punished. People expect those who made a mistake to show remorse and recognize their mistake. It is better to admit one's mistake rather than to stay silent. Apologies will be accepted, and one can be trusted again.

3. Charity (Naastenliefde): helping and supporting those in need. One should not treat others in a way they do not wish to be treated by others. Therefore, it is best to consider others' interests over one's own.

4. Truth (Waarheid): one must be honest even if it hurts, as lying breaks trust. Being honest is more important than being polite. It is better to be critical, and it helps to be open about one's personal life and feelings.

The following five underlying values are also called 'Weberian Values', as these values were made known due to the writings of Max Weber. These five values are also held in some Northern European countries. They are rooted in Protestantism and are shared by all nations with a predominately Protestant majority. However, Enklaar (2007) noted that these values are not only held by those who are protestant.

5. Work (Arbeid): working is good while doing nothing is not. Working hard is seen as something positive, but is must also be done correctly.

6. Order and Neatness (Orde & Netheid): describes the Dutch desire to have order, cleanliness, and rules to avoid confusion and chaos. Time is scarce. Hence, activities need to be completed in a timely fashion, and there are regular hours for activities. Being disorganized and untidy is associated with being irresponsible and antisocial.

7. Utility (Nut): Everything one undertakes must be useful and profitable. Otherwise, it is a waste of resources, such as money or energy. One must be frugal with their resources, especially with money.

8. Reliability (Betrouwbaarheid): One must fulfil their obligations if they have made a promise or agreement. What one says must go along with what they do. Anyone who does not follow through on their promises are untrustworthy. In business, a verbal yes means there is a deal. Because of this value, Dutch people take a verbal message quite literally, while not considering the context.

9. Moderation (Matigheid): One must control themselves. This value indicates that everything must be done in moderation, or things will go wrong. Be patient, keep composure, and do not exaggerate. Out-of-control behaviour is viewed as immature and demonstrates a lack of ability to hold oneself together.

The remaining three values originate from the historical Dutch provinces of Holland and Zeeland. These underlying values have spread to the rest of the country from West-Holland. These three values are typical Dutch values, and the combination of these values differentiates the Dutch from other cultures in the world. Nevertheless, according to Enklaar (2007), Switzerland is one of the few countries that shares these values with the Dutch.

10. Consensus (Overeenstemming): disputes and differing opinions must be settled peacefully. Aggression and violence should not be allowed and should be avoided no matter what. To reach a consensus, the Dutch should consult with one another instead, to maintain a pleasant atmosphere. However, rather than giving in to all of someone

else's demands, a compromise should be made. Keeping a friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid) without any hostility is important.

11. Equality (Gelijkheid): Inequality is unjust. Everyone should be treated equally, and nobody should be favoured over the other. Furthermore, one should not act like they are better than everybody else, as looking down on someone is viewed negatively. Rather than ordering someone around, the Dutch phrase orders in the form of questions.

12. Self-determination (Zelfbeschikking): everyone should be free to make their own decisions and express their opinions, as long as they do not harm others. One should have the ability to take the initiative and have personal freedom, without others interfering.

Table 3 summarizes the Dutch cultural values which have been discussed in this section. In the last section of this chapter, the Dutch cultural values and Swiss cultural standards will be briefly compared against each other.

Table 3: Underlying Values of Dutch Culture (Enklaar, 2007)

Nr.	Underlying Value (Dutch Translation)	Origin
1	Salvation (Heil)	Christianity
2	Guilt & Remission (Zonde & Schuld)	Christianity
3	Charity (Naastenliefde)	Christianity
4	Truth (Waarheid)	Christianity
5	Work (Arbeid)	Protestantism
6	Order & Neatness (Orde & Netheid)	Protestantism
7	Utility (Nut)	Protestantism
8	Reliability (Betrouwbaarheid)	Protestantism
9	Moderation (Matigheid)	Protestantism
10	Consensus (Overeenstemming)	Holland
11	Equality (Gelijkheid)	Holland
12	Self-determination (Zelfbeschikking)	Holland

2.3.3 Comparing the Dutch Values and Swiss Standards

There are similarities between the Dutch values found by Enklaar (2007) and the Swiss cultural standards found by Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011). For example, both the Dutch and Swiss value order (Brück, 2002; Enklaar, 2007) and reaching consensus with one another

(Enklaar, 2007; Lechner & Thomas, 2011). However, Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) may have misinterpreted certain concrete behaviours, as Thomas' approach does not separate concrete behaviours from underlying cultural logic, referring to both as 'cultural standards'. This results in a lack of conceptual clarity and does not meet the requirements of thick descriptions as described by Geertz (1973), as simply observing and describing behaviour from the outside leads to thin descriptions instead.

For example, when looking at the definitions of the Swiss cultural standards "Etiquette" (One has to be polite towards others; pending tasks are communicated in a friendly and neutral manner) and part of "Restraint" (One must not brag about their achievements or possessions), they are somewhat similar to the Dutch cultural value "Equality": Acting like someone is better than others or looking down on someone else is viewed negatively. Also, rather than ordering someone around, the Dutch phrase orders in the form of questions. Besides, the Swiss cultural standard termed "Save Face" seems strange, as this is a cultural practice often associated with Asia. When looking at the definition of "Save Face" (Criticism is only voiced in private and is formulated very carefully, so the peaceful coexistence is not destroyed) given by Lechner and Thomas (2011), the Swiss concrete behaviour seems more associated with conflict avoidance. Conflict avoidance can be found in the Dutch value "Consensus".

This chapter looked at the two approaches in cross-cultural research and discussed various models for cultural comparison. Hofstede Insights (2022) described the Dutch culture as feminine while viewing the Swiss culture as very masculine. However, this is contradicted by emic studies, which found that seeking consensus is critical in Swiss culture (Chevrier, 2002; Lechner & Thomas, 2011). Thomas' approach, using CIT and his concept of cultural standards, offers a better empirically grounded description of Swiss behaviours than the interpretative approach by Chevrier (2002). However, if this study were to exactly follow Thomas' approach, it may lead to thin descriptions of the Swiss culture from a Dutch perspective. Therefore, this study will use Thomas' approach and extend it by including an interpretive part. Hence, this study will separately explain the cultural logic underlying the Swiss concrete behaviours to provide thick descriptions of the German-Swiss culture. The next chapter will go into this study's research methodology.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the research method used to conduct the study. Additionally, this chapter explains other considerations regarding the chosen methods.

3.1 Research Design

This research focusses on concrete situations on the work floor, in which the Dutch experience communication and collaboration issues due to cultural differences with the German-Swiss. The first aim of this study is to establish German-Swiss cultural standards from a Dutch point of view. To achieve this, an inductive qualitative (emic) research approach was utilized.

Although quantitative approaches offer high presentiveness, they often fail to provide an in-depth explanation behind certain phenomena or experiences (Queirós et al., 2017). On the other hand, the qualitative research approach is preferred in cross-cultural research, as it focuses on understanding people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions (Enklaar, 2007; Pathak et al., 2013). In other words, the qualitative research approach can make sense of a complex reality and find the meaning behind actions in a given context (Queirós et al., 2017). Hence, using a qualitative approach can elucidate things which are not visible on the surface, such as the cultural logic underlying the cultural standards. When the cultural logic behind concrete behaviours are identified, the underlying Swiss cultural values can be compared to the Dutch cultural values. This will aid in making sense of the cultural differences the Dutch perceive in the German-speaking region of Switzerland.

The inductive approach allows new meanings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data (Thomas, 2003). Nevertheless, using an inductive approach does not mean a researcher should disregard existing theories when formulating their research question and objectives or identifying concepts they wish to explore (Saunders et al., 2009). Contrarily to the inductive approach, with a deductive approach, key themes can be obscured, reframed or left invisible because of the preconceptions in the data collection and data analysis procedures (Thomas, 2003).

To identify the German-Swiss cultural standards, the next section covers the data collection method, in which the sample size and requirements are tackled, as well as the research procedure. Once these have been considered, the data analysis method is explored. Lastly, after the data has been analysed, the results need to be checked by experts. Figure 3 visualizes how the research design is organized.
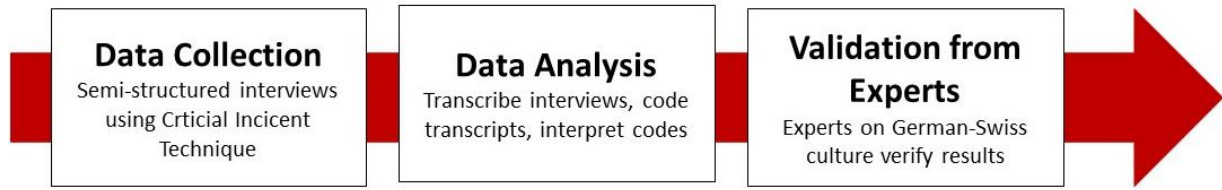
Figure 3: Visual Representation of the Research Design

3.2 Data Collection Method

Research with human subjects can take many different forms. During scientific research that depends on the participation of humans to generate data for further analysis, the interests of the participants may conflict with the interests of the researcher and the value of science as a whole. Therefore, a careful ethical assessment is necessary. Before the start of the data collection, this study was submitted to the Ethics Committee BMS from the University of Twente for ethical review. After careful consideration by the Ethics Committee BMS, this study was approved by the commission. Once the ethical approval was granted, the researcher began looking for participants and collecting data.

3.2.1 Sample Size and Requirements

Through the social media platform Facebook, the researcher reached out to several potential interviewees, and purposeful sampling was applied. Purposeful sampling was used because it allows the selection of information-rich cases to study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues related to the purpose of a study. Studying information-rich cases gives insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002).

Interviewees had to meet the following requirements. In the first place, only interview participants who have worked in the German region of Switzerland for at least six months were selected (see Figure 12 in Appendix A for the geographical distribution of languages). This is because the "honeymoon phase" of staying in a foreign country is usually over after six months. During the "honeymoon phase", expatriates often report unrealistically positive appraisals of their environment. Once the honeymoon phase is over, expatriates become more aware of the cultural differences between their country of origin and the country they are currently operating (Cieri et al., 1991). As a second requirement, the Dutch interviewees had to be wholly integrated into a team with Swiss colleagues, collaborating with them regularly. This was necessary to

ensure that the Dutch expatriates have had multiple interactions with the Swiss culture and thus may have had the opportunity to discover any cultural differences.

In qualitative studies, it is crucial that data saturation is achieved so that the emerging theory is comprehensive and well-grounded in data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). When one fails to reach data saturation, it can hamper content validity. Data saturation is reached when no new additional information, themes or codes can be discovered from conducting more interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that no one-size-fits-all method exists to reach data saturation, as it depends on the study design. Based on the experience of other researchers working with CIT, it was found that from around eleven interviews onwards, data saturation occurs (Thesing, 2016).

To ensure sufficient data saturation, at least sixteen Dutch expatriates who are living and working in the German region of Switzerland, had to be interviewed. However, because most initial participants were from the same canton (Zürich), the researcher decided to interview an additional participant who works and lives in a canton that had not been included yet. This was done to check if new information could be found in another canton. Yet, no new information was found. Hence, the researcher concluded that data saturation had already been reached. In the end, seventeen Dutch expatriates were thus interviewed.

The researcher tried to find participants with varying demographic characteristics in aspects such as gender, age, occupation, and the duration of their stay in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Due to purposeful sampling, participants were already chosen according to some common criteria. The higher the degree of homogeneity among the participant regarding their experiences, the sooner data saturation can be achieved (Guest, 2006). Hence, if the sample participants also shared similarities in demographic traits, those aspects may impact the results by reaching data saturation far quicker. This would mean that some cultural standards could be left undiscovered, as well as some underlying cultural values. In the end, out of the seventeen interviewees, six were female and eleven were male. The participants came from eight different cantons, from which the majority were from the canton Zürich.

When all requirements were met, interviews were conducted through a video call service such as Zoom or Teams from February until April in the year 2023. Table 4 presents the demographic information of the selected interviewees. Next, the following section dives into the study's research procedure.

Table 4: Interviewees' Characteristics

Nr.	Gender	Age	Years working in Switzerland	Canton	Current Position
1	M	44	21	Luzern	Sales manager
2	F	47	28	Luzern	Director & translator
3	M	34	9	Zürich	Risk consultant
4	F	55	14	St. Gallen	Career counsellor
5	F	33	1.5	Zürich	Architect
6	M	34	2	Zürich	Strategy manager
7	M	25	2.5	Zürich	Physiotherapist
8	M	31	4.5	Zürich	Sales engineer
9	F	45	8	Zürich	Project deployment leader
10	M	59	33	Zürich	Event organiser
11	M	41	5.5	Zug	User access coordinator
12	M	35	8	Basel	Organizational change manager
13	M	30	1.5	Bern	Winter sport employee
14	F	64	35	Bern	Social worker
15	M	64	8	Bern	Director
16	F	60	38	Obwalden	Department head in care home
17	M	43	1.5	Wallis	Electrician

3.2.2 Research Procedure

The interviews were not held in focus groups, as the presence of other participants could have inhibited a respondent and influenced how they formulate their responses (Acocella, 2012). Therefore, to collect the data related to the study, interviews were held in a 1-on-1 setting. The Dutch questionnaire and its English translation can be found in Appendix B. Interviews can be classified according to their degree of structure: they can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Structured interviews are very inflexible but provide much guidance. On the contrary, unstructured interviews are very flexible but highly inconsistent. Hence, unstructured interviews could be subject to various errors (Azarpazhooh et al., 2008). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research, as they offered a middle ground. The semi-structured interview provides guidance through a questionnaire but also gives the flexibility to ask other questions for elaboration. Moreover, these types of interviews establish participants' views on an experience related to the research topic (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Before the interviews were held, interviewees were asked for their written consent (see Appendix C) to be recorded. In addition, interviewees were reminded at the beginning of the interview that the interviews were recorded. The interviewees were interviewed in their native language, which is Dutch. Through a standard questionnaire with open questions, the participants were asked about their contact and experiences with the Swiss, and to provide typical examples (critical incidents) which clearly showed the cultural differences between the Dutch and Swiss. The aim was to collect as many detailed scenarios of typical Swiss behaviour as possible. Successful interviews will contain detailed accounts of what occurred on the job site. Therefore, if interviewees made generalized statements or went from one instance to the next without being specific, the researcher inquired for more elaboration.

Each interview lasted around an hour. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed using Amberscript, which converts audio into text. When interviews were held through Teams, then the interviews were transcribed and recorded using Teams as well. Because transcript programs can make transcribing errors, the transcripts were reviewed and adjusted where necessary. This is because when transcribing audio, it is crucial that the tape is transcribed exactly word-for-word and thus not paraphrased (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Once the transcripts had been improved, quotes which will be used for the analysis were retrieved and translated from Dutch into English. After this was done, the next step was to analyse the texts and quotes of the interviewees.

3.3   Data Analysis Method

As mentioned previously, the data was obtained through interviewing Dutch expatriates living and working in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. After having collected the data, the data was analysed through an inductive qualitative research approach. CIT was used as a qualitative research method, meaning that as many detailed critical incidents (stories) as possible were collected through the interviews. After the interviews were transcribed, the Thematic Analysis (TA) approach was used to analyse the data.

TA is an approach to identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning, also known as themes, within and across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe six different phases in the TA. These phases are:

1) Become familiar with the obtained data by transcribing audio and reading the transcripts.
2) Systematically generate initial codes using the quotes and words from participants.

3) Search second-order and third-order themes by checking the codes on similar features.

4) Review the themes and compare them to the extracted codes and the entire data set.

5) Define and name the different themes.

6) Produce a report by analysing data, selecting compelling examples supporting the codes and themes, and provide an answer to the research question.

