Intercultural communication in German-Dutch business contexts

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1   Introduction

1.1   German-Dutch relations and interdependencies

Germany and the Netherlands maintain close relationships. At the beginning of the 20th century, both countries were close trading partners. Over the last few decades, their relations have constantly intensified, resulting in today's close cooperation, consultations and interrelations in a variety of fields.

The countries cooperate on a variety of political issues. They maintain active cooperative alliances in global forums such as NATO and the UN and support each other's positions on global issues (cf. e. g., Läufer, 2007; Pekelder 2013). As Nijhuis (2015) stated, Germany and the Netherlands cooperate closely in the European Union and have mostly agreed on questions concerning the European integration process and the general orientation of the European Union.

At the federal, state and provincial levels there are (institutionalized) intensive contacts between parliamentarians and government representatives who discuss and work together on numerous issues. The institutionalized government consultations and German-Dutch conferences that regularly occur and in which various political issues are discussed are especially worth mentioning here (cf. Pekelder, 2013).

Below the intergovernmental level, the five German-Dutch Euregios (voluntary associations of German and Dutch public-law bodies) play an important role in removing cross-border obstacles for businesses and individuals. They also help in establishing cross-border cooperation in areas such as work, education and healthcare.

Furthermore, Germany and the Netherlands also maintain close educational and cultural relationships. In addition to about 570 cooperation agreements between universities and research facilities, there is also intense German-Dutch collaboration in regional science and technology networks between universities and companies (International Office of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, 2015). Pekelder (2013) also emphasized the numerous cooperations in education and science and claimed that the scientific cooperations between Germany and the Netherlands rank among the highest between two countries worldwide.

The Netherlands is also popular with German university students studying abroad. In 2013, more than 25,000 Germans studied at Dutch universities. However, there were only 2,000 Dutch students studying at German universities.

In the cultural field there are countless cooperations between German and Dutch museums, theaters, exhibitions and film productions. Germany is one of the 'priority countries' for Dutch cultural policy while German cultural policy, especially in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony, also has a strong focus on the

Netherlands (Läufer, 2007). In addition, many German-Dutch cultural foundations actively foster bilateral cultural relations.

In addition to political, educational and cultural relationships, there are also many personal relationships between German and Dutch people. In 2014, about 370,000 Germans lived in the Netherlands permanently and 140,000 Dutch people lived in Germany (CBS, 2014; German-Dutch Chamber of Commerce, 2014).

Moreover, the two countries have a very close economic relationship. The German Foreign Office (2014) stated that economic relations between Germany and the Netherlands are more intensive than between any other two countries, apart from the United States and Canada. In 2013, Germany exported goods and services with a total value of 71 billion euros to the Netherlands while importing goods and services with a total value of 89 billion euros from the Netherlands (Destatis, 2014). Germany is the Netherlands' most important trade partner while the Netherlands is Germany's fifth most important trade partner (after France, the USA, the UK and China). Moreover, the Netherlands is the biggest foreign investor in Germany, while Germany is the fourth largest foreign investor in the Netherlands (after the USA, Luxembourg and the UK). In 2013, there were about 5,350 Dutch companies in Germany and 2,200 German companies in the Netherlands (German-Dutch Chamber of Commerce, 2013). Furthermore, there are more than 25,000 German and Dutch cross-border commuters who work in the neighboring country.

German tourists are also extremely important for the Dutch tourism industry. In 2010, the 2,8 million Germans who visited the Netherlands (10,8 million overnight stays) accounted for almost 50% of all tourists in the country (Tyroller, 2010). Dutch tourists are also fairly important for the German tourism industry (cf. Tyroller, 2010): in 2014, 18% of the foreign tourists who visited Germany were Dutch. With roughly 11 million overnight stays, they were the biggest foreign group of tourists (Destatis, 2014).

These figures clearly demonstrate that Germany and the Netherlands are already closely interrelated in a variety of fields and that they depend on each other, especially economically. This view is supported by van Paridon (2009b) who found that over the past decades the interdependences between the German and the Dutch economic development were closer than between any other two countries with the exception of the US and Canada. Klemann and Wielenga (2009) also pointed out the close economic interdependency and entanglement between the two economies.

1.2   The effect of culture on (economic) relations

Despite close ties and geographic proximity, there are cultural differences that can lead to disturbances in cross-border cooperation. Linthout (2008, p. 39) claimed that the cultural differences between Germany and the Netherlands are bigger than between almost any other neighboring countries in the EU. This opinion was indi-

rectly confirmed by van Paridon (2009b), who stated that the close economic relationships between Germany and the Netherlands could be even closer if German and Dutch people were more familiar with the peculiarities of each other's markets and cultures. This was also stated by Gersdorf (2015), who interviewed German and Dutch entrepreneurs who experienced problems in the other country because they had not familiarized themselves with the business culture.

Cultural differences can manifest in differences in behavior, perceptions and attitudes. Numerous studies have found that these differences can lead to irritations, problems, communication breakdowns and/or misunderstandings in intercultural interaction situations. They can also influence intercultural interactions in various ways.

First, numerous studies have already extensively illustrated the extent to which cultural differences can prevent people and organizations from getting in contact with people and organizations from another culture. Salacuse (1991), for example, showed that cultural and linguistic barriers often prevent people from even considering establishing cross-border cooperation. Reiche, Carr, and Pudelko (2010) showed that people are generally reluctant to start business with people whose culture differs strongly from their own. Other studies (e.g., Linders, Slangen, de Groot, & Beugelsdijk, 2004) have suggested that cultural distance decreases bilateral trade while a common language and few cultural differences increase service trade (e.g., Kimura & Lee, 2004). Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson (2006) showed that culture has an important impact on organizations' entry modes in foreign markets. Benassy-Quere, Coupet, and Mayer (2005) pointed out the impact of cultural differences on foreign direct investments which are highest between countries that score similarly on Hofstede's (2009) dimension *power distance*. In measuring a similar effect on cross-border debt-holding between companies, Aggarwal, Kearney, and Lucey (2009) concluded that the effect is highest among companies from countries that score similarly on Hofstede's (2009) dimension *masculinity/ femininity*.

Besides the effects of culture on these rather technical issues of cross-cultural business, a variety of studies (e.g., Finch, 2009; Kwok & Tadesse, 2006; Pagell, Katz, & Sheu, 2005) have illustrated that cultural differences directly influence business negotiations between people from different cultures. Cultural differences can lead to irritations, misunderstandings or even a termination of the business activities.

In conclusion, these studies show that cultural differences present an array of challenges for companies, institutions and people who want to establish and maintain cross-border contacts. Those who manage to adapt effectively to other cultures have competitive advantages and can enter new markets more easily; in contrast, failure to adapt to other cultures can drag down business performance considerably. This applies to the German-Dutch context as well.

Some of the above-mentioned studies have tried to quantify the effect of culture. For example, studies have tried to estimate the welfare effects that could be realized if both parties in cross-cultural business were aware of certain cultural differences (e. g., Morosini, 1998) or if organizations were more aware that after a cross-border merger or acquisition it would be helpful to keep in mind that the employees of the other company are used to different management styles (e. g., Brake, Walker, & Walker, 1994). However, it is hard to quantify the effect of cultural differences on such issues since culture is just one factor among many others. Therefore, efforts to quantify these effects are rarely empirically based estimations (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006).

In 2011 the Duitsland Instituut, a Dutch research institute at the University of Amsterdam, estimated that the cultural and linguistic differences between Germany and the Netherlands result in cross-border business dealings with a value of up to 6 billion euros per annum not being realized (Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam, 2011). Even though this estimate has a rather weak empirical basis, it nevertheless indicates that — although sustainable and close relationships and cooperations already exist in various fields — cultural differences play an important role in the German-Dutch context. It is essential for both German and Dutch people to know and understand each other's culture. This view is supported by other studies (e. g., FENEDEX, 2011; Rabobank, 2008).

German-Dutch cultural differences, commonalities and characteristics have already been analyzed by various social scientists and authors, using different methods of analyzing culture. Social scientists like Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012), Hall (1990), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), House (1997), Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) have developed cross-cultural dimension models that can be used to compare — among others — the German and Dutch cultures with regard to certain dimensions. Furthermore, many scientific studies have analyzed single aspects of German or Dutch culture. Von der Dunk (1998), for example, analyzed the roots of Dutch liberality from a historical perspective while Weismann (2001) linked certain differences in mentality to religious development. Wesselius (1999) based his study on Hofstede's *masculinity/femininity* dimension and analyzed how Dutch femininity manifests in Dutch everyday life. Koentopp (2000) analyzed how differences in Hofstede's *power distance* dimension influence teamwork in German-Dutch teams.

Thomas and Schlizio (2009) used the intercultural concept of culture standards to analyze Dutch cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interactions. Culture standards are processes of perception, thought, evaluation and action that the majority of the members of a particular culture regard as normal, typical and obligatory (Thomas, 2005, p. 45). Since culture standards are deduced from the specific perspective of a culture they can point out potential sources of irritations or conflicts in bicultural interaction.

Furthermore, many German and Dutch authors have written popular science and guidebooks about their neighboring countries. For example, Ernst (2007), Schürings (2010) and Linthout (2006) have written about Dutch culture and Kerres (2008), Jacobs (2008) and Reyskens (2007) have written about German culture. Even though these books are generally not scientific but rather based on their authors' personal experiences, they are a rich source of information about cultural aspects and characteristics that might play a role in intercultural encounters.

1.3 Comparison of methods for analyzing culture

In the following section I will present three of the most widely used methods of analyzing culture and discuss their advantages and disadvantages as well as their assets and weaknesses. These three methods are: 1) popular science and guidebooks as a non-scientific respectively popular scientific way of analyzing culture, 2) dimension models as a cross-cultural method of analyzing cultural differences and 3) commonalities and the concept of culture standards as an intercultural method of analyzing intercultural interactions.

1.3.1 Popular science and guidebooks

German and Dutch authors have written a lot of popular science and guidebooks (e. g., Koentopp, 2000; Müller, 1998; Versluis, 2008) describing the culture of each other's countries. Apart from the advantages and weaknesses of individual books, these books have many general advantages and disadvantages compared to other methods of analyzing culture.

First, the majority of the books describes only those aspects of culture that are easily visible to outsiders. The underlying norms and values which account for many (though not all) visible and invisible aspects of culture are hardly or not described and discussed. Without ascribing these visible cultural characteristics to underlying norms and values it is hard to understand the reasons for many cultural differences or commonalities and it is therefore also hard to comprehend or predict general German or Dutch behavioral patterns in bicultural interactions.

Furthermore, the authors (most of them expatriates) predominantly describe their own, usually subjective, experiences. Although these experiences have occurred in certain cultural sectors, industries and organizations, they declare them to be valid for a whole country.

Finally, the authors offer diverging observations and explanations. For example, while Reyskens (2007) claimed that Germans regard a task as more important than good relations with colleagues at work, Meines (1990) claimed the opposite. A more comprehensive discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the analysis of a book corpus about the German and Dutch cultures is presented in chapter 3.

1.3.2 Dimension models

A scientifically more validated approach of identifying and explaining cultural differences and commonalities between Germany and the Netherlands can be found in different concepts and models developed by culture specialists. Well-established social scientists such as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hall (1989), Hofstede (2008), House et al. (2004) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) have compared different national cultures with each other from a global perspective, usually by using dimension models. The basic assumption of these models is that there are universal categories of culture, a generalized framework that underlies the more apparent and striking facts of cultural relativity (Kluckhohn & Kroeber 1952, p. 220 ff.). According to Hofstede (2008, p. 29) this framework must consist of different dimensions on which cultures can be ordered. Those dimensions are rooted in basic problems which every culture has to cope with, but on which their solutions vary. Each dimension has two opposite poles; every country can be positioned on a line between those poles.

For example, one of Hofstede's (2008) dimensions is *masculinity/femininity*. In short, masculine cultures are characterized by an appreciation of competition, achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success while feminine cultures are characterized by a preference for cooperation, consensus, modesty and quality of life. The extreme pole *masculinity* is assigned a score of 100 while the other extreme pole, *femininity*, is assigned a score of 0. With a score of 66, Germany is regarded as a more masculine country than the Netherlands with a score of 14.

However, the dimension models have — in addition to the criticism of the methodological approach of individual social scientists (e. g., McSweeney (2002) on Hofstede; Hofstede (2010) on Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner; Smith (2004) on the GLOBE study) — some advantages and disadvantages compared to other methods of analyzing culture.

First, dimension models are cross-cultural. They compare cultures with each other from a rather global perspective but do not analyze if, in which cases and to what extent the differences with regard to cultural dimensions play a role in concrete interactions between people from different cultures. They allow assumptions but they cannot predict which cultural differences will eventually lead to irritations, conflicts or communication breakdowns. Some authors even claim that such things as stable, comparable cultural dimensions cannot exist because culture is always constructed within a specific context and can only be understood through the interaction between the observed and the observer (cf. Hartmann, 2012).

According to Layes (2003, p. 53–65) dimension models are useful and helpful when it comes to comparing different cultures, especially in the context of frequently changing business partners and multicultural work groups. While in a strictly bicultural environment a person can frame all relevant knowledge about the cultural characteristics of the people from the other culture, this information

would become overwhelming in a multinational environment. According to Hartmann (2012), such an environment requires a general framework such as dimension models that shows the areas and ways in which cultures differ considerably.

However, those models are less practical when comparing two cultures for the purpose of giving practical advice for binational encounters, because they do not consider a variety of aspects that might play a role in those encounters. For example, they may not consider aspects such as self-perception and the perception of others or shared history. This opinion is supported by Schönhut and Antweiler (2002, p. 13) and Hartmann (2012, p. 24), who claimed that dimension models could only show how cultures work in isolation from each other but not how their members deal with each other. Nevertheless, as Bhawuk and Brislin (2001) as well as Egan and Bendick (2007) have described, dimension models are frequently taught in business schools around the world and are used to prepare individuals for interaction with people from other cultures, without making a distinction between multi- and bicultural contexts.

Layes (2003, p. 62) also noted the problematic one-dimensionality of the dimension models. Hofstede (2008, p. 28) claimed that the dimension models allow cases to be scored unambiguously (in the sense that for each dimension nations can be unambiguously placed on a line between two extreme poles and can then be compared to each other). Layes rejected this opinion and claimed that by placing nations on one line between two extreme poles the dimension models deny that there might be totally different forms of and characteristics to a certain dimension that apply to completely different aspects of life in different cultures. For example, on Hofstede's dimension *individualism/collectivism*, the Netherlands, with a score of 80 (on a scale from 0 to 100), appear more individualistic than Germany with a score of 67 (Hofstede, 2008, p. 215). However, by analyzing the answers to the 14 questions Hofstede (2008, p. 214) used to determine the national scores for the dimension *individualism/collectivism* (by averaging the answers to the separate questions), it appears that the differences between Germany and the Netherlands differ — sometimes substantially — from question to question (see Hofstede, 2008, p. 256 ff.).

Furthermore, when using the dimension models, it is hard to unambiguously show links and correlations between the different dimensions. Hofstede (2008) acknowledged that there are correlations between the dimensions and that cultural characteristics can often only be explained by the interplay of different dimensions. However, the dimension models can only show general universal correlations between the dimensions. These correlations and interdependencies can vary from culture to culture, which makes it hard to analyze the exact interplay of dimensions when analyzing separate cultures.

Besides, the dimension models cannot unambiguously show hierarchical relations between the dimensions. The models do acknowledge that there are certain hierarchies between the dimensions, but these hierarchies are often not very obvi-

ous and, just like the correlations, they can vary from culture to culture. This makes it harder to determine which dimension(s) play(s) the most important role when comparing two cultures.

Finally, it is hard to use the dimension models to compare cultures that do not greatly differ from each other with regard to the dimensions. For example, in Hofstede's (2008) dimension model (in which the extreme poles of each dimension differ by 100 index points) Germany and the Netherlands have similar scores on most dimensions (except for *masculinity/femininity* and *indulgence/restraint*), with a maximum difference of 13 index points. Nevertheless, irritations, problems, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns occur frequently in German-Dutch interactions (Linthout, 2008, p. 39) and many of these cannot be ascribed to those two dimensions. Of course Hofstede does not claim that irritations, problems, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns can be completely explained by differences in dimensions, but the dimension models can convey the impression that problems do not occur between countries that show only minor dimensional differences.

In summary, both guidebooks and popular science books as well as the dimension models show disadvantages when it comes to describing, explaining and predicting cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns in bicultural encounters, to pointing out potential communication breakdowns and to giving members of a certain culture practice-oriented insight into another culture. The popular science and guidebooks often lack objectivity and scientific validation. Dimension models are well suited for comparing cultures with each other, but they are not very suitable for analyzing what happens in concrete interaction situations between the members of two cultures.

1.3.3   Culture standards

In addition to guidebooks and popular science books and the dimension models, the concept of culture standards (a detailed definition and explanation of the term *culture standard* can be found in Section 2.3) can convey aspects of a country's culture in a practical and easily understandable manner. Culture standards are deduced from practical situations of bicultural interaction. In contrast to the dimension models the concept takes into account aspects such as self-perception and perception of others by decidedly analyzing one culture from the perspective of another (Demorgon & Molz, 1996, p. 57). It also considers the changes of cultural characteristics over time, the relevance of personal factors and the existence of different cultural sectors (Section 2.4.5 will describe how this is done).

In contrast to the cross-cultural dimension models, culture standards deal with cultural differences in intercultural situations. They describe, explain and predict what happens in concrete bicultural interaction situations, which irritations, con-

flicts and communication breakdowns can occur. This makes the concept of culture standards more practice-based than dimension models.

In addition, the concept of culture standards refers not only to the invisible, underlying aspects of culture, but also to the visible cultural characteristics that come to light in bicultural interactions. The authors of the dimension models also assume that culture consists of invisible and visible elements. Hofstede, for example, has claimed that the core elements of culture are values but that culture also manifests in the visible elements symbols, heroes and rituals (2008, p. 10). However, since dimension models are rather universal, they do not analyze or describe those visible and invisible elements for every culture.

Furthermore, the concept of culture standards can more clearly discern how culture standards are linked to each other than the dimension models can. Since many concrete cultural characteristics or behavioral patterns cannot be explained with just one single dimension or culture standard but rather with an interplay of different dimensions or culture standards (cf. Hofstede & Hofstede, 2009), the concept of culture standards facilitates understanding another culture. While the dimension models can only show general universal correlations between the separate dimensions (which above all might not apply to every single culture), the concept of culture standards can point out links and interdependencies of the separate culture standards particular to every separate culture that is analyzed.

The concept of culture standards also has the advantage of being able to show the hierarchical relations between single culture standards more clearly than the dimension models can. Since culture standards are deduced from concrete binational encounters, it is possible to analyze how important certain culture standards are in those encounters. This facilitates a prediction and explanation of cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns. While the dimension models can only show universal correlations between dimensions, culture standards can point out hierarchical relations of the culture standards for every particular culture (as will be described in Section 2.5.8). Moreover, the concept of culture standards allows a more nuanced analysis of cultural characteristics and differences than the dimension models when it comes to comparing cultures that do not greatly differ from each other with regard to dimensions.

Finally, Glaser and Strauss (2008, p. 12 ff.) criticized the fact that social scientists often first establish a theory and then try to explain observations or data with this theory. Since those theories are not deduced from concrete situations or observations, it is hard to adjust or correct them if they do not match the concrete observations. This criticism applies to the dimension models but not to the concept of culture standards. Here the theory (culture standards) is deduced from concrete observations and therefore fits into the approach of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2008).

1.3.4   Assessment of methods of analyzing culture in
a German-Dutch context

An inventory of the existing studies and books on German and Dutch cultures, cultural commonalities and differences reveals a need for further research in this field. This research is needed for several reasons.

First, a general intercultural analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interactions has not yet or has only partially been conducted. Only Thomas and Schlizio (2009) have made a contribution to this topic.

Second, existing methods and concepts of analyzing culture are and have been used incorrectly. For instance, data collected in cross-cultural analysis is frequently used to predict irritations and problems in intercultural interactions in management books (e.g., Holtbrügge & Welge, 2010; Macharzina & Wolf, 2012), scientific studies and intercultural workshops and trainings which can lead to misinterpretations and miss important aspects. This observation has been confirmed (both directly and indirectly) by several social scientists. For example, Reuter (2010) criticized interculturalists (i.e., intercultural trainers, consultants and mediators) and professionals in the field of intercultural management who often assume that big differences related to certain cultural dimensions automatically imply a high probability for irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in intercultural interactions, even though this claim is hardly empirically justified. Rathje (2007) claimed that existing intercultural competence training methods are increasingly criticized for using cross-cultural approaches and Bolten (2001) accused those who use dimension models for their intercultural training of an improper use and simplification. In this regard Dahlen (1997) points out two problems when using dimension models for intercultural analysis. First of all he claims that dimension models are based on outdated concepts of culture which were developed in the field of anthropology decades ago and which anthropologists have abandoned in favor of new concepts which are based on the assumption that there is "internal diversity within various kinds of social units " (p. 174). Authors of dimension models such as Hofstede or Trompenaars have therefore been criticized for leading to a generic, essentialist and representational view of cultures and for regarding culture as rather static, as a "stable value system" (Dahlen 1997, p. 159). This is also confirmed by Dervin (2010) who criticized the "solid vision on culture" of dimension models. Second, Dahlen states that even though it is known that the concept of culture has developed over the past decades and that cross-cultural models might not be well-suited for intercultural analysis, many interculturalists nevertheless stick to them because the "interculturalist field (unlike anthropology) is practically oriented and situated in the marketplace, they need to be able to offer to their customers ways of predicting the behaviour of "people from different cultures" (p. 174 f.).

However, it is striking that even though the existing methods and concepts used to analyze culture are subjected to criticism, there are few suggestions for improve-

ment. Some suggestions have been made for certain aspects (e. g., for avoiding stereotyping when working with Hofstede's model or for improving the intercultural competences of intercultural coaches). Furthermore, Dervin (2012) makes a general plea for improving and further developing the field of intercultural research. He states, "the world is changing all the time; our conception of intercultural encounters is in the midst of a revolution. […] the concepts we have been used to work with are very slippery and the research tools offered by the fields that have worked on representations, stereotypes and Othering are very useful to take a critical stance towards them. The future of research on intercultural communication, if it follows the changes other fields which deal with Otherness (Anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy …) have witnessed, lays within further reflexivity, criticality and the idea of *diverse diversities* (p. 197). However, a concrete solution for the general problem has not been addressed.

Third, single methods of analyzing culture have proved to be insufficient for predicting and explaining what happens in intercultural interaction situations. Each method has some disadvantages compared with other methods but can also reveal things that the other methods cannot reveal (a discussion of the single methods, their advantages, disadvantages and limits will be conducted later).

In summary, there are important cultural differences between Germany and the Netherlands. Despite diverse and good cooperation in various fields, there are nevertheless problems in the cross-border cooperation that to a considerable degree are caused by irritations, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns that arise from these cultural differences. As a result, potential is not being fully exploited, and business cooperations are sometimes not realized or are unsatisfactory for both sides. Since comprehensive scientific intercultural research has not yet occurred in this field, there is a scientific gap that this dissertation project seeks to fill.

1.4   Definitions and presuppositions

1.4.1   Culture

There is a vast number of definitions for the term 'culture'. Scientific disciplines such as anthropology, ethnology, history, psychology, communication sciences, sociology or educational sciences each maintain and prefer their own definitions, emphasizing the different aspects that are most important for their field of study. In addition, there are various definitions for the term within these disciplines (Appelsmeyer & Billmann-Mahecha, 2001; Nünning, 2008) and many authors (e. g., McSweeney, 2002; Sorrells, 2013) have addressed the problem of finding a general definition for culture.

This dissertation used methods and concepts of analyzing culture from different authors — each using his or her own definition of the term — and compared them to each other. The challenge was therefore to find a definition that subsumed

the definitions of all these authors and allowed for a comparability of their methods and concepts and the results from this dissertation project. On closer inspection, it became apparent that Thomas's (2005) culture definition meets these demands. It is sufficiently similar to the culture definitions of the other scholars whose methods are dealt with in this dissertation and to some degree subsumes these definitions.

Thomas (2005) analyzed culture from a psychological perspective. According to him, culture creates and structures an environment in which people can function (Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010, p. 19 ff.) and encompasses ideas and values. Culture is always manifested in a system of orientation which is typical of a country, society, organization or group. This system of orientation consists of visible aspects such as rituals, language, body language, mimicry, clothing and greeting rituals as well as underlying norms and values. It is passed on to future generations from the respective society, organization or group. It provides all members with a sense of belonging and inclusion within a society or group and creates an environment in which individuals can develop a unique sense of self and function efficiently. Culture influences the perceptions, thought patterns, judgments and actions of all members of a given society (Thomas, 2005, p. 48). In summary, Thomas (2005, p. 21 f.) sees culture as a national entity that provides its members with a sense-giving system of orientation. A person living in his or her own cultural orientation system can likely be understood and accepted by others who share the same cultural orientation system. Culture provides a common frame of reference that is learned by cultural socialization.

A comparison of Thomas's definition of culture with Hofstede's definition shows some resemblance. Hofstede (2008) described culture as a "collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values" (p. 19). Obviously, similar definitions of culture are used for the concept of culture standards and the dimension models. What Hofstede calls "collective programming" is reflected in Thomas's "common frame of reference learned by cultural socialization" and "is passed on to future generations." The distinguishing factor in Hofstede's definition can be found back in Thomas's "it provides its members with a sense of belonging and inclusion within a society" and "sense-giving system of orientation." While Hofstede refers to culture as a "system of collectively held values," Thomas also states that culture encompasses values, that is a "common frame of reference" (p. 48) and just like Hofstede he points out that culture consists of both values (which are hardly or not visible) and visible elements (e. g., rituals, clothing).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) definition of culture also does not differ considerably from Thomas's definition. He states that "culture is the way in which a group of people solve problems and reconciles dilemmas" (p. 6 f.). This is reflected in Thomas's statements that "culture has an influence on the perception, thought patterns, judgment and actions of all members of a given society," there

is a "system of orientation" and "culture creates an environment in which people can function." (p. 49). Just like Thomas, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner also emphasized that culture consists of different layers of depth, on visible and invisible underlying aspects.

Hall's definition — he regards culture as "the way of life of people, the sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitudes and material things" (1989, p. 4) — also resembles Thomas's definition. Hall also states that culture is learned, that it influences behavior and attitudes and that it consists of layers (which he calls implicit and explicit elements of culture).

This comparison thus shows that the definitions of culture used by these different social scientists show substantial similarities and overlap. Since the first study of this dissertation project (Chapter 2) is a study on culture standards, I decided to use Thomas's culture definition throughout my studies.

1.4.2   National culture

This dissertation compares the German and Dutch cultures. Before making this comparison, I had to consider whether using the concept of national culture to analyze interaction between different nations is possible and makes sense. I also had to examine whether Germany and the Netherlands can be considered (relatively homogeneous) national cultures.

These ideas are the subject of controversial discussions in the scientific community. On the one hand, critics of the concept of national cultures (e. g., Au, 1999; House et al., 2004, Reiche, Carr, & Pudelko, 2010) point out that there is significant intra-cultural variation within the societies of most countries. Hartmann (2012) gave examples that show differences within in-country groups. On the other hand, some social scientists (e. g., Beugelsdijk & Maseland, 2011; Tipton, 2009) have argued for the convergence hypothesis, which claims that the importance of national cultures decreases with increasing globalization and that in the business world, the best practices that emerge are similar in most countries (cf. Carr & Pudelko, 2006).

However, other social scientists have disagreed with these claims and argued that the concept of national cultures is still relevant (cf. e. g., d'Iribarne, 2009; Ghemawat, 2001). Witchall (2012), who summarized most of their arguments, acknowledged the criticism but pointed out that nevertheless the majority of national cultural differences have remained fairly stable over time and convergence in cultural habits occurs only on the surface. Religious, legal, political and social systems (i. e., institutions which disseminate information within a culture) remain relatively isolated, and it is these systems that coordinate and maintain social and cultural systems. Furthermore, most cultures remain predominantly national due to the self-centeredness of social systems themselves which may be structurally open (i. e., have contact with other systems) but are functionally closed (i. e., the

mechanism for interpretation does not come from the outside, but from within the cultural system itself).

Apparently this also applies to Germany and the Netherlands. House, Wright, and Aditya (1997), for example, discussed studies in which — for Germany and the Netherlands among others — Hofstede's dimensions were analyzed for different subgroups of nations and subsequently compared to the general country scores. These studies showed that the intra-national differences between Germany and the Netherlands were rather small. It can therefore be assumed that a comparison of the German and the Dutch cultures is indeed possible and makes sense.

Naturally — as it is the case for most cross- and intercultural studies — researchers must remember that there are factors apart from national culture (e. g., regional, organizational, contextual or individual factors) that also influence perception, behavior and attitude (Barmeyer & Genkova, 2011; Broszinsky-Schwabe, 2011). National cultures exhibit general characteristics, attitudes, perceptions and behavioral patterns that the members of a country are likely to show, but individual or group behavior can always deviate from it to varying degrees.

1.5   Aims and structure

As previously illustrated, there has been little scientific intercultural research on German and Dutch cultures. To fill this scientific gap, the general aim of this dissertation project was to offer a general intercultural analysis of differences and commonalities between German and Dutch cultures and to analyze which cultural aspects lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in intercultural encounters. The general research question is: *Which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction and which role do they play in these interactions?*

An analysis of different methods of analyzing culture revealed that no single method is sufficient to thoroughly answer this research question. Each method has limitations and disadvantages compared to other methods, but can also point out things that the others cannot reveal. Therefore different methods of analyzing culture had to be used to answer the research question. Three independent studies were conducted (described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4), each with its own research question and methodology and each approaching the general aim from a different perspective.

Furthermore, the results of the first and second studies were compared to each other and with other methods of analyzing culture. Since each method has advantages and disadvantages compared to other methods, this made it possible to minimize the disadvantages and create additional value by finding aspects that could not be found with a single method.
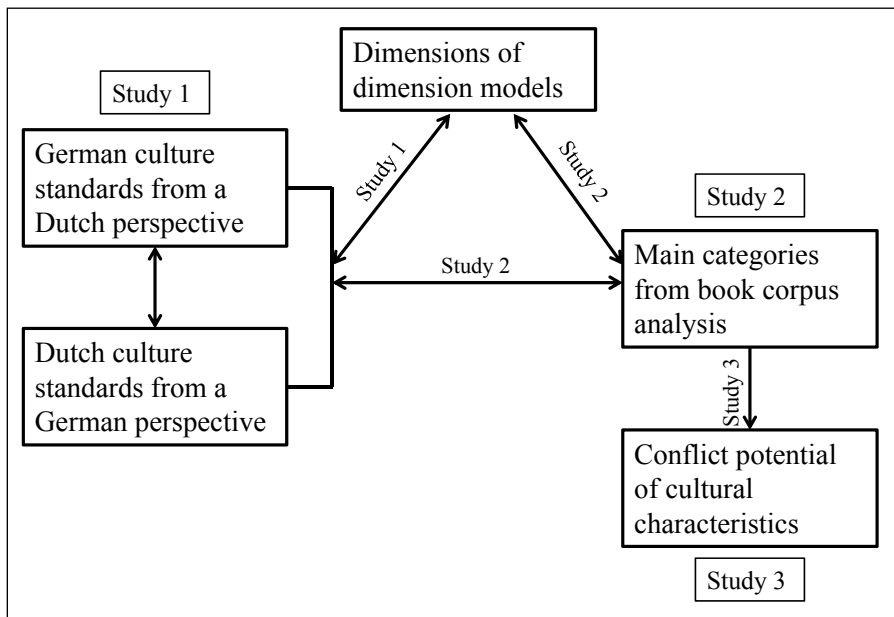
Fig. 1   Triangular entanglement of methods of analyzing culture

Figure 1 shows the two methods of analyzing culture that were used, how they were compared with each other and with the dimension models, and which comparison was conducted in which study.

The aim of the first study was to identify general, rather superordinate and underlying aspects of culture that play a role in German-Dutch interaction and to find potential sources for misunderstandings, irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns. The intercultural concept of culture standards was best suited to address this aim. Basically, culture standards are rather abstract, superordinate aspects of culture that describe and subsume typical behavioral patterns of a culture that come to light in bicultural interaction with the members of a specific other culture from the perspective of which they are deduced. They thus not only show the cultural characteristics through which German culture differs from Dutch culture, but they also point out potential sources for irritations, conflicts and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction situations. Since Thomas and Schlizio (2009) have already identified Dutch culture standards from a German perspective (indicating which irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns Germans experience in interaction with the Dutch), the following research question is addressed: *Which German culture standards exist from a Dutch perspective and how do they relate to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective and other methods of analyzing culture?*

There were several steps to answering this research question. First, German culture standards were identified using Thomas's (1996) culture standards method

(with gradual changes in the methodology). Second, the German culture standards were compared to Thomas's and Schlizio's (2009) Dutch culture standards from a German perspective to more clearly deduce which cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns are likely to cause irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions. Third, the results were compared to dimensions from the dimension models of different scholars (i. e., Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2011; Trompenaars, 2012 and Hall, 1989). Cultural dimension models are basically index systems that identify the value orientations of different national cultures, measure them and express them in numerical values (a more detailed definition and explanation of these models will be provided in Chapter 2.1).

The aim of the second study was to analyze the rather concrete and visible aspects of culture (i. e., how cultural differences manifest in German-Dutch interaction, and in which situations and contexts). An analysis of popular science and guidebooks from German authors about the Dutch culture (Dutch book corpus) and from Dutch authors about the German culture (German book corpus) was well suited to this aim because these books predominantly describe concrete and visible aspects of culture and are therefore a rich source for analysis (a list of these books can be found in Appendix 7; a description of the criteria these books had to meet can be found in Section 3.3.1.1). Since such a cross-cultural analysis of intercultural literature has not been conducted before, the study was primarily explorative in nature. It was hard to predict in advance which results the analysis would yield; therefore a rather open research question was formulated: *Which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German and Dutch book corpora and how do they relate to each other?* The results of this study were compared to the results of the first study to analyze if and which additional value they could provide and if and how they could complement the German culture standards. Furthermore, the results were compared to the dimensions of the dimension models that were also dealt with in the first study.

The aim of the third study was to analyze the potential for conflict related to different cultural characteristics. Up to now, such an analysis has not been or has only been conducted to a small extent; it is usually assumed that the cultural characteristics on which national cultures differ the most are also the ones that have the biggest conflict potential. However, as will be pointed out in Chapter 4, there is good reason to doubt this assumption.

The research question for the third study is: *Are cultural characteristics that Germans and Dutch regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions than cultural characteristics that Germans and Dutch regard as similarly relevant*? This question was analyzed by conducting an online survey.