It is important to note that the TA approach is not linear but more a recursive process: a researcher can move back and forth between phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To bring "qualitative rigor" to the conduct and presentation of this inductive research, this study uses first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions from Gioia et al. (2013) to show how the outcomes are grounded in the data. The second phase of TA, described by Braun and Clarke (2006), can be seen as the formation of first-order concepts; the third phase of TA, described by Braun and Clarke (2006), can be viewed as the formation of second-order themes. Lastly, the creation of aggregate dimensions by Gioia et al. (2013) is comparable to the fifth phase of TA described by Braun and Clarke (2006) (see Figure 4).

The first-order concepts are paraphrased quotes from the participants; the second-order themes are the "cultural standards" that can be linked to these paraphrased quotes; and the aggregate dimensions are the cultural values underlying these cultural standards. In the next section, the validation of the results by experts is discussed.
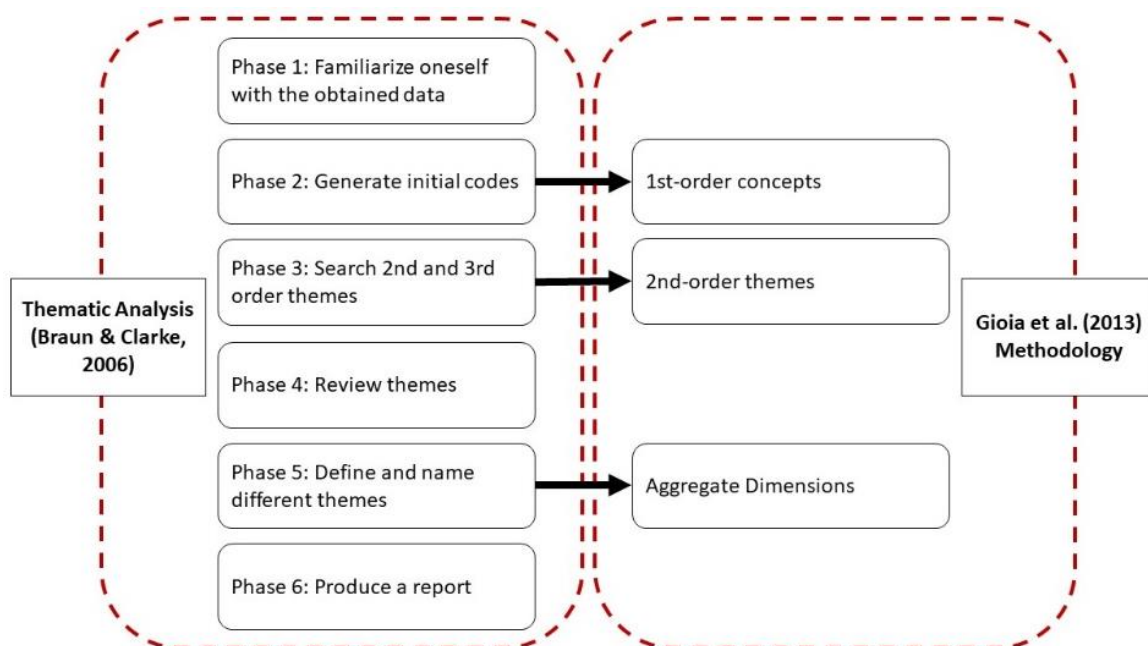
Figure 4: Own Elaboration on Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and Gioia et al. (2013) Methodology

3.4 Validation from Experts

A researcher's preconceptions, prior knowledge and biases can influence decisions and actions throughout the qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2019). Therefore, the results had to be presented to experts on Swiss culture to avoid misrepresenting the Swiss cultural standards due to the researcher's preconceptions, prior knowledge and biases. Experts should be able to determine whether the results made sense, thereby increasing the study's credibility (Nyumba et al., 2018). The validation from experts can eliminate the cultural bias of the interviewees and the researcher, producing more interpersonally comparable results (Fink et al., 2005).

The experts are two Swiss nationals who, through their upbringing in Switzerland, are experts in their own culture. As noted before, Thomas (1996) views culture as a system of orientation. The Swiss use their system of orientation to interpret and act upon the situations they encounter. Although not every Swiss may be aware of their cultural values, it can be assumed that they know typical Swiss behaviour. Hence, it stands to reason that the feedback given by the Swiss expert makes the critical incidents and cultural standards found from the data analysis concrete.

The experts have worked in both the Netherlands and the German-speaking region of Switzerland. They, therefore, know the Swiss and Dutch culture adequately, and were able to check if the analysis was reliable and correct, and if cultural standards and underlying values were not misunderstood or misinterpreted. Feedback from the experts was used to enhance the quality and reliability of the research. Through the experts' feedback, the description of the cultural standards were completed and refined.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the study's findings. First, brief descriptions of the Swiss cultural standards that were identified during this study are given, along with quotes obtained from the interviews and commentary on the opposing Dutch perspective. Then, the Swiss cultural standards are grouped together by the cultural value that explains the concrete behaviours of the Swiss from the German region of Switzerland, observed by Dutch interviewees.

4.1 Cultural Standards

Through an in-depth analysis of the interviews and evaluation from two experts on Swiss culture, eighteen German-Swiss cultural standards were identified. These cultural standards are summarised in Table 5. When several interviewees mention a particular behaviour, it is more likely to be a 'typical' Swiss behaviour. If less than three interviewees mentioned certain behaviours, the behaviour is not included as a cultural standard, as they are not considered "typical behaviour."

Table 5: Swiss Cultural Standards

Nr.	Standard	Explanation	Frequency
1	Sticking to rules and procedures	Meticulously following the existing rules and procedures.	14
2	Indirect Feedback	Giving criticism through indirect messages, through other persons or departments, or at a later moment	13
3	Reticence	One does not reveal their thoughts or feelings readily. They do not easily talk about themselves, and neither do they want to draw attention.	12
4	Camaraderie	A feeling of trust and friendship among a group of people who have known each other for a long time or gone through some experience together.	12
5	Formality	One must stay formal and polite towards colleagues and clients.	10
6	Gründlichkeit (Thoroughness)	Tasks are completed with regard to every detail. Great pains are taken to do something carefully and thoroughly.	10
7	Confrontation Avoidance	Withdrawing from conflict, avoiding conflict or preventing a conflict from occurring.	10
8	Social and Civic Responsibility	The goal is to help shape society in a positive way, by keeping an eye on each other to ensure that rules are being followed.	10
9	Fachkompetenz (Expertise)	Employees are expected to be experts in their field.	9

Nr.	Standard	Explanation	Frequency
10	Folgsamkeit (Obedience)	Instructions from higher levels are followed without question.	9
11	Pünktlichkeit (Punctuality)	People proceed according to plan and being punctual is important.	9
12	Consensual Decision-making	All relevant stakeholders have to be informed and consulted about an idea before implementing it.	6
13	Standoffish with Strangers	Not amicable towards strangers, especially those that are obviously not part of the community	6
14	Zuständigkeit (Responsibility)	One should work on their own tasks, and not cross boundaries.	5
15	Separation of Living Spheres	Strong separation of private and professional life.	5
16	Modesty	One does not call attention to their successes.	4
17	Leistung (Performance)	Dedication to one's work and commitment to reach high performance.	4
18	Quality-conscious	The desire to strive towards or achieve the highest possible quality.	3

Detailed descriptions of Swiss cultural standards from a Dutch perspective can be found below. A neutral description of the standard is first provided for each cultural standard. Next, a few quotations from the interviews are given, which illustrate the critical incidents where this cultural standard is involved. Finally, each section ends with the Dutch perspective on the Swiss cultural standard, explaining why Dutch behaviour would clash with the Swiss cultural standard using Dutch cultural values found by Enklaar (2007).

Sticking to Rules and Procedures

The Swiss meticulously adhere to the rules that have been set up for them. Additionally, if there are procedures for work processes, the Swiss tend to follow every step of the procedure in the proper order. Rules and procedures provide order. They ensure that risks can be minimized and high quality can be achieved. Hence, rules and procedures must be adhered to. If one does not stick to the rules, one may face consequences. When all steps of procedures are not performed as they should, unexpected things may happen. The Swiss may be less willing to make changes in existing procedures, because they know their existing procedures work, but are not sure if the same or better results can be achieved by adopting new procedures.

> *"At one point we had to decide to replace a certain system we were using for time management. **There were many questions on whether the replacement was necessary from consultants working for the company.** Nevertheless, we had to, because the system we used was no longer supported. This was because we no longer extended our license. **They didn't want to replace the system because it worked anyway.** Still, I said:*

'If it doesn't work anymore, then we won't have any support because we aren't paying for it anymore.' So, to me, it seemed pretty clear: We have to do something, we have to change it." – Interviewee 12

*"When a Swiss colleague went up to me with a new assignment, **he told me: 'You have to make it this and that way, and do it through this and that.'** I then told him: 'That's actually dumb what you are telling me, **I want to make it so and so, so it will go much faster and also look much better."** But, at that moment when I am still saying all of that, my colleague is already talking over me: **'No, we want it so and so.'** To that I think: Just let me finish before you make a judgment about whether what I say is good or not."* – Interviewee 17

There are also rules and procedures in the Netherlands that apply to all citizens. However, the Dutch follow the rules and procedures less rigorously than the Swiss. Moreover, not only do the Dutch question the validity of rules in certain situations, but also the validity of steps within procedures. According to the Dutch value of "Self-determination", people should be able to make their own choices as long as it does not harm others. Therefore, a small rule can be broken when the work benefits from it and there are no negative consequences. Another value that plays a role in Dutch behaviour is "Utility". Everything that the Dutch do must be useful, and must save resources. Hence, a goal must be achieved in the most efficient and least time-consuming manner. The Dutch are more used to giving their own interpretation to their job instead of working according to fixed structures and processes.

Indirect Feedback

In the Swiss workplace, feedback is given in an indirect manner, especially when it comes to criticism. Swiss comment on other person's work very politely and respectfully, roughly indicating where the problem lies but not pointing exactly towards the mistake. Additionally, a Swiss colleague could bring up a past mistake much later on another occasion. Directly pointing at one's mistakes may be understood as questioning somebody's expertise[1] or viewed as a personal attack[2].

---

[1] According to the first expert, the Swiss may be reluctant to give direct feedback due to their "Zuständigkeit": Responsibility. Everyone has their own responsibilities, and the Swiss may feel it is not their place to give feedback on something outside their "Zuständigkeit", as they may lack the expertise on the matter at hand.

[2] According to the second expert, the Swiss may find it rude when someone gives direct feedback, as this comes across as too personal and diminishes the qualities of the other employee. Such feedback may be given by a supervisor or manager, but should not be given by a colleague from the same level.

"Once I had mastered the language a bit, people had become much more open. I did tell them: 'If I make mistakes, please correct me, or I'll never learn the language.' They thought that was really strange because no one had ever asked them something like this before." – Interviewee 2

"If I tell someone in the Netherlands as a physiotherapist: 'Well, we have this and this problem, then you have to satisfy these requirements. I expect you to do this and that, and then we will achieve that result.' The patient then says: 'Fine.' So I give someone a set assignment to take home. He or she will come back one day, and then I ask them: 'Show me what you have done,' However, he or she says: 'I forgot.' Then I know, someone hasn't done the exercises, so I ask them: 'Well, what do you want to achieve? What are you here for anyway?' If I say the exact same thing to a Swiss patient, they don't receive it well at all." – Interviewee 7

"Usually, they don't tell me if I'm doing something wrong or have misunderstood something. They usually keep it to themselves for a bit, and then you hear it from another colleague, two to three weeks later. By that time, I would have completely forgotten about the incident. I then think to myself: They should have said so right away." – Interviewee 17

Giving objective and straight feedback is the standard in the Dutch workplace and private sphere. It can be perceived as harsh, but it does provide clarity on how the work should be done, leading to a better performance much faster. This is the result of the Dutch value "Truth", where being honest is more important than being polite. Likewise, the Dutchmen prefer getting a truthful assessment of their work and exactly knowing what is expected from them. Hence, the Dutch may find the Swiss way of giving feedback vague, leaving them wondering what they did wrong. Moreover, because the Dutch are more used to receiving direct feedback, they may miss the indirect messages from the Swiss. Therefore, it may take a while before the Dutch are aware of their mistake. When a Dutch employee is the one who has to give feedback to a Swiss colleague, giving feedback in the Swiss way may be seen as cumbersome and time-consuming, which goes against the value of "Utility".

Reticence

The Swiss do not like to draw attention to themselves, preferring to stay in the background rather than being under the limelight. They are honest but do not readily express their thoughts, opinions, feelings or personal matters. Instead, the Swiss are more inclined to keep these matters

to themselves or wait before expressing what is on their mind, even when they are close with their counterpart. When a Swiss employee holds a strong opinion or is confident that his or her opinion is correct, they will express it. However, when they are uncertain, or if they agree with what has been said beforehand, they tend to say nothing at all.

> *"When my boss asks in a team meeting: 'What do you think of that?' **Then a Swiss will not be the first to give his or her opinion.** They first wait until 4 or 5 people have said something, and then the Swiss, if they want to say anything at all, build on those opinions. 'I share the opinion of ...' But even if they had a completely different opinion, they wouldn't say: 'I don't agree with this at all. I really see that very differently.' No, the Swiss will then quickly look for commonality, so even if it is only 1% where that person agrees, they would then use it to very carefully add something to it."* – Interviewee 4

> *"**The Dutch are much more direct and much more open**. In addition, there are fewer taboo themes, and here there are really a lot of things that you just don't talk about, even when you get to know each other a little better. For example, you don't talk about your salary; if someone is sick, you don't immediately ask: 'So, what do you have?' I believe the Swiss are much more reserved. **You never feel, or don't feel for a long time, that you really know someone**. Of course, they are honest, but you always have that kind of feeling: **There's something else they just don't say**."* – Interviewee 10

> *"The boss was with a number of analysts, they were standing around a whiteboard. Someone from that group had to be appointed to speak or present something for just about a minute. What you saw, was **those Swiss almost trying to hide so they did not have to speak in front of the others**. That was really interesting, **because it's not that they don't have self-confidence**. They often know things better, and they often do everything very well."* – Interviewee 11

Dutchmen are very direct and open. Due to the Dutch value "Self-determination", they say directly what is on their mind and communicate their opinion or feelings on a topic. Giving one's opinion and challenging the status quo is not frowned upon by the Dutch. On the contrary, Dutchmen may feel repressed if they cannot speak their mind, as it is crucial to have discussions to find the best solution to an issue. Likewise, the Dutch expect everyone to express their opinion. When one does not express any opinion, a Dutchmen may quickly start wondering if the other person does not understand the topic or is not seriously partaking in the matter.

Camaraderie

The Swiss have strong personal relationships with friends they grew up with or met through associations or sports clubs. It takes time to build a friendship with a Swiss person and to become part of their inner circle. Nevertheless, once the friendship is built, it is strong and profound. If a Swiss meets a new person, such as a new colleague, the Swiss may appear to be very reserved or distant. They are less likely to engage in small talk or discuss personal matters at work[3]. However, as the Swiss and the new person go through many shared experiences at work, clubs or other associations, trust is built and the Swiss will become more open. It is worth mentioning that the Swiss prefer to speak Swiss German over High German. If one can speak Swiss German, it can be viewed as sympathetic[4].

> *"If you want to have more social contacts, you have to join the fire brigade or a sports club. Everyone is open there and you will be warmly welcomed. But if you just go and live somewhere and then expect those Swiss to automatically come to you, that is not the case, they are a bit stiff and more reserved. I also notice when I go back to the Netherlands, while I wait at the bus stop, someone may suddenly start chatting. Well, that never happens in Switzerland. Or you walk across the market and then a complete stranger tells you something, that never happens in Switzerland. That is one of the charms of the Netherlands. **Building relationships does take time**, they are quite closed. It takes longer because at first **it's harder to get in as a stranger**. But if you just sit in between and you have their trust, then it is also much deeper than in the Netherlands. In Switzerland, **friendships are less superficial**."* – Interviewee 1

> *"When new Swiss colleagues arrive, **I have no contact with them at first**, or only quite formally via email. But then somehow their SAP system crashes, and then we have to meet each other anyway, where I can do something good that benefits the other person. And then you often notice that communication is a bit looser and suddenly they say more than just 'hello' at the coffee machine. So I notice that **you often need something, a story together, to come out stronger**."* – Interviewee 11

---

[3] According to the first expert, discussing personal matters, such as illnesses or other issues, are intimate topics which should only be discussed with close friends or family members. The Swiss do not want to bother or confront others with personal issues that do not involve or concern them.

[4] Some Dutch interviewees had the feeling it is easier to get into the inner circle of the Swiss if they are able to speak Swiss German. According to the first expert, being able to speak Swiss German does not necessarily make it easier to make friends. When a Dutch person tries to learn Swiss German, it may be viewed as sympathetic. However, when a German tries to speak Swiss German, it may be seen as the German trying to infringe on the Swiss dialect.

> *"When I didn't live here for that long, I was like, **let's chat a bit with my colleagues**, and I noticed right away **that they weren't really that open to connection**. I was also here at first only for 6 months. And then you immediately notice that they probably thought: 'Okay, you are here for 6 months, so you won't be of much use to us, because you're going to leave again in 6 months.' So yeah, that didn't really help connecting with Swiss."* – Interviewee 12

Although making friends in the Netherlands is not necessarily easier, the Dutch are often perceived as open and welcoming. The Dutch strive for "Gezelligheid" (a friendly atmosphere) in every situation, including work. They engage in small talk with colleagues when waiting in front of the elevator, at the coffee machine or while waiting for others to arrive for a meeting, even if they do not know the other party very well. Likewise, the Dutch engage in small talk with strangers while waiting at a bus stop or while waiting in a queue at a supermarket. This breaks the ice and contributes to a pleasant, amicable and conflict-free atmosphere inspired by the value "Consensus".

Formality

For the Swiss, it is important, especially in a business context, to behave in a polite manner towards each other as a sign of respect. They use formal language to create a respectful distance. The Swiss first address each other with "Sie" instead of "Du", especially when talking to a superior or older colleague[5], and refer to each other by their surnames. The formal addressing continues until the superior or colleague gives permission to use their first name and say "Du" instead of "Sie". Whether at business or social meetings, it is important to shake everyone's hands and greet them using their name to show one's respect for the other person.

> *"**They always start with "Sie", and always call your last name neatly and shake your hand at the beginning**. In retrospect, I really like this about the Swiss. For example, the Swiss will always say at the end of the telephone conversation: 'Goodbye, Frau [Name]' It always makes me wonder: how did you remember my name? That is something that is very important: **always mention the name of the person at the end**."* – Interviewee 4

---

[5] According to the experts, this may depend on the region, industry or company at which someone works. From the experience of the first expert, she referred to her superiors and older colleagues with "Du" rather quickly. The second expert has worked at international companies in Switzerland, where colleagues quickly refer to each other and their superiors with "Du" as well. She did note, however, that at Swiss SMEs, formal speech is likely to be stricter, where an employee has to refer to their superiors and older colleagues with "Sie" instead.

*"I had more social contact with my colleagues in the Netherlands, but **here you are more professional with your colleagues**. I often make pretty harsh jokes, and sometimes my colleagues are shocked by the jokes I make. But in the end, after some time we can laugh about it."* – Interviewee 17

The Dutch use formal and polite language when they meet someone for the first time, or when a Dutch person communicates with a person of superior position or age. Oftentimes, however, the Dutch will quickly shift to using the informal address (jij) instead. The distance produced by formal and polite communication is for many Dutch uncomfortable and does not align with the Dutch ideal of wanting to create a pleasant and amicable atmosphere in the workplace: "Gezelligheid". This ideal demands that everyone treats each other in a friendly manner. Furthermore, according to the Dutch value "Equality", everyone is equal and should be treated similarly. Therefore, a Dutch superior may instead try concealing rank differences by asking subordinates to talk informally. Likewise, older Dutchmen who dislike the emphasis on their age may prefer to be addressed informally as well.

Gründlichkeit (Thoroughness)

In their work, the Swiss carry out their tasks and responsibilities in a careful and thorough manner so that nothing unexpected happens. For example, Swiss employees often prepare well for their meetings. If they wish to express their opinion during a meeting, they will have studied the matter extensively and prepared their findings to present. Furthermore, if a Swiss employee says they can do something, one can trust that the Swiss employee will keep their word and complete the task. At the same time, if a Swiss employee is uncertain whether they can complete a task, they will refrain from making any promises. Tasks need to be performed thoroughly, as other colleagues should be able to trust that tasks are delivered complete and well.

*"The Swiss actually **work very precisely, very accurately**. Can't say that the Dutch don't do that, but the Dutch are maybe sometimes a bit like: 'Well, it will be fine.' If we get an assignment or something like that from a Swiss client, they often want to know how much our service will cost. They want to have a certain certainty that they can pay for it or something. Of course, it also depends on whether I work for private clients or whether I work for a company. There are also differences there. But when it comes to private clients, they often want to know everything. 'Will it cost that much? It must not become more expensive!' Then you really have to say: 'No, it won't be more expensive'. They want to know everything very precisely, simply because **they do not want to experience any surprises**."* – Interviewee 2

*"We have a lot of pitches. You go to a customer and explain what we can do. But my colleague doesn't really get through to them. I would just do it very differently. I would just try to sell something that we might not even be able to do, purely because I just have a Dutch mentality of "Fake it till you make it". You just have to sell it. Anyway, he's too honest, and he's like: **'If we can't do that, then we shouldn't say it.'**"* – Interviewee 3

*"A Dutchman will quickly think: 'Although I haven't done this before yet, it's going to be all right,'. While in Switzerland, **work is handled with a bit more care in general**. If a Swiss person says: 'Yes, I can do this', by the rule, you know for sure that this person can do it."* – Interviewee 6

Like the Swiss, the Dutch prefer order and structure. Due to the Dutch value "Order and Neatness", the Dutch value order, cleanliness, and rules to avoid confusion and chaos. Activities are planned and organized, as being disorganized is associated with being irresponsible. Still, the value "Utility" often precedes the value "Order & Neatness". Therefore, the Dutch do not make very detailed plans or preparations because this allows them to adjust course when necessary. Additionally, because the Dutch value "Utility", they may work quite fast in comparison to their Swiss counterpart. However, because the Dutch work fast, their work may contain some mistakes. From the Dutch point of view, the Swiss are very well-organized, even more than the Dutch themselves. Hence, the Dutch perceive the Swiss as very reliable.

Confrontation Avoidance

When there is a disagreement between parties, the Swiss attempt to mediate the situation by calling in intervention from another party. For example, when a Swiss employee is displeased with a colleague, they may not express this directly to the person in question. Instead, the Swiss employee may express their displeasure to another person, such as a higher-up or co-worker, or not mention their displeasure at all. Likewise, when the Swiss witness their neighbours possibly overstepping the rules, they are more likely to call law enforcement to intervene rather than confront their neighbours directly themselves.

*"If we rent out a rental ski to someone, we have to scan it in the computer. However, I notice that sometimes a colleague has not done that properly or has scanned it incorrectly. Instead of the manager telling that employee: 'Can you do it properly next time?', **he will growl a little to himself but not confront his employee with it**."* – Interviewee 13

*"Well, I've had this manager once, at another workplace and years ago. **She never told me she had trouble with me.** Years later, I was working somewhere else, and one person I worked with knew my former supervisor. That person said to me at one point: 'The collaboration between you and that manager wasn't always that great.' I said: 'Oh, is that so? I hear this a little bit too late.'"* – Interviewee 14

The Dutch are very direct and straightforward, which is an influence of the Dutch value "Truth". According to this value, one must be honest even if it hurts, as honesty is more important than being polite. While "Truth" is also important for the Swiss, they may feel inhibited to confront others with it, afraid it would be considered impolite, thus disturbing the peaceful atmosphere. The value "Utility" plays a role here as well. Dutch people would rather directly confront another person than convey their message through a third party, as doing it directly goes much faster. One must be frugal with their resources, including time.

Social and Civic Responsibility

In Switzerland, there is a strong desire to help shape society in a positive way. Social control, especially in private life, is very high among the Swiss. The Swiss expect everyone to abide by the rules. However, if one deviates from the rules, they should be held accountable. The community keeps an eye on each other and feels responsible for monitoring and improving the behaviour of others when necessary. They may confront those who break the rules directly, or go through higher authority or law enforcement.

*"You have special garbage bags here. With those bags, you pay directly, when you buy those bags, for waste disposal instead of that being in your tax. Thus, this also means: if you create more waste, you have to pay more. The moment you just throw away a normal black waste bag, it is opened, and personal things are searched for. If they know that that garbage bag is yours, you will also get a hefty fine for it, or your landlord will be in front of your door. Anyhow, **this is being done collectively**. Try to implement that in the Netherlands. How many people are going to listen to it?"* – Interviewee 6

"We were in the van with a number of colleagues, including a few Italians. We were driving to a hotel for a team event, but a road was blocked off. There was a one-way road, but not on the side we came from, so we actually had to drive around it for miles, while the hotel was only 200 metres away. Of course, there was almost no one on the street at all. It's Switzerland, it's quiet, and there was nothing to do there. So one of the Italian colleagues said, 'Why don't you just cross the road? Just to the left and we'll be

there.' We also jokingly said: 'There's no police at all, there is nothing to worry about.'
But then that Swiss driver said: ***'It's not about the police. It's all those grannies who***
are watching the street from their balcony with binoculars, who will call the police."
– Interviewee 11

"I had a barbecue in my garden, and we were with 25 people. It was during the covid
period, but it was legal. The party was in my own garden. At least, in our shared garden.
I had informed my whole apartment complex: 'My birthday is in July, so I'm going to
have a party in the yard with music on Saturday.' However, I had not informed the
neighbours who lived next door in the other adjacent apartment blocks. ***They were not***
pleased with the fact that we were with 25 people in my garden. *They also thought it*
was antisocial that we did this during the covid period. ***So, they just called the police***
without anyone saying anything beforehand*."* – Interviewee 12

For the Dutch, rules are not absolute, and one may deviate from them if there are legitimate reasons. If a Dutch person witnesses someone violating a rule, but nobody is harmed by it, Dutchmen are not likely to hold the other person accountable. Controlling and reprimanding each other is sensitive in the Netherlands because this goes against the value of "Self-determination": everyone should decide for themselves what they do, as long as it does not bother others. Therefore, when the Swiss confront the Dutch regarding their behaviour, the Dutch may think the Swiss are unnecessarily sticking their nose in someone else's business.

Fachkompetenz (Expertise)

The Swiss attach great value to being specialists in their field, which is why having all the expertise needed for the work is imperative. Expertise is garnered through studies, internships and work experience. One is an expert, should have all the knowledge, and be highly skilled in their field of expertise. Because the Swiss are very knowledgeable in their area of expertise, they are usually very well-prepared for their job. As soon as one does not have the answers to questions related to their expertise or seems clueless in what they do, they will not leave a serious impression. Instead, they will be viewed as incapable.

"Suppose we have an intern or a younger colleague. We are happy to encourage them
to provide their input. ***Two people know more than one, and everyone can have good***
ideas. *In the end, I may have more experiences and I may have the final say, but that*
doesn't mean your brain isn't good, everything is appreciated. A statement: stupid
questions do not exist. The idea is, we're going to do this together. If you do that in the

Netherlands, the reaction from the intern or from the younger colleague is: 'Cool, my boss appreciates me, I can participate, I can talk, great.' The reaction in Switzerland and in Germany is actually the same, perhaps even more extreme in Germany. The response is, **'My boss has no idea what he or she is doing, they're completely lost, they have no clue.'** *In my case, I know perfectly well what we're going to do.* **I can spell it out for you, but you don't learn anything from that."** – Interviewee 6

"The Swiss are more hesitant in expressing their opinion. I think it takes them a little longer to have the confidence to speak up while I have no problem with that. I mean, if I don't quite know something and someone says, 'Yeah, but I think it should be this,' and they're right, then I have no problem admitting I'm wrong. While a Swiss first **wants to be 120% sure before they say something and dare to express their opinion in a meeting***."* – Interviewee 9

"When I first came to work here, I experienced some difficulties, because I felt that there was very little communication. While in the Netherlands I would receive a big book with sometimes too much information when I start working somewhere, here I had the feeling that a lot is expected, but **nobody really explains what I was supposed to do***."* – Interviewee 13

The Dutch employees are often generalists and know something about many subjects. They are not always expected to be specialized in one area of expertise. Therefore, there is no shame in not knowing the answer to a question and having to look up the answer first. In the Netherlands, the focus is on a wide range of knowledge and services to be offered. For example, being a manager is not just about one's expertise but also about how one leads a team and organizes work. One does not need all the expertise on a specific subject for this, as a Dutch manager can rely on the expert knowledge from their subordinates.

Folgsamkeit (Obedience)

Swiss employees are expected to listen to the higher-up and do what he instructs them to do. Instructions from the boss or higher-ups are followed diligently, regardless of what the employees themselves think. They may share their opinion about their boss' instructions among themselves and complain, but will avoid confrontations with their boss. Openly questioning one's boss is seen as inappropriate, as it would suggest that someone may doubt their boss's expertise and competence. The Swiss respect their boss, not so much because he has a higher

position, but because they expect that the boss knows what he is doing due to his higher level of expertise.

> *"If the boss says: 'Do this,' they do it, but between themselves, it's much harder for them. There is certainly a willingness to help within our team. But employees take a step further when the boss orders it. They also look toward the boss a lot to see: What does the boss think about this?* **If you also work a lot with the boss, the Swiss also feel like you're trying to gain the boss' favour.** *That's really a theme. Hierarchy. It's not like the Swiss don't do anything if the manager doesn't say it. It's more, if the supervisor says, 'Jump in a tub of mud,' then they jump in a tub of mud, while the Dutch would say: 'Have you become mad? I'm not going to do that.'* **A Swiss person is not likely to engage in discussions with their manager**. *"* – Interviewee 4

> *"They think,* **whatever the chief decides must be good.** *I found that difficult because I often want to know from them how they think one should tackle a challenge. It takes time. You have to convince them to give their real opinion. You have to keep asking questions and take the time to do it. If you as a chef are with someone you're not familiar with yet, if you get in touch with them and ask for their opinion, they often give the answer that they think you want to hear. You really have to come up with the alternatives yourself where you say: 'We could do it this way, but we can also do it that way.'"* – Interviewee 15

In the Netherlands, people can think along and come up with initiatives to improve work processes. This is much appreciated and seen as proactive. When a Dutch person only follows instructions and does not proactively think along, it can be considered a sign of passivity or incompetence. In the Netherlands, expressing one's opinion against the status quo and having discussions can lead to improvements and new insights. It shows that one is really committed to their job. When the Dutch only carry out instructions and are not allowed to give their own interpretation or have a say, this can lead to lots of frustrations. For Dutch workers, it is important to have a say and be able to act freely, which is inspired by the Dutch value of "Self-determination". This is a very strong source of motivation at work. When this freedom is missing, Dutch employees will quickly feel demotivated.

Pünktlichkeit (Punctuality)

The Swiss attach great importance to a clear schedule and adhere to it strictly. They are punctual, often arriving even 5 to 10 minutes before an appointment. Tight and clear schedules

offer peace and structure in their professional and private lives. To avoid surprising situations, appointments are planned in advance in the agenda. If one does not manage to arrive at the agreed time, they are expected to inform the other party beforehand. Failing to hear from someone why they are late or failing to provide a valid reason is seen as a sign of disrespect and unreliability.