Besides answering the general research question this dissertation project also tries to contribute to the progress of the field of intercultural research. In their meta-study Matsumoto and Yoo (2006) described how cross-cultural research method-

ologies have evolved and how each phase of research has addressed the limitations of previous ones. They stated that current research has to evolve to a new phase that minimizes the limitations of current studies. Among others, they addressed the problem of attribution fallacies (i. e., that researchers often link differences between groups to cultural causes without empirically testing if they might be caused by other factors instead) and pointed out that interrelations between cultural characteristics and their relevance are neither analyzed nor taken into consideration when explaining and/or predicting behavioral patterns. Even though Matsumoto and Yoo criticized cross-cultural studies, their criticism also applies to intercultural research for the most part. This dissertation project therefore tries to discover new approaches for intercultural research that address the limitations stated by Matsumoto and Yoo. The general conclusion will discuss how and to what extent this study contributes to a new phase in intercultural research.

The last chapter (Chapter 5) will point out some practical implications. It will note how the results can be used to extend and enhance existing concepts for intercultural workshops and trainings for German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring country. It will also note how these results can serve as a basis for a guidebook about cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that play a role in German-Dutch interaction.

2 German culture standards from a Dutch perspective

2.1 Introduction

As illustrated in the introductory chapter, different methods of analyzing culture have their own advantages and disadvantages. A combination of different concepts and methods is necessary to answer the general research question — which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction and which role do they play in these interactions? — because doing so reduces the disadvantages of each method and creates additional value. While a corpus analysis of popular science and guidebooks can predominantly reveal the concrete manifestation of culture in intercultural interaction, the concept of culture standards is suited to analyzing such cultural characteristics on another level. Culture standards show the rather abstract and underlying aspects of culture, essentially the underlying norms and values that determine behavior, behavioral patterns, perceptions and attitudes. In this way, they enable a deeper understanding of the cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction by virtually revealing their core. And while the dimension models enable a general comparison of different cultures, the concept of culture standards illustrates which cultural characteristics actually play a role in bicultural interaction. In addition, especially when it comes to comparing two cultures that do not differ from each other to a great extent with regard to dimensions, it can show cultural characteristics and differences in a more nuanced way. However, even though Dutch culture standards from a German perspective have already been identified (Schlizio, 2005), an identification of German culture standards from a Dutch perspective has not yet taken place.

2.2 Choice of methods and aims of this study

This study has two aims: 1) to identify, describe and explain the general, rather superordinate and underlying aspects of culture that play a role in German-Dutch interaction and 2) to find potential sources for misunderstandings, irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction by using the concept of culture standards. The research question is: *Which German culture standards exist from a Dutch perspective and how do they relate to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective and other methods of analyzing culture* (such as dimension models)?

This study does not aim to analyze the German culture in general or to compare the German and Dutch cultures in a cross-cultural manner. Different methods and concepts of comparing culture, such as dimension models, would be more suitable for that task. Rather, the objective is to analyze how German culture manifests in bicultural interactions with Dutch people and which aspects of German culture

play a role for Dutch people in these interactions. A basic assumption is that this study will show additional value compared to the dimension models.

A secondary aim of this study is to give Germans a better orientation in German-Dutch encounters. Thomas and Schlizio (2009) already identified Dutch culture standards from a German perspective but Thomas and Kinast (2010, p. 48) argued that only people who are familiar with both the foreign cultural orientation system and with their own can be successful in intercultural cooperation. Knowing and understanding both cultural orientation systems enables people to estimate whether and to what extent cultural divergence becomes evident in a binational encounter, to which extent the different orientation systems can coexist without leading to conflicts or irritations, and to which extent one can and should adapt to the other's orientations system. A comparison between one's own and a foreign orientation system can help a person to better avoid potential sources of misunderstanding or irritation and to estimate how a combination of both orientation systems can possibly create cultural synergies.

Structure of the study

Section 2.3 will define the term *culture standard* and outline the essential aspects of culture standards. Section 2.4 will explain the methodology for and process of identifying German culture standards from a Dutch perspective. It will also note in which parts the methodology is close to Thomas's (1996, p. 119 ff.) methodology (see also Schlizio, 2005; Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007) and in which parts and for which reasons it diverges.

Section 2.5 will present the German culture standards from a Dutch perspective. It will include an analysis of how and to what extent they interact with each other and in which hierarchical order they stand. Section 2.6 will compare German culture standards to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective (identified by Thomas & Schlizio, 2009) to identify potential sources of misunderstanding and irritation in bicultural encounters. Section 2.7 will compare them to the dimensions from different dimension models — among others from Hofstede (2008, 2011), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990) — and will analyze whether this study provides additional value compared to these models. Section 2.8 will conclude the culture standards study, including theoretical and practical implications as well as suggestions for further research.

2.3   Definition of culture standards

Culture standards are processes of perception, thought, evaluation and action that the majority of the members of a particular culture regard, for themselves and others, as normal, typical and obligatory. Personal behavior and the behavior of others

is judged and regulated according to these central culture standards. The individual and group-specific manner of handling culture standards for behavior regulation can vary within a certain range of tolerance. Culture standards give orientation, and influence the perception of one's material and social environment as well as one's evaluation of things and people. They thus guide one's actions (Thomas 2005, p. 45). Culture standards provide a regulatory function for mastering a given situation and dealing with people.

Krewer (1996, p. 150 f.) emphasized that culture standards have two characteristics. On the one hand, they show basic cultural differences between groups regarding their central organization of action, thinking and feeling. On the other hand, they point out potentially problematic situations in intercultural interactions. For Krewer, the most important feature of culture standards is that they are specific orientation systems that have the purpose of making one's own and foreign processes of thought, perception, evaluation and action comprehensible and understandable in *intercultural* interaction situations. He sees culture standards as a means to self-reflect (of course, dimension models can also be means for self-reflection but they do not require it) and reflect on foreigners in intercultural encounters (Krewer 1996, p. 152). This is why culture standards can only be deduced from specific bicultural interaction situations between groups or individuals.

If culture standards are reflected in other aspects of science and society such as literature, sociology, ethnology and religion or other studies in comparative culture, then it can be assumed that they are central culture standards. Central culture standards are not only applied in specific cultural sectors, problem situations or a narrowly defined scope of action, but are characteristic behavioral patterns of a vast majority of the members of a specific country. They are valid for different cultural sectors, apply in different situations and are stable over time.

2.4   Methodology

The methodological approach of this study is based on the methodology for identifying culture standards as suggested by Thomas (1996) (see also Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005). In parts, it has been modified and developed further. Where the methodology deviates from Thomas's approach, it is mentioned explicitly and the reasons are explained.

2.4.1   The critical incidents method as a means of identifying culture standards

A person living in his or her own cultural orientation system is likely to be understood and accepted by others who share the same frame of reference and cultural orientation system. However, if people from different cultures interact, they tend

to judge the behavior of the other from their own culture's orientation system (Edvardsson & Roos, 2000, p. 21 ff.). This might lead to critical incidents: situations in which people are confronted with unexpected behavior and reactions, the meaning of which is not clear to them and which cannot be deciphered on the basis of their respective and familiar cultural system of orientation (Göbel, 2003; Thomas, Kinast, & Schroll-Machl, 2010, p. 17–28). Critical incidents can be negative, positive or neutral. However, they are usually negative because they pertain to observed behavior that differs from the person's own cultural orientation system, which is regarded positively.

Cultural scientists working in the field of culture standards (e. g., Edvardsson & Roos, 2000; FitzGerald, Seale, Kerins, & McElvaney, 2008; Göbel, 2003; Thomas, 1996) generally agree that culture standards can best be identified by analyzing critical interaction situations in bicultural encounters. Therefore, this study used the critical incidents method to create a database from which German culture standards from a Dutch perspective could be identified.

Since the most practical approach for gathering critical incidents is interviewing people with experience in diverse intercultural encounter situations (Thomas, 1996), for example expatriates, that method was also applied to this study. Dutch people living in Germany were asked to describe situations in which their counterpart from the other culture reacted differently, unexpectedly or inexplicably (Thomas, 1996, p. 116 ff.). For instance, the first person interviewed in the course of this study described the following critical incident:

"In 2008, I climbed one step further on the career ladder. That same day, my supervisor said, 'Ok, you have a new function, now you may choose a new car. You need a bigger car; how about a BMW 5 Touring?' In the Netherlands, it is not self-evident that the company car you drive reflects your position in the hierarchy."

Another interviewee related a rather positive critical incident:

"At my first meeting, I was pleasantly surprised. Even though everyone could state his or her opinion, the production supervisor and the manager made the decision. It took less than half an hour to get to a conclusion that everyone could live with. Back in my old company in the Netherlands, this discussion would have taken hours."

2.4.2   Choice of interviewees

To gather critical incidents for identifying German culture standards, interviews were conducted with Dutch people living and working in Germany. The interviewees had to meet the following criteria.

First, only people who lived and worked (or had worked: two of the inter-
viewees had retired shortly before the interviews) in Germany were chosen for the
interviews. A second requirement was that they had regular contact with Germans,
both at work and in their private lives, to ensure that a certain level of pressure for
adaption to or integration in the German culture existed.

Another prerequisite was that the interviewees had to live at least 75 kilometers
from the Dutch border. This regional differentiation is not found in Thomas's
(1996) methodology (see also Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005).
However, given that Germany and the Netherlands are neighboring countries, a
regional differentiation made sense because it ensured that the interviewees spent
most of their time in Germany. Particularly in the border region, there are many
Dutch people who live and work in Germany but still spend a lot of time in the
Netherlands or in the company of other Dutch people. Interviewing such people
could have biased the results of this study.

According to Thomas (1996, p. 119–121), it is most effective to interview
people about critical incidents when they have been in the country whose cul-
ture is to be analyzed for about three to four months. Research (e. g., Berry, 1985,
p. 235–248; Bhawuk, 1998, p. 630–655) has shown that after three to four months,
the first euphoria about the new country ceases and increased efforts toward cul-
tural integration have to be made, leading to an accumulation of critical incidents.
Thomas (1996, p. 119–121) expressed his concern that after being too long in the
host country, interviewees might adopt the cultural orientation system of the host
country and judge earlier critical incidents from the host country's perspective.

For this study, the first three interviews were used to test whether the duration
of stay had an influence on the critical incidents related. The first three interview-
ees had been in Germany for 10, 3 and 42 years (see Appendix 1). However, the
analysis showed that there was no indication that Thomas's concern was substanti-
ated in the context of this study. Not only did the interviewees remember a lot of
and similar critical incidents (see Appendix 2) and how they evaluated them, but
they also had the ability to retrospectively state how typical those critical incidents
were and how frequently they occurred. For this reason, a maximum period of time
living in Germany was abandoned as a prerequisite for being interviewed. To be
considered for this study, the interviewees just had to have lived in Germany for
longer than three months to ensure that they were able to relate a relevant number
of critical incidents.

To find people who met these criteria, contact was established via the internet
with Dutch-German clubs such as the DNG Köln (German-Dutch association in
Cologne) or the German-Dutch club in Recklinghausen. Most of the members of
these clubs did not meet the criteria themselves, but they were often able to supply
addresses of friends, colleagues or family members who did. Thirty-nine potential
interviewees were eventually found via personal recommendations.

However, since the population of people who met the requirements was unknown, it was not possible to draw a random sample. There was thus a possible bias because it could not be completely ruled out that the sample of interviewees found was not representative of the whole population. One of the characteristics of the concept of culture standards is that they are often only valid for a certain cultural sector (Krewer, 1996). Since the aim of this study was to identify central culture standards (i. e., culture standards that are valid for the German culture as a whole), special care had to be taken to ensure that the culture standards deduced from the interviewees' answers were valid beyond single cultural sectors.

When a population is unknown and cannot be estimated, statistical methods can be used to calculate the probability that a sample is representative of the population (cf. Hudec & Neumann, 2010). However, since this study used a qualitative approach, the sample size was not large enough for such a calculation (at least not large enough to get reliable results from such a calculation).

To minimize the potential bias of a sampling error, this study therefore tried to select a sample that was as heterogeneous as possible: interviewees with a variety of different socio-demographic backgrounds were chosen. Subsequently, their answers were compared to each other and it was analyzed whether one or more of them had stated a considerable number of critical incidents that the others had not stated. This would have been an indication that it could indeed not be ruled out that certain culture standards do not apply to certain cultural sectors and that the results of this study could not be regarded as valid for the whole German culture. Since a statistical analysis of the concordance of the interviewees' answers was not feasible due to the relatively small number of interviewees, I merely checked whether there were critical incidents that were only stated by one or a few of the interviewees.

Eventually, 16 people were interviewed for this study. After 11 interviews a saturation point (cf. Ostertag, 2010, p. 4) was reached; the following 5 interviews provided no or only very few new critical incidents. For this reason, the 16 interviews were sufficient for the qualitative approach of this study.

Appendix 1 shows that the 16 interviewees covered a heterogeneous spectrum and represented a variety of cultural sectors: 10 of the interviewees were female, 6 male. Their ages varied from 26 to 65 years. Each of them had a specific (academic or professional) qualification (1 upper management, 3 middle management, 2 in public administration, 10 self-employed or qualified personnel) and worked in different industries and companies. They lived in different parts of Germany (11 people in North Rhine-Westphalia, 3 in Lower Saxony, 1 in Bavaria and 1 in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania). The names of the interviewees were anonymized and replaced by the pseudonyms In 1–16.

Appendix 2 shows that all the interviewees related similar critical incidents. This indicates that the potential bias mentioned above did not apply to this study. It could therefore be assumed that the German culture standards that were identified

in the further course of this study would indeed be valid for the German culture as a whole and can be characterized as central culture standards.

2.4.3   Pretest and conduction of the interviews

I decided not to conduct the interviews myself. Instead, they were conducted by a native Dutch speaker who is a professional speech therapist and a student of communication studies. She was familiar with interview methods and conducting interviews. Thomas (1996) and others (e. g., Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005) have let non-native speakers conduct their interviews, which apparently did not cause problems. However, in this case, it seemed appropriate to call in a Dutch person to conduct the interviews. Due to their shared history and the sometimes difficult and strained relations between Germans and Dutch people over the last decades, the interviewees — especially the older people — might have been biased and unwilling or reluctant to tell a German interviewer such as myself about negative critical incidents. However, this approach had the disadvantage that I could not get a personal impression of the interviewees and was not able to adjust the methodology if necessary once the interview phase had started.

For this reason, careful instruction of the interviewer was crucial. As preparation for the interviewer, but also as a pretest for the methodological approach, two test interviews with Dutch test people were conducted (in my presence) and analyzed afterwards. The interviewer explained the critical incidents method and was instructed to let the interviewees state their critical incidents without interruption. She was also told that to avoid influencing the interviewees, she could only ask general questions about different areas of life and work if the interviewees did not remember critical incidents. For example, she could ask questions such as "Do you remember critical incidents regarding the relationships between colleagues or between people from different hierarchical levels? Do you remember critical incidents regarding communication?" However, when she conducted the interviews, all the interviewees were able to relate critical incidents and she therefore did not need to ask additional questions. In the pretest, it also became apparent that prior to the interviews the interviewees had to be reminded once more that critical incidents do not necessarily have to be negative but may also be neutral or positive.

About one week before the interviews took place, the respondents received an email in which the interview method and purpose was explained. This presumably increased the number of critical incidents they were able to state when they were interviewed. The original mail can be found (translated into English) in Appendix 6.

With the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded. To begin, the interviewees were asked questions about their socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex, profession, place of work and position in the organization, place of residence in the host country, and period of stay in Germany. To gather

critical incidents situations, the narrative interview method (Mayring, 2003) was used to ensure that the respondents had as much freedom as possible to talk about occurrences, events and experiences without being influenced by the interviewer. This method has proven to be successful in previous research works involving gathering critical incidents (e. g., Schlizio, 2005).

The interviewees were asked to answer the following question: Do you remember situations in which a German acted or reacted differently, unexpectedly or inexplicably, or in which a Dutch person would have reacted differently?

In their studies, Schlizio (2005) and others (e. g., Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Thomas, 1996) added a further question to the interviews. After each stated critical incident, the interviewees were asked for explanations and at the end of the interview they were asked to give some tips for fellow countrymen who want to visit the host culture. This study abandoned those questions for several reasons, largely because the answers might have led to generalizations or stereotyping.

The two test interviews revealed that the interviewees were rather unsure why a certain critical incident had occurred. Upon my request, they admitted that the explanations they had given for the critical incidents were rather hypothetical and that they were (in many cases) not at all sure that they were right. They were also reluctant to offer recommendations because — as one of them stated on request — their experiences were subjective and situation-related and they were not sure whether, based on their personal experiences, they could give valid general advice. The evaluation of the critical incidents was thus reserved for the experts (see Section 2.4.5) who have a more general overview of cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns than the single interviewees.

2.4.4   Analysis of the interviews

Since only the content of the interviews was important for the analysis, a phonetic reproduction of the content and the use of notation signs was not necessary (MacLean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004, p. 113–123). An orthographic transcription method was used to transcribe the interviews. The first three interviews were transcribed completely to gain a better feeling for the interviews. For the other 13 interviews, only the stated critical incidents were actually transcribed (i. e., greetings, small talk in the beginning, digressions were not transcribed).

The interviewees described 225 critical incidents, 180 of which were concretely remembered situations. In 45 cases, the interviewees stated things about Germans that they found different, unexpected or inexplicable but for which they could not state a concrete remembered situation. However, they had observed them repeatedly over the years. In one example, In 1 stated that he was astonished that colleagues who have known each other for a long time in Germany often still address each other very formally, but he could not remember a concrete situation in

which he observed this behavior (see Appendix 2). Those 45 statements were also considered in this study and treated like critical incidents.

The 225 critical incidents were analyzed following the qualitative content analysis of Mayring (2003, p. 209 ff.). To begin, the material was paraphrased. Using the analysis technique "summarization" (Mayring 2003, p. 58), the material was then reduced to its core content to create a manageable corpus that still contained the relevant information and that did not bias the interviewees' statements. From the data it appeared that the critical incidents could be divided into 15 categories. Each category was given a title and a few quotations from the interviewees were attached to it. The categories were:

1. Separation of professional and private life (mentioned in 15 interviews, 27 critical incidents)
2. Dealing with time (mentioned in 15 interviews, 34 critical incidents)
3. Rules (mentioned in 13 interviews, 24 critical incidents)
4. Status (mentioned in 14 interviews, 16 critical incidents)
5. Academic titles and qualifications (mentioned in 14 interviews, 15 critical incidents)
6. Formality (mentioned in 15 interviews, 17 critical incidents)
7. Planning, preparation, attention to details (mentioned in 13 interviews, 18 critical incidents)
8. Task orientation (mentioned in 10 interviews, 17 critical incidents)
9. Hierarchies (mentioned in 14 interviews, 17 critical incidents)
10. Flexibility and improvisation (mentioned in 8 interviews, 14 critical incidents)
11. Directness and straightforwardness (mentioned in 9 interviews, 10 critical incidents)
12. Competitiveness (mentioned in 4 interviews, 4 critical incidents)
13. Tradition (mentioned in 3 interviews, 4 critical incidents)
14. Rituals (mentioned in 3 interviews, 4 critical incidents)
15. Trust (mentioned in 3 interviews, 4 critical incidents)

A detailed list that shows which of the interviewees stated how many critical incidents with regard to the categories can be found in Appendix 2. A more detailed description and explanation of the categories can be found in Section 2.5.

2.4.5   Expert evaluation

The 15 categories with the 225 critical incidents were presented to bicultural experts for evaluation. According to Thomas, Kinast, and Schroll-Machl (2003, p. 181–203), bicultural experts are people who have years of profound and extensive personal experience with both cultures and who have analyzed and compared both cultures in a methodical, well-reflected and scientific way. They are familiar

with both cultural orientation systems and causes of behavior and norms, and are consequently able to concretize culture standards.

In total, 10 experts participated in the evaluation of the categories: 6 Dutch and 4 German people. The expert group consisted of people who scientifically analyze the German and Dutch cultures (two historians, three communication scientists and one scientist of culture and literature) and people who deal with both countries and cultures on a daily basis in the free economy (three people working in cross-border consultancy companies, one working in a Dutch-German PR office).

Detailed information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the experts can be found in Appendix 3. Since some of the experts also preferred to be anonymized, their names were replaced by the pseudonyms Ex 1–10.

The number of experts in this study was higher than in comparable studies (in which, for the most part, no more than five experts evaluated the critical incidents). In studies from Thomas (1996) and others (e.g., Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005) regarding culture standards, the interviewees were asked to evaluate the critical incidents (e.g., by giving explanations for the behavior of the members of the other culture). This was not done in this study to avoid subjective evaluations, but the number of experts was increased to compensate for this omission.

The evaluation of the categories took place in face-to-face discussions with and between the experts. First, the general division of the critical incidents into 15 categories and the categories themselves were discussed with the experts to validate this approach. Subsequently, the experts were asked to answer seven questions for each of the categories. Furthermore, each expert was presented with the other experts' answers and given a chance to comment on them. In this way, the evaluation of the categories took place in a mutual discussion process. The seven questions were:

Questions 1 and 2: "How typical are the statements from this category?" and "How important are the statements from this category when it comes to binational encounters?" Those two questions can also be found in the majority of comparable studies about the identification of culture standards (e.g., Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005; Thomas, 1996). The experts could select from five answers: very typical/important, typical/important, neither … nor, a little typical/important, atypical/unimportant. Based on the answers to these questions, a weighting of the relevance of the categories was calculated. A numerical value of 4 was assigned to the answer 'very typical/important'; the answer 'atypical/unimportant' was assigned a numerical value of 0. Only those categories that had an average numerical value of ≥3 in both questions were used to identify culture standards. Four categories ('directness,' 'tradition,' 'rituals' and 'trust') were removed from the identification process due to a lack of relevance because they were considered neither typical for the Dutch perception of the German culture nor important in binational encounters.

Questions 3 and 4: "Is this category a separate and independent category or is it part of another or can it be assigned to another category?" and "Are there fundamental values or norms underlying this category?" The answers to these two questions show whether a category forms a culture standard, whether it is part of another category or another culture standard or whether it forms pari passu together with another category a culture standard. A category is a culture standard if the experts consider it to be independent, not belonging to another category, and if there are no underlying norms and values (otherwise those norms and values would form the culture standard). Question 3 is not found in other studies about the identification of culture standards. Question 4 can be found in a different form in some of the studies (e. g., "What should a person know about the host culture to understand this difference?").

Question 5: "Are there additional aspects to this category that have not been stated by the interviewees?" The purpose of this question was to test the 'completeness' of the categories. If the experts had stated further aspects, this would have been an indication that there was a need for further research related to those aspects.

Question 6: "How should a Dutch person react in critical interaction situations that have been stated by the interviewees regarding this category to avoid misunderstandings or irritations?" This question can also be found in most of the other studies about the identification of critical incidents.

Question 7: "Has this category undergone changes in the last years or decades or is it likely to change in the near future?" This question can also be found in similar studies. Culture standards usually change very slowly and to a small extent (Thomas, 2005, p. 45 f.). If the experts would have stated that a category changes or has changed to a greater extent, this might have been an indication that it is not a culture standard or that it is only a peripheral culture standard (Thomas, 2003). In that case, further research would have been necessary.

In the majority of the other studies about the identification of culture standards, the experts were also asked if they knew historical, religious or political reasons for the cultural differences stated by the interviewees. The purpose of this question was to identify a historico-cultural anchor for the culture standards. This question was abandoned in this study for two reasons.

First, the scientific discourse shows that social scientists are not unanimous about the extent to which or if it is possible at all to derive cultural characteristics from the history of a country. Skopol and Sommers (1980, p. 44) claimed that this is possible (at least to a certain extent), but Lorenz (2002, p. 246 ff.) and Daniel (2001) have noted that today's cultural characteristics can hardly be derived from particular developments or events in the past. Of course, there are certain historical developments or events that allow a better understanding of today's cultural characteristics, but trying to simply link today's cultural characteristics to those events or developments is rarely possible. This opinion is also shared by Matsumoto and

Yoo (2006), who analyzed various cultural studies in a meta-study. They acknowledged that these studies are often supported by thoughtful discussions of the socio-historical contexts in which cultural practices are embedded, but criticized the linking of cultural characteristics to historical developments because it lacks empirical justification. Among the experts who took part in the identification of the culture standards for this study, the two historians also agreed with this.

Second, an embedding of cultural characteristics into a historical context would not have been expedient for this study because it is not necessary for a simple identification of culture standards. Of course, Thomas (2003) had a point when he claimed that embedding cultural characteristics into a historical context certainly helps create a better understanding of cultural differences. Hofstede (2008, p. 11) has even claimed that cultural differences cannot be understood without the study of history because he sees culture as the crystallization of history in the minds, hearts and hands of the present generation. Nevertheless, since embedding the identified culture standards in a historical context would not have been empirically justifiable, it was not done in this scientific study.

2.4.6   Labeling the data

The process of identifying these culture standards was based on the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). In contrast to models of classic social research, which usually validate previously formulated theory on the basis of data, grounded theory is developed inductively from a data corpus.

The basic idea of the grounded theory approach is to analyze a database (in this case the critical incidents stated by the interviewees) and discover and label categories and their interrelationships (coding). The coding process starts with open coding, the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the data. With the method of open coding (in this case a qualitative content analysis as suggested by Mayring), the 15 categories described in Section 2.4.4 were generated and the critical incidents were divided among these categories. In the first instance, this was done by the author of this study, but the categories were also later confirmed by the ten experts.

Next, axial coding (the process of relating categories to each other, finding hierarchical relations between them and fitting them into a basic frame of generic relationships) took place. The experts identified causal relations between the categories, based on a questionnaire that every expert filled out about each category (see Section 2.4.5 and Appendix 4.4).

Subsequently, selective coding (choosing core categories and relating other categories to these core categories) was carried out. The experts identified five core categories (in this case culture standards) and linked other categories to them (see Appendices 4.2–4.6). By letting the experts carry out the axial and selective coding, the results could be regarded as objective and scientifically validated.

To be regarded as a culture standard, a category had to meet the following criteria: it had to be considered typical and important when it comes to binational encounters (see questions 1 and 2); it had to be separate and independent and not part of another category (see question 3); there should not be underlying norms or values to it (see question 4) (which does not mean that it cannot be a norm or value itself) and it must have undergone no or only minor changes (see question 7). These criteria were met by the categories *separation of professional and private life, task orientation, dealing with time* and *status orientation.* The categories *academic titles and qualifications, formality, hierarchies* and *competitiveness* were, according to the experts, part of these culture standards.

Two categories (*rules* and *planning, preparation, attention to details*) were regarded as belonging together; they formed the culture standard *appreciation for rules structures and regulations.* According to the experts, the *flexibility and improvisation* category is part of this culture standard.

In the course of the expert evaluation, it became obvious that not all critical incidents could be thoroughly explained by the five identified culture standards, which implied that there had to be further culture standards. After some discussion, the experts agreed that a culture standard called *fear of losing control* had to be added to the other culture standards. This culture standard was not directly deduced from the categories, but the experts agreed that it influences all other culture standards to at least a certain degree and that the other culture standards and critical incidents cannot be thoroughly explained without this one (see Appendix 4.5). After the identification of this sixth culture standard, we conducted theoretical sampling, a circular process during the course of which the collected data was analyzed again based on the new results of the coding. The critical incidents were analyzed and coded again in the light of the six culture standards. This time, the critical incidents could be thoroughly explained.

In addition, the other results of the expert evaluation were also coded various times. Each time one of the experts stated new aspects for one of the identified categories in the process of axial or selective coding, the category was coded again by the other experts, regarding this aspect. This ensured that as many aspects for each category and subsequently for each culture standard as possible could be identified, reaching a theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 2008, p. 51).

2.5   Results

With the help of the experts, six central German culture standards from a Dutch perspective were identified:

• Fear of losing control
• Separation of living spheres
• Task orientation
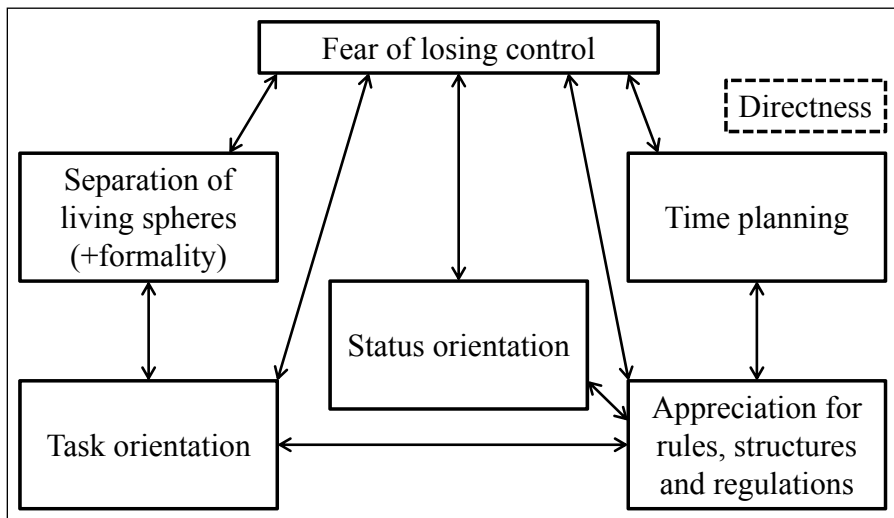
Fig. 2   Interdependency and hierarchies of German culture standards from a Dutch
          perspective. The arrows show which of the culture standards are related to each
          other

- Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations
- Time planning
- Status orientation

These six culture standards cannot be regarded separately. In parts they overlap,
they are mutually dependent and they stand in a hierarchical relationship to one
another. After the identification of the German culture standards, the experts were
asked to analyze if and how these are linked to each other and in what hierarchi-
cal relation they stand. This was also conducted in a discussion with all experts.
The culture standards and the links between them are illustrated in Figure 2. The
arrows illustrate which culture standards are linked to each other, and the numbers
attached to the arrows show how many of the experts agreed that a link between
two culture standards exists. A more detailed table, showing the answers of the
individual experts with regard to the interdependency and hierarchies of the culture
standards, can be found in Appendix 5.

    The figure shows that the culture standard *fear of losing control* is on a higher
hierarchical level than the other culture standards. The reason for this is explained
in Section 2.5.8. The culture standards *separation of living spheres, task orienta-
tion, time planning, appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* and *status
orientation* are more or less on the same hierarchical level. *Directness* was not a
separate culture standard but was nevertheless included in the figure. As will be ex-
plained in more detailed in Section 2.5.7, the experts disagreed about this cultural
characteristic and about whether it was part of one of the culture standards.

Sections 2.5.1 through 2.5.6 will describe and explain the six German culture standards from a Dutch perspective. They will describe which areas of life are impacted, the causal links between the culture standards and German behavioral patterns that Dutch people experience in bicultural encounters.

In the description and explanations of the culture standards and their characteristics, brackets are used to indicate which of the interviewees related critical incidents about that aspect or culture standard. Since the names of the interviewees were anonymized, their pseudonyms (e. g., In 1) are displayed in the brackets. Appendix 2 contains a table illustrating the number of critical incidents each interviewee described with regard to the single categories. The text in brackets shows which of the experts agreed with a certain explanation for a culture standard or its characteristics. Detailed information about the experts' socio-demographic characteristics can be found in Appendix 3 and information about their answers can be found in Appendix 4.

General characteristics are first described for each culture standard. It is then further divided into 'horizontal relationships' (relationships between people in their private life and between colleagues from the same hierarchical level), 'vertical relationships' (relationships between people from different hierarchical levels), 'communication' and 'applications'. Such a division is reasonable because the analysis of the critical incidents indicated that, from a Dutch perspective, German culture standards predominantly manifest in these parts of life. In addition, the culture standards show certain characteristics and peculiarities that differ from each other in these parts of private and professional life. However, since not every culture standard manifests in all these parts of life, this division is only used for those culture standards to which it applies.

Furthermore, some of the categories or critical incidents could not be assigned to one particular culture standard. According to the experts, those categories or incidents result from an interplay of different culture standards. In this study, they are assigned to the culture standard that they are most influenced by and endorsed with an explanation of which other culture standards they are also influenced by.

 In addition, this study analyzes how every culture standard is linked to other culture standards (in Chapter 2.5.8). Since most cultural characteristics result from an interplay of different culture standards (Thomas, 1996, p. 112), a description of the interactions between the German culture standards helps the reader better comprehend the cultural characteristics.

Schroll-Machl (2008) already identified German culture standards. However, she analyzed the German culture from a rather global perspective: she conducted a meta-study based on studies about German culture standards from the perspectives of various other cultures (USA, France, Czech Republic and China). It is questionable whether the results of her study can indeed be considered real culture standards (as defined by Thomas).

One of the most distinguishing features of culture standards is that they do not show cultural characteristics from a rather global perspective but from the specific perspective of another culture. Schroll-Machl pointed out general cultural characteristics of the German culture that are striking for people from other cultures. Her results are based on the results of intercultural culture standards studies but are cross-cultural rather than intercultural. This does not mean that they are inaccurate, but they cannot simply be transferred to the German-Dutch context.

In some cases, Schroll-Machl's German culture standards show great similarities with the culture standards identified in this study. However, that does not mean that they actually have the same effect in intercultural encounters between German and Dutch people. Thomas (1996, p. 113) stated that one culture can, from the perspectives of other cultures, have similar or identical culture standards, but they might still impact totally different fields of action, have different functions or have a different tolerance range. The Dutch-German culture standards in this study that resemble the German culture standards identified by Schroll-Machl are the following: *separation of living spheres, time planning, task orientation* and *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*. For each of these culture standards, this study analyzes the extent to which it differs from Schroll-Machl's culture standards and in which parts.

Furthermore, Schroll-Machl found culture standards that are not at all reflected in the critical incidents that were gathered in this study: *rule-orientated, internalized control* (which basically means that Germans control themselves at work and that there is no need for external control of work processes) and low-context *communication* (which means that German communication is very explicit and direct and that Germans formulate things almost fully verbally, making everything clear and unambiguous). This also shows that Schroll-Machl's culture standards cannot simply be transferred into a German-Dutch context.

2.5.1   Fear of losing control

The experts agree that many of the critical incidents reported by the interviewees can be explained by a German *fear of losing control*, which they regard as an independent culture standard. They consider this fear as typically German and important to binational interactions. Since roughly 150 of the critical incidents (stated by all interviewees) can be related to the German *fear of losing control,* it is evident that its importance exceeds that of the other culture standards. According to all the experts, the *fear of losing control* is one of the most fundamental values of German culture. The other central German culture standards from a Dutch perspective, especially *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* and *time planning*, can at least partly be explained by this culture standard.

The analysis of the critical incidents indicates that Germans have a strong aversion to losing control. To a considerably greater extent than Dutch people, they try

to avoid ambiguities, risks and situations in which they are not fully able to keep control (In 1–16). The experts agree that this is why they appreciate reliable and fixed rules, structures and regulations that help them keep control in every situation and avoid uncertainties and unforeseen situations (all experts but Ex 4). Detailed planning and stretching the planning horizon far into the future apparently also serve this purpose (Ex 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8).