> *"**Swiss people are always on time**. Actually, 5 or 10 minutes before an appointment starts, they are already there."* – Interviewee 10

> *"If I pay in 3 weeks while I had agreed to pay within two weeks, a Swiss partner will find this very annoying. In principle, the Dutch often pay late. **Here, everything has to be done as agreed.** I have to pay attention to that from time to time. Salaries should always be paid on the same day, which is the last Friday of the month. Salaries should be deposited on employees' account in the morning. It has to be taken care of. They won't say anything, but afterwards, if you didn't do it as agreed, they will immediately think: 'How will it go henceforward?'"* – Interviewee 15

> *"In the beginning, I said, 'Well, we can probably spontaneously go to so-and-so, because we know them, right?' My husband would then say: 'No, you don't just do that spontaneously. **You have to let them know beforehand and make an appointment**.'"* – Interviewee 16

Due to the value "Order & Neatness", the Dutch keep a clear agenda for themselves. Nevertheless, this is less strict than in Switzerland. In the Netherlands, it is still considered acceptable when someone is a few minutes late. If someone knows they will arrive late, it is quickly dealt with a quick message or phone call. Being a bit late is not a big issue, as long as it does not hinder the other party too much. The Dutch work with a slightly less strict schedule so that they are not constricted by their own schedule (Self-determination) and can respond flexibly to sudden events (Utility).

Consensual Decision-making

Swiss people try to hold discussions with all participants before introducing new ideas during meetings or making decisions. Thus, when someone wants to make a change or introduce an idea, they have to inform all relevant stakeholders of the plan before implementing it or even announcing the idea during a meeting. The Swiss appreciate it when they are asked for their input. The majority will determine the direction of a decision. The minority can accept that their opinion will not decide the direction, as long as their input was also taken into account.

*"I notice that when I have a project with Swiss colleagues and something has to be decided, **everyone undoubtedly wants to have a say**, which is of course also the case in the Netherlands. If you organize something with a Swiss team where six people are in favour and four people are against it, everyone will say, 'Fine, six people voted in favour, then it's fine,' and people accept it as is. I think that is less the case in the Netherlands. I think people will go on and on about it afterwards: 'I don't understand it, how could six people have voted in favour? How can that happen? It's clear it doesn't work, doesn't it?'"* – Interviewee 7

*"I was banqueting manager and room service manager. Point was, banquet is a fixed job, you know exactly what time that is; and room service is when they call. It doesn't really go very well together, so I wanted to change that. I thought: I just need someone to take those calls and be there to do that. I can't do all of that alone. That's when I started to make the change happen. It wasn't a change that was a necessity, it was more of an improvement proposal, you have to get support. You have to look: who are all the stakeholders? We have the people who work in communication; We have the front office manager who is responsible for communications, the rooms division manager who is responsible for the front office and telecommunications; We have the General Manager, who is of course responsible for the outcome of the entire hotel; My manager, because that is the department where it is currently housed at F&B; and its director. **Really, everyone who has something to say should be included.** If I had just pushed it through, if I'd gone to a meeting and said, 'Hey, I've got an idea!', everyone would have been done with me. You can't. It's much more of a warm-up phase."* – Interviewee 8

Like for the Swiss, "Consensus" is strongly anchored in Dutch society. Meaning, all stakeholders would like to be involved in the decision-making in order to make a compromise. However, when the Dutch are faced with small issues, they may take it upon themselves to solve the issue, if they are convinced others could benefit from this as well or would not be bothered by the decision. This behaviour is a result of the Dutch values "Utility" and "Self-determination." Having to consult others constantly before taking action takes time. Additionally, one should be able to take initiative, as long as those decisions do not harm others.

Standoffish with Strangers

The Swiss have a strong focus on their own community. They are close to those whom they have known for a very long time and trust. Hence, they may appear very distant to strangers, especially those who are obviously not part of their community. To get into the inner circle of

the Swiss, one has to put in time and effort to show the Swiss that they are trustworthy. Foreigners who speak Swiss German are considered as more sympathetic[6]. High German is often associated with the Germans, who are not always seen in the best regard by the Swiss[7].

> *"At first, it was very difficult to communicate. Because my last name has an "ij", which is not really known here, the Swiss all thought in the beginning that I was from Eastern Europe. They seem to look a bit down on Eastern Europeans. **They also really favour the Swiss with a real Swiss name in certain things.** I've sometimes noticed that people with a lesser educational background, but who have a better name, got a good job much faster than people with a different last name. "* – Interviewee 3

> *"When we're with friends and someone joins us because they know someone from the group, **they kind of create an awkward atmosphere**. In the beginning, I always introduce myself: 'I'm [Name], I'm from the Netherlands, etc.' And then I'd see them looking, like: 'Yeah, okay, but **I didn't ask for this at all?**' In my opinion, **it is only respectful to introduce myself and give a little background on where I know our mutual friend from.**"* – Interviewee 7

To the Dutch it can seem like the Swiss are unapproachable and very difficult to get acquainted with. Although most Dutch interviewees did mention that the atmosphere between the Dutch and Swiss was usually very positive, they also noted that not all foreigners have the same experience, especially foreigners who look very different. In contrast to the Swiss, Dutch people behave friendly rather quickly, although this friendliness can be quite superficial. The desire to create a friendly atmosphere (Gezelligheid) is a result of the value "Consensus". Creating a friendly atmosphere creates an environment where one can comfortably speak up and raise discussions.

Zuständigkeit (Responsibility)

The Swiss are very focused on their personal tasks. They are expected to act responsibly within their own job description and are not very likely to perform tasks that fall outside it. One is focused on the task for which they are responsible. One interviewee mentioned a popular saying from the army, which describes this Swiss standard well: *"Kein Problem meiner Stufe!",* which

---

[6] According to the first expert, the reaction may vary. When a Dutch person tries to speak Swiss German, it may be viewed as sympathetic. However, when a German tries to speak Swiss German, it may be seen as the German trying to infringe on the Swiss dialect.

[7] According to the first expert, the Swiss are quite wary of Germans: they view Germany somewhat like a big brother who may attempt to take control over their country. Also, the Swiss do not always appreciate the attitude of Germans, as the Germans can come across as arrogant from the Swiss point of view.

means *"Not a problem for my level!."* If something is not a problem for one's level, they do not have to solve it. With this way of working, there is certainty that everyone is performing their own tasks and it is easy to track who was responsible for certain tasks. Through this, everyone has a clear idea of what his or her responsibilities are, and all attention and expertise can be used in a targeted manner.

> *"Task demarcation is also very important. In the team we also have certain key points that someone is responsible for. You then have to be careful that if you have an idea on certain key points, that you play it through the formal channel, because **otherwise you cross a structure, and they don't like that very much**."* – Interviewee 4

> *"I sometimes let the lady from administration write letters to people. Well, don't assume that she will sign and send those letters, even for PO. No, I have to do that myself. Yes, it's really like:* **'You're responsible for that, you have to do that.'** *That's a bit of a troublesome at times."* – Interviewee 15

Naturally, the Dutch also have their own set of tasks and responsibilities. Still, the Dutch may feel inclined to also perform tasks that fall outside their job description. When a person has finished their own task, they are expected to look for opportunities to help their colleagues. When something goes wrong within a company, it will affect everyone after all. Hence, the Dutch feel much more responsible for the group result rather than for their own results only.

Separation of Living Spheres

Swiss strictly separate work and private life. They adapt their behaviour to the environment in which they find themselves at that moment. Hence, they may behave differently at work then they do in private life. At work, they place a lot of focus on their tasks. Intimacy and openly discussing private matters are not very common on the work floor, but should be reserved for the "Privatsphäre". The Swiss go to work to perform, not to make friends. Therefore, they do not talk about each other's private lives at work, but strictly about work-related matters.[8] Additionally, leisure time, such as breaks and weekends, should be respected, as it is seen as disrespectful to bother someone with work during their time off.[9]

---

[8] According to the first expert, having personal conversations during work can be distracting. Instead, such conversations should be held during breaks.

[9] According to first the expert, when the Swiss are at work, all their focus goes into their tasks. Therefore, it is not appreciated if their work interferes with their private life or free time, as the Swiss do not let their private life interfere with their work either.

*"If I compare my manager today with my manager from the Netherlands, they differ for me in the respect that I also discussed things on a more personal level with my Dutch manager. So, it was also sometimes about his children or about other things outside the workplace. That's not the case in this office right now, so **it's really purely a working relationship**."* – Interviewee 5

*"Some of my colleagues really know how to throw a party. They are usually **very calm, generally professional.** But at one point we were at a company party. They were very exuberant on the dance floor. Of course, not all my Swiss colleagues are like that, but I really didn't expect that. **They are quiet men at work**, but once the music started, they had the most fun. No shame on the dance floor."* – Interviewee 12

*"Here, the break starts at half past eleven, and the employees start working again at half past one. You shouldn't tell an employee five minutes before the break starts: 'A truck will arrive at half past one. This and that still needs to be done, can you get it ready?' They don't like that, because the lunch break is quite important to them. If you said this to an employee in the morning, fine. But **breaks are the breaks**."* – Interviewee 15

In the Netherlands there is no strict separation between work and private life. It is common to get to know each other at a more personal level rather than only focusing on work. Colleagues usually talk informally to each other, and conversations about one's private life contribute to "Gezelligheid". Anyone who does not engage in these activities would be viewed as an outsider. Dutchmen think that creating a better atmosphere will improve business performance, as it creates more cohesion among colleagues. Colleagues may even make time to do activities together in their spare time.

Modesty

The Swiss enjoy a high quality of living, and are often very knowledgeable in their field of expertise. Still, they do not call attention towards their abilities or successes, despite being very aware of their own qualities.

"Swiss people don't shout from all the rooftops that they've done something special, even though most of them are very smart. They have well-paid jobs, but they don't brag about it. I think it's noteworthy, because it's really contrary to the Dutch. The Dutch like to tell what they have done, what they have achieved. Here in Switzerland, even though

*they're really good at something, they're more likely to say: **'I do have a little bit of experience with it.'''** – Interviewee 3*

*"Swiss people think they're good too, despite not being very talkative. If you're going to travel and you have some Swiss in your group, **you don't hear them, you don't see them, but that doesn't mean they're insecure**. Not at all. I don't want to call them arrogant, but they are very aware that Switzerland is a good country. It always scores high in terms of happiness, in terms of prosperity scores very high, and they are really aware of that."* – Interviewee 11

The Dutch value "Equality". According to this value, everyone should be treated equally, and one should not act like they are better than everybody else. Therefore, bragging about one's abilities or achievements is viewed negatively. Hence, when the Swiss do not exaggerate their abilities or do not show off their capabilities or possessions, the Dutch view it quite positively.

Leistung (Performance)

The Swiss put a lot of dedication towards their work. They work very long hours a week, and would rather continue working than leave tasks unfinished. Every task is important, and needs to be performed with utmost care. Other colleagues should be able to trust that someone delivers their tasks complete and well. This all proves that you are a good professional.

*"I know a lot of people who work 40, 45, 50 hours a week. Someone may ask: 'Why won't you do a little less or take some time off for other activities?' They'll answer: **'Well, the work has to be done!'** While the Dutch will likely say: **'I will have another burnout soon, and then I won't have time to do this or that.'''** – Interviewee 7*

*"**Those people work really hard**. We work more hours a day than in the Netherlands. Here in Switzerland, I work nine to nine and a half hours a day."* – Interviewee 17

The Dutch also value "Work". Working hard is seen as something positive while doing nothing at all is viewed negatively. Therefore, the Dutch respect the Swiss for their high work ethic. Nevertheless, for the Dutch, working part-time or fewer hours is more common, so they have time for family, hobbies or rest. The Dutch may worry they will overwork themselves if they work too many hours, resulting in a burn-out. Although working hard is considered good, it must be done properly. Hence, if a task has not been completed yet, the Dutch may put off finishing the task until the next day. After a proper rest, they can focus on their work again.

Additionally, for the Dutch, doing their work alright is enough. They Dutch do not need to do their work perfectly to prove their professionality.

Quality-conscious

Quality is of importance, as quality ensures reliability or durability. The Swiss do not purchase more expensive items to show off their status, but because they care about the quality of their purchases[10]. Hence, the Swiss look for value for their money rather than simply buying items because of their design or brand reputation. Because the Swiss care about quality, they can be quite reluctant to make changes, as new products, procedures or plans may be sub-standard.

> *Quality is also a really typical Swiss theme. Where we as Dutch people always ask:* ***'What does it cost?',*** *a Swiss will not ask about the cost, but a Swiss will say:* ***'Is it good?'*** *They really enjoy themselves, they really free up the weekends for beautiful mountain walks, skiing, and sports."* – Interviewee 4

> *"**They are convinced of their quality**. As a result, **they can also be quite persistent or even rigid**. I've had that experience in the past where I didn't think the collaboration was going in the right direction, rather, the relationship was hindered. **It would have been okay if both parties poured some water in their wine, or to work on a solution, or perhaps to admit that the other was also a bit right.** That rigid attitude that they can take is sometimes difficult to work with."* – Interviewee 11

The Dutch are less concerned about quality than the Swiss. If something works out adequately, the Dutch accept it more easily. Contrary to the Swiss, the Dutch gain a lot of satisfaction from saving resources such as money, due to the Dutch value "Utility". Additionally, when there are disputes or differing opinions within the team, the Dutch are open to finding a middle-ground or to make a compromise, to maintain a friendly atmosphere. This is due to the value "Consensus". Hence, the unwillingness from a Swiss colleague to make a compromise can be perceived as rigid.

4.2 Underlying Cultural Values

As indicated before, apart from finding the cultural standards of the Swiss from the German speaking region, this study also tries to identify the underlying cultural values of the typical Swiss behaviours on the work floor. The goal is to find the cultural logic explaining the

---

[10] According to the second expert, the Swiss want to achieve the best quality. To get the best quality, efficiency and saving money are less crucial.

behaviours, thus offering a thick description of Swiss culture on the work floor from a Dutch perspective. Not all Swiss cultural standards can be seen independently of each other. Some standards overlap and others are related. In this section, the different Swiss cultural standards are linked to the cultural values that explain the cultural standards. In total, five cultural values were found: Professionalität, Gemeinschaft, Ordnung, Konsens and Gleichheit.

Some cultural values (Professionalität and Ordnung) were named after German cultural values found by Jimmink (2022), as the Swiss and Germans have many cultural standards in common. Other values (Konsens and Gleichheit) were named after values found by Enklaar (2007) (Consensus and Equality). Only the value Gemeinschaft was named by the researcher herself, after carefully considering the cultural standards that are related to one another. These values reflect the reason why the Swiss behave in a certain way. Figure 5 explains the content of each symbol of Figures 6 until 10.
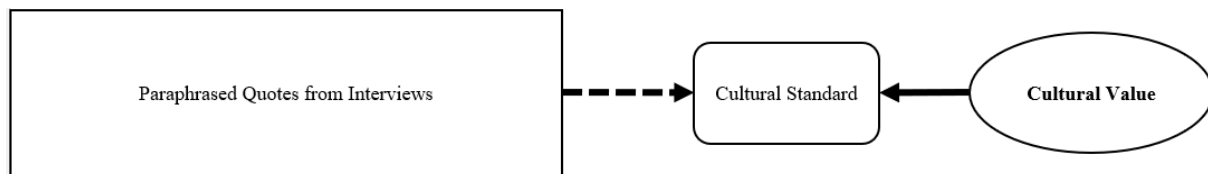

Figure 5: Explanation of Structure of Figures 6 until 10

Professionalität (Professionalism)

The cultural standards Formality, Fachkompetenz, Folgsamkeit, Zuständigkeit, Separation of Living Spheres and Leistung are all connected and inspired by the Swiss value "Professionalität". It is of utmost importance for the Swiss to show that they are professionals. The employee must be serious and competent. They are not expected to act amicably at work, and most certainly not irresponsibly. It is very important that employees have the knowledge required for the profession they practice. This is especially true for people in higher positions, who are assumed to have more knowledge or competence than their subordinates. Because of this assumption, when a higher-up gives instructions, these instructions are usually followed without question.

One should come well prepared to meetings and presentations, and is expected to perform their task with utmost care. Employees should act responsibly within their job descriptions and not fall outside those job descriptions. Additionally, there is a strong separation between work and private life. At work, one is there to perform and be of value to the company, completely dedicated to one's task. Intimacy usually does not belong in the serious work environment, but to the private sphere. Trust is based on performance, as the Swiss place great value on delivering

quality and meeting agreements. In short, according to the value "Professionalität", employees are expected to act professionally, to not drag their personal life into their work life, and behave according to their role. The relationship between the six cultural standards and the cultural value of "Professionalität" is shown in Figure 6.
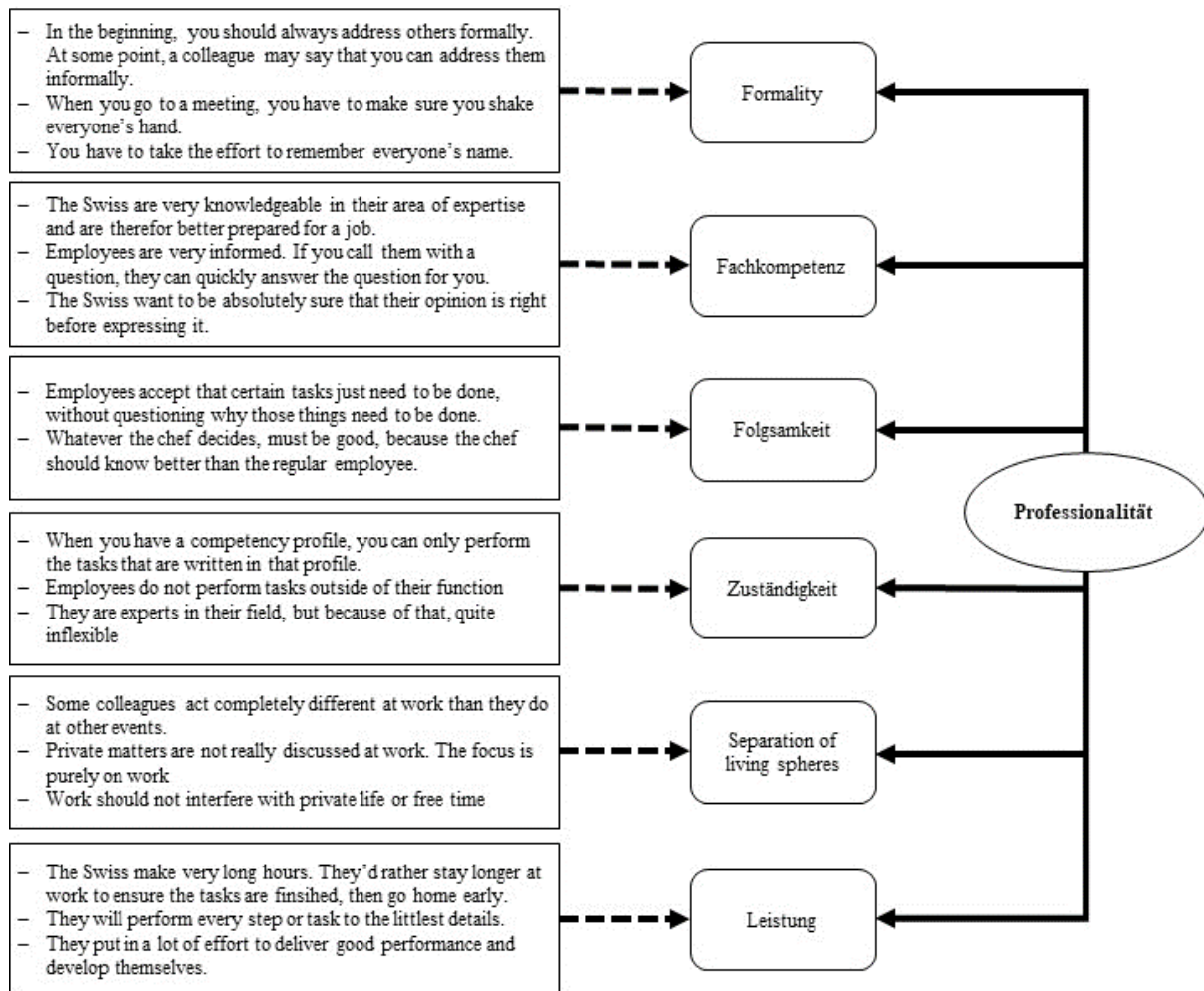

Figure 6: The underlying value of Professionalität

Gemeinschaft (Community)

The cultural standards Indirect Feedback, Reticence, Camaraderie, Social & Civic Responsibility, and Standoffish with Strangers are all connected and inspired by the Swiss value "Gemeinschaft". The Swiss have a strong sense of community. They make a strict divide between the members of their own community and outsiders. Within the community, the Swiss are close to a select few, those whom they have known for a very long time and trust. On the other hand, the Swiss do not readily express their thoughts, opinions, feelings or personal matters to those with whom they are not close to. Hence, they may appear very reserved or distant towards strangers, especially those who are obviously not part of the community.

In the Swiss workplace, colleagues are not necessarily friends. Feedback is given in an indirect manner, especially when it comes to criticism, because the Swiss attempt to give feedback in a polite manner. Directly pointing at one's mistakes may be understood as a personal attack, a way to diminish an employee's qualities, which could disturb the harmony in the workplace. To get into the inner circle of the Swiss, one has to put in time and effort to show the Swiss that they are trustworthy. Nevertheless, once trust and friendship has been established, the bonds will be strong. The Swiss prefer to speak Swiss German over High German. Being able to speak Swiss German can therefore be viewed as sympathetic. Within Switzerland, there is a strong desire to help shape society in a positive way and to support one's community values. To do this, everyone has to put in the effort. Therefore, social control, especially in private life, is very high among the Swiss. In short, the value "Gemeinschaft" is about the sense of belonging to a community and keeping the community's best interest in mind. The relationship between the five cultural standards and the cultural value of "Gemeinschaft" is shown in Figure 7.

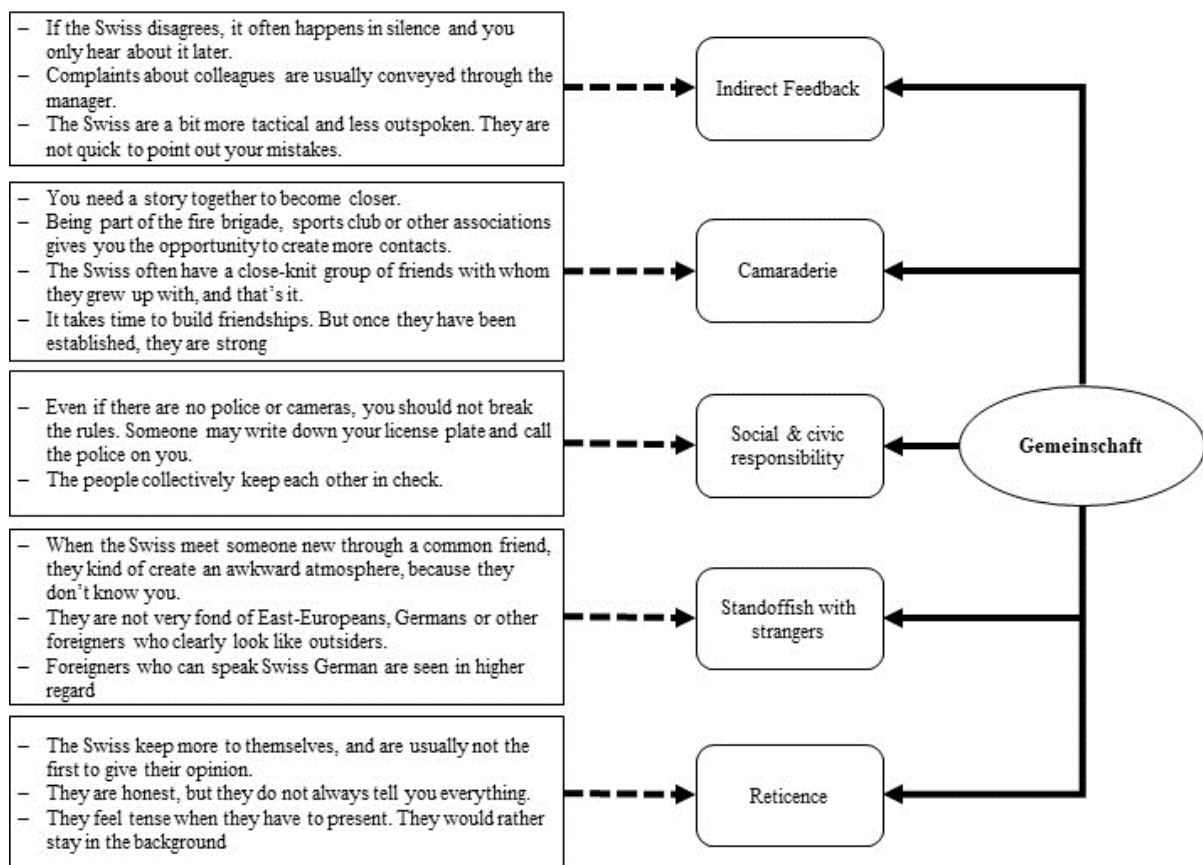*Figure 7:* *The underlying value of Gemeinschaft*

Ordnung (Order)

The cultural standards Sticking to Rules and Procedures, Pünktlichkeit, Gründlichkeit, and Quality-conscious are closely connected and a result of the Swiss value "Ordnung". This value

revolves around creating and maintaining a well-structured predictable environment. The Swiss attach great importance to order in their lives. To maintain order, there are rules. Not every rule may be very clear or may be written in the law, but the Swiss respect these rules and adhere to them diligently. Likewise, the Swiss follow every step of existing procedures thoroughly, and may be reluctant to change existing procedures or other processes, afraid these changes will be substandard and bring disorder. Employees are expected to adhere to rules and procedures to maintain the order on the work floor. In addition, the Swiss like to stick to fixed agendas. It is better to arrive slightly earlier than to arrive late. One shows reliability as well as respect by arriving early or on time. If one arrives late, they do not respect the other's planning or time. Lastly, the Swiss place a lot of importance on quality, and are willing to pay extra to ensure quality. If the quality of a good or service is good, then the good or service will last much longer. Goods or services of lower quality will not last long, are unreliable and will bring disorder when they suddenly stop working. In short, the value "Ordnung" is about maintaining stability and predictability for the present and the future. The relationship between the four cultural standards and the cultural value of "Ordnung" is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The underlying value of Ordnung
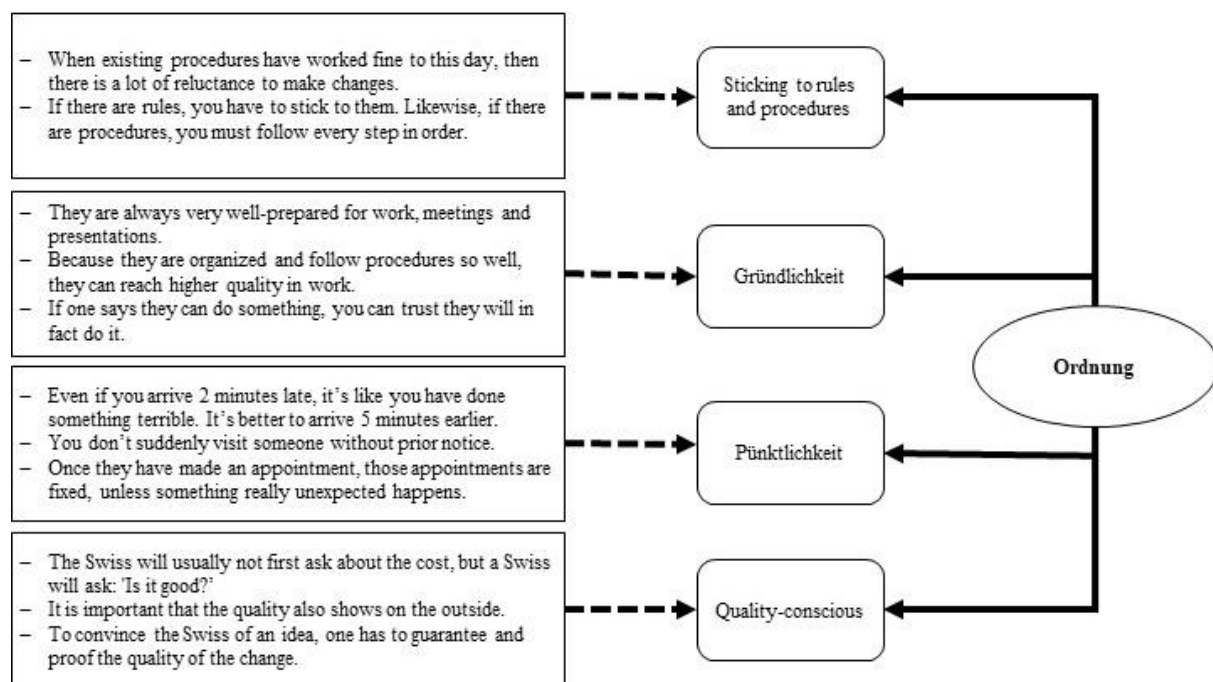
Konsens (Consensus)

The cultural standards Confrontation Avoidance and Consensual Decision-making are all connected and a result of the Swiss value "Konsens". The Swiss value neutrality. When there is a disagreement between parties, the Swiss attempt to mediate the situation by calling in intervention from another party. The intervention of a mediator may also be used when it comes

to giving feedback to avoid confrontation. When someone wants to make a change or introduce an idea, they must inform all relevant stakeholders of the plan before implementing it or even announcing the idea during a meeting. The Swiss appreciate it when they are asked for their input. The majority will determine the direction of a decision, and the minority can accept this as long as their input is also taken into account. "Konsens" is also deeply rooted in the Swiss political system[11]. In short, the value "Konsens" is about solving differing opinions, maintaining a peaceful atmosphere and avoiding conflict. The relationship between the two cultural standards and the cultural value of "Konsens" is shown in Figure 9.
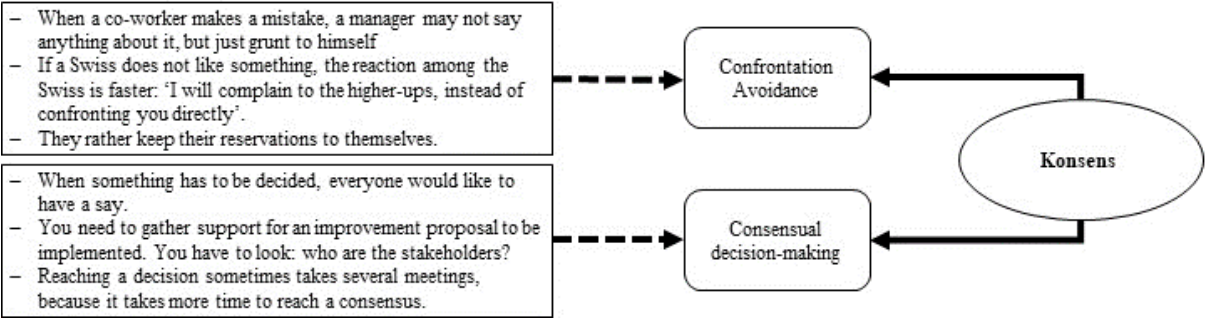

Figure 9: The underlying value of Konsens

Gleichheit (Equality)

The cultural standard Modesty is connected and inspired by the Swiss value "Gleichheit". The Swiss enjoy a high quality of living and are often very knowledgeable in what they do. Still, despite being very aware of their qualities, they do not call attention to their abilities or successes. In short, the value "Gleichheit" is about treating everyone equally and not acting like one is better than everybody else. The relationship between the cultural standard and the cultural value of "Gleichheit" is shown in Figure 10.
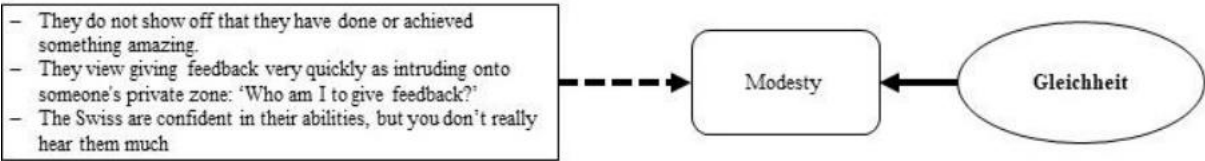
Figure 10: The underlying value of Gleichheit

---

[11] Switzerland has a direct democracy. Alongside the usual voting rights present within democracies, the Swiss also have the right to vote on specific issues. The initiative and referendum are important political instruments to reach a consensus on specific issues. Like on the work floor, the majority's opinion decides the course of direction (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This final chapter presents first an overview of the results. Next, the theoretical and practical contributions of the study are discussed, after which the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are considered. Finally, this chapter ends with a conclusion.