The critical incidents also imply that Germans generally seem to be more averse than Dutch people to doing different things simultaneously; multitasking is to be avoided. They try to keep things simple and break work processes and tasks down into single steps that are followed one after another to always maintain a good overview and controllability (In 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11).

Furthermore, the interviewees' answers show that Germans often feel uncomfortable when they are not able to plan and forecast things thoroughly or have to react to unknown situations. They prefer approaches, procedures and solutions that have already proven their worth in the past and are considerably less apt than Dutch to stray from the norm (In 9, 10, 14, 15).

2.5.2   Separation of living spheres

The interviewees (all but In 3) described 27 critical incidents related to the separation of different living spheres, especially private and professional life. According to the experts, this *separation of living spheres* is typical (3.4 of 4) and important in binational (business) encounters (3.8 of 4), the changes it has undergone through time are negligible and it forms an independent culture standard (see Appendix 4.4).

From a Dutch perspective, Germans tend to draw very sharp boundaries between their different living spheres, especially between their work and their private lives (all interviewees but In 16). They adjust their behavior and their interpersonal dealings to the sphere they are momentarily in (see also Schroll-Machl, 2008, p. 139 ff.). At work, they focus primarily on the task; work comes first. Feelings, humor and intimacy are part of private life, so they are not (or only to a small extent) part of professional life (In 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12). Even good relationships with colleagues and business associates are seen as more a pleasant side-effect than a premise for working together well (In 1, 4, 7, 10, 12).

According to the experts, this is one of the reasons why, from a Dutch perspective, Germans in the workplace often seem distant, reserved, dismissive, humorless and even unfriendly (Ex 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10). Dutch people who meet their German colleagues for the first time in private life often report feeling that they are dealing with two totally different people with regards to their external appearance, behavior and mood. In 16, for example, related the following critical incident:

"I had a meeting with the mayors of the cities Duisburg and Kleve. During the official program, both behaved very formally and showed a reserved and rather distanced attitude toward me. After the official part was over, we met for a pub crawl. Now both appeared in informal clothing and acted jovially and informally and we had a pleasant evening."

The experts agree that due to the *separation of living spheres*, Germans are inclined to see colleagues predominantly as colleagues and not as potential friends. Fellow workers are not automatically granted access to the private life, which is reserved to family and friends. In their private time, Germans maintain less contact with their colleagues than Dutch people. Meeting colleagues after work for leisure and sports activities or *borrels* (informal get-togethers) is less common in Germany than in the Netherlands and friendships do not develop as often from work but rather from private activities (In 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 15, 16). Interviewee 8, for example, stated,

"My colleagues are not my friends. That is completely separated, I rarely see colleagues doing something together in their free time. There is a great difference in dealing with each other at work or in your free time."

According to the experts, Germans generally talk less about private matters in the workplace than their Dutch colleagues do and do not ask others about their private lives (In 4, 6, 7, 9). As In 6 stated:

"Interaction with new colleagues usually first happens on a pure business level. In the Netherlands, the new one is immediately asked: 'Where do you live? Do you have kids? Are you married?' In Germany, it takes quite some time until you can ask your colleagues questions like that."

As Schroll-Machl (2008, p. 158) described, colleagues in German companies first meet on a strictly work-related level, stress their rationality (not their emotionality), and stay properly within their roles (without a personal "flavor") within the formal structures of their company. In the process of getting to know each other or even becoming friends, they start changing their roles and their distance decreases. Their contact becomes more private, emotions are shown, and the other person's personality becomes more visible.

However, as the experts stated, even when colleagues become friends, they stay task-oriented at work and usually discuss private matters in their free time. In 8 even explained that "At work my best friend is also my boss. At work she tells me in a rather direct tone to do this and that. Only after work are we normal friends again."

Four of the interviewees (In 1, 3, 8, 9) stated that the competitive pressure is higher in German companies than in Dutch companies and the working atmos-

phere and the way of treating each other are rougher. According to the experts, this impression is also caused by the *separation of living spheres* (Ex 1, 5, 6, 8). Germans tend to make a distinction between a person's professional role and the person behind this role, which Dutch people do to a lesser extent (Ex 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 9). Trying to outdo colleagues, directly criticizing and engaging in constructive disputes are seen as part of the professional role they play at work. Because of this, Germans usually do not consider open competition to be a disturbance of a good working atmosphere, but rather an instrument of increasing efficiency in a company (Ex 1, 2, 7, 8 9).

The experts agree that the *separation of living spheres* also influences the relations between different hierarchical levels. In Germany there is usually less contact between people from different hierarchical levels because the separation of private and professional life limits contact to business matters (In 10, 15; Ex 1, 2, 3, 7, 8). The relation-oriented and more informal Dutch workers tend to have more contact between different hierarchical levels (of course, this also has to do with the flatter hierarchies in the Netherlands).

2.5.3 Formality

With the exception of In 9, the interviewees agreed that Germans are more formal than Dutch people. Seventeen critical incidents directly referred to German formality. According to the experts, this formality is not an independent culture standard but part of the *separation of living spheres* because there are also living spheres in which Germans do not act formally, especially in private life (Ex 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10).

At work, Germans are usually more formal than Dutch people. Dress codes are more conservative and people more distanced and reserved when they meet (In 1, 6, 15, 16). Many Dutch people especially note the use of the formal "Sie" when addressing others instead of the more informal "du." In the Netherlands, people start addressing others informally rather quickly to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. In Germany, it takes much longer before people switch to addressing others with the informal "du." In 1, for example, stated:

> "I have been working in the company for about ten years now. Every morning, I greet our secretary, we often chat and spend our breaks together in the canteen. But I still address her with the formal Sie."

At official meetings or events, the formal form of address is always used. Even colleagues who have known each other for a longer time often still address each other with "Sie" (In 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11). This was stated by In 2, among others: "In official meetings, even close colleagues who normally address each other with the informal du always address each other with the formal Sie."

Respect and a respectful treatment of others is very important for Germans and acting formally, maintaining a little distance and following rituals is regarded as courtesy and respect. People who are higher in the hierarchy, older people, officials and people with (academic) titles are treated especially respectfully (In1, 4, 10, 14). In 4 explained, for example:

> "If I meet four people in the Netherlands, I just start with the person to my left or right and give everyone a handshake. In Germany, you first address the women but you also have to keep hierarchies in mind, the person's age and how long a person has been working for the company."

German formality also shows in how people communicate at work. In Dutch companies, information often flows freely between employees and between employees and supervisors, different kinds of communication channels are used, and information is spread informally (Ex 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9). In German companies, people use formal structures to communicate; information is conveyed through formal channels and usually flows vertically. The boss gathers the relevant information and disseminates it to the employees who need to be involved. When it comes to communication, Germans clearly prefer written documents (In 1, 3).

According to the experts, German formality is not only a result of the *separation of living spheres* but also has to do with the culture standard *task orientation* (Ex 4, 5, 8, 9). The experts agree that Germans appreciate clear and efficient structures; unambiguity is to be avoided and reliability is important. By using formal structures and communication channels, employers and supervisors can ensure that everyone receives the relevant information, the boss maintains an overview and every employee knows what to do and what can be expected from colleagues. From a German perspective, this is the best and most efficient way to complete a task.

Schroll-Machl (2008, p. 139) also described a typical German formality, but this formality has an extra dimension to it from an international perspective. At work, Germans show little to no emotion. From a Dutch perspective, this seems to have no influence on binational business encounters, but this may be because from an international perspective Dutch people also show little emotion at work (Vossenstein, 2010, p. 15).

2.5.4   Task orientation

In 15 of the interviews, 34 critical incidents regarding the German *task orientation* were described. The experts agree that *task orientation* is typical (3.6 of 4) and important (3.6 of 4) in binational business encounters. The changes it has undergone in the last decades are negligible and it forms an independent culture standard (see Appendix 4.4).

According to Schroll-Machl (2008, p. 46), when people meet they always meet on different levels: the task level and the social-emotional level that deals with emotions and relationships. The experts agree that while both levels are equally important to Dutch people, Germans show a clear preference for the task level (all experts but Ex 8). At work, they concentrate on the task; everything is to be subordinated to the work objectives. Being objective, showing enthusiasm about work and expending effort are important characteristics of professionalism. Germans want to be seen as goal-oriented.

According to the experts, Germans concentrate on the task at work; feelings are to be set aside. Working together with someone does not require first establishing a social relationship with that person. Germans certainly appreciate nice and friendly behavior, but they do not expect it and are not offended when being treated harshly or curtly. For this reason, Germans usually put less effort than Dutch people into creating a friendly atmosphere or getting to know their business partners (In 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11). In 5, for example, stated, "Dutch people find it more important than Germans to be seen as likable and congenial. In my company in Germany this is less important; here, work really is central."

According to 15 of the interview partners (In 1–15), formal and real hierarchies in Germany are stronger than in the Netherlands: 18 critical incidents refer to hierarchies in German companies. The experts agree that this is typical (3.8 of 4) and important (3.8 of 4). However, they do not regard hierarchical relations in Germany as an independent culture standard but see it as a result of interplay between the culture standards *task orientation, appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* and *separation of living spheres* (see Appendix 4.5). The hierarchical structures in Germany are not found in Schroll-Machl's study. It seems that they are a specific characteristic of the German *task orientation* from a Dutch perspective. Schroll-Machl (2008, p. 52) even claimed that from an international perspective, fulfilling the task, rational arguments and finding a consensus seem to be stronger than hierarchies in Germany.

Interviewees and experts agree that tasks and functions are usually clearly defined and assigned in Germany. The hierarchical levels are distinguished from each other, each level has clearly defined responsibilities and people tend to adhere strictly to what they are allowed and supposed to do. The supervisor or boss makes the decisions; the employees carry them out (Ex 3–10). Among other reasons, hierarchies are accepted because the task can be carried out most efficiently when everyone knows exactly what his or her responsibilities are, what may and must be done and what exactly can be expected from others (all experts but Ex 2 and 6).

From the critical incidents described by the interviewees, it became apparent that orders are often not formulated as a friendly question in Germany, as is common in the Netherlands, but are given rather directly and clearly (In 2, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15). According to the experts, Germans usually appreciate this unambiguousness

because they are clearly told what is expected and how to fulfill the task (Ex 3–10). In 4, for example, stated:

"Yes, in Germany, orders are given in a more commanding tone. At work I notice this every day. While in the Netherlands orders are formulated more as a friendly question, in Germany it is more 'do this, do that!' But that is accepted by the employees. My boss is strict but I never had the feeling of being seen as inferior."

The interviewees' answers imply that the German *task orientation* also influences communication. In business encounters, Germans place the highest priority on the specific objective of the interaction. They remain objective and get to the point quicker than Dutch people (In 1, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13). As In 16 put it:

"Social talk in advance is less common here than in the Netherlands. I once participated in a meeting with international members. When the boss opened the meeting with the words 'Good morning, we are here to discuss this and that, let us start,' they seemed rather surprised."

According to the experts, Dutch people often try to address others on a social-emotional level; in business encounters they emphasize small talk and breaking the ice. Germans do this to a somewhat lesser extent. Using humor in business encounters is often even frowned upon because it is regarded as frivolous (Ex 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9).

In discussions, Germans try to defend their point of view with arguments and facts. Things are either right or wrong; compromises are less popular than in the Netherlands (In 5, 8, 9). The best solution for a problem is what matters, not preventing people from losing face or taking everyone's opinions and views into account. Because of this, discussions are often perceived as harsher in Germany. Germans find this totally normal and acceptable; they often even enjoy defending their point of view with arguments (all experts but Ex 6, 7, 10). When In 11 arrived in Germany, she often felt that: "The Germans in my department were constantly fighting. Later I noticed that this was just the German way of discussion and that nobody got mad."

In presentations, Germans tend to present as many facts as possible because they believe it helps to better understand things and avoid unambiguity. For Dutch listeners, German presentations are therefore often boring and dry (Ex 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9) because Dutch people usually expect a short summary in presentations rather than a detailed description.

When it comes to job applications, the experts agree that in German companies the qualifications of the applicants are far more important than soft skills or congeniality. Certainly, in Dutch companies qualification is usually also the most im-

portant precondition for hiring someone but soft skills, personality and sympathy play a greater role in the application process than in Germany (Ex 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9).

Since Germans focus on the task, qualifications that help in fulfilling it are held in high esteem. Experts are admired and respected because they are considered to have profound knowledge in a certain field. Expert status is achieved through academic study and the title that comes with it. Along with a general *status orientation*, this is the reason why titles and qualifications play a greater role in Germany than in the Netherlands. PhD titles are especially held in high esteem. They are regarded as a proof of expertise and make the holder a trustworthy person (Ex 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10). Germans who have an academic title usually prefer or even ask to be addressed with it. They often add their title to their business cards and their signature when signing documents (In 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15). In 1 stated:

> "I have two sets of business cards. On the set for Germans my title is shown, on the Dutch it is not. One of my colleagues, a young man, told me one day that he now had been awarded a doctor's title and asked me to address him with his title from now on."

Since PhD titles are associated with profound expert knowledge and even with effort and success, they are regarded as door-openers more than in the Netherlands. People with a PhD have more chances to climb the career ladder; for some functions (beyond natural sciences) a PhD is even a requirement. And often people with a PhD are even given preferential treatment, for example when they apply to a bank for a loan (In 3, 5, 10, 16).

2.5.5 Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations

The interviewees reported 43 critical incidents regarding a German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*. The experts agree that this appreciation is typical (4 of 4) and important in binational business encounters (4 of 4). The changes it has undergone in the past decade are negligible and it is considered an independent culture standard (see Appendix 4.4).

2.5.5.1 Appreciation for rules

Generally, there are not considerably more rules and laws in Germany than in the Netherlands. However, the experts agree that rules and regulations cover more facets of life and are far more detailed in Germany. Work processes in particular are regulated and stipulated in more detail than in the Netherlands (Ex 1–10).

From the interviewees' answers, it became apparent that Germans have a strong appreciation for rules; they follow the rules and rarely question them (all interviewees but In 1, 5, 12). In 8, for example, stated:

> "For a few years I lived close to the Dutch border. When I saw a car that was parked illegally, I did not even have to take a look at the license plate. I just knew it was a Dutch car. Germans just stick to all the rules. Another example is the Sunday rest, which Germans take very seriously."

According to the experts, Germans assume that rules have a universal validity and are to be followed even if they do not make sense in certain situations or if a reason for the rules is not obvious at first glance (In 2, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16). As In 8 put it: "In Germany there is another attitude toward rules. Here rules are always to be followed."

The experts also stated that Germans prefer to have a clear and dependable understanding of what is expected because it helps them minimize risks and uncertainties (all experts but Ex 6, 9, 10). Because of their inner urge and motivation to stick to rules and regulations, external control is not necessary. It is taken for granted that everybody will follow the rules (Ex1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7).

In Germany, there is a strong social control because Germans expect everybody to stick to the rules (In 1, 10, 13, 15). In 1, for example, stated: "In Germany there is more social control. It is not accepted by your surroundings if you do not follow the rules."

One of the culture standards Schroll-Machl identified from an international perspective is *rule-oriented internalized control* (Schroll-Machl, 2008, p. 93–103). However, since many of the cultural characteristics of this culture standard are not shared from the Dutch perspective and those characteristics that can also be found from a Dutch perspective overlap with the culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, rule-oriented internalized control* is not a German culture standard from a Dutch perspective. From an international perspective, it is seen as a characteristic of the German culture that external control is not necessary because Germans usually strongly identify with the task and control themselves. This characteristic does not lead to critical interaction situations in German-Dutch encounters because Dutch people usually also work independently, with little external control (Vaessen, 2009, p. 88; Vossenstein, 2010, p. 71). This also applies to the strong appreciation for reliability that can be found in the Netherlands as well (Müller, 1998, p. 28).

2.5.5.2 Appreciation for planning, preparation and details

In 18 critical incidents, all interviewees (except In 8) described the German appreciation for planning. The experts agreed that Germans plan considerably more

than the Dutch. They stated that Germans tend to be more structured and organized in their work, so detailed planning is crucial. They are perfectionists and have high expectations when it comes to even the smallest details. They prefer to analyze all possibilities in advance and before even starting a task, they try to think about solutions for possible problems that might occur. Proactive planning is considered better than reactively adjusting to changing circumstances or unexpected problems. For this reason, they try to find and eliminate all potential sorts of mistakes and situations that might become dangerous. According to the experts, standardization and formalization of work processes can generally be found to a higher extent in German than in Dutch organizations (In 1, 2 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16). With regard to this, In 4 related the following critical incident:

> "We planned a Facebook campaign for our German client. They called us several times a day and asked us whether we had considered this fact and that fact, and what we would do if this or that event occurred. This behavior is normal for our German clients. They try to plan everything and to avoid all problems in advance."

The interviewees' answers suggest that Germans show a stronger tendency than Dutch people to write down everything. Work steps are written down in detail and verbal agreements are usually confirmed by written and signed documents. Germans often use contracts to organize and regulate their business with others. Those are usually more comprehensive because even the smallest details are included (In 1, 2, 3, 6). In 1 stated:

> "In the Dutch department of our company, things were discussed orally and only key aspects were written down. Even though everything worked fine, the German parent company always wanted them to write down everything in detail. At first, the Dutch were reluctant. But eventually the rate of production errors was demonstrably lower."

The interviewees' answers also imply that Germans are usually well prepared in meetings or business encounters. They know every detail about the topic or about the products they want to buy or sell and have considered answers to all possible questions in advance. More often than in the Netherlands, Germans get agendas for meetings beforehand so they can prepare themselves with facts and arguments. Discussions are usually kept on a high level; Germans tend to speak only when they have acquainted themselves with the subject and when they can support their arguments with facts (In 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13).

According to the interviewees and the experts, the German *appreciation for planning, preparation and details* also has another important characteristic: even though it makes work processes in Germany efficient and predictable, it also makes them less flexible. Most of the interviewees (In 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16)

stated that once a plan has been made, Germans become single-minded about putting it into action. If an unforeseen event occurs, they are often thrown off-balance or become doubtful about how they should continue. Since Germans are more reluctant to go off the beaten track, they find it more difficult than Dutch people to adapt to changing situations and improvise. According to Schroll-Machl, this lack of flexibility and improvisation is also seen as a German character trait from an international perspective. However, from a Dutch perspective, it is emphasized to a greater extent: 15 critical incidents regarding the lack of flexibility and improvisation show that this is a more important issue in German-Dutch encounters than it is from an international perspective (In 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16). All the experts agreed with this.

Schroll-Machl (2008, p. 76) also claimed that from an international perspective the German *appreciation for planning, preparation and details* makes decision-making processes slow. However, this is not the case from a Dutch perspective. The interviewees described seven critical incidents that show that decision making in Germany is usually faster than in the Netherlands (In 2, 7, 9, 12, 15) and the experts agreed with this (Ex 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9).

2.5.6   Time planning

15 of the interviewees reported 31 critical incidents related specifically to German *time planning*. The experts agreed that *time planning* is typical (3.4 of 4) and important (3.2 of 4) in Germany, that it has changed only slightly over the past decades and that it is an independent culture standard (see Appendix 4.4). German *time planning* manifests in three main categories.

2.5.6.1   Long-term horizon and detailed time schedules

The interviewees' answers suggest that in both their private and their professional lives, Germans show a tendency to plan further ahead than Dutch people; their planning horizon stretches further into the future. While Dutch people tend to set out a more general framework for the future and are apt to flexibly adapt to changing circumstances, Germans try to precisely define goals for the future. They like to plan as far ahead as they can (In 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13). According to the experts, this is why Dutch people often see Germans as worrying unnecessarily about things in the distant future (all experts but Ex 3, 4 and 5). In 5, for example, stated: "Many of my German friends start planning Christmas in April. One friend is already planning his birthday party for 2014. Things like this still surprise me." And In 7 stated:

> "When I started working at the German company, we had a project that we had to plan and carry out on rather short notice. I was not worried at all, but some

of my colleagues got really nervous and complained that they did not have enough time to fully plan the project before starting it. I could observe this sort of behavior frequently, not only in the first but also in the second German company I worked. This is peculiar because in my first job in the Netherlands people never got nervous when they could not fully plan a project. Actually, they rarely planned a project completely in advance."

The interviewees' answers also imply that Germans generally structure their time to a higher extent than the Dutch. They draw up detailed time schedules, consider all possibilities and then make detailed plans about how and when they will achieve their objectives. Setbacks and possible problems are taken into account in advance so that each task can be finished on time and without unexpected complications. Schedules are made to support progress toward the goal on the task level, minimizing disturbances and maximizing engagement and success (In 4, 5, 12, 14). With regard to this, In 5 stated:

"Planning often took a lot of time. The Dutch people in the company were sometimes irritated about this planning because after everything was planned, often something unexpected happened. For example, the customer called and wanted changes."

Due to this detailed and structured *time planning*, appointments are extremely important in Germany, even more than in the Netherlands. At work, but also in private life, spontaneous visits are frowned upon because they hinder people from fulfilling their tasks (In 7, 8, 9, 12). Often Germans only dedicate themselves fully to a visitor when the visitor has an official appointment (In 10, 12). In contrast to Dutch people, Germans often prefer to keep their office doors shut (In 12, 15). This shows that they do not wish to be disturbed in their work (Ex 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9). In 7 stated:

"Not only at work but also in private life friends, neighbors and colleagues do not like to be visited without an appointment. In the beginning I was surprised that my neighbor never had time when I dropped by for a chat."

2.5.6.2 Avoidance of multitasking, monochronic time planning

According to the experts, when Germans have a goal they try to achieve it by organizing their actions in a straight line. They prefer to concentrate on one task at a time and only start another task when the first has been finished. Germans try to avoid multitasking because doing different things simultaneously is regarded as a potential source for uncertainties and the likelihood of making mistakes increases (In 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12; Ex 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8). Problems are also dealt with systematically. As Schroll-Machl (2008) put it: "Firstly, the causes are discussed; secondly,

suggestions for solutions are sought; and only thirdly is a step-by-step implementation of the chosen solution delegated to the responsible people" (p. 123). Interviewee 1 stated:

> "I worked on a team with three Germans. For me, it was remarkable that they completed one order after another although it would have saved them a lot of walking to the warehouse if they had worked on different orders simultaneously."

Meetings in Germany usually have a fixed agenda that is strictly adhered to; one item is discussed after another, in a logical and structured order. According to the experts (Ex 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8), workers in the Netherlands do not usually follow agendas as strictly as in Germany. If new topics come up, they can be discussed (even if they are not on the agenda) and people tend to switch between different topics.

2.5.6.3   Punctuality

Eight of the interviewees reported critical incidents regarding punctuality (In 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15). From an international perspective, punctuality is quite important in the Netherlands (Vossenstein, 2010, p. 33). However, punctuality is even more crucial for Germans. Arriving late for an appointment is frowned upon; tardiness is equated with unreliability. Germans expect people who will be late for an appointment to inform them of the delay as soon as possible. With regards to this, In 7 said: "In Germany it is seen as a sign of disrespect to appear too late at an appointment, more than in the Netherlands."

Schroll-Machl's study (2008, p. 121–138) shows that from an international perspective, punctuality in Germany also includes the strict adherence to official working times. Closing time is closing time. However, different critical incidents from the Dutch interviewees suggest the exact opposite (In 7, 10, 15). From a Dutch perspective, Germans are the ones who do overtime if necessary and stay longer if asked by their boss. Interviewee 7, for example, stated:

> "Some of my colleagues work overtime even if they are not explicitly asked to do so. They are kind of proud about this. In the Netherlands, I have never observed such behavior."

This is an interesting discrepancy. Apparently, from a Dutch perspective, in this context the culture standards *time planning* and *task orientation* (if staying longer at work to get the task done is necessary, Germans stay longer) outweigh the culture standard *separation of living spheres* (which indicates that Germans strictly adhere to official working times).

2.5.7   Status orientation

Thirteen of the interviewees reported 14 critical incidents regarding German *status orientation*. The experts consider status orientation to be typical (3.2 of 4) and important (3.0 of 4). Although it is less persistent than the other culture standards (the experts agree that over the last decade there has been a decrease in the importance of status symbols in business life), they consider it to be constant enough to form an independent culture standard (see Appendix 4.4).

Most of the interviewees agreed that status symbols are more important in German private and professional life than in the Netherlands; they are seen as a proof of success. At work, company cars (especially German car brands), expensive clothes and big desks are common status symbols; in private life, they are cars and houses (In 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14).

One's position in the hierarchy is reflected by status symbols; the higher the position, the more expensive the status symbols. In 1, for example, stated:

> "When I moved up a step on the career ladder, the boss told me that normally I would get a new car, but due to the economic crisis the company could momentarily not afford to buy one. He asked me if it was OK for me if I got the car later. For me this was not a big deal. However, a week later I got a BMW Touring. They said that they bought it because I needed a car that fits to my position."

To some extent, titles (especially academic titles) are also seen as status symbols (In 1, 6, 10). People who do not demonstrate their hierarchical position with status symbols are often not taken as seriously as people who do (In 2, 15, 16).

2.5.8   Directness and straightforwardness

Eight of the interviewees (In 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14) described 10 critical incidents regarding German directness and straightforwardness. This is not a culture standard and is therefore displayed in a dotted box in Figure 2. Even though the experts considered this category to be neither typical (2.3 of 4) nor important (2.7 of 4) in bicultural interactions, it will be briefly described in this section because the interviewees and experts disagreed about this category. Five of the interviewees (In 4, 5, 9, 10, 13) relayed critical incidents that imply that Germans are more direct than Dutch people. In 13, for example, stated:

> "When I had just started working in Germany, one of my colleagues told me directly and bluntly that an application I had submitted was bad and wrong. At first I thought she wanted to attack me personally, but it turned out that this sort of behavior is normal in Germany. Germans tell others directly and outright if

something bothers them or something is not right. Dutch people usually beat more around the bush."

On the other hand, four interviewees (In 8, 12, 14, 16) relayed critical incidents that imply the exact opposite. In 14, for example, stated: "Dutch people are more direct; they tell you outright if they have a problem with you or something you do. Germans are more cautious; they complain or blame others more indirectly."

The experts also disagreed about whether German or Dutch people are more direct (it was ensured that they all had the same definition of 'directness'). Five of the experts (Ex 1, 3, 4, 5, 6) claimed that Dutch people are more direct than Germans; the other five (Ex 2, 7, 8, 9, 10) claimed the opposite. It was particularly noticeable that all the German experts claimed that Germans are more direct while all the Dutch experts (except Ex 2) claimed the Dutch are more direct.

To solve this disagreement, it was first verified that the experts had the same or at least a similar definition of directness, which was indeed the case. Every expert agreed that directness and straightforwardness means addressing issues directly without beating around the bush, using a rather low-context communication style, directly pointing out problems and irritations and not disguising criticism behind indirect formulations or even false compliments. Second, it was checked whether the German and the Dutch experts had different situations or contexts in mind when they discussed comparative directness, but that was not the case either.

An explanation for this friction could thus not be found. This indicates that there might be some limitations to the concept of culture standards. It becomes obvious that the concept may not be able to cover all visible aspects of culture that come to light in bicultural interactions. Further research would thus be necessary to determine which culture is more direct.

2.5.9 Interconnections and interrelations between the culture standards

As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, one disadvantage of dimension models is that concrete manifestations of cultural differences often cannot be explained by single dimensions but rather by the interplay of different dimensions (cf. e.g., Hofstede, 2008). With the dimension models, it is hard to unambiguously point out links and interrelations between single dimensions. Even though some general universal correlations between dimensions have been pointed out — Hofstede and Hofstede (2009, p. 111), for example, stated that there is a general negative correlation between the dimensions *individualism* and *power distance* — these correlations can vary from culture to culture, making it hard to analyze the exact interplay of dimensions when trying to explain certain cultural differences in intercultural interactions between two cultures. On the other hand, using the concept of culture standards makes it possible to point out interdependencies and interrelations between single culture standards which both help to explain concrete
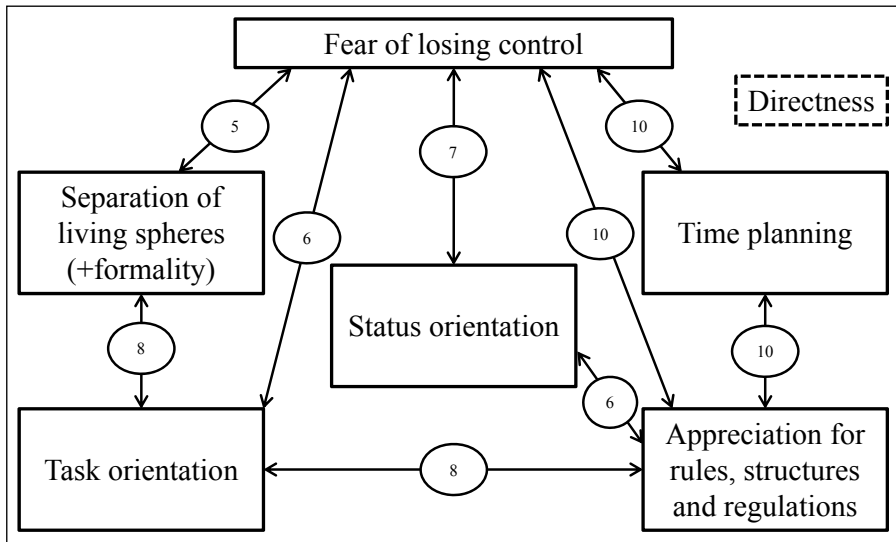
Fig. 3   Interdependency and hierarchies of German culture standards from a Dutch
          perspective. the circled numbers show how many of the ten experts agreed that the
          two culture standards are interrelated.

manifestations of cultural characteristics and enable people to generally gain a
better understanding of a certain culture. As the identified culture standards from
this study show, it is even possible to point out hierarchies between single culture
standards.

Therefore this section will point out which other culture standards each of the
identified culture standards is related to and how. The following figure illustrates
the mutual interrelationships. The circled numbers show how many of the ten ex-
perts agreed with this interrelation.

Appendix 5 contains a detailed description of which culture standards each
expert considers to be interrelated with which other culture standard(s).

2.5.9.1   Fear of losing control

As already mentioned, the experts agreed that the culture standard *fear of losing
control* has an umbrella function and that it is — at least to some extent — related
to the other culture standards. However, it is especially closely related to the cul-
ture standards *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* and *time plan-
ning*. All the experts agreed that one of the main reasons why Germans appreciate
reliable and fixed rules, structures and regulations is that they think that this helps
them keep control in every situation and avoid uncertainties and unforeseen situ-
ations. The same applies to their appreciation for planning everything in advance.

2.5.9.2 Separation of work and private life

The experts agreed that the culture standard *separation of living spheres* is closely related to the culture standard *task orientation* (all experts but Ex 4). According to them, Germans focus primarily on the task at work. Good personal relationships are appreciated but not a priority. This task orientation can to some degree be explained by the separation of professional and private life, although the experts agreed that both are individual culture standards.

Furthermore, the separation of living spheres is also related to the culture standard *fear of losing control* (Ex 2, 3, 5, 9, 10). According to the experts, one of the reasons that Germans tend to avoid a smooth transition between private and professional life, between role and person, is that it might lead to disturbances or inefficiencies at work if private matters become too important in the workplace. If personal issues interfere with work, this might lead to a loss of control.

2.5.9.3 Task orientation

The culture standards *separation of living spheres* and *task orientation* are closely related to each other. The separation of living spheres is one of the main reasons why Germans are able to focus on the task at work to such an extent (Ex 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9).

To some extent, the culture standard *task orientation* is also related to the culture standard *fear of losing control* (Ex 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9). The majority of the experts agreed that one reason for task orientation is that by committing themselves fully to a task, Germans can avoid disturbances at work. Things will go as planned and even if people do not like each other, they are still able to work together well. Task orientation is one way to keep control at work.

2.5.9.4 Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations

The culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* is clearly linked to the culture standard *fear of losing control* (Ex 1–10). The experts agreed that the main reasons why Germans try to plan as much and in as much detail as possible and prefer fixed structures and universal rules is that they believe this makes it is possible to avoid ambiguities and keep control over results and every single work step.

It is also closely related to the culture standard *time planning* (Ex 1–10). The experts stated that Germans not only prefer to plan as systematically as possible, but they also try to plan as far ahead as possible.

Furthermore, it is linked to the culture standard *task orientation* (Ex 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10). According to the experts, following fixed rules and structures and planning are seen as the best and most efficient ways to fulfill a task.

2.5.9.5   Time planning

The experts agreed that the culture standard *time planning* is related to the culture standard *fear of losing control* (Ex 1–10). They claimed that Germans stretch the planning horizon as far into the future as possible, appreciate punctuality and avoid multitasking to minimize uncertainty and ambiguity and to keep a maximum of control over tasks and work processes.

Furthermore, there is a connection to the culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* (Ex 1–10). Germans prefer structures and reliability; they try to plan as much as possible. Although *time planning* is an independent culture standard, it is also — according to the experts — one aspect of German planning.

2.5.9.6   Status orientation

The German *status orientation* is at least to some extent linked to the culture standard *fear of losing control* (Ex 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10). Germans seek to avoid uncertainties. This is why — according to the experts — they trust people who show status symbols because they see them as a sign that the person must be successful and therefore good at what he or she does. Expensive status symbols are also a sign that a company is performing well because otherwise it could not afford to provide them.

Furthermore, *status orientation* is — at least to some extent — linked to the culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* (Ex 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10). The experts stated that Germans want clear and dependable structures and therefore appreciate it if the external appearance of people reflects their function and hierarchical position.

2.6   Comparison of German and Dutch culture standards

According to Thomas and Kinast (2010, p. 48), only those people familiar with both their own and the foreign cultural orientation systems can establish interculturality and be successful in bicultural cooperation. When people from different cultures interact, their cultural orientation systems collide. To avoid irritations and problems, they start a negotiation process (in most cases unconsciously and non-verbally) about how to deal with their differences. Such a negotiation process can

only be successful if the interaction partners are familiar with both their own and the foreign cultural orientation systems.

Therefore, this section will compare the identified German culture standards from a Dutch perspective to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective (which were identified by Thomas and Schlizio (2009)). This comparison can highlight the areas in which the German and Dutch cultural orientation systems collide and in which areas irritations, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns are likely to occur. The comparison thus provides both German and Dutch people with a better orientation in bicultural encounters.

As was pointed out in Section 2.4.5, the methodology used for this study differed in parts from the approach used in the majority of other culture standards studies, including Thomas and Schlizio's (2009) study about Dutch culture standards from a German perspective. In addition, Thomas and Schlizio conducted their study with 28 interviewees (all professional and managerial staff) and four experts. Furthermore, some recent studies have suggested that some of Thomas and Schlizio's Dutch culture standards (identified in 2006) might have changed in recent years (e. g.; Calvinistic modesty, cf. Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007). Nevertheless, the differences in methodology and the possible gradual changes of Dutch culture standards are not so big as to preclude a comparison to the results of this study.