5.1   Swiss Cultural Standards as Perceived by the Dutch

As stated before, this research aimed to discover cultural standards from the German-speaking region of Switzerland and underlying values seen from a Dutch perspective. The study discovered eight German-Swiss cultural standards, as described in chapter 4, section 4.1. These cultural standards are listed below.

1. Sticking to Rules and Procedures
2. Indirect Feedback
3. Reticence
4. Camaraderie
5. Formality
6. Gründlichkeit
7. Confrontation Avoidance
8. Social and Civic Responsibility
9. Fachkompetenz
10. Folgsamkeit
11. Pünktlichkeit
12. Consensual Decision-making
13. Standoffish with Strangers
14. Zuständigkeit
15. Separation of Living Spheres
16. Modesty
17. Leistung
18. Quality-conscious

These eighteen cultural standards can be linked to five German-Swiss underlying values as described in chapter 4, section 4.2. These five cultural values are Professionalität, Ordnung, Gemeinschaft, Konsens and Gleichheit. Combined, the cultural standards and values provide a thick description of German-Swiss culture. These descriptions can be used to describe and predict Swiss behaviour during encounters between the Dutch and Swiss from the German-speaking region of Switzerland on the work floor.

5.2   Theoretical Contributions

First, this study aimed to determine the typical Swiss concrete behaviours experienced by Dutch expatriates working in the German part of Switzerland with the help of CIT. Second, this study aimed to provide a thick description of the German-Swiss culture by including typical Swiss behaviour and the values behind those behaviours, explaining and interpreting critical incidents which Dutch expatriates may face in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. This would

provide suggestions and answers to enhance cooperation and communication between the Dutch and the German-Swiss, resulting in more efficient collaborations. In chapter 1, section 1.2, three research gaps were identified. This study contributes to the existing literature on cross-cultural differences by bridging these three research gaps.

Contribution 1: The cultural differences between the Dutch and German-Swiss on the work floor have been investigated in an emic and rigorous in-depth study.

This paper provides an emic and rigorous in-depth study of Dutch and German-Swiss cultural differences on the work floor by applying the methodologies of Thomas et al. (2010) and Gioia et al. (2013). Narratives from Dutch individuals were used to describe the German-Swiss culture from the Dutch point of view. Using a qualitative research method allowed this study to make sense of behaviours in a given context (Queirós et al., 2017). This emic qualitative study describes the typical behaviour of the Swiss from the German-speaking region and the meaning they assign to their behaviours. The German-Swiss cultural standards are derived from real-life encounters using the Critical Incident Technique.

Contribution 2: The way how Dutch expatriates in the German-speaking part of Switzerland view the German-Swiss cultural standards have been investigated through an emic approach.

This study discovered eighteen different Swiss cultural standards that explain the 'typical behaviour' of the Swiss from the German-speaking region, using narratives from Dutch individuals to describe the German-Swiss culture from the Dutch perspective. In addition, this study discovered similarities and differences when comparing it with existing emic literature regarding Swiss cultural standards from the Austrian and German perspectives identified by Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) and the observations from a French perspective by Chevrier (2002). Table 6 compares the emic findings from Brück (2002), Lechner and Thomas (2011) and Chevrier (2002) with the cultural standards perceived by the Dutch interviewees from this study.

A noticeable difference between the findings from this study and the findings from Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) is that this emic study identified eighteen Swiss cultural standards. These are considerably more than those Brück (2002) or Lechner and Thomas (2011) identified, who both identified eight Swiss cultural standards. The reason is that they did not differentiate cultural standards from cultural values. The present study distinguished cultural standards from underlying values, providing a thick description of how and why the Swiss from the German-speaking region behave the way they do. From the eighteen Swiss cultural

standards identified from the Dutch perspective, four cultural standards were not identified by either Brück (2002), Lechner and Thomas (2011) or Chevrier (2002): *Fachkompetenz, Folgsamkeit, Separation of Living Spheres,* and *Social & Civic Responsibility*.

Two cultural standards found by Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) are not included in Table 6. "Patriotism", which is a standard found by both Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011), was not regarded as a cultural standard in this study. Although some participants did notice that the Swiss are very proud of their canton and country, the researcher did not consider Patriotism as a concrete behaviour. Likewise, the cultural standard "Swiss German" found by Lechner and Thomas (2011) was also not included as a cultural standard in this study, as the researcher did not consider a dialect to be a concrete behaviour either. Be that as it may, if Swiss German and Patriotism had to be linked to a cultural value, they could be connected to the value *"Gemeinschaft"*.

All other cultural standards identified by Brück (2002) were (partially) in line with the findings from this study. The standard "Client Centricity" describes the politeness and patience of the Swiss (especially in services towards clients) while maintaining a certain distance. This behaviour corresponds with the cultural standard *Formality* found in this study, where one must stay formal and polite towards colleagues and clients. Another standard Brück (2002) found is "Group Formation": the Swiss form groups that more or less separates them from one another to ensure the continuity of traditional cultural characteristics. This standard could be linked to the cultural standard *Camaraderie*: there is a feeling of trust and friendship among a group of people who have known each other for a long time or gone through some kind of experience together.

As mentioned, Brück (2002) did not distinguish between cultural standards and values. This becomes apparent when looking at the standard "Pursuit towards Order", which is akin to the cultural value *"Ordnung"* found in this study. Moreover, the remaining four standards found by Brück (2002) are connected to "Pursuit towards Order", which reinforces that "Pursuit towards Order" should be considered a cultural value rather than a cultural standard. "Compliance with Rules" can be linked to the cultural standard *Sticking to Rules & Procedures*: Strictly adhering to the existing rules (and procedures) is essential to maintain order. The cultural standard *Pünktlichkeit* is about proceeding according to plan and being punctual. This cultural standard can explain one of the behaviours described in the standard "Directness": meetings start immediately and are considered good if they are quickly and efficiently

concluded. The standard "Future Orientation" found by Brück (2002) describes two different behaviours. First, it explains that the Swiss proceed in a very planned manner, again aligning with the cultural standard *Pünktlichkeit*. However, the second description given by Brück (2002) is that plans are worked out in great detail to include all contingencies, making the future more tangible. This description corresponds to the cultural standard *Gründlichkeit*, which is about completing tasks with regard to every detail and taking great pains to do something carefully and thoroughly. Lastly, the standard "Propensity to Efficiency" refers to how the Swiss do not like tolerating suboptimal conditions when things could be done better. This is very similar to the cultural standard *Quality-conscious*, which describes the desire to strive towards or achieve the highest possible quality.

Several of the cultural standards discovered in this study were also identified by Lechner and Thomas (2011), although some of their standards describe several behaviours. For example, Lechner and Thomas (2011) described "Etiquette" as follows: 'People are polite towards fellow human beings and when dealing with each other. No orders are given, but pending tasks are communicated in a friendly and neutral manner. Mistakes must not be addressed directly.' The first part of the description of "Etiquette" is in line with the cultural standard *Formality*, while the third part of the description aligns with the cultural standard *Indirect Feedback*: Giving criticism through indirect messages, through other persons or departments, or at a later moment. However, the second part of the description of "Etiquette", 'No orders are given, but pending tasks are communicated in a friendly and neutral manner', is not included in any of the Swiss cultural standards observed by the Dutch. This is likely because there is not much difference in how the Dutch and Swiss communicate pending tasks, which is why it did not cause many cultural clashes. Still, this description of "Etiquette" can be linked to the value *"Gleichheit"*.

The standard "Restraint" from Lechner and Thomas (2011) also describes several behaviours. First, it describes that someone should not brag about their achievements or possessions, which is in line with *Modesty*. "Restraint" also describes the behaviour of approaching strangers with a certain detachment and discretion (*Standoffish towards Strangers*). This is sometimes mistaken as distrust, but building close relationships with the Swiss simply takes some time (*Camaraderie*). Thus, this paper differentiates these behaviours into three standards: *Camaraderie, Standoffish with Strangers, and Modesty*.

Likewise, "Save Face" describes more than one cultural standard from this study. "Save Face" was defined as follows by Lechner and Thomas (2011): The Swiss try not to insult others in any circumstances (*Confrontation Avoidance*). Criticism is only voiced in private and is

formulated very carefully (*Indirect Feedback*). This is because the Swiss do not wish to destroy the peaceful coexistence between them and others. Therefore, they try to respect and appreciate every person and opinion. This latter part of the "Save Face" description could be linked to the cultural value *"Konsens"*. Finally, the two other standards from Lechner and Thomas (2011), "Mentality on Responsibility" and "Consensus Orientation", were also observed by the Dutch and were renamed *Zuständigkeit* and *Consensual Decision-making*.

Curiously, many of the cultural standards this study found, which Lechner and Thomas (2011) did not identify, are linked to the underlying values *"Professionalität"* and *"Ordnung"*. Jimmink (2022) conducted research into German culture from a Dutch perspective and found that *"Professionalität"* and *"Ordnung"* are also underlying values of German culture on the work floor. Therefore, Lechner and Thomas (2011) may not have found most of the cultural standards associated with *"Professionalität"* and *"Ordnung"*, as German employees also hold these underlying values. In other words, these underlying values would not have caused cultural clashes between the Germans and the Swiss.

Another emic study on Swiss culture was performed by Chevrier (2002). Chevrier (2002) found that harmonisation of interests, overcoming differences, achieving consensus, and working hard are necessary for the Swiss to maintain their competitiveness. These attributes were confirmed by the standards *Consensual Decision-making* and *Leistung*. The Swiss required a clear definition of tasks and responsibilities so that everyone could work within their sphere of competence, which is akin to the standard *Zuständigkeit*. Reflected in the standard *Sticking to Rules and Procedures*, following the rules and procedures were also typical of the Swiss (Chevrier, 2002). Chevrier (2002) also found that Swiss technical quality means using the best supply and paying a lot of attention to detail and the precision of the workmanship. This is related to the standard *Gründlichkeit*. Comparing the observations by Chevrier (2002) with the study's results, her findings correspond with this study's results.

Finally, from the Austrian, German and French studies, there was only one standard this study did not identify: "Appreciation". This standard is associated with respect, benevolence and recognition, and is expressed through interest, attention and kindness (Lechner & Thomas, 2011). Two interviewees noted that the Swiss show more appreciation towards their employees through attention, recognition or small gifts. Still, as there were only two instances where this seemed to be the case, it is not included here as a cultural standard. In this regard, there was no apparent difference between the Dutch and the Swiss. Still, the standard "Appreciation" has been included in Table 6 under *"Gleichheit"*.

Table 6: *Comparing the results with findings by Brück (2002), Lechner and Thomas (2011) and Chevrier (2002)*

Underlying values	Cultural Standard from this study	Cultural Standards from Brück (2002)	Cultural Standards from Lechner and Thomas (2011)	Observations from Chevrier (2002)
Professionalität	Formality	Client Centricity	Etiquette	
	Fachkompetenz			
	Folgsamkeit			
	Zuständigkeit		Mentality on Responsibility	
	Separation of living spheres			
	Leistung			Working hard
Gemeinschaft	Indirect Feedback		Save Face Etiquette	
	Reticence			
	Standoffish with Strangers		Restraint	
	Camaraderie	Group Formation		
	Social & Civic Responsibility			
Ordnung	Sticking to Rules & Procedures	Compliance with rules	*(Pursuit towards order)*	Following rules and procedures
	Pünktlichkeit	Directness		
	Gründlichkeit	Future Orientation		Paying attention to detail and the precision of the workmanship
	Quality-conscious	Propensity to efficiency		
Konsens	Confrontation Avoidance		Save Face Etiquette	*(Achieving consensus)*
	Consensual Decision-making		Consensus Orientation	Harmonisation of interests and overcoming differences
Gleichheit	Modesty		Restraint	
			Etiquette	
			Appreciation	

At last, the findings can be compared to the Dutch cultural values. The underlying values of the Dutch culture have been studied by Enklaar (2007). He found that Dutch culture rests on twelve underlying values. Although the Netherlands and Switzerland are situated quite far from each other, Enklaar (2007) suggested that Swiss and Dutch cultures cherish the same cultural values. Figure 10 visualizes which Dutch values clashed with which German-Swiss Values. The Figure is based on three things: (1) which Swiss cultural standards belong to which Swiss cultural values, (2) how many interviewees described a Swiss cultural standard, and (3) which Dutch values are involved in incidents where a cultural standard was observed. Figure 10 shows that the Dutch values "Self-determination" and "Utility" were involved in most critical incidents between the Dutch and Swiss. In contrast, the Swiss values *"Gemeinschaft"* and *"Ordnung"* were often involved during clashes between the Dutch and Swiss cultures.

"Utility" is a Weberian value. Weberian values are held in some Northern European countries and are shared by all nations with a predominately Protestant majority (Enklaar, 2007). Zürich and Geneva are the centres of Calvinism and Zwinglianism, which would suggest that the Swiss would, therefore, also hold the value "Utility". Still, many critical incidents involved the Dutch value "Utility". This could be due to the fact that the Swiss prefer *"Ordnung"* over "Utility", while the Dutch prioritize "Utility" over "Order & Neatness". As for the value "Self-determination", it is a value which originates from West-Holland. Enklaar (2007) suggested that Switzerland is one of the few countries that share the three values from West-Holland, including "Self-determination". However, as this Dutch value caused many cultural clashes, it could mean that the Swiss do not hold the value "Self-determination". Another explanation is that the Swiss do not hold this value as dear as the Dutch but prioritize other values.

This study found that both the Dutch and the Swiss hold the cultural value "Order" ("Order & Neatness" for the Dutch, and *"Ordnung"* for the Swiss). Still, the desire to maintain stability and predictability appears to be stronger among the Swiss from the German-speaking region of Switzerland, as it contributed to several incidents between the Dutch and the Swiss. In contrast, many of the incidents involving the underlying value *"Ordnung"*, were linked to the Dutch values "Self-determination" and "Utility". Thus, the Dutch values "Self-determination" and "Utility" have precedence over the value "Order & Neatness". The same is the case with the Swiss value *"Konsens"*, which is akin to the value "Consensus" from the Dutch. The study also confirmed that both the German-Swiss and Dutch hold the value "Equality" ("Gelijkheid" for the Dutch and *"Gleichheit"* for the Swiss). While the Swiss value *"Gleichheit"* did not appear

to clash with any Dutch value, the Dutch value "Equality" did cause incidents when involved with the Swiss values *"Ordnung"* and *"Professionalität"*.

The Swiss from the German-speaking region share many values with the Dutch. Because of this, there is a good atmosphere between the Dutch and the Swiss. However, the values *"Professionalität"* and *"Gemeinschaft"* are only held by the Swiss, while the value "Self-determination" is most likely only held by the Dutch. Subsequently, although the Dutch and Swiss may share several cultural values, Dutch expatriates may face hurdles when adjusting to the Swiss workplace culture. In certain situations, the Swiss and Dutch may prioritize different cultural values over others. For example, the Swiss may prioritise *"Ordnung"* over "Utility", whereas the Dutch prioritize "Utility" over "Order & Neatness. Hence, even when harbouring the same cultural values, conflicts could still occur when not the same values have precedence.
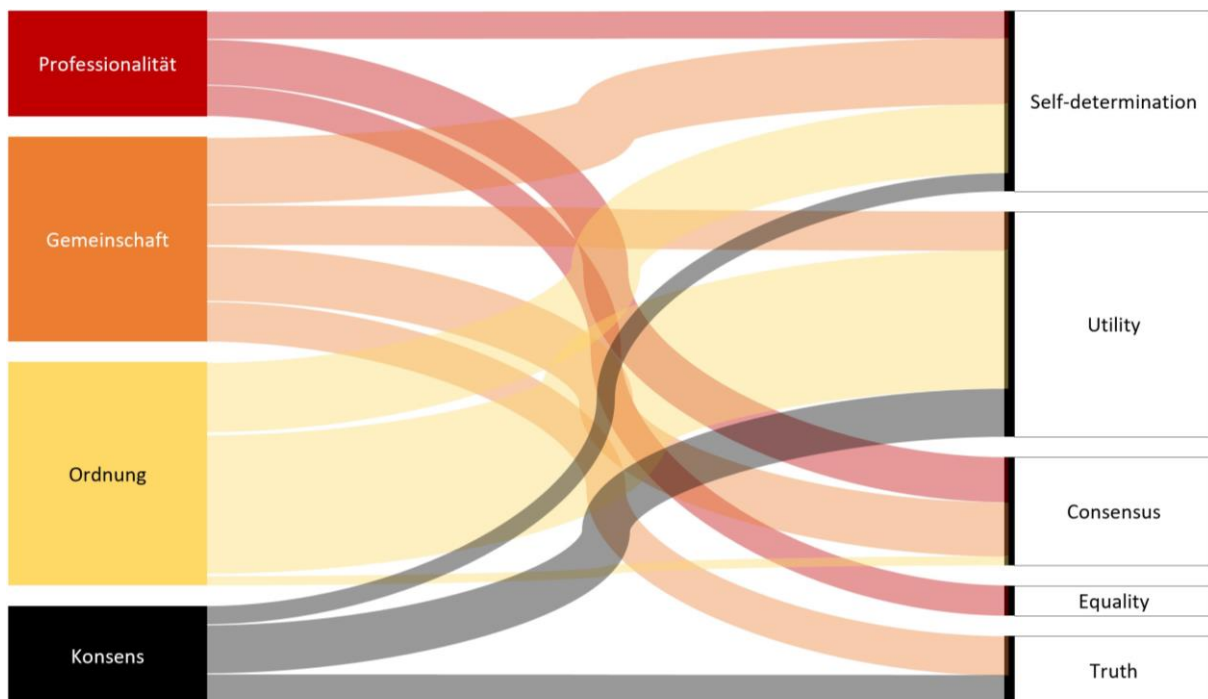

Figure 11: Clashes between Swiss and Dutch values

Contribution 3: The underlying German-Swiss cultural values provide a thick description of the German-Swiss cultural standards.

This study offers a thick description of Swiss culture by distinguishing between cultural standards and underlying values, which Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) did not do. While Brück (2002) and Lechner and Thomas (2011) reported critical interaction situations, they did not distinguish between cultural standards and underlying values. Therefore, their findings did not provide a thick description of Swiss culture. This study identified five

underlying values: Professionalität, Gemeinschaft, Ordnung, Konsens and Gleichheit. These five underlying values help evaluate and explain the eighteen German-Swiss cultural standards.

The underlying value "Professionalität" can explain Formality, Fachkompetenz, Folgsamkeit, Zuständigkeit, Separation of living spheres, and Leistung. This value emphasizes that employees are expected to act professionally, not to drag their personal life into their work life, and behave according to their role. The underlying value "Gemeinschaft" can explain Indirect Feedback, Reticence, Camaraderie, Social & civic responsibility, and Standoffish with strangers. The Swiss feel attached towards their community and keep the community's best interest in mind. The underlying value "Ordnung" explains Sticking to Rules and Procedures, Pünktlichkeit, Gründlichkeit, and Quality-conscious. The Swiss prefer maintaining stability and predictability for the present and the future. The underlying value "Konsens" explains Confrontation Avoidance and Consensual Decision-making. Due to this value, the Swiss want to maintain a peaceful co-existence and avoid creating conflict. Lastly, the underlying value "Gleichheit" explains the standard Modesty. One should not act like one is better than everybody else, but everyone should be treated equally.

5.3   Practical Contributions

The description of the German-Swiss culture provided through eighteen cultural standards and five underlying values provides the reader, especially Dutch individuals, with an insight into Swiss behaviour from the German-speaking region, as seen from the Dutch perspective. It gives the reader, Dutch expatriates or Dutch businessmen collaborating with Swiss colleagues a better understanding of what to expect when working in a bicultural situation. This could allow for a higher tolerance in these situations because the behaviour of the Swiss can be better understood and interpreted.

The lack of cultural awareness and resulting misunderstanding can often be one of the major reasons why international businesses do not succeed or are not able to acquire critical competitive advantage. Training that can simulate the reality of cultural situations can be used to reduce these misunderstandings (Hurn, 2011). Using CIT and the concept of cultural standards, the findings from this study can be used as a culture assimilator. A culture assimilator is a programmed learning technique designed to expose members of one culture to some of the basic concepts, attitudes, role perceptions, customs and values of another culture (Fiedler et al., 1971). Incidents based on real-life scenarios tend to be more inherently exciting and challenging, therefore being more motivating than simply studying lists of do's and do not's

(Hurn, 2011). This being the case, Dutch expatriates and businessmen can learn about Swiss culture in a more engaging way by reading the incidents from this study.

Nonetheless, before trying to create awareness of another culture, Dutch expatriates and businessmen that engage in cross-cultural training should first create self-awareness of their culture by becoming familiar with their cultural values, as described in chapter 2, section 2.3.2. Sagiv and Schwartz (2022) describe cultural values as shared conceptions of what is good and desirable. Once Dutch expatriates are aware of their own cultural values, it can explain why they perceive other's behaviour as strange or bad. To understand the German-Swiss culture, Dutch expatriates should get acquainted with the eighteen German-Swiss cultural standards described in chapter 4, section 4.1, and the five underlying values described in the same chapter, section 4.2. This will help Dutch expatriates become aware of what behaviours are considered appropriate or inappropriate by the Swiss from the German language region.

5.4   Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

In this study, seventeen Dutch individuals who work and live in the German-speaking region of Switzerland were interviewed. This resulted in descriptions of critical incidents, from which cultural standards were established from the Dutch perspective. Like many other studies, this study comes with its limitations. The limitations will be discussed in the following paragraphs, and some suggestions will be given for future research.

The first limitation is in the study's sample. Seven out of seventeen interviewees work and live in Zürich. As noted in chapter 3, section 3.2.1, due to purposeful sampling, participants are chosen according to some common criteria. The higher the degree of homogeneity among the participant concerning their experiences, the sooner data saturation can be achieved (Guest, 2006). Hence, if the sample participants also share similarities in demographic traits, such as the canton where they work and live, it could impact the results by reaching data saturation far quicker. This would mean that some cultural standards and values may have been left undiscovered. Additionally, cultural standards and values valid in Zürich may not be the case in other cantons. A suggestion for future research would be to ensure that the sample includes participants from all cantons of the German-speaking part of Switzerland when researching the cultural standards and values of the Swiss from this region.

Other limitations in this study are in the data collection and analysis. First, there is the social desirability bias. The social desirability bias is the general tendency of research subjects to choose responses that they believe are more socially desirable or acceptable instead of

responses that reflect their true thoughts or feelings. Social desirability bias may become an issue when research involves collecting data on personal or socially sensitive issues (Grimm, 2010). The bias may have been minimised by detailing the purpose of the study and ensuring the research participants that the interviews will be anonymous (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). Still, the reader should be aware that this bias may have occurred. The other limitation has to do with the coding and interpretation process. The coding in this study was carried out by only one individual (the researcher). Although the researcher discussed the interpretation of data with their supervisors and two experts, more experts could have been used to improve the reliability and interpretation of the Swiss cultural standards. Nonetheless, through comparing the results with other studies, the researcher did do some triangulation, testing the validity of the results.

This study provides insights into the Dutch experiences in bicultural situations. However, expatriates from other cultures cannot use the results, as the German-Swiss cultural standards were only described from a Dutch perspective. Although the study provides a thick description of German-Swiss behaviour from the Dutch perspective, it does not provide a complete description. As other countries may perceive other German-Swiss cultural differences than the Dutch do, German-Swiss culture should also be studied from the perspective of other cultures.

Another suggestion for future research is to look into the cultural differences observed by Dutch expatriates working in Switzerland's French-, Italian- and Romansh-speaking regions and how these cultural differences differ from each other and the German-speaking region. As noted before, Dunkel (2011) found that Swiss originating from the German- and French-speaking regions differed in culture. Several interviewees and other Dutch expatriates living and working in Switzerland have observed significant cultural differences between the various language regions of Switzerland. Hence, it would be interesting to research if other cultural standards and underlying values can be observed in the different language regions.

Finally, the eighteen cultural standards identified in this study should help the Dutch expatriates become more culturally competent when working with the Swiss from the German-speaking region. The findings can help increase their awareness, knowledge and understanding of the 'typical' German-Swiss behaviours and their values. Nevertheless, one must remember that these results only provide clues and should not be used to generalize all Swiss from the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It is wrong to assume that all Swiss from that language region behave similarly. The reader of this paper should keep in mind that these results should not be used to form prejudices.

5.5 Conclusion

The main research question of this study was: *"Which cultural differences do Dutch individuals living and working in the German-speaking region of Switzerland perceive, and how can they overcome these differences?"* The first part of the research question has been answered based on the following eighteen different German-Swiss cultural standards that have been identified: Sticking to Rules & Procedures, Indirect Feedback, Reticence, Camaraderie, Formality, Gründlichkeit, Confrontation Avoidance, Social & Civic Responsibility, Fachkompetenz, Obedience, Pünktlichkeit, Consensual Decision-making, Standoffish with Strangers, Zuständigkeit, Separation of Living Spheres, Modesty, Leistung and Quality-conscious.

The second objective of this study was to identify the underlying values of these 'typical' German-Swiss behaviours. Five underlying values were discovered within this research:

1. **Professionalität:** Formality, Fachkompetenz, Folgsamkeit, Zuständigkeit, Separation of living spheres, Leistung.
2. **Gemeinschaft:** Indirect Feedback, Reticence, Camaraderie, Social & civic responsibility, Standoffish with strangers.
3. **Ordnung:** Sticking to Rules & Procedures, Pünktlichkeit, Gründlichkeit, Quality-conscious.
4. **Konsens:** Confrontation Avoidance, Consensual decision-making
5. **Gleichheit:** Modesty

With these, the latter part of the research question can be answered. An issue expatriates may face when working and living abroad is adjusting to the cross-cultural difference. After all, when people from different cultural backgrounds meet, misunderstandings often occur (Lechner & Thomas, 2011). The cultural standards and underlying values with thick descriptions provide valuable insights into the German-Swiss culture and how the Swiss from the German-speaking region think and behave. After becoming familiar with their cultural values, Dutch expatriates or businessmen can avoid the cultural pitfalls they face in the German language region by familiarizing themselves with thick descriptions of German-Swiss culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acocella, I. (2012). The focus groups in social research: advantages and disadvantages. *Quality & Quantity, 46*(4), 1125-1136. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-011-9600-4

Avery, G. (2012). *The European Economic Area Revisited*. European Policy Centre.

Azarpazhooh, A., Ryding, W. H., & Leake, J. L. (2008). Structured or unstructured personnel interviews? *Healthcare Management Forum, 21*(4), 33-43. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0840-4704(10)60054-3

Bergen, N., & Labonté, R. (2020). "Everything is perfect, and we have no problems": detecting and limiting social desirability bias in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research, 30*(5), 783-792. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319889354

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brück, F. (2002). *Interkulturelles Management: Kulturvergleich Österreich, Deutschland, Schweiz* (Vol. 1). IKO, Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation.

Butterfield, L. D., Maglio, A.-S. T., Borgen, W. A., & Amundson, N. E. (2009). Using the enhanced critical incident technique in counselling psychology research. *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy, 43*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794105056924

Chevrier, S. (2002). Le solide contre l'ingénieux. Malentendus dans la gestion de projets franco-suisses, in: D'Iribarne, Henry, Segal, Chevrier, & Globokar. *Cultures et mondialisation. Gérer par-delà les frontières*, 139-163.

Cieri, H. D., Dowling, P. J., & F. Taylor, K. (1991). The psychological impact of expatriate relocation on partners. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 2*(3), 377-414. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585199100000074

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 297-298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Dunkel, A. (2011). Micro-cultural differences in Switzerland: The Effectiveness of Targeted Promotional Messages in the Field of Organ Donation https://sonar.ch/global/documents/318354

Enfield, N. J. (2000). The theory of cultural logic: How individuals combine social intelligence with semiotics to create and maintain cultural meaning. *Cultural Dynamics, 12*(1), 35-64. https://doi.org/10.1177/092137400001200102

Enklaar, A. (2007). *Nederland, tussen nut en naastenliefde: op zoek naar onze cultuur*. Scriptum.

Enklaar, A. (2022). One market, many cultures. *CROCUS: European Institute for Cross Cultural Studies, 1*.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. (2023). *Political System*. Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft. Retrieved 5 July, 2023, from https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/en/home/politik-geschichte/politisches-system.html

Fiedler, F. E., Mitchell, T., & Triandis, H. C. (1971). The culture assimilator: An approach to cross-cultural training. *Journal of applied psychology, 55*(2), 95. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030704

Fink, G., Kölling, M., & Neyer, A.-K. (2005). The cultural standard method.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological bulletin, 51*(4), 327. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061470

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. . In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (Vol. 5019).

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational research methods, 16*(1), 15-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151

Grimm, P. (2010). Social desirability bias. *Wiley international encyclopedia of marketing*.

Guest, G. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension* (Vol. 609). Anchor.

Hansen, N., & Heu, L. (2020). All human, yet different: An Emic-Etic Approach to Cross-Cultural Replication in Social Psychology. *Social Psychology*, 361–369. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000436

Helfrich, H. (1999). Beyond the Dilemma of Cross-Cultural Psychology: Resolving the Tension between Etic and Emic Approaches. *Culture & Psychology, 5*(2), 131-153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067x9952002

Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine, 292*, 114523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences : international differences in work-related values*. Sage Publications.

Hofstede, G. (2011). National cultures, organizational cultures, and the role of management. In *Values and Ethics for the 21st Century.* (pp. 385-402). BBVA.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3 ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede Insights. (2022). *Country Comparison*. https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-netherlands,switzerland/

Hong, H. J. (2010). Bicultural competence and its impact on team effectiveness. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 10*(1), 93-120. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595809359582

Hurn, B. J. (2011). Simulation training methods to develop cultural awareness. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 43*(4), 199. https://doi.org/10.1108/00197851111137816

Jimmink, B. J. (2022). Cultural Differences on the Work Floor between the Dutch and the German. http://essay.utwente.nl/92321/

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2019). A Review of the Quality Indicators of Rigor in Qualitative Research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84*(1), 7120. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Lechner, T., & Thomas, A. (2011). *Beruflich in der Schweiz: Trainingsprogramm für Manager, Fach-und Führungskräfte*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Leung, A. K. Y., & Cohen, D. (2011). Within- and Between-Culture Variation: Individual Differences and the Cultural Logics of Honor, Face, and Dignity Cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 100*(3), 507-526. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022151

Lu, L.-T. (2012). Etic or emic? Measuring culture in international business research. *International Business Research, 5*(5), 109. https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v5n5p109

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global qualitative nursing research, 2.* https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674

Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. Public Affairs.