Thomas and Schlizio (2009) identified seven Dutch culture standards from a German perspective. These culture standards are:

- Informality
- Pragmatism
- Relation orientation
- Egalitarian character/flat hierarchies
- Calvinistic modesty
- Consensus culture
- Calimero effect

In parts, these culture standards describe similar aspects of culture as the German culture standards identified in this study (i. e., they describe behavioral patterns or attitudes that are diametrically opposed to the behavior that Dutch people experience when interacting with Germans). Therefore those German and Dutch culture standards that show similarities with regard to their content are compared to each other. Table 1 shows the possible relationships between German culture standards from a Dutch perspective and Dutch culture standards from a German perspective.

Table 1   Possible relationships between German and Dutch culture standards

German culture standards	Dutch culture standards that bear a similarity to German culture standards
Fear of losing control	Informality, pragmatism
Separation of living spheres	Relation orientation, informality
Task orientation	Flat hierarchies, Calvinistic modesty, consensus culture
Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations	Informality, consensus culture, flat hierarchies
Time planning	Informality, pragmatism
Status orientation	Calvinistic modesty

2.6.1   German fear of losing control vs Dutch informality and pragmatism

Two of the most characteristic central Dutch culture standards from a German perspective are *informality* and *pragmatism* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 55–59). They imply that the Dutch generally tend to be less afraid of unknown or complicated situations than Germans. Their planning horizon does not reach as far into the future and their planning is less obsessed with details. According to these two culture standards, Dutch regard flexibility and improvisation as positive traits; plans and agreements can be changed and adjusted to changing circumstances.

In binational interactions, these two Dutch culture standards might conflict with the German *fear of losing control*. The experts agree that on the one hand Germans value the Dutch flexibility and improvisational talent, but on the other hand they often feel deeply uncomfortable with the Dutch approach. Dutch people apparently often admire the structured and analytic approach to working that they think is typical for Germans, but at the same time they often complain that Germans are inflexible and waste too much time on planning (all experts but Ex 2, 5).

2.6.2   German separation of living spheres vs Dutch relation orientation and informality

According to Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 93–108), Dutch people are *relation-orientated*. At work they find it important to create a friendly and intimate atmosphere; talking about private matters is one way to establish good relations with colleagues. The experts agreed that this is one of the reasons why Dutch people often misinterpret the German reluctance to talk about private things at work as coldness, aloofness or even arrogance. Germans, on the other hand, are said to often find the Dutch to be nosey, intrusive, pushy and shallow (Ex 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10).

Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 95) also claimed that due to the more fluent borders between professional and private life in the Netherlands, it is more common for Dutch workers than German workers to meet colleagues in their free time. This does not necessarily mean that they are friends with their colleagues. This behavior is apparently often misinterpreted by Germans who — according to the experts — tend to only grant real friends access to their private lives, and so interpret this behavior as an overture toward friendship (Ex 1, 3, 6, 7, 10).

The distinction between person and role is also looser in the Netherlands than in Germany, so Dutch people often show a stronger tendency to take things more personally than Germans do (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 98). In Germany, harsh and direct criticism is apparently more acceptable because Germans know that it is usually not themselves being criticized but rather the role they fulfill (Ex1, 3, 6, 7, 10).

German *formality* is also likely to collide with the Dutch culture standard *informality* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 129–139). Since — according to the experts — Germans are apt to only take seriously information that is spread via official channels, preferably in writing, they often regard the Dutch informality as disorganization and lack of planning. Dutch people, on the other hand, apparently often see the German formality as rigidity. The German practice of supervisors gathering all information and spreading it to the relevant employees is sometimes even interpreted as obedience to authority (Ex 1, 2, 3, 6, 7).

Regarding the use of language, Dutch *informality* might also collide with German formality. As Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 100) stated, the quick switch from the formal "u" to the informal "je" when addressing others can be especially irritating for Germans. When they are addressed informally, they sometimes even get the impression that their Dutch counterparts are offering friendship. Dutch people, on the other hand, are — as most of the experts claimed — often irritated when Germans stick to the use of the formal "Sie" because they mistake this behavior for arrogance and aloofness (all experts but Ex 4, 9).

2.6.3 German task orientation vs Dutch flat hierarchies, Calvinistic modesty and consensus culture

The Dutch culture standard *flat hierarchies* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 27–49) refers to a postulated egalitarian character of the Dutch. According to Thomas and Schlizio, hierarchies are flatter in the Netherlands than in Germany and formal hierarchies are usually hidden. The boss is seen as a primus inter pares whose task is to coordinate and inspire the employees. Dutch workers who are used to this style of management often find German supervisors authoritarian and employees obedient. The Dutch culture standard *flat hierarchies* might collide with the German *task orientation* because — according to the experts — Germans appreciate clearly

assigned functions and responsibilities and visible hierarchies because they see this as a means to optimally fulfill the task.

The German appreciation for titles might conflict with the Dutch culture standard *Calvinistic modesty* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 141–151). Thomas and Schlizio claim that in the Netherlands it is common to appear modest in public; showing titles, wealth or status symbols publicly is disapproved of and seen as swaggering. If — according to the experts — Dutch show this modesty in Germany, for example when applying for a job, they might be disadvantaged relative to their German competitors or not be taken as seriously (Ex 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10).

Furthermore, the German *task orientation* may conflict with the Dutch culture standard *consensus culture* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 73–91). According to Thomas and Schlizio, Dutch show a tendency to take decisions by consensus, by seeking a balance between the positions of the people involved. Germans apparently do this less often. According to the experts, the focus on *task orientation* means that discussions are not as much about finding a consensus but rather about principles, about finding the one best solution. Dutch workers therefore often feel uncomfortable because they have the feeling that Germans are constantly fighting about things and being bossy, dogmatic and aggressive (all experts but Ex 6, 7, 10). Germans, on the other hand, often misinterpret the Dutch desire for consensus as softness, buckling or not having an opinion. They also often feel that Dutch colleagues are not well prepared because otherwise they would defend their opinion by presenting more facts, arguments and objective reasons. The Dutch approach of also addressing others on the social-emotional level is often seen as unprofessionalism (all experts but Ex 6, 7, 9, 10).

2.6.4 German appreciation for rules, structures and regulations vs Dutch informality, consensus culture and flat hierarchies

The German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* is almost diametrically opposed to the Dutch culture standard *informality* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 129–139). Thomas and Schlizio claim that in the Netherlands rules are often not seen as universally valid. They are rather regarded as guidelines that can be interpreted situationally. Rules are not static but can be discussed and negotiated. This is —— according to the experts — one of the reasons why the Dutch sometimes misinterpret the German appreciation for rules as a lack of reflection skills and taking initiative (all experts but Ex 2, 5, 6). Germans, on the other hand, sometimes admire the Dutch for how they deal with rules, but a deviation from the rules is often seen as unprofessionalism.

The Dutch are said to be generally less afraid of uncertainties and ambiguities. According to Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 140), they show a tendency to define less approximate target agreements than Germans and to provide a rather rough and less detailed planning framework. They regard flexibility and improvisational

talent as positive character traits that enable people to quickly react to new challenges and unforeseen changes. The critical incidents show that this might also collide with the German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*. Interviewees and experts agree that that although the Dutch often admire the detailed German planning and the analytical way of thinking, they tend to get impatient when Germans spend too much time on planning (In 1, 2, 6; Ex 1, 2, 4, 5, 7). On the one hand, Germans admire the Dutch ability to act flexible and improvise. On the other hand, they often regard improvisation as a means to compensate for bad planning (Ex 1, 2, 4, 5).

Irritations or conflicts can also occur when the German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulation* meets the Dutch culture standards *flat hierarchies* and *consensus culture* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 73–91). Since — according to this culture standard — the Dutch tend to distinguish less than Germans between a person and the role that person has in an organization, the Dutch want to avoid the impression that one person stands on a higher level than another. The experts agree that the Dutch therefore often do not see German hierarchical structures as the wish for clear and dependable conditions, but rather interpret them as obedience to authority (all experts but Ex 2, 5, 6). Due to the *flat hierarchies* and the *consensus culture*, Dutch meetings are often less structured than German meetings. Every participant has the right to state his or her opinion, agendas are often changed or expanded during the meeting and brainstorming is normal. These characteristics often lead Germans to find Dutch meetings unprofessional and chaotic.

2.6.5   German time planning vs Dutch informality and pragmatism

The German long-term planning horizon often stands in contrast to the Dutch culture standards *informality* and *pragmatism* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 111–127 and 129–139). Different critical incidents stated by the interviewees show that Dutch people often get impatient when Germans spend too much time making plans for the future and discussing all possible options (In 1, 6, 9, 10, 11). Germans, on the other hand, are often irritated when the Dutch start tasks without having planned them out thoroughly (Ex 1, 3, 4, 5).

In Germany, visits without an appointment are often seen as unofficial and informal, so what is discussed during those visits is sometimes not seen as official information. According to the experts, Dutch workers often do not notice this distinction. If they want to discuss something with a German colleague, they drop by for a talk without making an appointment. If the German colleague does not regard the issue as important or sees it more as a sort of brainstorming or a gathering of ideas, they are surprised (Ex 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10).

2.6.6 German status orientation vs Dutch Calvinistic modesty

The German *status orientation* sometimes conflicts with the Dutch culture standard *Calvinistic modesty* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 141–151). If Dutch people behave too modestly in binational business encounters, for example by appearing with a small and cheap car or using understatement when introducing their company, this can lead to irritations on the German side because the Germans might think that the Dutch are financially unsuccessful and therefore untrustworthy. On the other hand, Germans are often seen as braggers when they arrive for meetings with Dutch people with expensive cars and status symbols, describe their company in an exaggerated manner or insist on being addressed with their formal (or academic) title(s) (all experts but Ex 2, 4, 10).

2.7 Comparison of German culture standards from a Dutch perspective with dimension models

A comparison of the identified German culture standards with the dimensions from different dimension models shows whether, in which areas and to what extent they contradict or complement each other. In addition, such a comparison can analyze whether the identified culture standards and thus this study do indeed have an added value compared to the dimensions from the dimension models when it comes to describing, explaining and predicting German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interactions with Dutch people. The comparison enables an analysis of whether and, if so, the extent to which the cross-cultural dimensions actually depict the reality of concrete intercultural interaction situations. Furthermore, in the course of identifying German culture standards from a Dutch perspective, it became evident that both the concept of culture standards itself and this study and its methodology have some limitations.

One limitation of the concept of culture standards is that they are not always valid for a country's culture as a whole. Thomas (1996, p. 112) and Helfrich (1996, p. 199) distinguished between central culture standards that are valid for a whole country and culture standards that are only valid for a certain cultural sector or subculture or that only apply to specific problem situations or a narrowly defined scope of action. The choice of interviewees minimized the possibility that the culture standards found are not applicable to the entire country (the interviewees met many criteria and a comparison of their answers found no considerable differences; see Section 2.4.2). However, a comparison with dimension models (which describe cultural characteristics for national cultures) can further support the assumption that they are indeed central culture standards.

Another limitation that became apparent in the process of identifying German culture standards is the inability to completely rule out the possibility that the results might have been influenced by stereotyping, at least to a small extent. Of

course, identifying culture standards by evaluating concrete situations that have actually been experienced is one way to prevent stereotyping. In addition, although similar studies (e.g., Dünstl, 2005; Gruttauer, 2007; Schlizio, 2005) commonly asked the interviewees to explain the critical incidents, I did not because their opinions might have been a potential source of stereotyping. Nevertheless, the interviews showed that the interviewees had a certain image of Germans and certain expectations of German behavior before they came to Germany. For example, an interviewee stated: "Before I came to Germany, I always pictured Germans as stiff and distanced. When I came into the country, this proved to be true." Therefore the interviewees could possibly have remembered critical incidents that best confirmed their prejudices, which might have led to stereotyping. A comparison with the dimensions from the dimension models would be helpful here, because it could further indicate that stereotyping has been ruled out as much as possible.

2.7.1   Structure

For each of the six identified culture standards, I will analyze whether there are dimensions from the dimension models that resemble them, or whether there are dimensions that contradict my findings. I will then compare these dimensions to the culture standards. Furthermore, I will analyze whether there are dimensions from the dimension models that show noticeable differences between the German and the Dutch cultures but do not have equivalents among the identified culture standards.

However, one has to keep in mind the difficulty of finding unambiguous resemblances between certain culture standards and dimension models. The resemblances pointed out in this section are not empirically justified correlations but rather well-founded and logically coherent assumptions. Therefore, the German culture standards identified in this study are compared only to those dimensions that they relatively obviously resemble. This does not mean that they could not resemble (perhaps more weakly) other dimension as well. However, resemblances that are too hypothetical will not be mentioned.

Many social scientists have proposed various dimensions and dimension models. However, I will only use the dimension models from Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990) for this comparison because a comparison with all dimensions from all dimension models would be beyond the scope of this study. The dimensions in these three dimension also align with the dimensions proposed by other researchers (e.g., Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Schein, 1985; Schwartz, 1992). I also did not use the dimensions from the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) for the comparison because they focus on the cultural influence on leadership.

With regard to the dimensions, I considered the differences between Germany and the Netherlands to be noticeable if they were larger than ten index points (Hofstede, 2008) or 10% (Trompenaars, 1997).

2.7.2 Comparison of the culture standards with dimension models

2.7.2.1 Fear of losing control

The culture standard *fear of losing control* bears some resemblance to Hofstede's dimension *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 145 ff.). This dimension refers to the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions to try to avoid them. Countries with a high level of *uncertainty avoidance* maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. These cultures have an emotional need for rules. People tend to believe that time is money, they have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, and precision and punctuality are the norm. Innovation may also be resisted, and security is an important element in individual motivation.

Since the culture standard *fear of losing control* and the dimension *uncertainty avoidance* resemble each other strongly, they can be compared to each other. According to Hofstede (2008), *uncertainty avoidance* is considerably higher in Germany (with a score of 65) than in the Netherlands (with a score of 53). However, the culture standard *fear of losing control* shows that in bicultural interaction with Germans, Dutch people regard this difference as much larger than one would expect from Hofstede's scores.

The culture standard *fear of losing control* also resembles Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012, p. 141 ff.) dimension *human-nature-relationship*. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, there are cultures in which people believe that humans can and should dominate their environment and cultures in which people believe that humans must and should adapt to it. With regard to this dimension, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner found only minor differences between Germany and the Netherlands. However, the culture standard *fear of losing control* suggests that German people feel a stronger urge to control and dominate their environment than the Dutch. It must be noted that this resemblance is rather speculative, especially since the dimension *human-nature-relationship* is not undisputed in the scientific community (cf. Kutschker & Schmid, 2011).

2.7.2.2 Separation of living spheres

The culture standard *separation of living spheres* resembles Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997, p. 80 ff.) *specific/diffuse* dimension. Specific cultures

separate the different living spheres (especially work and private life) from each other, with strict boundaries between them. Each living sphere contains norms and behavioral codes that only apply to that sphere. People who are granted access to one living sphere (e. g., work colleagues) are not automatically granted access to other spheres (e. g., private life). In diffuse cultures, the boundaries between the separate living spheres are less strict and can overlap. Criticism is expressed rather indirectly because people from diffuse cultures tend to take it personally.

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, both Germany and the Netherlands are specific cultures and the dimension-related differences between the two countries are negligible. However, the culture standard *separation of living spheres* shows that when Dutch people interact with Germans, they often perceive the Germans to be much more specific than the dimension suggests. The 27 critical incidents related to this culture standard show that this actually leads to irritations, communication breakdowns and problems in bicultural interactions.

2.7.2.3   Formality

German formality resembles various dimensions. First, it shares similarities with the *neutral/affective* dimension (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 69 ff.). In neutral cultures, people do not express their feelings publicly; feelings should be subdued and controlled. In affective cultures, people express their feelings publicly. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, both the Dutch and German cultures are neutral. Since Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner found that 35% of the German and 46% of the Dutch respondents stated that they would not show feelings at work, he regards the Dutch culture as slightly more neutral than the German culture.

However, the inclusion of formality as part of the German culture standard *separation of living spheres* shows that in concrete interaction situations, the Dutch often perceive Germans to be more neutral. At work, Germans behave formally, are reserved and distant, and rarely show their feelings. In other situations, the Dutch see Germans as far more affective. Germans are especially likely to show strong feelings when arguing or defending their opinions in discussions and meetings.

The concept of culture standards can thus provide a more nuanced picture than the *neutral/affective* dimension when assessing concrete interaction situations. While Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) did not differentiate between the living spheres work and private life, the culture standard *separation of living spheres* suggests that there are actually noticeable differences. It illustrates that, in the German culture, neutrality and affectivity manifest differently in different areas and situations.

2.7.2.4 Task orientation

First, the culture standard *task orientation* bears some resemblance to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's dimension *specific/diffuse* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 81 ff.). A comparison shows that in concrete bicultural interactions in the living sphere work, the Dutch perceive Germans to be remarkably more specific than Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's small difference suggests. The culture standard implies that Germans are considerably more task focused while Dutch workers find a pleasant working atmosphere to be equally important (Germans also value good mutual relations, but these must not interfere with the task).

Second, the culture standard strongly resembles the dimension *masculinity/femininity* (Hofstede, 2009, p. 279 ff.). Masculine cultures are driven by competition, achievement and success; this value system is especially found in organizational behavior. Success means being the best and performance is highly valued. Managers are expected to be decisive and assertive. In feminine cultures, the dominant values are caring for each other, a high quality of life and a good work-life balance. Success means liking what one does. An effective manager supports his or her employees, and consensus is an important value. On this dimension, Germany scored 66, making it a masculine culture, while the Netherlands scored 14, making it a feminine culture. The comparison suggests that the strong differences between Germany and the Netherlands with regard to that dimension are actually reflected in the culture standard *task orientation*.

Furthermore, the culture standard *task orientation* shows similarities with the dimension *power distance* (Hofstede, 2009, p. 79 ff.). *Power distance* expresses the attitude of cultures toward inequality between its members. It refers to the extent to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions in a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Germany (with a score of 35) and the Netherlands (with a score of 38) are both countries with a low power distance.

At first glance, the culture standard *task orientation* seems to contradict the dimension *power distance*. While the interviewees related 18 critical incidents in which they perceived the German culture to be more hierarchical (see Appendix 2), the dimension suggests that the differences in *power distance* are negligible. However, on closer inspection, this is not a discrepancy. Both the dimension and the culture standard show that hierarchies in Germany are not caused by a general acceptance of power distance or obedience to authority, but rather by the dimensions *uncertainty avoidance* and *masculinity/femininity*. In Germany, hierarchies exist because Germans appreciate clear and unambiguous structures with clearly defined tasks and responsibilities. Management styles and dealings with each other, which can be explained by the dimension *masculinity/femininity*, make hierarchies in Germany appear stronger to Dutch people than they actually are. Hasenkamp and Lee (2001) also share this opinion, stating that mistaking German hierarchies for a general acceptance of power distance or obedience to authority is one of the most persistent misinterpretations of German organizational culture.

Here the culture standard *task orientation* can thus better illustrate what really causes Dutch perceptions about German hierarchical relations than the dimensions from the dimension models can.

The German appreciation for academic titles and qualifications resembles the dimension *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2009, p. 145 ff.). One of the main reasons Germans appreciate titles and documented qualifications is that they help to avoid uncertainties by rather objectively documenting that a person has profound expertise in a certain field of knowledge.

The appreciation for academic titles and qualifications also resembles the dimension *universalism/particularism* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 31). In universalistic countries, people adhere to standards which are universally agreed to by the culture. They try to apply the same rules in all situations: what is right is always right, in every situation and for everyone. Rules apply regardless of circumstances or particular situations. People in universalistic countries make little or no distinction between people from their in-group (e. g., family or friends) and their out-group (strangers). In particularistic countries, people assess specific circumstances or personal backgrounds. Behavior is adjusted to circumstances: what is right in one situation may not be right in another. Rules are not seen as universally valid but rather as guidelines (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 40). In- and out-groups are clearly distinguished.

According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993, p. 204), the difference between Germany and the Netherlands regarding this dimension is negligible; both countries are universalistic. However, the German appreciation for academic titles and qualifications shows that in concrete interactions in this respect, Dutch people see Germans as far more universalistic than the *universalism/particularism* dimension suggests. During the expert evaluation, it became apparent that Germans appreciate academic titles and qualifications because they want universal objective criteria to estimate a person's qualification and expertise.

2.7.2.5   Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations

The culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* resembles Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) *universalism/particularism* dimension. In universalistic cultures, rules are regarded as universally valid, regardless of the specific situation. Just like the culture standard *task orientation*, the German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* also shows that in bicultural interaction situations, Dutch people often see Germans as far more universalistic than the *universalism/particularism* dimension suggests. The experts agree that Germans regard rules as universally valid and have an appreciation for unambiguous and clear structures.

Furthermore, the German appreciation for planning and details strongly resembles Hofstede's dimension *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 145). One

of the main reasons for this detailed planning is keeping control over all situations and avoiding uncertainties and ambiguities. Just like the culture standard *fear of losing control*, the German appreciation for planning and details shows that in bicultural interactions Dutch people see the German *uncertainty avoidance* as stronger than Hofstede's dimension suggests.

The culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* may also bear some resemblance to the dimension *human-nature relationship* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 141 ff.). Just like the culture standard *fear of losing control,* the *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* illustrates that in bicultural interactions, Dutch people see the German culture as one in which people try to dominate their environment. Germans perceive their environment as something that can be dominated by actively trying to control every aspect of it. In contrast, Dutch people are more likely to perceive their environment as something that cannot be controlled and must therefore be adjusted to by improvising and being flexible (Ex 1, 2, 4, 5, 6). However, as already mentioned, this resemblance is rather speculative, especially because the *human-nature relationship* dimension is not undisputed among social scientists.

2.7.2.6   Time planning

Just like the *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*, the culture standard *time planning* resembles the dimension *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 145). The same reasoning as above applies.

Moreover, it also has some similarity with the dimension *time orientation* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012, p. 120 ff.), both Germany and the Netherlands are future-oriented cultures, with only negligible dimension-related differences. However, a comparison with the culture standard *time planning* shows that in bicultural interactions, Dutch people perceive that the German planning horizon stretches far further into the future than Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's dimension seems to indicate.

Furthermore, the German avoidance of multitasking and appreciation for organizing things in a straight chronological line is quite similar to the dimensions *monochronic/polychronic time planning* (Hall, 1989, p. 44 ff.) and *sequential/synchronic time planning* (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, p. 123 ff.). Cultures with a monochronic or sequential perception of time view time as a line of sequential events. Everything has its time and place; one thing is done after the other. People in monochronic or sequential cultures make detailed plans, schedule events very tightly and consider punctuality to be crucial. In cultures with a polychronic or synchronic perception of time, multitasking is normal and different things can be done simultaneously. Time is seen as elastic, so deadlines and punctuality are not crucial. Tasks are less structured than in cultures with a monochronic or sequential perception of time.

According to Claes and Gerritsen (2011, p. 168) Germany and the Netherlands exhibit negligible differences with regard to this dimension; both are strongly monochronic or sequential cultures. However, the culture standard *time planning* suggests that in bicultural interactions, Dutch people see Germans as relatively more monochronic or sequential than one would expect from the small differences in the dimensions *monochronic/polychronic time planning* and *sequential/synchronic time planning*.

2.7.2.7 Status orientation

The culture standard *status orientation* is similar to the dimension *masculinity/femininity* (Hofstede, 2008). According to Hofstede (2008, p. 279 ff.), masculine cultures are driven by competition, achievement and success. Success means being the best, so status symbols are important because they display a person's success.

Furthermore, that culture standard also resembles the dimension *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 145 ff.). In the expert evaluation, it became apparent that status symbols are also important for Germans because they allow people to draw conclusions (to a certain extent) about another person's expertise and skills (all experts but Ex 3, 4, 6).

2.7.2.8 Individualism/collectivism

The dimension *individualism/collectivism* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 209 ff.) refers to the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a culture. In individualistic societies, people are supposed to look after themselves and close relatives. There is a strong belief in the ideal of self-actualization. Loyalty is based on personal preferences. In collective cultures, people belong to "in-groups" that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

Both Germany and the Netherlands are individualistic countries, but the Dutch (with a score of 80) are more individualistic than the Germans (with a score of 67; Hofstede, 2008, p. 215). However, this difference is not reflected in the culture standards and no critical incidents referred directly to this dimension. The comparison of the culture standards with the dimension *individualism/collectivism* found that this is a dimension in which Germany and the Netherlands differ substantially, but which does not lead to irritations, problems or communication breakdowns in concrete interaction situations.

However, there might be a certain resemblance between *individualism/collectivism* and the German lack of directness and straightforwardness. According to Hofstede (2008, p. 212), communication in individualistic countries is usually more direct than in collective countries. He claims that there is a weak but yet statistically significant correlation between Hall's distinction between *high and low*

context cultures and his own dimension *individualism/collectivism*. As mentioned in Chapter 2.5.7, the authors disagreed about whether Germans or Dutch are more direct. Here the comparison with Hofstede's dimension suggests that the Dutch might be more direct than the Germans and that *individualism/collectivism* might, at least to a small extent, be reflected in the critical incidents related to directness.

Table 2 shows the possible resemblances between German culture standards from a Dutch perspective and the analyzed cultural dimensions.

2.7.2.9 Conclusion

First, the comparison shows that the six identified German culture standards are — at least to some extent — reflected in various dimensions from the dimension models. Since it is assumed that the dimension models depict reality and are valid for a culture as a whole, it can also be assumed that the identified culture standards are valid for the German culture as a whole and not only for certain cultural sectors. Furthermore, it indicates that in the process of identifying culture standards, stereotyping has indeed been ruled out as much as possible.

Second, the comparison also illustrates that the identified culture standards actually have added value compared to the dimensions from the dimension models. The culture standards are better suited to describing, explaining and predicting irritations, problems and communication breakdowns in concrete interactions between Dutch and German people than the dimensions are.

The comparison of culture standards with different dimensions shows that in interactions between Dutch and German people, differences between the two cultures related to single dimensions are sometimes perceived to be stronger or weaker than expected from the differences in the dimension scores. There are even dimensions (i. e., individualism/collectivism) that cannot be clearly related to culture standards. Germany and the Netherlands differ with regard to these dimensions, but this is not reflected in the culture standards because these differences apparently do not lead to irritations or problems in interaction situations. This illustrates that cross-cultural models are not only not well suited to explaining and predicting behavior and cultural characteristics in intercultural interaction, but that in some cases they can even be misleading.

The comparison also shows that the culture standards can provide a more nuanced picture for describing, explaining and predicting what happens in bicultural interactions between German and Dutch people. While some dimensions showed only minor differences between Germany and the Netherlands, the concept of culture standards makes it possible to see that some cultural characteristics manifest differently in different areas and situations. For example, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012, p. 69 ff.) research found negligible differences between Germany and the Netherlands with regard to the dimension *affective/neutral*. However, the culture standard *separation of living spheres* shows that, in some situations,

Table 2   Possible resemblances between German culture standards from a Dutch perspective and analyzed cultural dimensions (from Hofstede, Hall and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner)

Culture Standard	Resembles		
	Hofstede	Hall	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner
Fear of losing control	Uncertainty avoidance	-	Human-nature-relationship
Separation of living spheres	Indulgence/re-straint	-	Specific/diffuse Neutral/affective
Task orientation	Masculinity/femi-ninity Power distance Uncertainty avoidance	-	Specific/diffuse
Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations	Uncertainty avoidance	-	Universalistic/particularistic Human-nature-relationship
Time planning	Uncertainty avoidance	Monochro-nic/poly-chronic	Time orientation Sequential/synchronic
Status orientation	Uncertainty avoidance Power distance	-	Universalistic/particularistic
Directness*	Masculinity/femi-ninity Power distance Uncertainty avoidance	-	-
Not clearly re-flected in culture standards	Individualism/col-lectivism**	-	-

*Since the experts disagreed about whether German or Dutch people are more direct, directness was not regarded as a culture standard. However, since it leads to critical incidents, it was also compared to the dimensions from the dimension models.
**Hofstede's dimension long-term vs. short-term orientation was not included in this comparison because it is not undisputed in the scientific community and it is unclear whether it can indeed be used to compare Germany and the Netherlands (cf. Fang, 2003).

the Dutch perceive Germans to be far more neutral, while in other situations they perceive them to be more affective than themselves.

Furthermore, at first glance, some of the identified culture standards show great similarity with certain dimensions. For example, the culture standard *fear of losing control* seems to be the same as Hofstede's (2008, p. 145) *uncertainty avoidance*. However, the comparison shows that there are important differences between them.

In addition, the comparison shows that attribution errors can occur in trying to explain certain cultural characteristics that come to light in bicultural interactions with dimensions. For example, at first glance, it seems that the German *status orientation* can be thoroughly explained by the dimension *masculinity/femininity* (Hofstede, 2008, p. 279 ff.). However, *status orientation* suggests that masculinity is not the only reason and that it is also caused by uncertainty avoidance. The identified culture standards are thus better suited than the dimension models to provide Dutch people with an understanding of and knowledge about German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns in bicultural interactions.

2.8   Conclusion

In the introductory section, two aims were set for the culture standards study. The primary aim was to identify, describe and explain German culture standards from a Dutch perspective to provide Dutch people with a practical and scientifically validated approach for better understanding German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interactions. The secondary aim was to give both German and Dutch people a better orientation in bicultural encounters by pointing out potential sources of communication breakdowns. This section will analyze whether and to what extent these two aims were reached. Furthermore, practical implications from this study will be presented.

The first objective — the identification of German culture standards from a Dutch perspective — was reached. Section 2.5 identified six German culture standards from a Dutch perspective:

1. *Fear of losing control*: Germans want to keep control in all situations and under all circumstances and try to avoid ambiguities and uncertainties.
2. *Separation of living spheres*: Germans tend to draw very sharp boundaries between different living spheres, especially between their working and private lives. They adjust their behavior to the sphere they are presently in.
3. *Task orientation*: At work, Germans concentrate on the task; everything should be subordinated to the work objectives. Good relationships with others and a warm and friendly atmosphere are important but must not disturb the effective fulfillment of the task.
4. *Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*: Germans see rules as universally valid; they are to be followed in all situations. Germans also try to plan in as much detail as possible and try to consider all possibilities in advance. This makes work processes effective but also inflexible.
5. *Time planning*: From a Dutch perspective, Germans try to plan as far ahead as possible. They try to avoid multitasking and punctuality is crucial.
6. *Status orientation*: Status symbols are important in Germany.

215 of the 225 critical incidents related by the interviewees can be explained by one or an interplay between these six German culture standards. Only the critical incidents related to directness and straightforwardness are not considered to reflect a culture standard because it is impossible to ascertain whether Dutch or German people are more direct and straightforward.

The identified culture standards can be used to describe, explain and predict most aspects of German culture that play a role in German-Dutch interactions. At the same time, the culture standards also describe and explain the invisible, underlying aspects of culture, as is evident from the comparison with the dimension models.

A comparison of the identified culture standards with different dimensions from dimension models (see Section 2.7) could minimize the limitations of the concept of culture standards and this study. It strong indicated that the identified culture standards are valid for the German culture as a whole (i. e., that they are central culture standards) and that stereotyping could be prevented in this study.

The secondary aim of this study — to give German and Dutch people a better orientation in bicultural encounters by pointing out potential sources of communication breakdowns — has also been reached. I also showed that most of the disadvantages that dimension models have when it comes to explaining, describing and predicting German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interactions with Dutch do not apply to this study. Since this study is intercultural rather than cross-cultural, it takes aspects that are implicitly included in the critical incidents into account (e. g., self-perception, perception of others and shared history). It can therefore provide Dutch people with a more nuanced and accurate picture of how Germans behave in interactions with the Dutch than the dimension models can.

Furthermore, this study was also able to show hierarchical relationships between German culture standards. Knowledge about which culture standard plays the biggest role in binational encounters — in this case the *fear of losing control* — enables Dutch people to prioritize cultural characteristics in binational encounters and facilitates a prediction and explanation of German behavior.

In Section 2.6, the identified German culture standards were compared to the Dutch culture standards from a German perspective that have been identified by Schlizio and Thomas (2009). This comparison pointed out the areas and situations in bicultural interactions between Germans and the Dutch in which cultural orientation systems are likely to collide. It can be estimated that conflicts, irritations and communication breakdowns occur most frequently in these areas and situations. Since this study identified both German and Dutch culture standards from the perspective of the neighboring country, it better enables German and Dutch people to understand their counterparts in bicultural interactions because — as Thomas and Kinast (2010, p. 48) claimed — only people who are not only familiar with the foreign but also with their own cultural orientation system can be successful in

intercultural cooperation. Not only can they detect and avoid potential sources of irritation and conflict, but they can also estimate the extent to which the different orientation systems can coexist without leading to conflicts or irritations and the extent to which one must adapt to the other's orientation system to get along well. With this knowledge, people could even try to estimate how a combination of both orientation systems could create cultural synergies.

2.8.1   Theoretical implications

This intercultural study provides an additional value compared to cross-cultural dimension models when it comes to describing, explaining and predicting German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interactions with Dutch people. Cross-cultural models are not well suited to explaining and predicting behavior in intercultural interaction and can even be misleading when applied in an intercultural context.

Dimension models convey the impression that in comparing two cultures, a small difference on a dimension means that irritations, communication breakdowns and/or misunderstandings are unlikely to occur and, on the other hand, a big difference means that they are more likely to occur. Of course, the authors of the dimension models do not claim this themselves, but management courses, intercultural trainings, guidebooks (e.g., Holtbrügge & Welge, 2010; Macharzina & Wolf, 2012) and even university courses frequently interpret dimension models in this way (cf. e.g., Bhawuk & Brislin, 2001). However, this study found that the interviewees nevertheless reported critical incidents that imply that irritations, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns actually do occur in bicultural interactions with regard to some dimensions in which Germany and the Netherlands differ only slightly. The assumption that big dimensional differences lead to problems while small differences make problems unlikely is therefore questionable; the results of this study imply that this is not necessarily the case.

Furthermore, the results show that dimensions can manifest differently in various areas of life or to different extents. For example, one result suggests that Germans are more neutral at work while they are more affective in their private lives than Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) dimension *affective/neutral* suggests. In addition, the comparison shows that Hofstede's (2009) dimension *individualism* does not play a role in bicultural interactions between German and Dutch people, although the differences between the two countries on this dimension might lead to different assumptions. With regard to bicultural interactions, this study can thus provide a more nuanced picture of the German culture for Dutch people than the dimension models can.

A comparison of my results with a meta-study about German culture standards (Schroll-Machl, 2008) found that German culture standards from a Dutch perspective differ from those that were identified from an international perspec-

tive. Although some of the culture standards identified in this study resemble the results of the meta-study, they impact different fields of action and partly have different functions and a different tolerance range. Therefore, compared to Schroll-Machl's meta-study, this study provides added value to Dutch people who want to understand and predict German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns in bicultural interactions. It can therefore be assumed that it is not advisable to automatically apply the results of a meta-study such as Schroll-Machl's to a strictly bicultural context because a bicultural analysis is better suited to such a context.

2.8.2 Practical implications

As mentioned in the introductory section, current intercultural workshops and trainings that aim to prepare German and Dutch people to interact with each other often use cross-cultural models to point out the differences between the two cultures. This study illustrates that these models are not well suited for intercultural trainings. They can provide people with a good overview of another culture and an understanding of the major differences between their own and the other culture. However, they cannot sufficiently explain and/or predict behavior in intercultural interaction, which is extremely important for people who want to interact with people from another culture. The results of this study could be used as a basis to improve the quality of such trainings and workshops because it shows what actually happens in German-Dutch interaction and which differences actually have potential for irritations or conflict.

2.8.3 Further research

Both the performance of this study and its results revealed areas in which further research would be reasonable. Generally, the study provides Dutch people with a good understanding of German cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interactions. However, the study results could be further extended, improved and validated by follow-up studies. If this study's findings were enhanced by follow-up studies, they could — at least to some extent — help the current field of intercultural research to evolve to a new phase (as proposed by Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006). They actually suggested this new phase for cross-cultural research but, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, their criticism of the current methods of cross-cultural research also apply to the field of intercultural research.

First, a quantitative testing of this study's results would be reasonable. An integration of qualitative and quantitative methods has become increasingly important in the field of social sciences (Salden, 1992) because both types of methods have weaknesses that could be minimized by combining them (Mayring, 1999).

They can be combined by using a generalization model or a triangulation model (Mayring, 1999). In a generalization model, a quantitative study is conducted to confirm the results of the qualitative study and to analyze whether they are indeed valid in all contexts and situations. The results of the quantitative and qualitative studies could then be compared to each other. Such a study could, for example, be conducted by using a survey that asked German and Dutch respondents to evaluate real-life situations. Another possibility would be to observe German-Dutch interactions. In a triangulation model, a quantitative study about German culture standards from a Dutch perspective could be conducted without direct reference to the qualitative study.

Furthermore, a scientific and comprehensive comparison of the Dutch and German cultural orientation systems could also add additional value to this study. This study compares the German and Dutch orientation systems, allowing German and Dutch people to estimate in which cases and situations their orientation systems can coexist or to which extent they have to adapt to the other's orientation system to work together well. However, a scientific analysis of these questions has not yet taken place. A follow-up study that analyzes in which areas and to what extent German and Dutch people can and/or must adapt their cultural orientation systems to the other's and how cultural synergies could be created would add additional value.

In addition, the results of this study could be further validated and enhanced by comparing them to the experiences and observations of people who have had intercultural experiences with Germans or the Dutch. This could, for example, be done by conducting a scientific and comprehensive comparison of a corpus of (popular) science and guidebooks from Dutch authors about the German culture (and by German authors about the Dutch culture). The culture standards study has revealed the more general, superordinate and underlying aspects of culture that play a role in German-Dutch interaction. A book corpus analysis would be complementary to this because it could show how cultural differences manifest in concrete interaction situations, and in which contexts and situations (to some degrees the culture standards study could already reveal this, but a book corpus analysis would be better suited for this purpose).

Furthermore, this study's methodology, and a comparison of the identified culture standards with the dimensions from the dimension models, already allows a strong assumption that the culture standards are indeed valid for the entire German culture. A comparison with a book corpus of (popular) science and guidebooks from Dutch authors about German culture could further confirm this assumption, if the cultural characteristics described in these books could be explained by the culture standards identified in this study. Thomas, Kinast, and Schroll-Machl (2010, p. 22) share this opinion. They claim that culture standards can be assumed to be central culture standards (i. e., valid for a whole culture in most contexts and situations) if they are validated by other social and scientific disciplines such as literature, sociology, ethnology, history or religion.

Moreover, in the process of identifying German culture standards, it was not possible to attribute all characteristics of the German culture to the culture standards (e. g., directness respectively lack of directness). A comparison with the results of a book corpus analysis could help to answer the question of whether there are other cultural characteristics that cannot be attributed to the culture standards and which characteristics these are.

3   A book corpus analysis of popular science and guidebooks about the German and Dutch cultures

3.1   The book corpus analysis as a method of analyzing culture

As mentioned in the introductory section (Chapter 1), there are various methods of analyzing culture. In addition to the scientific approaches such as culture standards or dimension models, there are also many popular science and guidebooks from German and Dutch laymen, practitioners and social scientists who use non-scientific methods to describe the culture of the neighboring country. These books are written — among others — by expatriates (e. g., Koentopp, 2000; Pechholt, Douven, & Essers, 2008), journalists (e. g., Meines, 1990; Vaessen, 2009), intercultural coaches (e. g., Schürings, 2010; Vossenstein, 2010) and historians (e. g., von der Dunk, 1998). They describe and try to explain predominantly visible aspects of culture and how these aspects manifest in bicultural interactions. In most instances they are not based on scientific research, but rather on personal experiences and impressions.

When it comes to comparing cultures with the purpose of giving the members of one culture practical advice about intercultural interactions with members of another culture, these books can offer some advantages compared to other methods of analyzing culture. In contrast to the concept of culture standards and dimension models that describe rather general cultural characteristics, popular science and guidebooks predominantly describe concrete intercultural situations from everyday life and from interaction situations. In addition, they often describe a popular image that one culture has of another. In doing so, they can be stereotypical (i. e., abstracting and generalizing) and sometimes even prejudiced.

Popular science and guidebooks can offer an added value to other concepts of analyzing culture because they can show aspects that cannot, or can hardly or only inadequately, be illustrated by the dimension models or the concept of culture standards (see Section 3.5). They can complement or complete, specify and, to a certain degree, validate or falsify the results from these methods of analyzing culture. For instance, a popular science and guidebook analysis can illustrate if, to what extent and how cultural differences that are pointed out by dimension models actually manifest in concrete bicultural interaction situations (because they are based on observations of bicultural interactions). With regard to culture standards, these books can be used to validate single culture standards, for example by confirming the universal validity of culture standards for a nation's culture. This was also pointed out by Krewer (1996, p. 150), who stated that other scientific and literary sources can be used to validate culture standards.

However, the advantages of an analysis of popular science and guidebooks can only be achieved by analyzing a large corpus of books because individual books may just describe cultural characteristics, stereotypes and/or aspects that are only

valid in a certain cultural sector and not for a country's culture as a whole. Besides, the author's observations or interpretations of these observations might be inaccurate or idiosyncratic and authors may have copied from each other. Therefore, only the results of an analysis of a sufficiently large sample of popular science and guidebooks can lead to rather reliable statements about a country's culture.

Even though authors usually do not use scientific approaches (or only use rudimentary versions) for their books, many of them have been working for years at the intersection between German and Dutch cultures and have intensively engaged themselves with German-Dutch cultural differences that come to light in bicultural interaction. They have worked in different cultural sectors and in different parts of the countries. They can thus be considered experts in the field of intercultural interactions between Dutch and German people.

Analyzing a sufficiently large corpus of popular science and guidebooks, written by authors with different backgrounds and from different cultural sectors, minimizes the chance of idiosyncratic observations or interpretations of certain observed situations and allows minority opinions to be clearly pointed out and put in relation to the majority opinions. If certain cultural aspects or characteristics are stated similarly by authors with experiences and observations from different cultural sectors, contexts and situations, it can — at least to a certain extent — be regarded as an indication that these cultural aspects and characteristic are actually representative of that culture.

Of course, one has to keep in mind that authors of popular science and guidebooks also influence each other. By checking the lists of references in their books, one can see that most of them have read books written by many other authors. This might (to some degree) have influenced the choice of topics and cultural characteristics or how comprehensively and in how much detail they describe certain aspects in their own books.

A book corpus analysis can thus allow statements to be made about German and Dutch cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that come to light in bicultural interaction. Since these books often describe concrete situations and give examples, they can show the areas of life and situations in which visible aspects of culture manifest and how (of course, the critical incidents gathered in the culture standards study are also real-life examples and are also concrete manifestations of culture). Such an analysis, involving across-cultural approach to analyzing how German and Dutch authors perceive each other's cultures in intercultural interactions, has not yet been conducted (actually, in this form, it has not been conducted for other intercultural contexts either).

3.2   Choice of methods and aims of this study

The first study of this dissertation (Chapter 1) identified German culture standards from a Dutch perspective. Culture standards illustrate rather abstract, underlying and superordinate aspects of culture. They provide an overview of the cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interactions and point out potential sources for misunderstandings, irritations, communication breakdowns and/or conflicts. As already pointed out in the conclusion of the culture standards study (Section 2.8), it would be expedient and beneficial to analyze how German-Dutch cultural differences manifest in concrete interaction situations, and in which contexts and situations. That is the aim of this study. The main research question for this study is thus: *Which concrete cultural characteristics play a role in German-Dutch interaction and to which contexts and situations do they apply?*

As already pointed out in the introductory section, an analysis of a corpus of popular science and guidebooks about the German and Dutch cultures appears to be a suitable means for reaching this aim. Therefore, a German book corpus (i.e., books about the German culture written by Dutch authors) and a Dutch book corpus (i.e., books about the Dutch culture written by German authors) were analyzed for this study. (A detailed explanation of the criteria these books had to meet to be considered suitable for analysis can be found in Section 3.3.1.1.) Since such a cross-cultural analysis of intercultural characteristics by means of a book corpus analysis had — in this form — not yet been conducted, there were no direct reference studies and it was hard to make assumptions or even estimations of possible results in advance. The methodology of the study was therefore exploratory in nature.

Therefore the main research question was broken into three separate research questions, each one building up upon the previous one. The three research questions are:

A. Which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German book corpus and which in the Dutch book corpus?
B. How do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpora?
C. Are there differences or commonalities between the cultural characteristics the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora describe?

For better readability in the course of this study, research question A will be labeled RQ A (content), research question B will be labeled RQ B (relations) and research question C will be labeled RQ C (differences). Research questions A (content) and B (relations) will be analyzed in Section 3.3 and research question C (differences) in Section 3.4.

Originally, a fourth research question was formulated about changes over time in cultural characteristics in both book corpora. However, a comparison of the

books in the corpora that were published before 1995 with the books published after that year showed that the book corpus analysis did not allow assumptions about dynamic developments. There were no considerable differences between the older and the newer books. Therefore, this question was abandoned.

A second aim of this study was to analyze whether, how and to what extent the results from the analysis of the German and Dutch book corpora complement or complete, specify and validate, or falsify the results from other methods of analyzing culture. To achieve this aim, the results were compared to the results of the culture standards study and the dimensions of different scholars' dimension models. In Section 3.5, the results from Sections 3.3 and 3.4 will be compared to the results from other studies about differences and commonalities between the German and Dutch cultures. They will also be compared with German culture standards from a Dutch perspective (see Chapter 2) and Dutch culture standards from a German perspective (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009). Furthermore, they will also be compared to different dimensions from the dimension models of Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990).

3.3   Cultural characteristics, relevance and consistency (RQs A and B)

To answer RQ A (i. e., which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German book corpus and which in the Dutch book corpus?), I categorized the cultural aspects and characteristics that are described in the German and Dutch book corpora. These main categories also form the basis for the quantitative approaches that were used to answer RQ B (relations) and RQ C (differences) because, as Früh (2011, p. 38) put it, qualitative and quantitative content analysis cannot be regarded separately. Quantifications always have to be rated, every observance or identification of content is first a qualitative analysis, and raw material first has to be transformed and aggregated into units that allow precise descriptions of relevant content characteristics.

To answer RQ B (i. e., How do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpora?) I analyzed two aspects of the main categories. First, I weighted the main categories of each book corpus and put them into order of relevance. Second, I analyzed the consistency of each main category (i. e., whether a main category contained conflicting or inconsistent statements from the authors).

3.3.1 Methodology

3.3.1.1 Methodology of the content analysis (RQ A)

I conducted two categorizations to answer RQ A (content). This is a recognized approach in communication sciences (cf. e.g., Mayring, 2003). First I generated subcategories and then I generated main categories from these subcategories. For greater clarity and better readability, the results from the first categorization will henceforth be labeled 'subcategories' and the results from the second categorization will be labeled 'main categories.'

Defining the population of texts

The population of relevant material for the German and Dutch book corpora includes popular science and guidebooks as well as other forms of advice literature and how-to texts such as journals. For this study, *guidebooks* are defined as pieces of text that describe the German or Dutch culture and aim to introduce this culture to interested laymen from the other culture. Often these books also give advice about how to deal with people from the described culture. However, this was not a preliminary requirement for a text to be attributed to the population of relevant texts. The population thus also contains texts that merely describe German or Dutch culture.

The term *popular science books* is used to describe pieces of literature that deal with the German or Dutch culture and are written for non-scientists. What distinguishes them from guidebooks is that the information they contain is gathered by surveys, interviews, etc. One example is books that are written by coaches for intercultural management training who analyze their experiences from cultural training sessions (e.g., Koentopp, 2000). Other examples include books from people who gather information from interviews with bicultural experts (e.g., Huijser, 2005).

The population relevant to the research question for the German book corpus contains texts from Dutch authors about German culture; for the Dutch book corpus it contains texts from German authors about Dutch culture. Furthermore, the population contains texts that deal with different cultures and that only in parts (for example, in some chapters) deal with the Dutch or German culture (e.g., Mole, Snijders, & Jacobs, 1997).

To be considered a part of the population relevant to the research question, the texts had to meet several other criteria:

1) The authors had to be German or Dutch people writing about the neighboring culture or comparing the cultures to each other. Since this study deals with cultural characteristics that come to light in intercultural interaction situations be-

tween German and Dutch people, texts from authors from other cultures would be ill-suited because the cultural orientation system of another culture is always judged by one's own cultural orientation system (Thomas, 2003, p. 48).

2) Only texts published after 1985 were considered part of the population. The reason for this is that this study focuses on the current image of the German culture in Dutch literature and the Dutch culture in German literature.

Identifying the population of texts relevant to the research questions

To identify the population of literature relevant to the research questions for the German and Dutch book corpora, I conducted a comprehensive literature research. Since most university libraries concentrate on scientific and academic literature, the research was extended to different sources. The primary source for literature was the database from the Special Collection Library BeNeLux (Sondersammel-gebiet BeNeLux), located in the library of the Haus der Niederlande in Münster, Germany. In addition to scientific literature, this database also contains a large number of popular science and guidebooks about Dutch culture and about German culture from a Dutch perspective. Another important source of literature was the intranet database of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (in the Netherlands), which contains a lot of literature about the Dutch and German cultures, both scientific and other. In addition, I extended the search to the library catalogs of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, which contain most of the existing literature in the German and Dutch languages.

I also conducted internet research. I used various search engines to find relevant literature by searching for sources containing keywords and combinations of terms such as *culture, German, Germany, Dutch, Netherlands,* and *cultural differences*. This search engine research was conducted in Dutch, German and English. I also used the bibliographies and book recommendations from the literature I had already found to find more literature.

In the course of the literature research, I found about 55 books for each corpora that met the requirements for this study. However, it must be noted that it was not possible to identify the whole population of literature. For example, in the course of the literature research it became apparent that there are pieces of literature for which the title does not indicate that they deal with the Dutch or German culture. One of the books, for example, was titled *Negotiations in English* (Schroevers & Lewis, 2010), which does not indicate that it actually deals with the German culture from a Dutch perspective. I only found it because it was shelved among other books about the German and Dutch cultures.

Nevertheless, I could identify a substantial part of the literature relevant to the research question. As Merten and Teipen (1991, p. 106) pointed out, if a population cannot be completely identified, a cluster sample is sufficient if it covers a substantial and representative part of the population. A first analysis of the literature — in

which I read the texts, investigated the authors' backgrounds and compared the lists of references in the books — showed that this was indeed the case.

After identifying the literature, I analyzed it further. I only kept pieces of literature that primarily deal with aspects of the Dutch or German cultures; all other pieces of literature were sorted out. For example, many of the identified books turned out to be historical books that largely dealt with the history of Germany or the Netherlands and only to a small extent, if at all, with culture. Other books dealt primarily with geographical, political or touristic aspects. Those books were not considered part of the population relevant to the research question.

Selecting the sample of texts

A qualitative content analysis must not only provide a comprehensive and valid description, but it also has to depict a topic in its entirety (i. e., it has to be generalizing). Since an exhaustive analysis of the whole population of texts that are relevant to the research questions was not possible, an important criterion for the selection of the sample was that the results of the analysis could be generalized and regarded as representative and valid for the whole population (cf. Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 107). To meet this criterion, the sample had to cover a heterogeneous width.

To do so in the course of selection, I ensured that texts from different media (e. g., books about German culture, books about Dutch culture, books comparing the German and Dutch culture, articles from academic journals) were included in the sample. I also ensured that I included texts of different lengths and volumes. Furthermore, I ensured that the sample contained texts from authors who had experienced their interactions with the neighboring culture in different cultural sectors. For example, the sample included texts from journalists (e. g., Meines, 1990), intercultural consultants (e. g., Schürings, 2010) and people who had worked in different sectors and industries.

About 70 texts (35 for the German book corpus and 35 for the Dutch book corpus) remained for the sample. The number of texts that were eventually analyzed for the German and Dutch book corpora was determined by the saturation point (cf. Ostertag, 2010). As Appendix 8 shows, the number of new statements (i. e., statements that had not appeared in the books analyzed before) regarding cultural characteristics decreased on average with every book that was analyzed. For the German and Dutch book corpora, the saturation point was reached after analyzing 20 books apiece (i. e., the analysis of the following books provided no or only a small number of new statements about cultural characteristics). To verify that the saturation point had indeed been reached, I analyzed four more books for the German corpus and three more for the Dutch corpus. In total, I analyzed 24 texts for the German corpus and 23 texts for the Dutch corpus. The authors and titles of these texts are listed in Appendix 7.

Creating subcategories for the German and Dutch book corpora

The texts from the sample for the Dutch and German book corpora were analyzed in random order. For this, I made two lists of the texts that were relevant and suitable for the sample (one for the German corpus and one for the Dutch corpus). The titles were not alphabetized. Subsequently, for each of the two lists, I analyzed every third text. After I worked through a list, I analyzed every third text again, starting from the top of the list. I continued this process until the saturation point was reached.

After I read the first texts and gained an overview of their content, I defined criteria for the first coding for the first qualitative analysis. The aim of this first analysis was to scrutinize what the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora wrote about the culture of the neighboring country, and which cultural aspects and characteristics they considered relevant in bicultural interactions between German and Dutch people.

An initial cursory reading of the first texts showed that a word analysis (i. e., an analysis of how frequently certain catchwords or catchphrases occur in a text; cf. Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 108 and 137 f.) would not have been expedient because it became apparent that statements that were identical or similar with regard to their content were in many cases described in totally different words. For example, both Reyskens (2007) and Jacobs (2008) stated that orders are given in a more direct and commanding tone in German companies than in Dutch companies. Reyskens stated: "German hierarchies are also reflected in the way that supervisors give orders to their employees" (p. 49). In contrast, Jacobs stated: "Do this, do that, have this ready by tomorrow! For Germans this tone is normal and accepted, they do not take this personally" (p. 114). Therefore, I decided a semantic content analysis (Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 145 ff.) was an appropriate method for the coding. Within the semantic content analysis, I conducted a topic analysis. According to Früh (2011), this is the most common content analysis method.

I kept the classification scheme for the creation of the subcategories as simple and transparent as possible. From each text, I extracted those text passages that referred to the other culture. Passages in which statements about the German or Dutch culture, cultural characteristics or behavioral patterns are made were considered relevant to the first categorization. The term 'statement' for this study was defined as one or more sentences that contain(s) one or more of the following:

A) A description of a cultural characteristic. For example: "Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch." (Jacobs, 2008, p. 28)
B) An explanation of a cultural characteristic. For example: "This appreciation for written documents has different reasons. Germans write down everything because it helps them to avoid uncertainties in advance. Also, Germans like to think and act in formal structures." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 123 f.)

C) An example of a cultural characteristic or of areas, contexts and situations in which it manifests. For example: "Dutch crane operators often use their intercoms to make jokes, mock colleagues, etc. Germans think, 'That is uncooperative and rude' and 'This cannot lead to good results'." (Hesseling, 2001, p. 33)

D) Passages that contain advice about how to act and behave in bicultural encounters. For example: "Do not wear fancy clothes and do not use garish colors." (Hesseling, 2001, p. 44)

Furthermore, I applied the general criteria for creating categories in social sciences (completeness, mutual exclusiveness, independence from each other, explicit definitions, cf. e. g., Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 148 f.) to the creation of the subcategories.

I carefully extracted and recorded every text passage containing statements, explanations, examples or advice about the Dutch or German culture (see Appendix 9). Statements that were thematically identical or very similar were grouped into subcategories. I labeled each subcategory; the labels were formulated as statements about cultural characteristics, such as "authority is gained by know-how and expertise" (see Appendix 9).

In the categorization process, I took care to leave as little room for interpretation as possible. For this, I even treated statements that differed only slightly from each other — for example "Orders are given rather directly" and "Orders and instructions are not formulated as a kind request as is common in the Netherlands" (see Appendix 9) — as two different subcategories. On the one hand, this approach reduced the selectivity between the subcategories to a certain degree. On the other hand, it ensured that the creation of the subcategories was not unconsciously influenced by my previous knowledge.

First categorization: subcategories

In the course of the first categorization, 110 subcategories for the German corpus and 107 for the Dutch corpus emerged. These subcategories can be found in the Excel spreadsheet in Appendix 9. For each subcategory, the spreadsheet shows in which of the analyzed texts (and on which pages) the relevant texts can be found. Furthermore, the spreadsheet describes the total number of pages for each of the analyzed texts on which a subcategory is described and displays the percentage of pages that this subcategory has in the whole text (i. e., the part of the text that deals with culture is displayed in brackets after the page reference). For example, for the subcategory *Meetings and presentations: Germans are well prepared*, the following is stated for the first analyzed book from the German book corpus: 19–22 (4=6%). This means that statements about the subcategory can be found on page 19–22. It is described on four pages, thus on six percent of the pages of book number 1 in which German cultural characteristics are described.

Second categorization: Creating main categories

In the second step of the qualitative analysis, I classified the subcategories that were extracted directly from the texts of the book corpora into main categories. The main categories for the German book corpus were based on the 110 subcategories extracted from the German book corpus in the first step of qualitative analysis; the main categories for the Dutch book corpus were based on the 107 subcategories extracted from the Dutch book corpus. The coding for the classification into main categories was based on the following coding rules.

A main category was defined as a bundle of subcategories that are thematically identical or similar. A verbatim correlation between the subcategories that make up a main category was not necessary (cf. Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 119 ff.). The reason for this is that in some cases subcategories that show no verbatim resemblance can nevertheless describe a similar content. For example, the subcategories *Germans prefer known, established and approved approaches and methods* and *Germans are less flexible and pragmatic than the Dutch, improvisation is seen as poor planning* both deal with flexibility but describe it in totally different words.

For the German book corpus, a main category had to contain statements about the German culture; for the Dutch book corpus, it had to contain statements about the Dutch culture. A main category had to describe a certain cultural characteristic or behavior; it could not merely describe a situation. However, if there were certain cultural characteristics or behavioral patterns that just occurred in certain situations, they were allowed to form a main category. For example, in the process of extracting subcategories from the book corpora in the first step of the qualitative analysis, it became apparent that, according to some authors, Germans show a certain kind of behavior in meetings and discussions that they do not show in other situations. In this case, it was reasonable to regard this behavior in discussions and meetings as a separate main category.

Each main category was given a caption describing a cultural characteristic, a certain behavior or a situation in which a certain cultural characteristic comes to light. For instance, a main category containing statements about hierarchical relations in organizations was labeled *hierarchies*.

It appeared that single subcategories that were extracted from the book corpora in the first step of the qualitative analysis could be attributed to more than one main category. The reason for this was not a lack of selectivity between the main categories or a lack of mutual exclusiveness, but rather that some of the subcategories extracted from the book corpora in the first step of the qualitative analysis could only be explained by assuming an interplay of different main categories. For example, one subcategory extracted from the Dutch book corpus was *Dutch expect to be included in decision-making processes* (Appendix 9, cell A195). On the one hand, this had to do with hierarchies; on the other hand, it also had to do with a Dutch appreciation for consensus. Furthermore, a main category had to meet the general requirements for categories in social sciences (i. e., completeness, mutual

exclusiveness, independence from each other, explicit definitions; cf. e. g., Merten & Teipen, 1991, p. 148). The coding template can be found in Appendix 10.

From the subcategories that were extracted in the first step of the qualitative analysis, I created 20 main categories from the German book corpus and 19 main categories from the Dutch book corpus. These can be found in Appendix 11 and are described in Section 3.3.2.

Reliability test

The main categories I created not only answer RQ A (content) (see Section 3.3.2) but also formed the basis for the (predominantly) quantitative analysis steps that were carried out to answer RQ B (relations) and RQ C (differences). For this reason, the quality of the main categories was essential to the quality of all this study's results. As Holsti (1969, p. 95) stated, "content analysis stands and falls by its categories".

To ensure and demonstrate the quality of the main categories, I conducted a reliability test. Früh (2011, p. 180 ff.) has stated that if objectivity is impossible, intersubjectivity should be the aim. A reliability test can show whether or not the coding rules are unambiguous and the coding process transparent. If other people who apply the same coding rules to the same raw material (in this case, the subcategories from the first step of the qualitative analysis) create identical or similar main categories, it can be concluded that the main categories are intersubjective. Furthermore, this process can rebut the claim that in the process of categorization the author has — consciously or unconsciously — been influenced by the results of other studies he has conducted.

The reliability test was only conducted for the second step of the qualitative analysis: the creation of main categories. The reason is that this step left some room for interpretation, whereas the first step left very little space for interpretation (see Section 3.3.1). Another reason for not conducting a reliability test for the first step was the volume of the sample. Within a two-month period, I analyzed 47 texts with a total of more than 4000 pages. Coding this material again would have required a disproportionate effort from the coders. Of course, a sample of only a small number of the texts could have been used for a reliability test. However, this would not have been very expedient because I extracted a high number of statements from the corpora: 109 from the German corpus and 107 from the Dutch corpus. This means that coding only a small number of the texts could have permitted only very limited conclusions regarding intersubjectivity.

I used Holsti's (1969) formula for the reliability test. Even though this test was developed more than 40 years ago, it is still (along with Cohen's Kappa, Scott's pi and Krippendorff's alpha) one of the most common methods of determining reliability in social sciences (Lombard, 2010). According to Heckmann (1992, p. 140), Holsti's model has been criticized because it does not take into account the extent

of intercoder agreement that might result from chance. To reduce this possibility, I invited two external coders to the reliability test, which means that three pairs of coders could be compared. The reliability test was conducted by comparing my categorization of this study (henceforth referred to as coder 1) to that of two other coders (henceforth called coders 2 and 3) who had to meet several criteria.

Since a person's own cultural orientation system usually influences his or her perception of the foreign culture (Krewer, 1996, p. 150 ff.; Thomas, 2005, p. 21 ff.), I invited a Dutch coder and a German coder to ensure that the coding was not done from a certain German or Dutch perspective. The coders had to be familiar with both the Dutch and German cultures; a preliminary requirement was that they had to have spent at least six months in the neighboring country. The reason for this is that people with a lack of background knowledge and a lack of knowledge about which cultural characteristics play a role in bicultural encounters might have had difficulties creating meaningful and practical main categories. Another preliminary requirement was that the coders must not be communication scientists because a communication scientist might have unconsciously been influenced by other methods of analyzing culture (e.g., by Hofstede's (2008) dimension model). Coder 2 was a Dutch political scientist working in Germany and coder 3 was a German commercial employee who had studied in the Netherlands.

To avoid external influence, the coders were not allowed to see my categorization. After they had received the coding template with the coding rules (see Appendix 10) and the list of subcategories that had been extracted from the German and the Dutch book corpora in the first step of the qualitative analysis (Appendix 9), they had to do the coding on their own. They were not allowed to consult with or pose questions to each other or to me with regard to the coding process.

Intercoder reliability is an indicator of the concordance between coders who have coded the same sample with the same coding rules. Holsti's (1969) formula can only be used to calculate the concordance between two coders. Therefore, I compared the three pairs of coders (coder 1/coder 2, coder 1/coder 3 and coder 2/ coder 3) to each other and subsequently calculated the arithmetic mean from the three intercoder reliability values, as suggested by Früh (2011, p. 88 ff.).

With Holsti's formula, the result 1 means a total accordance between the two coders while the result 0 indicates no accordance at all. According to Früh (2011, p. 192 f.), there is no fixed benchmark for how high an intercoder reliability value has to be to pass the reliability test. However, he has deduced approximate values by analyzing similar studies (content analysis in which a categorization is made) and suggests that an intercoder reliability value of .50 means that the reliability test is passed and an intercoder reliability value between .75 and .85 is the best achievable score (see also Spooren & Degrand, 2010).

For each pair of coders, I analyzed for which of the subcategories from the first step of the qualitative analysis their results matched and for which they did not match. A subcategory was regarded as a match if the main category to which it was

assigned by one of the coders and the main category to which it was assigned by the other coder were thematically identical or very similar. Since the labeling of the main categories was done independently by each coder, a perfect concordance of the wording was not a preliminary requirement to being regarded as a match. For example, coder 1 assigned the subcategory *private and professional life are separated, 'Feierabend'* to the main category *separation of work and private life* while coder 2 assigned it to a main category labeled *distinction work and private.* The wording of the main categories did not match, but they were regarded as a match because they coincided thematically. For each pair of coders, every subcategory that was assigned to more than one main category by one of the two coders was also listed more than once. For example, in the comparison of coder 1 and coder 3, the subcategory *Dutch expect to be included in decision-making processes* was listed twice because coder 1 assigned it to the two main categories *hierarchies* and *consensus and 'overleg'.* Since coder 2 assigned it to only one main category, *hierarchies*, one match and one mismatch was counted for the calculation. Appendix 12 highlights the matching subcategories.

Subsequently, I calculated the intercoder reliability for each pair of coders. The results of the comparison and the calculation steps of the intercoder reliability for the Dutch and German book corpora can be found in Appendix 12 for each pair of coders. Appendix 13.1 shows the number of matching main categories for each pair of coders. Appendix 13.2 shows — for both book corpora and for each pair of coders — which main categories matched. Appendix 13.3 shows the results of these calculations.

The results of the reliability test show that the coding rules were formulated sufficiently clearly and transparently, and that the main categories have validity. For the German book corpus, the intercoder reliability for coder pair 1/2 is .65, for pair 1/3 it is .76 and for pair 2/3 it is .60. The arithmetic mean of the intercoder reliability values of all three pairs is .67. For the Dutch book corpus, the intercoder reliability value of coder pair 1/3 is .71, for pair 1/3 it is .77 and for pair 2/3 it is .62. The arithmetic mean of the intercoder reliability of all three pairs is .70.

Completeness of coder 1's main categories

To analyze the completeness of coder 1's category scheme, I analyzed whether there were matching main categories used by coders 2 and 3 that could not be found in coder 1's category scheme. If coders 2 and 3 had agreed that there were more main categories than coder 1 had created, this could have been an indication that the coder 1's category scheme was incomplete.

For the German book corpus, coders 2 and 3 used one main category that was not used by coder 1: *courtesy*. However, on closer inspection it became apparent that *courtesy* bears analogy to the main category *formality*. Those subcategories that coders 2 and 3 attributed to *courtesy* were in most cases attributed to the main

categories *formality* or *separation of work and private life* by coder 1. The low degree of selectivity between the main categories *courtesy* and *formality* or *separation of work and private life* thus made it unnecessary for coder 1 to add this main category to his category scheme.

For the Dutch book corpus, there was also one main category used by coders 2 and 3 but not by coder 1: *privacy*. However, there was a very low degree of selectivity between this main category and the main categories *formality* and *hierarchies* that were used by coder 1. In fact, the subcategories that coders 2 and 3 attributed to the main category *privacy* were attributed to the main categories *formality* and *hierarchies* by coder 1. It was therefore decided that is was not necessary to add the main category *privacy* to coder 1's category scheme.

3.3.1.2   Methodology of the relation analysis (RQ B)

To answer research question B — How do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpora? — I analyzed two aspects of the book corpora. I first analyzed the relevance of the main categories and then analyzed their consistency.

Weighting the main categories and ranking relevance

Since the authors of the texts in the book corpora made no or only very vague statements about the relevance of the cultural characteristics they described, I had to determine which variables should be taken into account to calculate the relevance of the main categories of each book corpus. Three variables were determined.

The first variable used for weighting the main categories was the number of texts in which a main category is stated. As already mentioned, the authors of the texts come from different cultural sectors and have worked in different industries. The analysis of the number of texts in which a main category is stated could therefore be regarded as the main criterion for the relevance and weighting of this main category. If a main category is not stated by an author it can be assumed that, according to that author, it does not play a relevant role in bicultural interactions. If it is stated by many authors, it can be assumed that it does play a role in intercultural interaction situations between German and Dutch people and that it plays a role in different contexts and situations. However, with regard to this variable, I had to keep in mind that the authors of the analyzed books might have been influenced by the other authors when they wrote their books. As the reference lists in many of the books from the corpora show, some of the authors had read (and thus possibly been inspired by) the books of the others. This might have influenced the results and was therefore kept in mind in the process of interpreting the data.

The second variable was the number of pages on which a main category was stated in the German or Dutch book corpus. My reading of the texts revealed that the reason why authors describe a certain main category on more pages than other main categories is usually that more situations or contexts are described in which that main category manifests or that more examples for this main category are given. It could therefore be assumed that the authors regard those main categories as more important than other main categories. The comprehensiveness of description could therefore indeed be regarded as an indicator of the relevance the authors attribute to a main category.

The third variable was the median of the percentages that a main category has in the single texts from the book corpora. For this, I calculated the percentage of pages that a main category had of the total part of text in which culture is described for each text in the German and Dutch corpora. From these percentages, I calculated the median.

One example involves the German book corpus. In book 1 (Huijser, 2005), 36% of the text deals with the main category *hierarchies*. In book 2 (Koentopp, 2000), it was 24%, in book 3 (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009) 35%, in book 4 (Linthout, 2008) 15%, in book 5 (Pechholt, Douven, & Essers, 2008) 30%, etc. The median of these percentages is 27%. The reason this variable was applied is that the second variable (the number of pages on which a main category is described) on its own did not have a high level of expressiveness. The single texts of the book corpora differ considerably with regard to their lengths (from 7 to 177 pages). Naturally, single main categories are usually described on more pages in longer texts than in shorter texts. This means that statistical outliers could distort the results.

For example, the subcategory t*he boss is the boss and not a 'primus inter pares'* is described on 42 pages in six books (see Appendix 9). From this, one could conclude that this cultural characteristic is stated on an above average number of pages. However, closer inspection reveals that this subcategory is described on 21 pages in book 16, which is 50% of the total number of pages on which it is described. This means that if this subcategory had not been described in this long book, the total number of pages and the percentage per book on which it is described would be considerably lower. Variable 3 ruled out this sort of distortion. Since the calculation was based on the percentage a main category has in the texts rather than on a concrete number of pages, the difference in the texts' page numbers was relativized. By calculating the median, I minimized the influence of statistical outliers on the results.

However, even though variable 2 (number of pages) has a lower level of expressiveness, it could not be abandoned. As Krämer (2011) pointed out, since both the calculation of the average and the median have advantages and disadvantages, an entanglement of both is necessary to gain good results.

To take their different levels of expressiveness into account, I assigned a weighting factor to each variable. This weighting factor was determined in coop-

eration with the experts who had conducted the expert evaluation for the culture standards study. As already mentioned, variable 1 (number of texts) has the highest expressiveness for the relevance of the main categories; it was therefore assigned a weighting factor of 2. Variable 3 (median of percentages), which has a higher level of expressiveness than variable 2 (number of pages), was assigned a weighting factor of 1.5. Variable 2 was assigned a weighting factor of 1.

Calculating the weighting

In a first step, I calculated the three variables stated above for each main category (the main categories can be found in Appendix 11). In a second step, I put each of the three variables for the main categories into a ranking order. Rank 1 was assigned to the main category with the highest number (total or median); the last rank was assigned to the main category with the lowest number. The calculation of the rankings can be found in Appendix 14.1.

In some cases, within a variable, two or more main categories had the same number (total or median). For example, in the German book corpus, the main categories *communication* and *hierarchies* were both stated in 24 of the texts. In those cases, main categories that were equal with regard to a certain variable were assigned to two successive ranks. So as not to distort the results of the following calculations, all ranks were subsequently assigned a numerical value. The main category on rank 1 was assigned the numerical value 1, rank 2 was assigned the numerical value 2, etc.

For those main categories that were equal with regard to a certain variable, I calculated the arithmetic mean of their ranks and assigned it to both as their numerical value. For example, two main categories that were equal with regard to a certain variable were put on ranks 1 and 2. The numerical value for both ranks was the arithmetic mean between both ranks, thus 1.5.

In a third step, I multiplied the numerical values by their weighting factor (see Appendix 14.1). In a fourth step, I calculated the weighted arithmetic mean for each main category. I did this by calculating the arithmetic mean of the three weighted values for each main category. The results of this calculation are displayed in Appendix 14.2.

In a fifth step, I put the main categories into a ranking of relevance. The main category with the lowest weighted arithmetic mean was assigned to rank 1; the main category with the highest weighted arithmetic mean was assigned to the last rank.

Consistency of the main categories – discrepancies between the authors

The reading of the texts from the book corpora revealed that there was some disagreement between the authors with regard to some main categories. For example, Hesseling (2001, p. 35) stated that Germans are more consensus-oriented than the Dutch, while Linthout (2006, p. 274) claimed the opposite. To analyze the level of consistency of the main categories (i. e., to analyze whether the single subcategories from a certain main category wee mutually supportive and dependent or if they were contradictory to each other), I first scrutinized whether each main category of the German and Dutch book corpora contained conflicting subcategories. For those main categories that actually contained conflicting subcategories, I then analyzed whether the conflicting subcategories were merely a marginal minority opinion or whether they were supported by a considerable number of authors, described in a considerable number of texts and on a significant number of pages (i. e., I weighted the diverging categories).

Clustering categories

I clustered the conflicting subcategories to analyze the consistency of the main categories. Within each main category, those subcategories that supported the view shared by the majority of the authors were labeled *group 1,* while contradictory subcategories were labeled *group 2*. For example, within the main category *directness* in the German book corpus, the category "Germans are more direct than Dutch, they express their opinion more openly" was regarded as *group 1* because it was stated by more authors than the opinion "Germans are less direct than the Dutch." Appendix 15.1 shows the conflicting categories within the main categories and Appendix 15.2 shows which cluster of categories (group 1 or group 2) they were assigned to.

Determining variables

Subsequently, three variables were determined for the analysis of the consistency. The first variable was the number of subcategories that supported the majority and minority opinions. It can be reasonably assumed that an opinion that subsumes considerably more subcategories than the contradictory opinion has more relevance in the book corpora.

  The second variable was the number of texts in which subcategories that supported the majority or minority opinions are stated. If subcategories that support one opinion are mentioned in more texts than subcategories that support the contradictory opinion, it shows that more authors support this view. It also shows that these subcategories manifest in more different situations and contexts. It can thus

be assumed that subcategories supporting a certain opinion that are stated in more texts have a higher relevance in the book corpora.

A third variable was the number of pages on which subcategories supporting a certain opinion were stated. If subcategories supporting this opinion were described more comprehensively and in more detail than those subcategories that described a contradictory opinion, this also indicates that it is more relevant in the book corpora.

All three variables were regarded as equally important. The calculation of the three variables can be found in Appendix 15.3.

3.3.2 Results related to cultural characteristics, relevance and consistency (RQs A and B)

This section will present the main categories for the Dutch and the German book corpora in a decreasing order of relevance. For each main category, the following aspects will be described:

- the content (RQ A)
- the weighting of relevance (RQ B)
- the consistency (i. e., the level of agreement between the authors with regard to this main category; RQ B)

Tables 3 and 4 give an overview of the main categories of the German and Dutch book corpora, their relevance (i. e., their weighted value) and their consistency. The tables present the rank and the weighted value (see Appendix 14) for each main category. In addition, they state on how many subcategories from the first step of the qualitative analysis each main category is based. One has to keep in mind that the number of subcategories on which a main category is based neither shows how often each category is mentioned in the book corpora, nor allows conclusions to be drawn about the relevance of the main categories. Furthermore, for each main category, the tables show the number of subcategories that are contradictory to the majority opinion, which shows whether or not they are consistent (for each main category, Appendix 15.3 shows the level of consistency and the calculations of the three variables). The quotes used to illustrate the main categories have been translated into English; Appendix 16 shows them in their original language.

Table 3   Main categories of the German book corpus, ranked by relevance and consistency

Rank	Main category and relevance (i. e., weighted value)	Number of subcategories it is based on	Contradictory subcategories
1	Hierarchies (2.08)	21	1
2	Communication (4.33)	14	2
3	Formality (4.42)	7	0
4	Separation of work and private life (4.50)	9	0
5	Modesty and status (10.33)	11	0
6	Rules (12.00)	2	0
7	Directness (12.33)	7	3
8	Perception of time (13.42)	7	0
9	Flexibility (14.00)	5	0
10	Obviation of uncertainties (14.25)	8	0
11	Task more important than good atmosphere (15.33)	11	1
12	Planning (17.33)	4	0
13	Details (20.42)	3	0
14	Meetings and discussions (20.67)	7	1
15	Everything is structured (20.68)	7	0
16	Expertise and qualification (22.00)	5	0
17	Preparation (22.58)	1	0
18	Perfection (24.83)	1	0
19	Respect (28.17)	1	0
20	Individualism (29.33)	3	1

A low weighted value indicates a high relevance and vice versa.

3.3.3   Results related to content of the book corpora (RQ A) and relations between cultural aspects (RQ B)

3.3.3.1   German book corpus

Hierarchies

With a weighted value of 2.08, the main category *hierarchies,* which refers to hierarchical relations in organizations, is by far the most relevant in bicultural interaction situations between German and Dutch people. (Keep in mind that due to the methodology, a low weighted value indicates a high relevance.) The vast majority of the authors who described cultural characteristics related to this main category

Table 4   Main categories of the Dutch book corpus, ranked by relevance and consistency

Rank	Main category and relevance (i. e., weighted value)	Number of subcategories it is based on	Contradictory subcategories
1	Modesty and status (1.50)	17	6
2	Hierarchies (3.33)	15	0
3	Consensus and 'overleg' (4.17)	11	0
4	Planning (6.67)	10	0
5	Communication (8.33)	11	1
6	Informality (9.92)	4	0
7	Perfection (12.75)	2	0
8	Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation (13.42)	8	1
9	Rules (13.58)	2	0
10	Harmony as important as task (15.33)	6	3
11	Separation of work and private life (15.83)	9	4
12	Expertise and qualification (17.00)	4	0
13	Obviation of uncertainties (20.00)	7	0
14	Egalitarian character (20.75)	1	0
15	Tolerance (21.17)	1	0
16	Details (24.17)	3	0
17	Individualism (25.42)	4	1
18	Calimero effect (25.50)	1	0
19	Perception of time (26.17)	5	0

A low weighted value indicates a high relevance and vice versa.

agreed that tasks, responsibilities and functions are more clearly defined in Germany than in the Netherlands, and formal and real hierarchies match. Koentopp (2000), for example, stated that:

"[In] Germany and the Netherlands different leadership styles prevail. The consequence is that fixed structures and clearly defined (written and unwritten) norms and rules exist in Germany. Functions and competences are clearly described and separated from each other." (p. 45)

This was also emphasized by Linthout (2006), who wrote that:

"[In] the Netherlands, power is more informal, less concrete [...] because it shows less in the functions. In a meeting in which German and Dutch officials

took part, in the introduction phase the Dutch told about their tasks while the Germans talked about their function in the organization." (p. 288)

In the German book corpus it is also claimed that the boss of an organization stands on top of the hierarchy and is not a 'primus inter pares.' The boss ultimately makes the decisions while employees play an advisory role; consensus is less important than in the Netherlands. This applies to meetings but also to application processes, as Hesseling (2001) wrote: "*There will probably be persons from other departments taking part in the application meeting. However, they may state their opinions but the decision will ultimately be taken by the boss.*" (p. 8)

Some of the authors also claimed that responsibilities are delegated to a lesser extent in Germany than in the Netherlands and that there is usually less contact between people from different hierarchical levels. Koentopp (2000, p. 45), for example, wrote that: "*in their lunch break German superiors often do not take their lunch together with their employees in the canteen and if they do so, employees do not join them at their table without being asked to do so*" (p. 48). Hesseling (2001) added that: "*the relationship between superiors and employees is often based on fear; therefore the contact between them is predominantly professional and not private.*"

In the German book corpus it is also claimed that orders and instructions are given rather directly in German organizations. Linthout (2006), for example, demonstrated this with a popular joke about a sinking ship:

> "The passengers do not listen to the first mate when told to enter the rescue boats but when the captain walks over to them and briefly talks to them, they immediately start entering the boats. When the first mate asked him how he did that, the captain answered, 'It was simple. I told the Americans that they are insured, the Englishmen that it is sportsmanlike, the Italians and the Dutch that it is prohibited to enter the rescue boats and the Germans that it is an order.'" (p. 289)

Among the authors who claim that hierarchies in German organizations are more concrete and apparent than in Dutch organizations there is dissent about the reasons for this. While some authors claim that Germans prefer clear and unambiguous conditions and accept authority because this is a way to avoid ambiguities (e. g., Koentopp, 2000, p. 52), others claim that Germans are obedient to authority. In their opinion, Germans work because they are told to, do not show individual motivation or initiative and are scared of their supervisors and never criticize them. Hesseling (2001, p. 30), for example, stated that: "*the relations between supervisors and subordinates are therefore often characterized by fear.*"

The main category *hierarchies* is relatively consistent. Almost all the authors (23 of 24) described subcategories that are not contradictory and in parts are mutually supportive. Only Zeidenitz and Barkow (1994) disagreed with the majority

opinion. They implied that German hierarchies are flatter than Dutch by claiming that: "*in German companies, everyone from the boss to the room cleaner is called 'Mitarbeiter' (colleague) and that is not only an empty phrase. Everyone in the company regards the others as equal, hierarchies are weak.*" (p. 57)

Communication

With a weighted value of 4.33 in the German book corpus, *communication* is the second most important main category in German-Dutch bicultural interactions. It describes different aspects of communication. First, there are subcategories that deal with communication channels. The authors who made statements about communication channels agreed that information is conveyed through formal channels (e. g., emails, letters, official meetings) to a higher degree in Germany than in the Netherlands; it is not spread informally (i. e., through the office grapevine). Information flows vertically rather than horizontally. The boss gathers the information and spreads it to those who need it. Huijser (2005), for example, wrote that:

> "Knowledge is power and power is shared only if necessary. Even though a German supervisor expects to be informed comprehensively and frequently about everything, he will only share his knowledge with his employees if necessary. His authority and position are to some extent based on the fact that he is in control of the information channels." (p. 61)

Here it becomes obvious that the main category *communication* is to some degree interrelated with the main category *hierarchies*.

Some of the authors from the German book corpus also stated that everything is written down in German business life. As Schürings (2010) put it: *"Germans want to consider and discuss even the smallest details and every potential problem in advance and then they want to write everything down in a several pages long protocol."* (p. 98)

Second, there are subcategories describing a German style of communication. The authors who made statements about communication style agree that Germans maintain a very direct style of communication; orders and instructions are especially given rather directly and are not usually formulated as a kind request as is common in the Netherlands. The meaning of messages does not have to be understood from the context; it is predominantly conveyed verbatim. To a certain degree, this aspect overlaps with the main category *directness*.

The German book corpus also reveals that Germans prefer to use technical terminology at work (i. e., that they use a lot of technical and specialist terms that are usually not found in everyday language and are often only understood by experts or specialists in a certain field or profession). Linthout (2006), for example, stated:

"In Germany scientific and technical texts are written for experts and professionals. The language that is used also shows one's status. By using scientific and technical language, the author demonstrates that he knows what he is writing about, that he is reliable and competent and that he takes the reader seriously." (p. 246)

Special attention is paid to the German discussion culture. The authors who wrote about this agree that in Germany, discussions about facts are more important than feelings and meetings are fact-based. Discussions are more about the principle, Germans are more idealistic than the Dutch and there is a culture of dispute. With regard to this, Mole, Snijders & Jacobs (1997) wrote:

"Germans only take part in a discussion if they have expertise about the topic. Discussions are about who is right. They do not give in, not even when it comes to aspects that are of little importance. Inconstant argumentation or giving in too quickly is seen as a sign of incompetence or a lack of knowledge." (p. 74)

There is overall unanimity among the authors that the German communication style is harsher and rougher than in the Netherlands.

While the authors agreed about most of these aspects, there is dissent with regard to the directness of communication. While some authors (e.g., Breukel & Eijk, 2003; Gesteland, 2010; Metzmacher, 2010) stated that Germans are more direct than Dutch people, others (e.g., Birschel, 2008; Hesseling, 2001; Jacobs, 2008) stated the exact opposite. However, the quantification clearly shows that the first opinion is the majority opinion in the book corpus. Six of the eight subcategories that deal with directness imply that Germans are more direct than the Dutch; they can be found in 22 of the 24 texts from the German book corpus (84.6% of the texts). On the other hand, the two subcategories that state the opposite can only be found in four (15.4%) of the texts. While subcategories that imply that Germans are more direct than the Dutch are described on 100 pages, those subcategories stating the opposite are described on only 13 pages.

For the main category *communication*, there was only dissent about one aspect and the authors who stated contradictory subcategories were clearly a minority. It can therefore be regarded as consistent.

Formality

This main category deals with the formal behavior that Germans show, particularly at work. With a weighted value of 4.42, it is the third most important main category in bicultural interactions between Germans and the Dutch, only marginally less relevant than the main category *communication*.

The authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding this main category agreed that Germans behave more formally at work than the Dutch. They are more reserved and distant; they do not show as many emotions and are more polite.

When it comes to addressing others, they stick to the more formal "Sie" longer than the Dutch. This was — among others — pointed out by Linthout (2006), who gave the following example: "*In the German-Dutch Army corps [...] the different ways of greeting and addressing each other caused such serious confusion that in 2001 the formal way of greeting and addressing each other was stipulated*" (p. 207). He went on to explain that in "*Germany, the informal form of addressing is used for close friends only and includes a commitment for the person who is addressed this way. This is why the 'du' is not offered as quickly as in the Netherlands.*"

The German book corpus also reveals that humor at work is frowned upon more in Germany than in the Netherlands. Hesseling (2001, p. 8), for example, wrote: "*humor is not a strong point of the Germans. For example, Dutch crane operators often use their intercoms to make jokes, mock colleagues, etc. Germans think, 'That is uncooperative and rude' and, 'This cannot lead to good results'.*" Even though this is a rather extreme view, most of the other authors agreed that from a Dutch perspective Germans are seen as rather humorless at work.

According to some authors in the German book corpus, Germans also tend to dress more formally at work. Pechholt, Douven, and Essers (2008), for example, advised Dutch people who want to do business in Germany to "*not wear ostentatious clothes and no clothes with flashy colors. Dress conservatively*" (p. 40).

Some of the authors also claimed that German formality includes communication channels. They claimed that Germans prefer to convey information via formal channels and that meetings are also more formal; in contrast to the Dutch, Germans prefer fixed structures and agendas at meetings. Versluis (2008) described German meetings as follows: "*German meetings are more formal and structured. The boss gives every participant the chance to quickly present his or her opinion and arguments regarding a certain issue. He then makes his decision.*" (p. 65)

With regard to the main category *formality*, there is no dissent among the authors. It can therefore be regarded as consistent.

Separation of work and private life

The main category *separation of work and private life* deals with the different behavior that Germans show at work and in their private lives. With a weighted value of 4.50, it takes the fourth place in the ranking of relevance and is only slightly less relevant in bicultural interactions than the main category *formality*. The authors who made statements about a German separation of work and private life agreed that Germans tend to draw a sharper boundary between their professional and private lives than the Dutch do. To illustrate this, Schürings (2010) quoted

Paul Medendorp, a former board chairman of a German insurance company, who missed that in the Netherlands *"you can just walk into a colleague's office, drink a cup of coffee, put your feet on the table and tell about your weekend"* (p. 89). And Zeidenitz and Barkow (1994) stated that "*for Germans, life consists of two parts that are strictly separated: public and private life"* (p. 5).

In the German book corpus, some authors also stated that colleagues are not automatically regarded as friends. They claimed that Germans are perceived as reserved, distant and humorless at work and they do not tell much about their private matters or feelings. Also, Germans usually take longer than Dutch people to switch to the more informal 'du.' Some of the aspects of this main category resemble the main category *formality*. It shows that the level of German formality differs considerably between work and private life.

The main category *separation of work and private life* is consistent. There are no discrepancies between the authors.

Modesty and status

With a weighted value of 10.33, the main category *modesty and status* takes fifth place in the ranking of relevance. With regard to this main category, the authors agreed that a demonstratively shown modesty and understatement is less common in Germany than in the Netherlands. According to these authors, Germans demonstrate their success with status symbols. As Linthout (2006, p. 45) put it:

"Dutch businessmen have to be aware of the fact that in Germany education, academic titles, cars, clothing and external appearance play a greater role than in the Netherlands. Among German businessmen, they [the Dutch] are often called 'Bata-men': they wear suits but their shoes are cheap and neglected. In Germany, driving a cheap car is not a sign of modesty but shows unsuccessfulness in business."

In the German book corpus, authors stated that Germans are proud of academic titles and expect to be addressed with them. Versluis (2008), for example, wrote that:

"While in the Netherlands people would laugh out loud if someone signed an email with his name and title, in Germany this is considered to be perfectly normal. The doctoral degree is something sacred in Germany: it shows that you are educated, profound and well-grounded. Don't you dare addressing your business partner from Munich without mentioning his doctoral degree." (p. 36)

According to some of the authors, business meals in Germany are usually more extensive than in the Netherlands. The Dutch often perceive Germans as loud, bossy, arrogant, flamboyant and very self-assured. Self- criticism or self-irony are rare. As

Meines (1990) put it: "*In Germany, everyone is convinced that German products are the best in the world, and that German rules, customs and practices are the most efficient, well-grounded and should be a role model for the world*" (p. 24). Some of the authors also stated that Germans are less stingy than the Dutch.

However, one of the authors, Linthout (2006), implied that at least in some cases Germans are more modest than the Dutch by stating that "*Germans are less apt than the Dutch to give other advice without being asked*" (p. 58). Nevertheless, with only one subcategory that is contradictory to the other subcategories, this main category can be regarded as predominantly consistent.

Rules

With a weighted value of 12.00, the main category *rules* takes sixth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements with regard to this main category described a German appreciation for rules. According to them, Germans see rules as universally valid and follow them at any given time and in any situation. As Huijser (2005) put it:

> "For the Dutch, the German respect for laws and rules, for authorities, for traffic signs and all kinds of signs with rules and prohibitions, is remarkable. Traffic signs and signs with prohibitions are accepted uncritically. Germans imply that these signs are there for a reason." (p. 65)

This main category is consistent; there were no discrepancies among the authors.

Directness

With a weighted value of 12.33, the main category *directness* is regarded as only slightly less relevant in German-Dutch encounters than the main category *rules*. Some subcategories from the main category *directness* can also be found in the main category *communication*. However, this main category deals with directness in general, not just in communication. It shows that *directness* manifests in other contexts and situations as well. Even though directness is usually and in most cases expressed through communication, it goes beyond communication and can therefore be considered an independent main category. As Reyskens (2007) put it: *"Directness seems to be a very German attitude. […] almost a German life philosophy"* (p. 89 f.).

With regard to the main category *directness*, it is striking that a considerable group of authors made statements contradictory to the majority opinion. In 19 of the 24 texts from the German book corpus (82.6%), subcategories are stated that imply that Germans are more direct than the Dutch. These subcategories are de-

scribed on 75 pages. The authors who described these subcategories claimed that criticism is expressed rather directly in Germany and accepted as normal. Since Germans distinguish between role and person, they can be more direct in discussions because they do not take direct criticism personally. However, subcategories can be found in four of the books (17.4%) that imply that the Dutch are more direct than Germans; these subcategories are described on 13 pages. The authors using these subcategories imply that Germans are less direct than the Dutch. Germans do not openly criticize supervisors and express criticism rather indirectly. Jacobs (2008), for example, wrote: "*The boss is not to be criticized and the colleagues are also not directly criticized*" (p. 144).

The majority opinion is thus that Germans are more direct than the Dutch. Nevertheless, the contradictory opinion cannot be disregarded; this main category is less consistent than other main categories.

Perception of time

With a weighted value of 13.42, the main category *perception of time* takes eighth place in the ranking of relevance. According to the authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding this main category, Germans have a stronger orientation toward the past and the future, while the present orientation is weaker than in the Netherlands. Koentopp (2000), for example, wrote:

> "In Germany, past, present and future are linked to each other and are interdependent. Tradition and knowledge about the future form the basis of present action and planning. For the Dutch, the present is more important; it is not linked as strictly to the past and future. The term 'eternal loser' exists only in Germany." (p. 43)

Some of the authors also stated that the German planning horizon stretches further into the future than the Dutch. As Mole, Snijders, and Jacobs (1997) put it: "*Whatever they do, Germans always consider the future*" (p. 45 f.). One notices that the main category *perception of time* bears a certain resemblance to the main category *planning*. In the German book corpus, it is also stated that tradition is important in Germany; organizations with a long tradition are regarded as especially trustworthy. Furthermore, some of the authors stated that Germans tend to avoid multitasking. Jacobs (2008), for example, wrote:

> "For a German, time is a series of events that occur after each other over minutes, hours, days, month and years. If this order is disturbed, he becomes insecure and unconfident. Unexpected events cause big problems. This is why Germans try to avoid multitasking." (p. 45)

Moreover, the authors stated that punctuality is crucial in Germany. Since there is no dissent among the authors, the main category *perception of time* can thus be regarded as consistent.

Flexibility

With a weighted value of 14.0, the main category *flexibility* takes ninth place in the ranking of relevance and is regarded as only slightly less relevant in German-Dutch interaction situations than the main category *perception of time*. *Flexibility* implies that Germans are generally less flexible than the Dutch. According to the authors who made statements about this main category, Germans prefer known, established and approved approaches and methods and do not like being forced to improvise. Things that are planned are preferably not changed or adjusted afterwards; standardization is seen as a means of avoiding possible problems. The authors who addressed this main category claimed that Germans are less open to new things. Schürings (2010), for example, wrote: "*Germans see changes as a threat rather than a chance*" (p. 97). Since there were no diverging opinions among the authors, this category can be regarded as consistent.

Obviation of uncertainties

With a weighted value of 14.25, the main category *obviation of uncertainties* is only slightly less relevant than the main category *flexibility* and takes tenth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements with regard to *obviation of uncertainties* agreed that Germans try to avoid uncertainties and prefer clear and unambiguous conditions. Zeidenitz and Barkow (1994), for example, wrote:

> "The German soul is torn apart by uncertainties. Germans struggle constantly to keep away the chaos. They are unable to ignore their doubts, to forget their problems for a while and to just enjoy their time with colleagues without worrying." (p. 12 f.)

In the book corpus, it is stated that from a Dutch perspective, Germans seem to be pessimistic and to worry a lot. Their obviation of uncertainties manifests in different situations. The authors stated that reliability is crucial, Germans only speak foreign languages at work if their language skills are close to perfect and perfection is strived for. As Zeidenitz and Barkow (1994) put it:

> "The compromise or being content with less than the best is not enough. Strictly speaking, only the very best is acceptable. Germans totally agree with Plato: they have no doubt that perfection exists. They know that on earth we will

never be able to reach perfection, but they are sure that one can get pretty close to it. Even though Plato was a Greek, his thoughts were German." (p. 14)

And Huijser (2005) stated: *"They always strive for perfection and are disappointed if they cannot reach it"* (p. 63).

Since there are no contradictory subcategories, the main category *obviation of uncertainties* can thus be regarded as consistent.

Task is more important than a good atmosphere

With a weighted value of 15.33, the main category *task is more important than a good atmosphere* takes eleventh place in the ranking of relevance. Most of the authors who made statements regarding this category agreed that the task is more important than a good atmosphere in German business life. They claimed that Germans concentrate on the task at work. Feelings and a good atmosphere are secondary to the task. The Dutch often feel that Germans lack empathy at work. Meines (1990), who often stated extreme views, for example wrote:

"After a while they [Dutch who work in Germany] will discover that this scourge occurs not only at work but that it spreads across the whole society: the incapacity, or maybe the unwillingness, to put oneself in the position of others. The combination of unfriendliness and being unable (or unwilling) to place oneself in the position of others was a permanent topic of conversation among foreigners in Germany." (p. 15)

In the German book corpus, it is also stated that meetings start more immediately in Germany than in the Netherlands, and small talk is less important. Reyskens (2007), for instance, advised the Dutch to not take it personally if Germans get straight to the point in meetings because "*they do not mean to offend you. First comes business, and only afterwards people get to know each other better*" (p. 99). According to the majority of the authors making statements about this main category, facts are more important than feelings in Germany; discussions are more fact-based. At work, Germans are more hectic and fast-paced, competition is tougher and work is harder. As Meines (1990) put it: *"In German companies, there is clubbing and stabbing among the employees"* (p. 39).

Furthermore, some of the authors in the German book corpus (e. g., Koentopp, 2000; Mole, Snijders, & Jacobs, 1997; Thomas & Schlizio, 2009) stated that privacy is very important for Germans at work, so office doors are usually kept closed. Coffee is not served as often as in the Netherlands.

However, there is also one contradictory subcategory. Meines (1990) stated that Germans do not admit it when they have made a mistake. According to him, Germans want to be liked by their supervisors. Good relationships with supervisors are

thus more important than the smooth functioning of production processes. Meines claimed that "*even thinking about admitting mistakes can cause nightmares to the German. He would rather cut his arm open while swimming in a shark basin than admit that he has made a mistake*" (p. 30). This subcategory implies that being liked and having a good working atmosphere are in some cases more important for Germans than the task.

This is a minority opinion though. Ten of the 11 subcategories of this main category imply that the task is more important than a good atmosphere in Germany. These subcategories can be found in 19 of the 24 texts (95.0%) from the German book corpus and are described on 79 pages. The contradictory subcategory can be found in only one book (5%) and is described on only three pages.

In conclusion, the main category *task is more important than a good atmosphere* can be regarded as consistent and the contradictory subcategory can be seen as marginal.

Planning

With a weighted value of 17.33, the main category *planning* takes twelfth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements about this main category agreed that Germans plan more and in more detail than the Dutch. Germans try to plan everything in advance and consider every possibility before starting something. This main category is, to a certain degree, related to the main categories *obviation of uncertainties* and *perception of time*. Since there were no discrepancies among the authors regarding this main category, it can therefore be considered consistent.

Details

With a weighted value of 20.42, the main category *details* takes thirteenth place in the ranking of relevance. Most of the authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding this category claimed that details are more important for Germans than for the Dutch. According to them, Germans try to consider every detail in their planning. In presentations, Germans also mention and expect more details than the Dutch because they try to avoid possible sources of mistakes or problems. As Reyskens (2007) put it: *"Presenting as many facts and details as possible is an important characteristic of German professional life"* (p. 90).

According to some of the authors, this is also why Germans want to know every detail about applicants before hiring them. Hesseling (2001), for example, wrote: "*CVs and references are much more comprehensive and detailed than in the Netherlands. School reports and diplomas document your qualifications. Furthermore,*

applicants also write down their hobbies and activities. References from your former employers complete your application" (p. 34).

With regard to this main category, there were no diverging statements among the authors so it is consistent.

Meetings and discussions

With a weighted value of 20.67, the main category *meetings and discussions* takes fourteenth place in the ranking of relevance. According to the majority of the authors who made statements regarding this main category, German behavior differs considerably from Dutch behavior in discussions. First, consensus is regarded as less important in Germany than in the Netherlands. Compromises are not the best solution. The team may take part in a discussion, but the decision is eventually made by the boss. Some of the authors claimed that Germans not only accept this because of the stronger hierarchies that prevail in German organizations, but because they believe that there is one best way of doing things. As Versluis (2008) put it: "*In German companies, meetings have the purpose of letting you state your opinions and arguments. However, it does not mean that you actually have a say. Compromises are not popular*" (p. 37). In the German book corpus, it is also stated that meanings have to be supported by facts in Germany. Discussions are deeper; arguments are important. Linthout (2006), for example, wrote:

> "In discussions, Germans predominantly emphasize controversy. This is why their discussions are more vivid and insistent; they clarify and explain their points of view more, state more facts and sources, and give more examples. The others are constantly asked to explain the reasons for their views, and constructive criticism is seen as something positive." (p. 274)

The authors in the German book corpus also agreed that Germans only participate in a debate when they can make a substantive contribution. As some of the authors wrote, from a Dutch perspective, Germans appear instructive, dogmatic and self-opinionated. Meines (1990), for example, stated that "*self-criticism, putting one's standpoints into perspective and relativizing them, is not done in Germany*" (p. 15).

However, there is one subcategory that contradicts the majority opinion. It implies that in discussions, Germans are less dogmatic and self-opinionated than the Dutch and that they strive for consensus. Hesseling (2001) claimed that: "*Germans are self-critical: they always feel that they could have done better. This is why they value consensus more than the Dutch do*" (p. 35). This is a minority opinion though.

The majority opinion is supported by five subcategories, described in 9 of the 24 texts of the German book corpus and on 30 pages. The minority opinion, sup-

ported by only one subcategory, is described in only one text and on six pages. It is thus marginal, but the main category *meetings and discussions* can be considered predominantly consistent.

Everything is structured

The main category *everything is structured* takes fifteenth place in the ranking of relevance. However, with a weighted value of 20.78, the difference in relevance to the main category *meetings and discussions* (20.67) is small. According to the authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding this category, Germans try to structure things as much as possible. They write everything down, meetings are more formal and they have a fixed structure and agenda. As Metzmacher (2010) put it: *"Meetings have a fixed choreographic order that is strictly adhered to"* (p. 44). In the German book corpus, it is also stated that efficiency is very important for Germans. Time schedules are crucial; appointments are needed for every visit. Germans try to plan and standardize as much as possible. With regard to this main category there is no discrepancy between the authors, so it is consistent.

Expertise and qualification

This main category has a weighted value of 22.0 and takes sixteenth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements about this category agreed that (academic) qualifications, expertise and education are more important in Germany than in the Netherlands. Schürings (2010) wrote:

> "In the application process, your expertise and the references from your former employers are the most important. Personality is of secondary importance. Expertise and achievements are held in higher esteem than in the Netherlands. A phrase like, 'He may be a ratfink but he sure knows what he's talking about' is common in Germany." (p. 91)

In the German book corpus, it is also stated that German bosses and supervisors usually have more expert knowledge than Dutch bosses do; their authority is to a large extent gained by know-how and expertise. In job applications, qualifications and expert knowledge are more important than the applicant's personality.

Since there was no dissent among the authors, the main category *expertise and qualification* is consistent.

Preparation

With a weighted value of 22.58, the main category *preparation* takes seventeenth place in the ranking of relevance. According to the authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding the main category *preparation*, in meetings and presentations Germans are usually better and more thoroughly prepared than the Dutch and do not appreciate it if others are not well prepared. Reyskens (2007) offered the Dutch the following advice:

> "You better prepare yourself thoroughly for your negotiations with Germans because the German negotiator hates meetings in which the business partners are poorly prepared or have no knowledge about the details. It is best if you bring a clear and comprehensive documentation, preferably in German. If you hold a presentation you have to know everything about your product, the relevant laws and rules." (p. 151 f.)

Since there were no discrepancies between the authors, the main category *preparation* is consistent.

Perfection

With a weighted value of 24.83, the main category *preparation* takes eighteenth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who stated cultural characteristics with regard to the main category *perfection* claimed that from a Dutch perspective, Germans aspire to perfection. Mistakes are to be avoided by all means. This main category is to some extent linked to the main category *obviation of uncertainties*, but it goes further. *Obviation of uncertainties* might be one reason for the pursuit of perfection but, more importantly, trying to reach perfection is regarded as a value in itself. Since there were no discrepancies between the authors, this main category is consistent.

Respect

With a weighted value of 28.17, the main category *respect* takes nineteenth place in the ranking of relevance. One may notices that its relevance is considerably lower than the relevance of the main category *perfection* (which took rank 18). With regard to this main category, the authors agreed that respect is very important for Germans, even more important than being liked. Meines (1990) wrote: "*For Germans, the most important thing is being respected. Being seen as friendly is less important to them*" (p. 12). With regard to the main category *respect*, there were no discrepancies between the authors so it can be regarded as consistent.

Individualism

With a weighted value of 29.33, this main category is the least relevant in the German book corpus. Some of the authors claimed that *"Germans are more individualistic than Dutch"* (Jacobs, 2008, p. 124). For example, if something goes wrong, the person whose fault it is takes the responsibility and blame for it. As Reyskens (2007) put it: *"Since tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined, when problems or mistakes occur it is easy to find the person responsible. This person takes individual responsibility for the mistake"* (p. 121).

However, some authors also stated things like "*Germans are less individualistic than the Dutch*" (Reyskens, 2007, p. 90). With regard to the main category *individualism*, it is especially striking that, although the authors used similar definitions of individualism, there was no clear majority opinion. The quantification showed a trend toward the opinion that Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch. However, this trend is less clear than for the main categories above.

The main category *individualism* consists of only three subcategories. The first states directly that Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch, while the second states that they are more collectivistic. The third subcategory (*If things go wrong, mistakes are made, problems occur, the person whose fault it is takes the responsibility and the blame)* can at least indirectly be understood as a claim that Germans are more individualistic. These opinions can only be found in a few of the texts in the German book corpus. While subcategories stating that Germans are more individualistic can be found in four of the books and are described on 11 pages, contradictory subcategories are described in two of the books on seven pages.

In conclusion, even though there is a majority opinion, the main category *individualism* is predominantly inconsistent.

3.3.3.2　Dutch book corpus

Modesty and status

With a weighted value of 1.50, the main category *modesty and status* is clearly the most important main category in bicultural interactions between Germans and the Dutch. According to some of the authors who made statements about this main category, understatement is more common in the Netherlands than in Germany. People do not show wealth and status publicly, exaggeration is disregarded and self-irony and not taking oneself too seriously are more important than in Germany. As Linthout (2006. p. 344) put it:

> "In the Netherlands, people who want to stand out from others are met with mistrust or make a fool of themselves. 'Act normal; that is crazy enough': every Dutch person knows this adage and Germans should know it as well if they

want to deal with the Dutch. Other adages that are popular in the Netherlands are 'High trees catch a lot of wind' and 'Whoever sticks his head above the hayfield loses it'."

Furthermore, in the Dutch book corpus it is stated that academic titles are usually not shown on business cards in the Netherlands as is common in Germany. The Dutch also do not expect to be addressed with their titles. Vossenstein (2010), for example, wrote:

"In Dutch society, the use of such academic titles is limited to the functional working environment. A German student quoted, 'I find the teachers here much more approachable than those in Germany. You have to address the latter with "Herr Professor" but in Holland that isn't so'." (p. 30)

Some of the authors also stated that the Dutch do not like compliments; the team rather than the individual gets compliments for good work or achievements. Business meals are generally less fancy than in Germany. Germans also often perceive the Dutch as stingy.

However, there are also authors who stated contradictory subcategories which imply that the Dutch are less modest than Germans or not modest at all. According to them, the Dutch are proud of their titles and expect to be addressed with them. Müller (1998), for example, wrote:

"Especially striking is the discrepancy of the self-perception of the Dutch and the picture they have of us Germans. Even though Dutch academics proudly state even the smallest academic degree 'doctorandus' when signing documents or on their business cards, they make fun of the alleged German appreciation of titles." (p. 29)

Furthermore, in the Dutch book corpus it is also stated that many Dutch people see themselves as moral role models for the world and are very proud of their country. They are very self-assured and tell others what to do. This was — among others — stated by Birschel (2008), who wrote that *"the raised index finger, the moral undertone can be found throughout the whole country. Dutch see themselves as a role model for the world"* (p. 84 ff.). Some of the authors also stated that especially in recent years it has become more acceptable and common to show wealth and status symbols.

However, the majority opinion is that the Dutch are more modest than Germans. This view is supported by 9 of the 15 subcategories. It can be found in 22 of the 23 texts from the Dutch book corpus and is described on 274 pages. The contradictory opinion is supported by six subcategories. It can be found in eight of the texts from the Dutch book corpus and is described on 55 pages.

In conclusion, even though the opinion that the Dutch are more modest than Germans is the majority opinion, it cannot be regarded as highly consistent. This is the case because the contradictory view is not marginal but described by many authors, in many books and on a considerable number of pages.

Hierarchies

With a weighted value of 3.33, the main category *hierarchies* takes second place in the ranking of relevance. The authors making statements about this category agreed that hierarchies are flatter in the Netherlands than in Germany. According to them, formal and real hierarchies often do not match. The Dutch tend to reject authority; the boss is more a 'primus inter pares.' With regard to this, Vossenstein (2010) related the following anecdote about a German who moved to the Netherlands:

> "[…] For instance riding a bike on a one-way street against the traffic. In the beginning, when I first saw someone do that, I thought, 'How can you do that?' When I myself did it the first time, I felt rather wicked; a police car stopped me and the officer gestured towards me. So I started apologizing but he just said, 'Look, we are coming from the right side, you from the wrong, so move over a bit.'" (p. 23)

And as Linthout (2006, p. 36) put it: *"Power is much more informal, less concrete and for outsiders hardly noticeable. Dutch supervisors have to formulate their orders as a kind request and they have to explain their motivations for orders."*

According to the authors, the Dutch culture is a consensus culture. The boss has a moderating role and employees expect to be included in the decision-making process. In meetings and discussions, everyone may state his or her opinion. Fichtinger and Sterzenbach (2006), for example, wrote that *"as a supervisor, you cannot simply give orders because your employees want to be part of the decision process. If they are excluded from the decision-making process, the result is a sort of passive opposition"* (p. 33 f.).

Some of the authors who made statements about hierarchies also mentioned that the flat hierarchies in the Netherlands influence communication. They claimed that instructions are usually formulated as a kind request. If the boss wants something, he goes to his employees and does not call them into his office. Office doors are usually left open and everyone can enter, even the boss's office.

Some authors also stated that Dutch employees have more autonomy and personal responsibility than German employees. Dutch bosses delegate more. Schürings (2010), for example, gave Germans the following advice:

"Do not think that similar hierarchical ranks mean that the responsibilities and the level of authorization are also similar. Dutch bosses delegate more than German bosses. If the Dutch boss does not take part in a meeting, as a German you should not immediately assume that the Dutch are not interested in the deal." (p. 96)

Furthermore, books in the Dutch corpus stated that there are more (informal) contacts between people from different hierarchical levels in the Netherlands than in Germany. Also, due to their alleged egalitarian character, the Dutch tend to give others unrequested advice; to Germans, they often seem to be meddlers.

Since there are no contradictory subcategories, the main category *hierarchies* can thus be regarded as consistent.

Consensus and 'overleg'

With a weighted value of 4.17, the main category *consensus and 'overleg'* takes third place in the ranking of relevance. There was no dissent among the authors making statements regarding this category that, from a German perspective, decisions are predominantly made by consensus in the Netherlands. The Dutch expect to be included in the decision-making process. The Dutch term 'overleg,' which does not have a direct literal translation in English, describes this special form of mutual consultation that manifests in different situations.

According to some of the authors, meetings usually take longer in the Netherlands because everyone may state his or her opinion. Vossenstein (2010), for example, cited a German who stated the following about Dutch meetings: *"I find it hard to accept the collective decision making. It only causes delay. There are meetings on everything here, and people have a say even when they have no information to add at all"* (p. 68).

In the book corpus, it is also stated that a warm and friendly working atmosphere is important in the Netherlands because decisions require consensus. This is why conflicts are avoided and the Dutch usually argue more softly than Germans. Ernst (2007) wrote:

"Even though the Dutch are just as meritocratic as the Germans, in Dutch companies it is more common to drink a cup of coffee or have a little chat with colleagues during work time. It is important to make other feel comfortable as quickly as possible." (p. 54)

Some of the authors (e.g., Fichtinger & Sterzenbach, 2006; Linthout, 2006; Pecholt, Douven, & Essers, 2008) also stated that the Dutch are less direct, criticism is expressed rather indirectly and not the single person but the group is criticized. However, other authors (e.g., Ernst, 2007; Metzmacher, 2010; Vossenstein, 2010)

stated that the Dutch are more direct than Germans. Another claim that some of the authors made is that since everyone may contribute to discussions, the Dutch tend to consider their own opinions to be more important than others' facts.

The main category *consensus and 'overleg'* can be considered consistent. The authors' statements are complementary and mutually supportive and there are no contradictory opinions.

Planning

With a weighted value of 6.67, the main category *planning* takes fourth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements about this main category agreed that Dutch people plan less than Germans. Their planning horizon does not stretch as far into the future. Often only a general framework is set up, without detailed planning. Perfection is not necessary and mistakes are accepted. According to the authors, the Dutch are flexible; things can be adjusted during the implementation process. As Linthout (2006) put it:

> "The Dutch think that Germans worry totally unnecessarily about things in the distant future. The Dutch think more target-oriented. They deal with things on short notice and start thinking about solutions for problems when they actually occur. For their projects they set up rough frameworks without paying much attention to the details. The details are dealt with in the process of realization." (p. 280)

The authors also agreed that the Dutch are open to new ideas and approaches, and see new things not as potential threats but rather as opportunities. Many things are implemented for a certain period of time to test them.

Most of the authors claimed that Dutch people do not write down as much as Germans. However, van der Horst (2000) asserted that the Dutch tend to write down more than the Germans and that things that are written down are not changed afterwards:

> "This way of working, seeking consensus, requires accurate recording and formulating the decisions clearly and unambiguously. Agreements have to be written down in detail because otherwise there might be disagreement about the interpretation afterwards. If this happens, no higher power can stop the endless discussions that will start again. This is why Dutch consider written documents to be sacred." (p. 145)

The quantification shows that this is clearly a minority opinion: it was stated in only one text and on only three pages. In conclusion, the main category *planning* can be regarded as predominantly consistent.

Communication

With a weighted value of 8.33, the main category *communication* takes fifth place in the ranking of relevance. According to some of the authors' reflections upon *communication*, the Dutch discussion culture differs from the German. While the meaning of a message is conveyed predominantly verbatim in Germany, in Dutch conversations one also has to read the meaning from the context.

The authors also agreed that facts are important in discussions in the Netherlands, but feelings and consensus are equally important. With regard to this, Schots (2004) described the following anecdote from Dutch politics in which a Dutch politician was arguing with his speechwriter:

> "'Footnote,' he reminds him. 'Footnote? Oh, he is talking about an indication of the references. He wants me to state the original documents on which I base my mocking of the purple policy. As if it was not obvious enough that the purple coalition is responsible for the long waiting times.'" (p. 113)

Furthermore, in the Dutch book corpus, authors observed that technical language is seen as bragging in the Netherlands; things have to be expressed in a manner that makes them understandable for laymen as well. Linthout (2008, p. 67), for example, wrote that *"a person who cannot express something in simple terms wants to stand out from the crowd or possibly wants to conceal that he has not understood the matter himself."*

Some of the authors who reflected upon the main category *communication* also stated that since hierarchies are flatter in the Netherlands, instructions are usually formulated as a kind request. Information is spread informally and flows freely and horizontally between employees.

Language is also usually more informal than in Germany. When addressing others, the Dutch usually switch to the more informal 'je' more quickly than Germans.

However, while the authors in the Dutch book corpus agreed on most aspects of this main category, there was dissent with regard to the aspect *directness of communication*. While some of the authors stated that the Dutch are more direct than Germans, others stated that they are less direct. Linthout (2006), for example, wrote: *"The Dutch are somewhat less direct than Germans. The Dutch way of discussion is clear: you respect the other's feelings. While the Dutch have a 'yes, but-technique' of discussion, Germans have a 'no, because-technique'"* (p. 275). Vossenstein (2010), on the other hand, implied that the Dutch are more direct by writing that *"the reactions of Germans to the Dutch directness range from the positive term 'confident', through rather neutral terms such as 'very straightforward indeed' and 'very honest' to the less positive: 'abrupt', 'blunt' and 'rude'"* (p. 15).

Among the authors there was no clear trend toward one of these contradictory opinions. There were only a few subcategories that dealt with the directness of

communication (in contrast to the German book corpus, the Dutch book corpus does not deal with different aspects of directness but only with directness in communication). Three subcategories conveyed the impression that the Dutch are less direct than Germans; these subcategories can be found in 11 of the 23 analyzed texts from the Dutch book corpus and are described on 27 pages. Even though only one subcategory implied that the Dutch are more direct than Germans, this subcategory was described in five of the texts and is notably described on 38 pages.

In conclusion, while most aspects of the main category *communication* are consistent, the aspect *directness of communication* is inconsistent and there is not a clear tendency toward one of the contradictory opinions.

Informality

With a weighted value of 9.92, the main category *informality* takes sixth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who stated cultural characteristics related to this category agreed that the Dutch are more informal than Germans. Meetings are less structured and clothing is less formal. Information is conveyed through both formal and informal channels. At work, the Dutch are less reserved and distant and tend to switch from the formal pronoun 'u' to the informal 'je' quicker than Germans. Hesseling (2001), for example, wrote that *"at work, people are quickly on a first-name basis; after work, you might be invited to joint activities to get to know each other better. Your colleagues will talk casually about their hobbies, their families and their private lives"* (p. 44 ff.).

With regard to the main category *informality*, there was no dissent among the authors. It can therefore be considered consistent.

Perfection

With a weighted value of 12.75, the main category *perfection* takes seventh place in the ranking of relevance. According to the authors who stated cultural characteristics regarding this category, the Dutch are more pragmatic than Germans. Perfection is not crucial, mistakes are accepted and, from a German perspective (according to the authors), the Dutch are often content with mediocrity. With regard to this, Vossenstein (2010) cited a German professor working in the Netherlands who said:

> "It is a sport among Dutch students to work exactly hard enough for an exam or assignment so that they pass with minimum effort. Dutch students will not settle for sixes, that is too risky, but a seven or eight will do." (p. 29)

The main category *perfection* is consistent; there was no dissent among the authors.

Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation

With a weighted value of 13.92, the main category *flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation* takes eighth place in the ranking of relevance. Most of the authors who made statements about this category claimed or implied that the Dutch are more flexible and pragmatic than Germans and that they can improvise better. According to some of these authors, not everything has to be done via official procedures and channels in the Netherlands, in contrast to Germany. Things can be changed in the implementation process. Koentopp (2000) put it as follows: *"The Dutch do not start thinking about solutions before problems actually occur. The focus is on the aim; processes are adjusted to changing circumstances."* (p. 50 f.)

Some authors also stated that the Dutch tend to improvise more than Germans and that they are more open to new ideas and approaches. This view is — among others — held by Ernst (2007), who wrote: *"if things have to be changed during the process of realization, Germans see this as a sign of bad planning while the Dutch are proud of their ability to improvise"* (p. 56). In the Dutch book corpus, authors also stated that, from a German perspective, the Dutch seem fatalistic and pragmatic.

However, one subcategory implies that the Dutch are less flexible than Germans. Fichtinger and Sterzenbach (2006) wrote that in Germany, *"things that have been planned and decided are not changed or adjusted afterwards in the process of implementation"* (p. 56). This is a minority opinion though. While the opinion that the Dutch are more flexible than Germans is supported by seven subcategories, can be found in 15 of the 23 texts from the Dutch book corpus and is described on a total of 102 pages, the one subcategory implying the opposite can be found in only two of the texts and is merely described on four pages.

The main category *flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation* is consistent; the minority opinion that contradicts the majority is marginal.

Rules

With a weighted value of 13.58, the main category *rules* takes ninth place in the ranking of relevance. Some of the authors who made statements about the main category *rules* claimed that the Dutch often see rules not as universally valid but more as guidelines. Linthout (2008), for example, wrote that: *"in the Netherlands though, where an egalitarian character and a tradition of consensus and mutual trust prevail, prohibitions and limitations are the root of all bad. The reaction to prohibitions is usually: 'I will decide this on my own'."* (p. 104) According to these authors, if the Dutch see rules as pointless in certain situations or contexts, they do not stick to them but rather try to find a way to dodge them. Some of the authors also stated that in the Netherlands, "*there are generally more rules and bureaucracy than in Germany*" (Fichtinger & Sterzenbach, 2006, p. 106).

However, even though this subcategory is not mutually supportive to the other subcategories, it is not contradictory to them either. The main category *rules* can therefore be regarded as consistent.

Harmony as important as task

With a weighted value of 15.33, the main category *harmony as important as task* takes tenth place in the ranking of relevance. According to some of the authors who made statements about this category, a warm and friendly atmosphere and good mutual relations at work are important for the Dutch. They want harmonic relations, so small talk and talking about private matters is regarded as normal at work. It is clear that this category has some links to the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *informality*. However, some other authors claimed that the task is central in the Netherlands and feelings and good mutual relations are secondary to the task.

There is a clear tendency toward the first opinion. On the one hand, each of the two contradictory views is supported by three subcategories. But while the opinion that the task is more important than good feelings and a friendly atmosphere in the Netherlands can only be found in one of the texts from the Dutch book corpus and on a total of seven pages, the contradictory opinion can be found in 18 of the 23 texts and on a total of 84 pages.

Since the opinion that feelings and a good atmosphere at work are secondary to the task in the Netherlands is relatively marginal, the main category *harmony as important as task* can be regarded as predominantly consistent.

Separation of work and private life

With a weighted value of 15.83, the main category *separation of work and private life* takes eleventh place in the ranking of relevance. According to some of the authors who described cultural characteristics related to this main category, the Dutch tend to draw less sharp boundaries between their professional and private lives than Germans. At work they are less distant and reserved, and they also talk about private matters and feelings. Colleagues are often also friends whom one can also meet for leisure activities. Müller (1998), for example, wrote: *"The strong borders between private and professional life do not exist in the Netherlands. It is normal to gather together after work for a beer in the pub. These so-called 'borrels' take place with work colleagues."* (p. 36)

Other authors, for example van der Horst (2000, p. 139), stated the exact opposite. According to them, the Dutch are more reserved than Germans. At work they do not talk about private things or show emotions, and privacy is very important.

However, the claim that the separation between work and private life is less strict in the Netherlands than in Germany is the majority opinion. It is based on four subcategories, can be found in 14 of the 23 texts from the Dutch book corpus and is described on 68 pages. In contrast, the contradictory opinion is based on five subcategories that can be found in five texts and is described on 23 pages. It cannot be regarded as marginal, so the main category *separation of work and private life* is thus relatively inconsistent.

Expertise and qualification

With a weighted value of 17.00, the main category *expertise and qualification* takes twelfth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors claimed that personality and sympathy are as important as qualifications and expert knowledge in the Netherlands. Pechholt, Douven, and Essers (2008, p. 13) wrote that this also applies in applications: *"In application processes, companies usually search for team players; soft skills are in this case more important than qualification."*

While German bosses usually have expert knowledge in a certain field, Dutch bosses are often managers. Leadership skills and the ability to moderate are more important for Dutch bosses than expertise in a certain field. Schürings (2010), for example, wrote that *"Dutch management appears as an inverted pyramid: The boss carries everything, he guides and accompanies the employees. Supervisors are there to support the employees"* (p. 92).

There are no contradictory subcategories regarding the main category *expertise and qualification*, so it can therefore be regarded as consistent.

Obviation of uncertainties

With a weighted value of 20.00, the main category *obviation of uncertainties* takes thirteenth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who described cultural characteristics related to this category agreed that the Dutch are generally less afraid of uncertainties than Germans. Koentopp (2000) wrote: *"Differences in attitude to security also become obvious if one looks at agreements. Germans try to avoid uncertainties by writing everything down in detail. In Dutch contracts, one can often find the phrase 'Details will be determined later'."* (p. 51)

In the Dutch book corpus, authors stated that, from a German perspective, the Dutch are optimists. The lack of fear of uncertainties is one reason why, according to the authors, tasks, responsibilities and functions are not as clearly defined in the Netherlands as in Germany. As Busse (2006) put it:

"Compared to Germany, work is organized more flexibly. In one company department, one can often find different work and working time models while

functions and responsibilities are not as clearly defined as in Germany. This is why it is often more hectic in Dutch companies and work is more diversified because people think less in categories of authorization and hierarchies." (p. 15)

Furthermore, in the Dutch book corpus, authors stated that the Dutch draw less attention to planning and details and are more flexible than Germans. They are not afraid of multitasking or making mistakes. The Dutch speak foreign languages even if they do not master them perfectly.

With regard to the main category *obviation of uncertainties*, there are no contradictory subcategories. It can therefore be considered consistent.

Egalitarian character

With a weighted value of 20.75, the main category *egalitarian character* takes fourteenth place in the ranking of relevance. According to the authors who made statements about this category, everyone is equal in the Netherlands and has to be treated equally. This not only applies to work, but also to private life. Pechholt, Duiven, and Essers (2008) explained that *"over the centuries, the Netherlands were a republican consensus society which is the reason that today there is an atmosphere of equality"* (p. 66).

With regard to this main category, there is no dissent among the authors so is consistent.

Tolerance

With a weighted value of 21.17, the main category *tolerance* takes fifteenth place in the ranking of relevance. According to the authors who made statements about this category, the Dutch are more tolerant than Germans. As Müller (1998) put it:

"Dutch tolerance means that everything is allowed as long as it happens behind closed doors and does not disturb the neighbors. This tolerance is predominantly caused by the wish to act morally right, which includes leaving others in peace. Further elements are plain indifference and the wish to cloister oneself away and stay with like-minded people." (p. 62)

However, while Müller (1998) and Fichtinger and Sterzenbach (2006) interpreted Dutch tolerance as a sort of indifference toward others, other authors (e. g., Ernst, 2007; Gerisch, 1994; Vossenstein, 2010) see it as real tolerance.

There are no contradictory subcategories within this main category, so it is consistent.

Details

With a weighted value of 24.17, the main category *details* takes sixteenth place in the ranking of relevance. The authors who made statements about this category agreed that details are generally less important for the Dutch than for Germans. Presentations are usually shorter and less detailed, just like application portfolios and written documents. With regard to this, Pechholt, Douven, and Essers (2008) gave the following advice: *"Ensure that your application is short and concise. While German application papers may be comprehensive and detailed, Dutch supervisors disfavor such applications."* (p. 123)

Within this main category there are no conflicting subcategories, so it can be regarded as consistent.

Individualism

With a weighted value of 25.42, the main category *individualism* takes seventeenth place in the ranking of relevance. Some of the authors claimed that the Dutch are less individualistic than Germans. According to them, it is more important to be part of the group in the Netherlands than in Germany. With regard to this, Linthout (2006) wrote:

> "Due to the egalitarian character of the Dutch, a spontaneous, informal conversational tone prevails; direct criticism is to be avoided. Being part of the group, being nice to others and being seen as a nice person is of paramount importance; direct criticism is thus rare." (p. 307)

Busse (2006) also implied that the Dutch are less individualistic than Germans by writing: "*If mistakes are made, the whole group rather than the individual takes the responsibility"* (p. 33).

However, other authors stated the opposite and claimed that the Dutch are actually more individualistic than Germans. Müller (1998), for example, wrote: "*In Dutch companies, praise and criticism is given to the person who deserves it; you cannot hide in the group.*" (p. 33)

There is no clear majority opinion. Two subcategories support the opinion that the Dutch are less individualistic than Germans; this view can be found in three of the texts and is described on nine pages. The opinion that the Dutch are more individualistic than Germans is supported by one subcategory; it can also be found in 3 of the 23 texts from the Dutch book corpus but is described on only two pages. In conclusion, even though the majority opinion is that the Dutch are less individualistic, the main category *individualism* has to be regarded as relatively inconsistent because the minority opinion that the Dutch are more individualistic cannot be disregarded as marginal.

Calimero effect

With a weighted value of 25.50, the main category *Calimero effect* takes eighteenth (the second last) place in the ranking of relevance. The category is named after the cartoon character Calimero. This little black chicken is often in an inferior position to other animals and states, "they are big and I am small and that is just not fair." The category implies that in their interactions with Germans, the Dutch are often influenced by a Calimero complex.

According to the authors who put forth this idea, the Dutch feel like they live in a small and less powerful country next to the larger, more populated and thus more dominant Germany. Since Germany has more influence and power in many areas, the Dutch try to enhance themselves by presuming that their own cultural characteristics are positive while interpreting diverging characteristics of the German culture as negative. For example, hierarchical relations in Germany are often interpreted as obedience to authority. According to the authors, this Calimero complex plays a role in bicultural encounters. Linthout (2006), for example, gave the example of a merger between the German DASA and the Dutch company Fokker in the 1970s: *"One of the German diplomats involved stated, 'every step of the Germans was interpreted negatively'."* (p. 278)

Since there are no discrepancies between the authors with regard to this main category, it can be considered consistent. But since it is only stated in three of the texts from the Dutch book corpus and has a low relevance, it can be concluded that this main category only plays a subordinate role in current bicultural encounters between Germans and the Dutch. However, one has to keep in mind that the *Calimero effect* can be affected by the political situation. If political relations between Germany and the Netherlands get worse for some reason, this category could become more relevant.

Perception of time

With a weighted value of 26.17, the main category *perception of time* takes the last place in the ranking of relevance and is therefore the least relevant in bicultural interactions. According to some of the authors who made statement about the Dutch *perception of time*, punctuality is less important for the Dutch than for Germans.

Some of the authors also stated that the Dutch are not afraid of multitasking; doing different things simultaneously is regarded as normal. However, one of the authors disagreed with this and stated the opposite. Vossenstein (2010, p. 141) wrote:

> "Virtually all Dutch people, starting when they are still schoolchildren, carry their agenda, a diary full of scheduled meetings and appointments for both

business and social engagements. One thing is done after the other, exactly how the agenda tells them to."

Furthermore, some of the authors also wrote that appointments are more important in the Netherlands than in Germany. The Dutch do not like unannounced visits.

With only one contradictory subcategory that was stated by one author in 1 of the 23 texts from the Dutch book corpus, the main category *perception of time* can be regarded as predominantly consistent.

3.3.4   Conclusion about content and the relations analysis (RQ A and B)

The qualitative content analyses found 20 German and 19 Dutch main categories. With the help of this categorization, three aims could be achieved.

First, research question A — which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German book corpus and which in the Dutch book corpus? — could be answered. For both the German and the Dutch book corpora, the qualitative analysis pointed out which cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns the authors considered relevant in intercultural interactions between Germans and the Dutch. For each main category, I was therefore able to illustrate in which areas and situations it applies and if there were discrepancies between the authors about the main category or single aspects of it.

Second, based on the results from the qualitative analysis, research question B — how do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpus? — could be answered. Even though the authors of the popular science and guidebooks did not (explicitly) make statements about which cultural characteristics they considered most relevant in German-Dutch interaction, different indicators could be used to place the main categories in a ranking order of relevance. This clarified which main categories the authors of the popular science and guidebooks (implicitly) considered most relevant in German-Dutch interaction. This gives Germans or Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring country a better orientation because it enables them to estimate which cultural characteristics the other people will consider to be especially relevant and which cultural characteristics they have to pay particular attention to.

Furthermore, the internal consistency of the single main categories could be determined. It could be shown that most of the main categories were consistent (i.e., they either contained no contradictory subcategories or the contradictory subcategories they contained represented only a minority opinion). However, two of the main categories from the German book corpus (*directness* and *individualism*) and four of the main categories from the Dutch book corpus (*modesty and status, communication, separation of work and private life* and *individualism*) were not as consistent as the other main categories; the minority opinion could not be dis-

regarded as negligible. That is an important finding because it shows that there is dissent between the authors with regard to some of the main categories. This raises the question of why this dissent exists.

A closer inspection of the main category *directness* suggests that these main categories might have to be further differentiated because the authors' statements might be context-related. There are apparently situations in which Germans are perceived to be more direct than the Dutch (e. g., when it comes to giving orders) and other situations in which the Dutch are perceived to be more direct than the Germans (e. g., when it comes to expressing their feelings). Directness can thus manifest differently in different situations. This might also be the case with the main categories *individualism*, *modesty and status*, *communication* and *separation of work and private life*. However, since the analysis of the book corpora cannot definitely determine whether these main categories have to be further differentiated, further research is necessary to analyze the reasons for the authors' different opinions.

Furthermore, the fact that the authors sometimes disagreed about some of the main categories shows that German or Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring country should not rely merely on popular science or guidebooks for this preparation because by doing so they might get the wrong impression of the other culture. For example, if a German wanted to prepare himself to interact with a Dutchman and read a guidebook that stated that the Dutch are more direct than Germans, this might lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in situations in which the Dutch act less directly than Germans.

Third, the results from RQ A (content) and RQ B (relations) can be used to answer RQ C: Are there differences or commonalities between the cultural characteristics the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora describe? It is possible to compare whether the authors from the Dutch and German book corpora stated similar main categories and if they considered similar main categories to be equally relevant in bicultural interaction situations. This will be done in the next section (Section 3.4).

3.4 Comparison of main categories from the German and Dutch book corpora (RQ C)

To answer RQ C — Are there differences or commonalities between the cultural characteristics the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora describe? — three different aspects were scrutinized. First, I analyzed whether the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora stated similar or different main categories. Second, I compared whether those authors attributed similar or different relevance to the main categories that were found when the corpora were compared. Third, with

regard to those main categories that can be found in both book corpora, I analyzed whether the authors described similar or different situations and contexts in which they manifest in bicultural interactions.

3.4.1   Methodology

To analyze the first aspect — the question of whether the German and Dutch book corpora contained similar main categories — I determined whether each main category was reflected by main categories in the other corpus. To be regarded as identical or similar, main categories did not necessarily have to have the same label; they just had to make statements about the same or similar cultural characteristics. For example, the main German category *formality* and Dutch category *informality* were regarded as similar because both deal with the degree of formality in organizations.

To analyze the second aspect — differences in relevance — I looked at the concordance of relevance that was attributed to them by the authors from the German and Dutch book corpora. To do this, I compared the ranking order and the weighted arithmetic means (calculated in Section 3.3.1) for the German and Dutch book corpora to each other. Although the number of main categories, which influences the weighted arithmetic means, differs between the corpora (20 in the German and 19 in the Dutch), this influence was negligible and a direct comparison was therefore possible. If a main category had a similar ranking and weighted arithmetic mean in both corpora, it was regarded as equally important.

For the comparison, I applied a scale that distinguished between three different degrees of accordance in relevance. For each main category that can be found in both corpora, I calculated the difference of the weighted arithmetic means (that were calculated in Appendix 14; also see Appendix 17.1). The following threshold was applied:

- Strong accordance: difference between 0 and 4.0
- Accordance: difference between 5 and 9.0
- Weak accordance: difference higher than 10

The reason for this threshold was a 'natural grouping' of the weighted arithmetic means; there were distinct breaks between the three groups.

To analyze the third aspect — do the authors in the German and Dutch book corpora describe similar or different contexts and situations in which main categories manifest in bicultural interactions? — I analyzed the level of accordance of the single subcategories that each main category was based on (for those main categories that actually had a counterpart in the other book corpus). I did this by comparing the subcategories from each main category found in both book corpora to each other (see Appendix 17.2) and calculating the percentage of those subcat-

egories that were reflected in the same main category of the other book corpus. These could be subcategories that have a direct counterpart in the other book corpus, such as "*Application portfolios and curriculum vitae are more detailed than in the Netherlands*" (German book corpus) and "*Application portfolios and curricula vitae are less detailed and shorter than in Germany*" (Dutch book corpus). It also included subcategories that do not have a direct counterpart but are nevertheless reflected in subcategories from the other book corpus, such as "*Companies with a long tradition are regarded as especially trustworthy*" (German book corpus) and "*the Dutch are present-oriented; the past and future are less important than in Germany*" (Dutch book corpus).

3.4.2 Results comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora

In the presentation of the results, the main categories with a similar level of accordance of relevance are presented in groups. This means that there are four different groups: main categories with a high accordance, accordance and weak accordance in relevance, as well as main categories that do not have a counterpart in the other book corpus.

Table 5 shows which of the main categories from the Dutch and German book corpora have a counterpart in the other corpus. For those main categories that actually have a counterpart, the accordance of relevance (the difference of their weighted arithmetic means that was calculated in Section 3.3.1) is displayed.

Figure 4 graphically shows the weighted arithmetic means of the main categories and their level of accordance.

Figure 5 shows the difference of the weighted arithmetic means of those main categories that can be found in both book corpora. The main categories are divided into groups of strong, normal and weak accordance of their weighted arithmetic means.

Strong accordance

The following main categories, found in both book corpora, have strong accordance in the relevance that was attributed to them by the authors in the corpora: *task is more important than a good atmosphere/harmony as important as task* (difference in weighted arithmetic mean of 0), *flexibility/flexibility pragmatism, improvisation* (0.58), *hierarchies* (1.25), *rules* (1.85), *details* (3.74), *individualism* (3.90) and *communication* (4.00).

A comparison of the single subcategories that these main categories from the Dutch and German book corpora subsume shows that for all but one pair of compared main categories there is also a high level of accordance. This shows that both book corpora state (predominantly) similar situations and contexts in which these

Table 5   Matching main categories and accordance of relevance

German corpus main categories and rank	Dutch corpus main categories and rank	Difference weighted arithm. means
Hierarchies (1)	Hierarchies (2)	1.25
Communication (2)	Communication (5)	4.00
Formality (3)	Informality (6)	5.50
Separation of work and private life (4)	Separation of work and private life (11)	11.33
Modesty and status (5)	Modesty and status (1)	8.83
Rules (6)	Rules (9)	1.58
Perception of time (8)	Perception of time (19)	12.75
Flexibility (9)	Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation (8)	0.58
Obviation of uncertainties (10)	Obviation of uncertainties (13)	5.75
Task more important than a good atmosphere (11)	Harmony as important as task (10)	0
Planning (12)	Planning (4)	10.66
Details (13)	Details (16)	3.75
Expertise and qualification (16)	Expertise and qualification (12)	5.00
Perfection (18)	Perfection (7)	12.08
Individualism (20)	Individualism (17)	3.91
Meetings and discussions (14)	Consensus and 'overleg' (3)	16.50
Respect (19)	-	-
Directness (7)	-	-
Everything is structured (15)	-	-
Preparation (17)	-	-
-	Calimero effect (18)	-
-	Tolerance (15)	-
-	Egalitarian character (14)	-

Note: the books in the Dutch corpus were written by German authors who wrote about Dutch culture (thus showing how Germans perceive Dutch culture) and vice versa.

main categories manifest in bicultural interactions. (A detailed comparison of the single subcategories that these main categories subsume can be found in Appendix 17.2; there the accordance is also shown in percentages. However, since those percentages are based on rather small numbers of subcategories, they do not have a high expressiveness and are therefore not stated in the text.)

Only the main category *individualism* is an exception; here the accordance between the single subcategories is weaker. As already pointed out in Section 3.3.2,
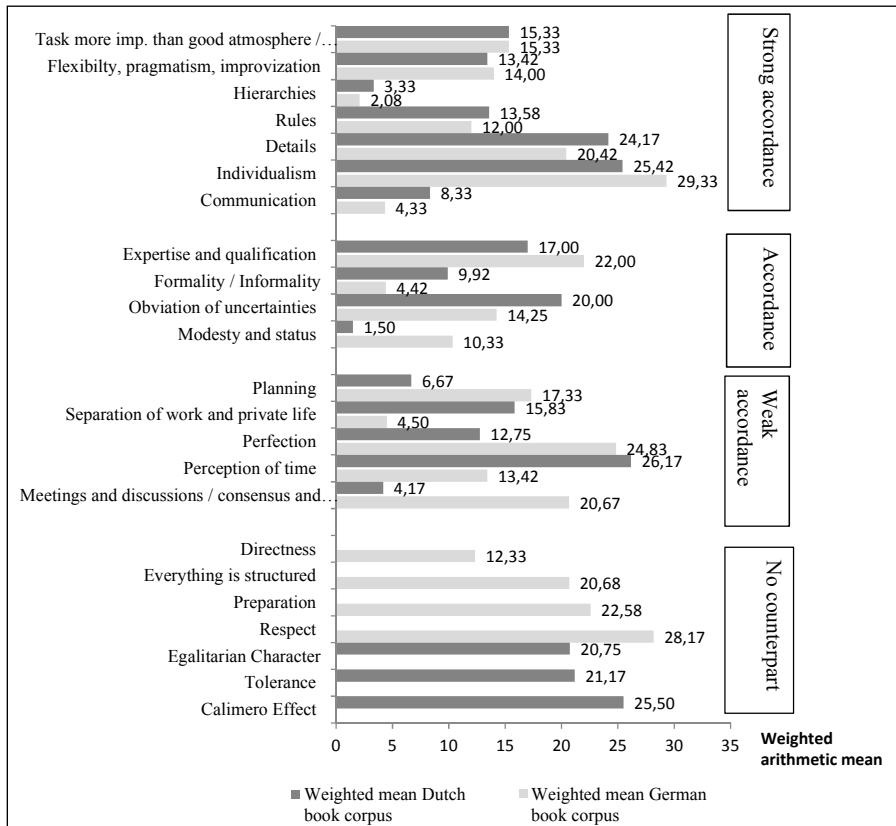
Fig. 4   Weighted arithmetic means of the main categories and level of accordance
(0 = high relevance, 30 = low relevance)

the majority opinion in the German book corpus is that Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch. However, many subcategories state the opposite. The majority opinion of the Dutch book corpus is also that Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch. However, just like in the German book corpus, many subcategories imply the opposite.

Accordance

The main categories *formality/informality* (5.50), *obviation of uncertainties* (5.75), *expertise and qualification* (5.00) and *modesty and status* (8.83) have a normal accordance of the relevance that is attributed to them by the authors from the German and Dutch book corpora. Furthermore, a comparison of the single subcategories that these main categories subsume shows that there is also a high level of accordance (see Appendix 17.2). The authors in both book corpora thus described similar
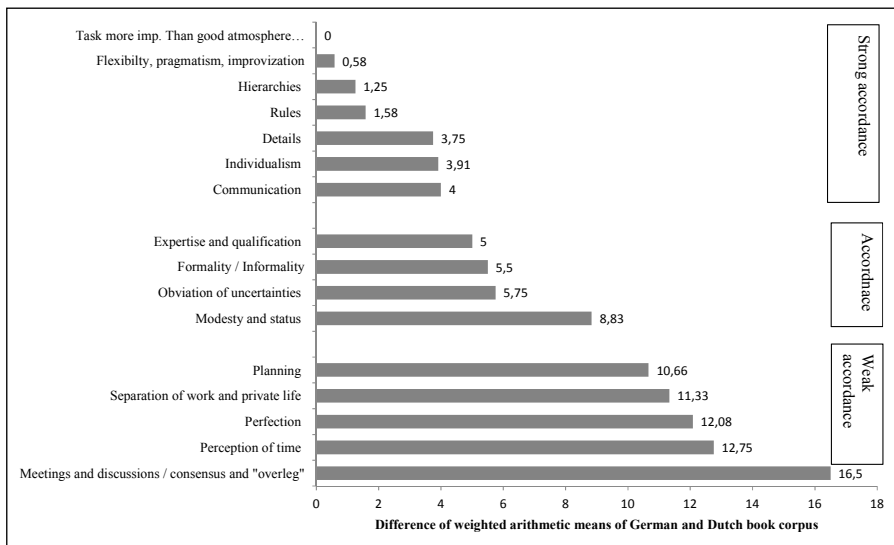
Fig. 5   Differences of weighted arithmetic means in the German and Dutch book corpus

situations and contexts in which these main categories manifest in bicultural interactions.

Weak accordance

The main categories *perception of time* (12.75), *planning* (10.66), *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* (16.50), *separation of work and private life* (11.33) and *perfection* (12.08) have a very weak accordance of the relevance that is attributed to them by the authors from the German and Dutch book corpora.

With regard to the main category *perception of time*, the Dutch — according to the corpora — apparently find the German perception of time remarkable, while for Germans the Dutch perception of time seems to be less relevant in bicultural interactions. However, the comparison shows that different aspects of this main category are perceived differently. While the authors in the German book corpus found it striking that Germans appreciate and expect punctuality, the authors in the Dutch book corpus put only a little emphasis on the claim that the Dutch are less punctual than Germans. The alleged Dutch ability to multitask was generally also not considered especially relevant in bicultural interactions.

However, more emphasis was put on the claim that the Dutch are present oriented. According to the book corpora, this seems to be regarded with similar relevance as the German past and present orientation. The comparison thus shows that with regard to this main category in both corpora, the weighted arithmetic means represent an average value of relevance that conceals the fact that different aspects

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of the category are regarded as differently relevant in bicultural interactions. This does not mean that the main category *perception of time* has to be further divided into different main categories (the reliability test in Section 3.3.1 clearly shows that all its aspects are part of this main category), but it shows that in the further course of this study (especially in the comparison of the results of the book corpus analysis with other methods and concepts of analyzing culture) the different relevance of the different aspects should be taken into consideration.

Regarding the single subcategories of the main category *perception of time*, there is a high accordance (see Appendix 17.2). The authors of both book corpora thus described similar situations and contexts in which this main category manifests in bicultural interactions.

Pertaining to the main category *planning*, it seems that — according to the authors from the German book corpus — the Dutch find the German appreciation of planning to not be very relevant in bicultural interactions. However, Germans find the lack of planning — that the Dutch have according to the Dutch book corpus — peculiar.

The comparison of the main categories *meetings and discussions* and *consensus and 'overleg'* shows that the authors from the Dutch book corpus stated that in bicultural interactions Germans apparently find the Dutch appreciation for consensus very striking. However, according to the German book corpus, the Dutch do not find the German discussion culture very relevant.

With regard to the main category *separation of work and private life*, it is noticeable that — according to the book corpora — the Dutch see the German *separation of work and private life* as very relevant in bicultural interactions. However, Germans do not find it very relevant if the Dutch do not draw such sharp boundaries between their work and private lives.

Regarding the single subcategories of this main category, there is a high accordance (see Appendix 17.2). The authors of both book corpora thus described similar situations and contexts in which this main category manifests in bicultural interactions.

The comparison of the main category *perfection* shows that — according to the book corpora — in bicultural interactions German find it more remarkable that the Dutch do not aspire to perfection than vice versa.

No counterpart in the other book corpus

The following main categories can only be found in the German book corpus: *directness*, *everything is structured*, *preparation* and *respect*. As pointed out in Section 3.3.2, the majority of the authors who made statements about German *directness* claimed that Germans are more direct than the Dutch. In the Dutch book corpus, there is no main category called *directness*. This indicates that in bicultural

interactions Germans apparently do not generally feel that a potential Dutch indirectness leads to irritations, problems or communication breakdowns.

With regard to the main category *everything is structured*, it seems that in bicultural interactions the Dutch apparently find it noticeable that Germans work in a very structured way. For Germans, on the other hand, it generally does not seem to play a role that the Dutch may work in a less structured way.

Pertaining to the main category *preparation*, the Dutch — according to the German book corpus — seem to find it noticeable that Germans are well prepared when they attend meetings or discussions. Germans, on the other hand, do not seem to find it remarkable that the Dutch are less prepared in meetings and discussions.

Also, according to the German book corpus, the Dutch apparently experience that *respect* is very important to Germans in bicultural interactions. On the other hand, Germans usually do not feel that a potential Dutch lack of respect plays a role in German-Dutch interactions.

The following main categories can only be found in the Dutch book corpus: *egalitarian character*, *tolerance* and *Calimero effect*.

With regard to the main category *egalitarian character*, Germans in bicultural interactions — according to the book corpora — find it noticeable that the Dutch do not only have flat hierarchies in organizations but that they also try to avoid the impression that one person is superior to another in their private lives. The Dutch, on the other hand, generally do not seem to have the impression that Germans appreciate hierarchies in their private lives or that potential hierarchical relations in the private lives of Germans have an impact on bicultural interactions.

The main category *tolerance* can also only be found in the Dutch book corpus. While the authors in the corpus stated that Germans perceive the Dutch to be especially tolerant in bicultural interaction situations, the Dutch do not seem to perceive Germans as being especially intolerant. For them, a potential German tolerance (or lack thereof) does not affect interactions.

It is in the very nature of the main category *Calimero effect* that it can only be found in the Dutch book corpus. It is not reflected in the German book corpus.

Conclusion

In the comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora, I analyzed whether the included authors described similar main categories, whether they attributed similar relevance to them and whether they stated similar situations and contexts (i. e., similar single subcategories subsumed by the main categories) in which the main categories manifest in bicultural interactions.

In advance of this comparison, it was implicitly anticipated that cultural characteristics stated in one book corpus would also be stated in the other book corpus and regarded as similarly important. This assumption seemed reasonable for the following reason: cultural characteristics that are described in popular science

and guidebooks are usually deduced from bicultural interaction situations in which German or Dutch behavior leads to irritations, conflicts or communication breakdowns. These conflicts emerge because the Dutch and the German cultural orientation systems collide (Thomas, 2005, p. 21 ff.). It therefore seems logical that cultural characteristics that are stated in the German book corpus would also be stated in the Dutch book corpus. If, for example, in bicultural interactions, the Dutch culture is perceived as having low hierarchies, it would be logical that the Dutch would perceive the German culture as more hierarchical. This view is also shared by many intercultural coaches and can be found in a variety of guidebooks about culture. The authors of such books (e. g., House et al., 2004; Hulsebosch, 1998; Mead, 1994) often use the dimensions from different (cross-cultural) dimension models (e. g., from Hall 1989; Hofstede, 2008; or Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) as a basis and interpret them in such a way that those dimensions in which two cultures differ the most are also the dimensions in which most irritations and problems can be expected in bicultural interactions.

However, the comparison of the book corpora revealed that this is not always the case. While 16 main categories actually had a counterpart in the other book corpus, seven (four from the German and three from the Dutch book corpus) had none. This shows that there are cultural characteristics that apparently play a role in bicultural interactions for Germans but not for the Dutch, and vice versa. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora do not always attribute similar relevance to the main categories that can be found in both corpora. While the accordance of relevance for ten of these main categories was strong or normal, it was weak or very weak for six of them (see the scale in Section 3.4.1). This illustrates that in German-Dutch encounters it is not necessarily only those cultural characteristics with the greatest differences between the two cultures that cause irritations, problems or communication breakdowns.

The relevance that members of a culture attribute to certain cultural characteristics plays an important role as well. For example, according to the book corpora, there are remarkable differences between the Dutch and German cultures regarding the main category *hierarchies*. In the German book corpus, this main category was described in all the analyzed books; in the Dutch book corpus, it was described in 22 of the 23 analyzed books. It can thus be assumed that most German and Dutch people who use such guidebooks to prepare themselves for intercultural encounters are aware of this difference and can — with regard to hierarchical relations — adjust their behavior. The main category *planning*, on the other hand, is regarded with different importance by the authors from the German and Dutch book corpora (i. e., very weak accordance of relevance). While — according to the book corpora — Germans regard this main category as relevant in bicultural interactions, the Dutch do not regard it as especially relevant. In the Dutch book corpus, this main category was described in all the analyzed books; in the German corpus, it was described in only 16 of the 24 books. This means that Dutch people who use

such guidebooks to prepare themselves for Dutch-German encounters may not be aware of this cultural difference and/or the fact that it is highly relevant for Germans, which can lead to irritations, problems and communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions. This study thus adds a further dimension to the commonly used approaches toward intercultural communications and allows a more nuanced view of intercultural communication.

The comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora also revealed that the accordance of the single subcategories of the compared main categories was, in most cases, high. This illustrates that similar situations and contexts are described in the German and Dutch book corpora in which the main categories manifest in bicultural interactions.

Furthermore, the comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora illustrates once again that culture is complex and multilayered; some of the main categories are not as unambiguous as they appear at first glance, for instance *individualism*. In Section 3.3.2, it was shown that there is dissent among the authors about whether Germans or the Dutch are more individualistic. The comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora shows that there are different situations and contexts in which Germans sometimes appear more individualistic than the Dutch, and vice versa. Another example is the main category *perception of time*. The comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora illustrates that the authors consider different aspects of this main category to be differently relevant in bicultural encounters.

3.5   Comparison with other concepts and methods of analyzing culture

As explicated in Chapter 1, different methods of analyzing culture can be used to scrutinize the Dutch and German cultures from different perspectives. Each of these methods has advantages but also weaknesses compared to the others. To minimize the limitations of the single methods and to gain a comprehensive and nuanced overview of how the German and Dutch cultures manifest in bicultural interactions, a combination of these methods is expedient.

A comparison of German culture standards from a Dutch perspective with dimensions from dimension models, in which the advantages and disadvantages of each method of analyzing culture and the additional value of the comparison were pointed out, has already been conducted (see Section 2.7). This comparison showed that the identified culture standards have an added value compared to the dimensions from the dimension models when it comes to describing, explaining and predicting irritations, problems and communication breakdowns in concrete intercultural interactions between the Dutch and Germans. In this section, the results from the book corpus analysis as a third method of analyzing culture were compared to both.

3.5.1 Comparison with culture standards

First, I compared the main categories determined in the book corpus analysis to the results from culture standards studies about the Dutch and German cultures (i. e., with the German culture standards from a Dutch perspective in Chapter 1 and with the Dutch culture standards from a German perspective identified by Thomas and Schlizio (2009)). Table 6 displays these German and Dutch culture standards.

Table 6   German culture standards from a Dutch perspective and Dutch culture standards from a German perspective

German culture standards	Dutch culture standards
Fear of losing control	Calimero effect
Separation of living spheres	Flat hierarchies
Task orientation	Pragmatism
Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations	Informality
Relation orientation	Calvinistic modesty
Status orientation	Consensus culture

In the culture standards study, I criticized the commonly used methodological approach for identifying culture standards (see Chapter 1) and further developed it. For example, I used questions other than those used by Thomas and Schlizio (2009) in their interviews and expert evaluation. This means that the German culture standards from a Dutch perspective and the Dutch culture standards from a German perspective were not identified using the exact same methodological approach. Furthermore, in the culture standards study it was suggested that some of the Dutch culture standards from a German perspective identified by Thomas and Schlizio in 2006 (e. g., the culture standard *Calvinistic modesty*) had undergone changes over recent years. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the results of their study are still (at least for the most part) valid and therefore can be used in a comparison with the results from the book corpus analysis, together with the German culture standards identified in Chapter 2.

A first step in the comparison was to analyze each main category to determine whether it resembled or contradicted existing culture standards. The results of this analysis can be found in Tables 7 and 8. One has to keep in mind, however, that just because a main category resembles certain culture standards does not mean that it is actually and unambiguously related to them, or that they serve as an actual explanation for it. The links between culture standards and main categories are not empirically justified correlations but rather well-founded and logically coherent assumptions.

Table 7   Dutch culture standards that bear resemble to main categories from the Dutch
book corpus

Main category	Dutch culture standard(s)
Hierarchies	Flat hierarchies, consensus culture
Communication	Relation orientation, flat hierarchies, informality, consensus culture, Calvinistic modesty
Informality	Informality, relation orientation
Separation of work and private life	Relation orientation
Modesty and status	Calvinistic modesty
Rules	Informality, pragmatism, flat hierarchies
Perception of time	Informality, pragmatism
Flexibility	Informality, pragmatism
Obviation of uncertainties	Informality, pragmatism
Harmony as important as task	Relation orientation, consensus culture
Planning	Informality, pragmatism
Details	Informality, pragmatism
Consensus and 'overleg'	Consensus culture, flat hierarchies, relation orientation
Expertise and qualification	Relation orientation, pragmatism
Perfection	Pragmatism
Individualism	-
Egalitarian character	Flat hierarchies

In the course of this analysis, I discovered that the main categories of the book corpus analysis can be divided into two groups. First, there are main categories that resemble culture standards. Second, there are main categories that contradict culture standards or are not at all reflected in them. In presenting the results in this section, I will point out for each group which additional value the main categories can contribute to the other methods of analyzing culture, which new insights the comparison can offer and how the different methods complement each other.

Table 9 shows to which of the two groups each main category belongs. Rather than separating them, the main categories of the German and Dutch book corpora are presented here together in one table (those that can be found in both book corpora are stated only once). This is done to illustrate the high level of concordance: of the main categories that can be found in both book corpora, the majority of the main categories that can be attributed to group 1 (resemblance) in the German book corpus can also be attributed to this group in the Dutch book corpus.

Table 8   German culture standards that resemble the main categories from the German book corpus

Main category	German culture standard(s)
Hierarchies	Task orientation, appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, separation of living spheres, fear of losing control
Communication	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control, task orientation
Formality	Task orientation, separation of living spheres
Separation of work and private life	Separation of living spheres, task orientation
Modesty and status	Status orientation, task orientation, fear of losing control
Rules	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of uncertainties, task orientation
Perception of time	Time planning, fear of losing control
Flexibility	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control
Obviation of uncertainties	Fear of losing control
Task more important than a good atmosphere	Task orientation
Planning	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, time planning, fear of losing control
Details	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control, task orientation
Meetings and discussions	Task orientation, separation of living spheres
Expertise and qualification	Task orientation, separation of living spheres, fear of losing control
Perfection	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control
Individualism	-
Preparation	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control, time orientation
Respect	Status orientation
Directness	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of losing control, task orientation
Everything is structured	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations, fear of uncertainties, task orientation
Tolerance	Flat hierarchies, Calvinistic modesty
Calimero effect	Calimero

Table 9　　Main categories that resemble (group 1), partially resemble (group 2) or do no resemble or contradict (group 3) culture standards

Resemblance	Contradictory or not reflected
Communication	Calimero effect (D)
Separation of work and private life	Tolerance (D)
Formality/informality	Individualism
Rules	
Hierarchies	
Planning	
Details	
Modesty and status	
Flexibility	
Obviation of uncertainties	
Task is more important than a good atmosphere/harmony as important as task	
Perception of time	
Expertise	
Perfection	
Preparation	
Respect	
Directness	
Everything is structured	
Egalitarian character	
Meetings and discussions*	

D = Main category can be found only in the Dutch book corpus.

* The main category Meetings and discussions shows a much weaker resemblance to the analyzed culture standards than the other main categories. However, it does not contradict and can — at least to some degree — be found in the culture standards.

3.5.1.1　Group 1 resemblance

The comparison shows that most of the main categories from the German and Dutch book corpora resemble culture standards. These main categories are *communication, separation of work and private life, formality/informality, rules, hierarchies, planning, details, modesty and status, flexibility, obviation of uncertainties, task is more important than a good atmosphere/harmony as important as task, perception of time, expertise, perfection, preparation, respect, directness, everything is structured* and *egalitarian character.*

In the following sections, I will use the main category *communication* to illustrate the complexity of the comparison of the main categories with culture standards and dimension models. General patterns that come to light in the comparison with the majority of the main categories will be pointed out.

Comparison of main category communication with culture standards and dimensions

The main category *communication* consists of different aspects that show similarities to various culture standards. Those cultural aspects from the Dutch book corpus regarding *communication channels* correspond to some degree with the Dutch culture standard *relation orientation*. Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 53 f.) stated that the Dutch are relation-oriented. In contrast to the German *task orientation*, harmonic relations with colleagues and supervisors and a warm and friendly atmosphere are equally important as the task in the Netherlands. At work, people also talk about private things; dealings with others are more informal. This encourages the development of networks in which people exchange information informally. Often, in official meetings it becomes apparent that things have already been discussed informally in advance. This behavior is also described in the main category *communication*.

The rather informal Dutch *communication channels* also resembles the culture standard *pragmatism* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 55 ff.). As Thomas and Schlizio stated, the Dutch are goal-oriented. It is important that the goal is reached; how it is reached is of secondary importance. Rules, fixed structures and standardized processes are less important than in Germany. As the main category *communication* shows, this pragmatism can be found in the communication channels. If a goal can be reached more quickly by spreading information informally to those people who need it, it is not necessary to use formal communication channels.

Furthermore, the aspect *communication channels* might to some extent be reflected in the Dutch culture standard *flat hierarchies*. In the Netherlands, the role of the boss is said to differ from the role of a German boss. According to Thomas and Schlizio (2009), Dutch bosses usually play a moderating role. They delegate more and hence do not need all the information. This aligns with the proposition from the main category *communication* that, in the Netherlands, information does not necessarily have to flow vertically because the boss does not try to control all information as it is common in Germany (cf. e. g., Gemert, 2004, p. 60).

Finally, the aspect *communication channels* also resembles the Dutch culture standard *informality* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 57 ff.). According to Thomas and Schlizio, the Dutch act more informally than Germans. They are less afraid of losing control; things can be dealt with informally, so rules are seen as guidelines. This fits with the proposition from the main category *communication* that information is often spread informally in Dutch organizations.

In the German book corpus, the aspect *communication channels* from the main category *communication* resembles the culture standard *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations*. The main category *communication* shows that this appreciation may also influence the communication channels. Furthermore, the aspect *communication channels* also resembles the culture standard *fear of losing control*. This was especially obvious in the texts from Huijser (2005, p. 43 ff.) and Hesseling (2001, p. 53 ff.), who both stated that Germans prefer written documents and conveying information via official communication channels because they want to be 100% certain that the information reaches those people who need it and that the information will not be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

A second aspect within the main category *communication* is the style of communication. The authors in the Dutch book corpus disagree about the directness of communication. Although their majority view is that the Dutch are less direct than Germans, the minority view that states the opposite cannot be disregarded as marginal. A comparison with the Dutch culture standards shows that they resemble the majority opinion and contradict the minority opinion. First, the aspect *communication style* resembles the Dutch culture standard *relation orientation* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 53 f.). As Thomas and Schlizio stated, it is important to maintain a warm and friendly atmosphere in Dutch organizations. Even under stress conditions, one is supposed to stay friendly. Direct criticism and bluntly stating one's opinion would thus contradict this culture standard.

Furthermore, the Dutch discussion culture resembles the culture standard *consensus culture* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 51). According to Thomas and Schlizio, being too direct, blunt or even brusque might disturb the process of finding consensus. In the Dutch book corpus, this opinion is — among others — implied by Linthout (2008, p. 182) who stated that the German approach in discussions is *"you are wrong, because …,"* while the Dutch approach is *"basically you are right, but …"* This culture standard thus also supports the assumption that the Dutch are less direct than Germans.

Just as in the Dutch book corpus, it also became apparent in the German book corpus that there are different opinions regarding the style of communication. Even though the majority opinion is that Germans are more direct than the Dutch, the contradictory opinion that Germans are less direct than the Dutch cannot be disregarded as marginal. A comparison with German culture standards cannot illustrate whether or not Germans are more direct than the Dutch either; as described in Chapter 2.4.7, this question cannot be answered using the concept of culture standards.

This discrepancy (in the Dutch and German book corpora) illustrates once again that the main categories (i. e., concrete aspects of culture that come to light in bicultural interaction) cannot be completely and unambiguously explained by culture standards.

Another aspect of the main category *communication* that is stated in both book corpora is that Germans prefer to use technical language, while this is seen as bragging in the Netherlands. A comparison with culture standards and dimensions from dimension models did not contradict this.

With regard to the Dutch culture standard *consensus culture*, Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 52 f.) stated that in discussions in the Netherlands, everyone has the right to and expects to state his or her opinion. This makes it necessary for everyone to understand what the others are saying. It therefore seems logical that the Dutch often try to avoid using technical language, as is stated in the Dutch book corpus.

Another culture standard that bears some resemblance to this aspect of the main category *communication* is the *Calvinistic modesty* of the Dutch. According to Thomas and Schlizio (2009, p. 59 f.), it is common in the Netherlands to appear modest in public; showing titles, wealth or status symbols publicly is disapproved of and seen as swaggering. This might be another reason for the reluctance to use technical language. As discovered in the culture standards study (Chapter 2), the Dutch sometimes feel that Germans use technical vocabulary because they want to show that they are smarter and better than others.

The German appreciation for technical language, on the other hand, resembles the culture standards *task orientation* and *fear of losing control*. Using clear and unambiguous technical terms is seen as a means to fulfill the task optimally because there is little room for interpretation and everyone knows exactly what is meant. The comparison with the culture standards thus supports the view that Germans usually do not use technical language because they want to stand out from others, as Mole, Snijders and Jacobs (1997, p. 51) and Gerisch (1994, p. 59) implied. Instead, they see the use of such language as a sign of respect for others, as Linthout (2006, p. 245) and Hesseling (2001, p. 39 f.) claimed.

Just like the comparison of the aspect *communication style* with culture standards, the comparison of the aspect *technical language* also shows that culture standards cannot unambiguously predict behavior in bicultural interactions. As the minority opinion regarding this aspect of the main category *communication* shows, there are also situations and contexts in which behavior in bicultural interactions contradicts culture standards.

General comparison of main categories from group 1 (resemblance)
with culture standards

The comparison of the main category *communication* with culture standard models revealed exemplarily different things that apply to the majority of the other main categories. First, almost all the main categories (and the different aspects they subsume) resemble culture standards. However, the comparison showed that most of the main categories (with the exception of *separation of work and private life*

in the German book corpus and *obviation of uncertainties* in both book corpora) resemble more than one culture standard (cf. Tables 7 and 8). As pointed out in the culture standards study (Section 2.4.8), most concrete cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interactions cannot be explained by a single culture standard but rather by an interplay of different ones. Culture standards are rather abstract and superordinate. Even though both Thomas and Schlizio's (2009) culture standards study and the culture standards study described in Chapter 2 also describe (some) situations and contexts in which they manifest in bicultural interactions, culture standards predominantly describe abstract, underlying aspects of culture. It is thus not easy to deduce concrete manifestations of culture in German-Dutch encounters from them. One additional value of the main categories is that they complement the culture standards by showing how they manifest in concrete bicultural interactions.

Another aspect revealed in the comparison of the main categories with culture standards is that the latter are sometimes better suited than the main categories to provide reasons for certain behavior in German-Dutch encounters. As already mentioned, the authors in the German and Dutch book corpora predominantly described the visible aspects of culture that come to light in intercultural interaction but often did not provide reasons for them. For example, while the authors merely stated that there are differences between German and Dutch views of hierarchies and the acceptance of hierarchies, the culture standard *task orientation* also points out that Germans are more willing to accept hierarchies at work because they see clearly assigned functions and responsibilities as a way to avoid uncertainties and to best fulfill the task. The comparison, particularly with the culture standards, can thus add the underlying motivation for why Dutch or German people act in certain ways when they interact. Furthermore, Section 3.3.2 described that with regard to some of the main categories, the authors described the same situations and contexts in which they manifest but set out different or even contradictory reasons for them (e. g., in the main categories *hierarchies*). Here the comparison with culture standards can also help to point out the motivation for certain behavior.

3.5.1.2 Group 2 contradictions or no resemblance between main categories and culture standards and dimensions

The main category *Calimero effect* is reflected in the culture standard *Calimero* (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 53 f.), but the main category *tolerance* does not resemble any of the culture standards. Of course, it is possible that they might be reflected in the other methods of analyzing culture, but this linkage would be purely hypothetical. The comparison thus reveals another additional value of the book corpus analysis: there are aspects of culture that are not reflected in the culture standards. By merely using the concept of culture standards, one would miss certain cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural encounters.

The comparison of the main category *individualism* with culture standards is particularly interesting because it apparently contradicts the findings from the culture standards study. In Section 2.7, I pointed out that even though Hofstede's (2008, p. 209 ff.) dimension *individualism/collectivism* shows a noticeable difference between Germany (score of 67) and the Netherlands (score of 80), individualism does not seem to play a role in bicultural interactions between the Dutch and Germans because no critical incidents regarding individualism were stated in the interviews. In the Dutch culture standards from Thomas and Schlizio (2009), statements regarding *individualism* cannot be found either. There is thus a discrepancy with the book corpus analysis because the main category *individualism* implies that individualism does play a role in bicultural encounters.

A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that critical incidents (which were used to identify culture standards) are predominantly based on negative experiences that a person has had with another culture because such experiences can be remembered longer and more vividly (Göbel, 2003). It is possible that individualism does play a role in bicultural interactions between the Dutch and Germans but is not such a dominant cultural aspect that it would lead to irritations or communication breakdowns in such interactions. In this case, the comparison of the main category with culture standards would show that the book corpus analysis can sometimes add further aspects that cannot be discovered with the methods of culture standards studies. However, without further research it is hardly possible to draw reliable and firm conclusions about this topic.

3.5.2   Comparison with dimension models

In addition to the culture standards, the main categories from this study were also compared to dimensions from different dimension models. Even though social scientists have developed various dimensions and dimension, this comparison only used the models from Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990). They align with and subsume most of the dimensions from other dimension models (e.g., models from Schwartz (1992), Schein (1985) or Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961)) and are therefore sufficient for the purposes of this study.

In the comparison of the main categories of the book corpora with culture standards, resemblances could be pointed out relatively clearly. There is only a manageable number of culture standards and dimensions and both show rather abstract and superordinate aspects of culture. Even though the resemblances are not empirically justified, they seem to be rather obvious.

However, in the comparison of the main categories with dimension models, it appeared that it is hardly possible to clearly assign the main categories to certain dimensions. The main categories show rather concrete manifestations of culture (thus different things than the dimensions) and there are many (20 German and

19 Dutch main categories), which makes an assignment rather arbitrary. To further demonstrate that the attribution of main categories and dimensions is rather arbitrary and intuitive, a second expert on cross- and intercultural communication was asked to make such an attribution (The coding rules and the results of this reliability test can be found in Appendix 18). The comparison of the results shows that the intercoder reliabilities — calculated with Holsti's (1969, p. 140) formula — were very low for both the Dutch (.31) and German (.34) book corpora. This points out the relative arbitrariness of the attribution. For example, with regard to the main category *planning*, both coders agreed that it resembles the dimension *power distance* (Hofstede, 2008). However, coder 1 also assigned it to the dimensions *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 2008), *time orientation* (Hall, 1990) and *human-nature relationship* (Hall, 1990), while coder 2 assigned it to the dimension *monochronism/polychronism* (Hall, 1990).

In conclusion, it is hardly possible to unambiguously assign the main categories from this study to dimensions from dimension models. This shows that it is hard to use the dimension models to predict or explain concrete manifestations of culture in German-Dutch interaction.

3.5.3   Conclusion

By comparing the results from the book corpus analysis with culture standards and dimensions from dimension models, it was possible to reach the second aim of this study that was introduced in Section 3.2: to analyze if, how and to what extent the results from the analysis of the German and Dutch book corpora complement or complete, specify and validate or falsify the results from other methods of analyzing culture.

The comparison of the main categories from the book corpus analysis with the German and Dutch culture standards revealed different things. First, it illustrated that they complement each other. Both main categories and culture standards are intercultural approaches that show which aspects of culture actually play a role in German-Dutch encounters. However, culture standards are rather abstract and show superordinate aspects of culture. They are well suited to giving a general understanding of the German or Dutch culture as it manifests in German-Dutch encounters but, as the comparison shows, it is often difficult to use them to deduce actual behavior in bicultural interactions. The main categories from the book corpus analysis show a more detailed and practice-based way in which cultural characteristics play a role in bicultural interactions, and in which situations and contexts they manifest in which way. While the culture standards are rather abstract, the main categories are concrete and can thus provide a more nuanced picture than the culture standards. On the other hand, the culture standards also complement the main categories. The main categories describe the most common and relevant manifestations of culture in German-Dutch interactions. However, there are count-

less possible situations and contexts in these interactions and naturally they cannot all be described in the book corpora. To prepare oneself well for bicultural interactions, one also needs culture standards to comprehend cultural differences that manifest in German-Dutch encounters on a superordinate and abstract level and needs to be able to conduct one's behavior accordingly.

Furthermore, the comparison could be used to point out that there are aspects of culture that play a role in bicultural interactions between Germans and the Dutch that could not be identified with the concept of culture standards (e. g., the aspects *individualism* and *tolerance*). Here the main categories can thus complete the culture standards.

The culture standards, on the other hand, could sometimes supply explanations for the main categories that could not be found in the book corpora. Usually, the popular science and guidebooks from the book corpora merely described cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural encounters but gave no or only rudimentary explanations for them. The culture standards can enable a better understanding of these cultural characteristics by pointing out the reasons for certain behavioral patterns. Furthermore, as mentioned in Section 3.3.2, there were several aspects in the book corpora about which the authors agreed but gave diverging, often even contradictory explanations (e. g., *hierarchies*, *communication* and *modesty and status*). With regard to this, the comparison with the culture standards could point out which explanation is more likely and could therefore enable a better understanding of the reasons for German and Dutch behavior in bicultural interactions.

The comparison with culture standards could also point out the interrelations between the single main categories. Even though the book corpus analysis could show the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to separate main categories in bicultural interactions, it could not (or could only in a rudimentary way) show how the single aspects interrelate. The comparison with the culture standards could reveal these interdependencies. It could, for example, be pointed out that the main categories *planning*, *details* and *everything structured* from the German book corpus are to some extent linked to each other because they resemble the same culture standards. On the other hand, the comparison also showed that, in some cases, the culture standards subsume different cultural characteristics (which can be found in separate main categories in the book corpus analysis). This can provide a blurred picture. For example, the main categories *informality* and *rules* which were regarded as separate in the Dutch book corpus, are subsumed in the culture standard *informality*. By doing so, Thomas and Schlizio (2009) implied that the only reason for the Dutch way of dealing with rules is their informality. The book corpus analysis could provide a more nuanced picture by suggesting that the main category *rules* cannot merely be explained by Dutch *informality* but rather by an interplay of different culture standards (e. g., *pragmatism*, *informality*, *flat hierarchies,* and *relation orientation*).

The comparison of the results from the book corpus analysis with dimensions from dimension models also indicated different things. First, it showed that it can be hard to use the dimension models to explain which cultural characteristics actually play a role in bicultural interactions. Concrete manifestations of culture cannot be unambiguously assigned to certain dimensions. Such an assignment would be rather arbitrary and it remains unclear whether a concrete manifestation of culture can indeed be explained by a certain dimension or interplay of certain dimensions. Correspondingly, since the main categories cannot be clearly assigned to dimensions, it is also hard to use dimension models to predict what will happen in bicultural interactions.

3.6   Conclusion

In the introductory section, I set two aims for this book corpus study. The primary aim was to obtain a scientific and comprehensive conspectus of the current state of literature of popular science and guidebooks that describe German behavior in bicultural interactions to a Dutch audience and vice versa. That aim was fulfilled.

First, 20 German and 19 Dutch main categories could be determined (RQA). The German main categories illustrate which aspects of the German culture the Dutch find noticeable in German-Dutch encounters, while the Dutch main categories show which cultural characteristics Germans perceive as remarkable in such encounters. These main categories are comprehensive and cover a great part of the cultural characteristics that play a role (or could do so