Moser, R., Migge, T., Lockstroem, M., & Neumann, J. (2011). Exploring Chinese cultural standards through the lens of German managers: A case study approach. *IIMB Management Review, 23*(2), 102-109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2011.02.002

Nisbett, R. E., & Miyamoto, Y. (2005). The influence of culture: holistic versus analytic perception. *Trends in cognitive sciences, 9*(10), 467-473. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2005.08.004

Nyumba, T. O., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and evolution, 9*(1), 20-32. https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210X.12860

Pathak, V., Jena, B., & Kalra, S. (2013). Qualitative research. *Perspectives in clinical research, 4*(3), 192. https://doi.org/10.4103/2229-3485.115389

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods.* (3 ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Queirós, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European journal of education studies*. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.887089

Raju, S. (2017). Managing Cultural Diversities in Internationalisation of Business. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development, 2*(1), 1276-1284. https://doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd8241

Rijksdients voor Ondernemend Nederland. (2013, 08/09/2021). *Handel Nederland - Zwitserland*. Retrieved 6 January, 2023 from https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/landen-en-gebieden/zwitserland/handel

Sagiv, L., & Schwartz, S. H. (2007). Cultural values in organisations: insights for Europe. *European Journal of International Management, 1*(3), 176-190. https://doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2007.014692

Sagiv, L., & Schwartz, S. H. (2022). Personal values across cultures. *Annual Review of Psychology, 73*, 517. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-020821-125100

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson education.

Setti, I., Sommovigo, V., & Argentero, P. (2022). Enhancing expatriates' assignments success: the relationships between cultural intelligence, cross-cultural adaptation and performance. *Current Psychology, 41*(7), 4291-4311. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-00931-w

Siegfried, A. (1950). *Switzerland, a democratic way of life*. Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

Steers, R. M., Nardon, L., & Sanchez-Runde, C. J. (2017). *Management Across Cultures* (3 ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Suter, G., & Kauffeld, S. (2013). Meetings im kulturellen Vergleich: Deutsche brauchen Klarheit, Schweizer gute Zuhörer. *Personal Quarterly*, 28-33.

Swiss Federal Statistical Office. (2000). *Geographical distribution of the languages of Switzerland*. Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft. www.bfs.admin.ch

Thesing, C. (2016). *Intercultural communication in German-Dutch business contexts*. Münster: Waxmann.

Thomas, A. (1996). *Psychologie interkulturellen Handelns*. Hogrefe, Verlag für Psychologie.

Thomas, A., Kinast, E.-U., & Schroll-Machl, S. (2010). *Handbook of intercultural communication and cooperation: Basics and areas of application*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thomas, D. R. (2003). A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748

Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*. Nicholas Brealey International.

Venaik, S., & Brewer, P. (2013). Critical issues in the Hofstede and GLOBE national culture models. *International Marketing Review*. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-03-2013-0058

Weber, E. U., & Morris, M. W. (2010). Culture and judgment and decision making: The constructivist turn. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*(4), 410-419. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610375556

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Geographical Distribution of the Languages in Switzerland
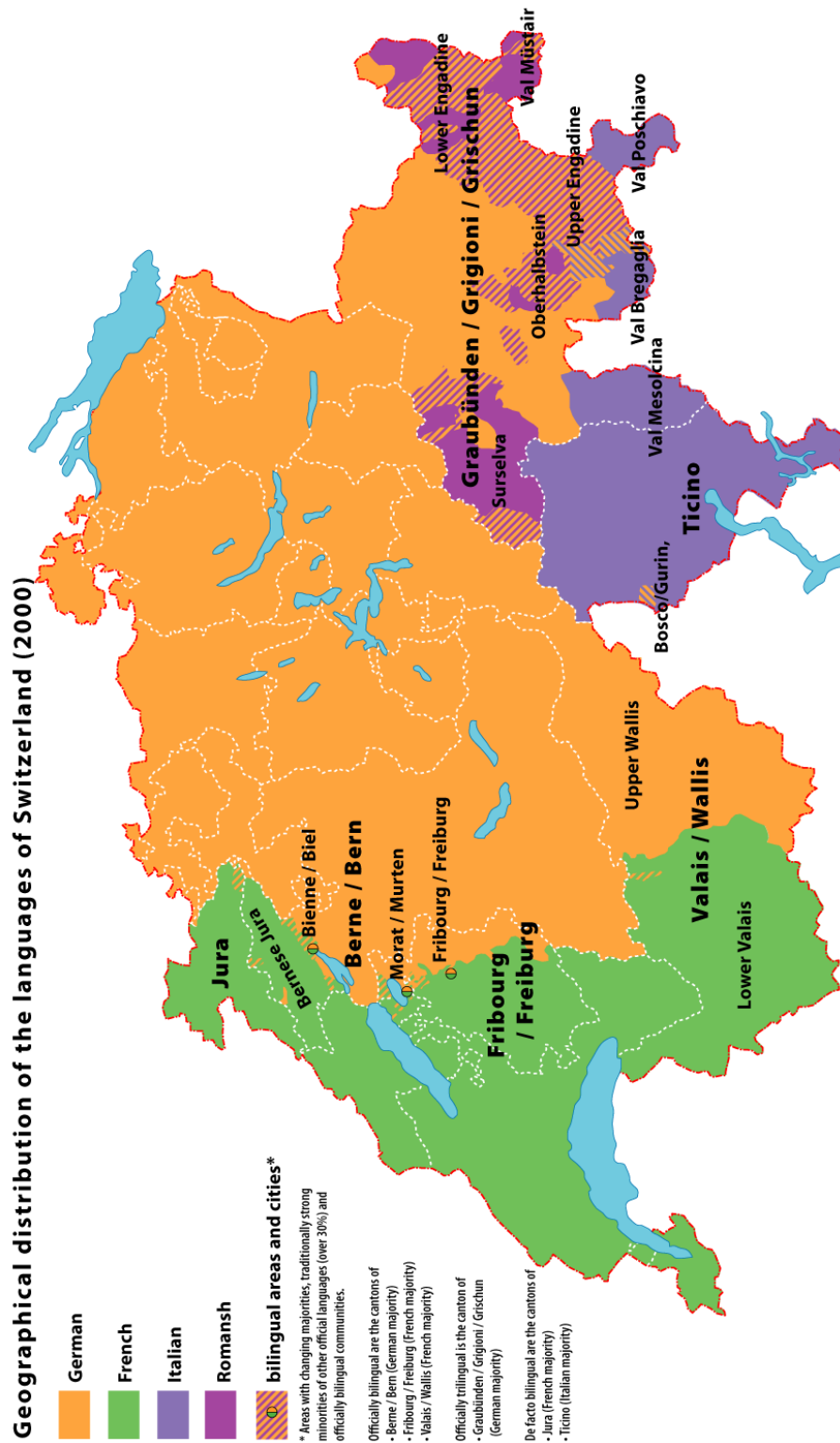

Figure 12: *Geographical Distribution of the Languages in Switzerland from Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2000)*

Appendix B: Interview Guide Critical Incident Analysis

Dutch Questionnaire

Mezelf eerst voorstellen. Het onderzoek is bedoeld om uit te vinden hoe de samenwerking tussen Nederlanders en Zwitsers verbeterd kan worden. Het interview is vertrouwelijk en de inhoud wordt niet gedeeld met collega's. Uw naam zal niet vermeld worden en ik zal ervoor zorgen dat uitspraken niet tot u te herleiden zijn. Als er vragen zijn die u ongemakkelijk maken, dan hoeft u ze niet te beantwoorden. Ook heeft u het recht om het interview op elk moment te verlaten. Gaat u akkoord met het opnemen en transcriberen van het interview? Zo ja, dan kunnen we beginnen.

Kunt u uzelf eerst even voorstellen?

- Naam
- Functie
- Leeftijd

Verblijf in Zwitserland

- Hoe lang bent u al werkzaam is Zwitserland?
- Wat voor werkzaamheden doet u?

Ik begrijp dat u regelmatig contact hebt met Zwitserse collega's.

- Hoe vaak heeft u contact met Zwitserse collega's?
- Waaruit bestaat het contact? (Telefonisch, e-mail, in persoon)
- Wat bespreekt u met elkaar?
- Wat is uw positie daarbij en wat is de positie van de Zwitserse persoon/personen? (rang, taakverdeling)
- In welke taal spreekt u met Zwitsers? Is de communicatie goed te noemen?
- Hoe zou u de sfeer tussen Nederlanders en Zwitsers beschrijven?
- Is de samenwerking volgens u goed of kan hij beter?
- Zijn de persoonlijke relaties volgens u goed of kunnen ze beter?

Ik wil graag over uw ervaringen met Zwitsers spreken.

- Hoe zijn uw ervaringen met Zwitsers in het algemeen?
- Wat zijn de meest opvallende verschillen tussen Nederlanders en Zwitsers volgens u?
- Wat mist u (vaak) bij Zwitsers?
- *(Als hij specifiek eigenschappen noemt)* Kunt u daar een voorbeeld van geven?

Critical Incidents

- Wat was de meest positieve ervaring die u had met Zwitsers?
- Wat gebeurde er precies?
- Wat maakt dit voor u tot zo'n positieve ervaring?
- Wat was de aanleiding voor die gebeurtenis?
- Op welke manier droeg deze gebeurtenis bij aan een succesvolle samenwerking?

Hebt u nog meer van zulke voorbeelden?

- Kunt u ook een minder prettige ervaring noemen die u had met Zwitsers? Wat gebeurde er precies? Wat maakte dit voor u een minder prettige ervaring?
- Wat was de aanleiding voor die gebeurtenis?
- Op welke manier belemmerde deze gebeurtenis de succesvolle samenwerking?
- Hoe reageerde u?
- Hoe is het afgelopen?
- Waarom gedroeg de Zwitserse collega zich op die manier, denkt u?

Hebt u nog meer van zulke voorbeelden?

Meer vragen over ervaringen met Zwitsers.

- Hebt u wel eens misverstanden tussen Zwitsers en Nederlanders meegemaakt?
- Hebt u wel eens meegemaakt dat u verrast werd door gedrag van Zwitsers?
- Hebt u wel eens meegemaakt dat u Zwitsers niet begreep?
- Hebt u wel eens meegemaakt dat u het oneens was met uw Zwitserse collega?
- Hebt u wel eens een conflict gehad met een Zwitserse collega?
- Hebt u wel eens andere problemen gehad met Zwitsers?

Stelling: Het is makkelijker om samen te werken met een Nederlander dan met een Zwitser.

- Wat is uw mening en waardoor komt dat?

Een aantal laatste vragen:

- Een goede manager: hoe moet deze zich gedragen?
    - o Verschillen Nederlanders en Zwitsers hierin?
- Een goede collega: hoe moet deze zich gedragen?
    - o Verschillen Nederlanders en Zwitsers hierin?
- Een goede werkgever: hoe moet deze zich gedragen?
    - o Verschillen Nederlanders en Zwitsers hierin?
- Hoe wordt er door de Zwitsers omgegaan met procedures en de controle daarop?
- Hoe gaat het besluitvormingsproces in het Zwitsers bedrijf?
    - o Wie neemt de beslissingen en hoe gaat dat in zijn werk?
    - o Worden de besluiten door iedereen gerespecteerd?

Wilt u nog meer vertellen over uw ervaringen met Zwitser? Hebben we alles besproken?

Mocht u nog iets te binnen schieten over de verschillen tussen Nederlanders en Zwitsers, dan kunt u mij altijd mailen. De resultaten zullen verwerkt worden in mijn master thesis. Als u geïnteresseerd bent naar de resultaten, dan kan ik de thesis naar u toesturen wanneer het af is.

Dan wil ik u heel erg bedanken voor uw tijd en medewerking!

English Questionnaire

Introduce myself first. The research intends to find out how cooperation between the Dutch and Swiss can be improved. The interview is confidential, and the content will not be shared with colleagues. Your name will not be mentioned, and I will ensure that statements cannot be traced back to you. If there are questions that make you uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You also have the right to leave the interview at any moment. Do you agree to the recording and transcription of the interview? If yes, then we can start.

Can you introduce yourself first?
- Name
- Function
- Age

Stay in Switzerland

- How long have you been working in Switzerland?
- What kind of work do you do?

I understand you have regular contact with Swiss colleagues.

- How often do you have contact with your Swiss colleagues?
- What does the contact consist of? (Phone calls, e-mail, in-person meetings)
- What do you discuss with each other?
- What is your position in these discussion and what is the position of your Swiss colleague(s)? (rank, division of tasks)
- With what language do you communicate with the Swiss? Do you communicate well?
- How would you describe the atmosphere between the Dutch and Swiss?
- Is the collaboration good according to you, or can it be improved?
- Do you think that the personal relations are good, or could they be better?

I would like to talk about your experiences with the Swiss.

- How are your experiences with the Swiss in general?

- What do you think are the most striking differences between the Dutch and Swiss?

- What do you (often) miss with the Swiss?

- *(If they mention a specific characteristic)* Can you give an example?

Critical Incidents

- What has been your most positive experience with the Swiss?
- What happened exactly?
- Why is this such a positive experience to you?
- What led up to this event?
- In what manner did this event contribute to a successful collaboration?

Do you have more of these examples?

- Can you also mention a less pleasant experience which you have had with the Swiss? What happened exactly? Why is this a less pleasant experience?
- What led up to this event?
- In what manner did this even obstruct a successful collaboration?
- How did you react?
- How did this end?
- Why do you think the Swiss colleague behaved in that way?

Do you have more of these examples?

More questions regarding experiences with the Swiss.

- Have you experienced misunderstandings between the Swiss and Dutch?

- Have you been surprised by the behaviour from the Swiss?

- Were there instances where you did not understand the Swiss?

- Were there instances where you disagreed with your Swiss colleague?

- Have you had conflicts with any of your Swiss colleagues?

- Have you experienced other issues with the Swiss?

Proposition: It is easier to collaborate with a Dutchmen than with a Swiss.

- What is your opinion on this, and why?

Some remaining questions:

- A good manager: how should they behave?
    - Do the Dutch and Swiss differ in this?
- A good colleague: how should they behave?
    - Do the Dutch and Swiss differ in this?
- A good employer: how should they behave?
    - Do the Dutch and Swiss differ in this?
- How do the Swiss handle procedures and how do they monitor how these procedures are dealt with?
- How is the decision-making process structured in a Swiss company?
    - Who make the decisions and how does that work?
    - Are decisions respected by everyone?

Would you like to talk some more about your experiences with the Swiss? Have we discussed everything?

If anything about the differences between the Dutch and the Swiss pops up, feel free to email me. The results will be incorporated into my master thesis. If you are interested in the results, I can send the thesis to you once it has been finalized.

I would then like to thank you for your time and cooperation!

Appendix C: Consent Form Online Interviews

"Intercultural Collaboration in European Business: Cultural Differences between the Dutch and Swiss on the work floor."

Principal Investigator
Natasha Gabriëlle Suijkerbuijk, Student
MSc. Business Administration
University of Twente
n.g.suijkerbuijk@student.utwente.nl

Purpose

As a result of today's rise of the global marketplace, more organizations are sending employees to work outside their home countries as expatriates. An issue expatriates may face when working and living abroad, is adjusting to the cross-cultural difference. This thesis will determine the cultural differences between the Dutch and the German-Swiss on the work floor. It aims to provide clues for Dutchmen on how to interact with the Swiss on the work floor. Because of the internal cultural diversity between the various regions in Switzerland, this study focuses on the German speaking part of the country.

Description

I would like to ask if you would be willing to participate in an online interview. If you agree, you would be asked questions concerning your personal experiences on working and living in Switzerland, with emphasis on incidents where the Dutch and (German-)Swiss culture clashed. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. Your participation will require approximately 60 minutes of your time.

Use of Research

The results of this study will be presented in a final master thesis required for completion of my degree.

Risk of harm

You will not be put under any risk or harm by participating in the study. Any personal information which could point towards you will not be published in the final master thesis.

Participation and withdrawal

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, without explanation, at any point. If questions during the interview make you uncomfortable, you have the right to skip over them. If you would like to review the questions before the interview, the principal investigator can send you a copy of the interview guide.

Management of Research Information/Data

Office Teams or Zoom will be used to host the online interview. If you agree, the interview will be recorded using these applications. Recordings will be saved on my laptop, until they have been transcribed. Once transcripts have been made, recordings will be erased. The transcripts will be used to analyse the collected data and will also be erased once the research has been finalized.

I have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to participate in this research under the following conditions:

I consent to the interview being recorded, and to the data I provide to be used in the above-mentioned study   ☐ *Yes*   ☐ *No*

Participant Name: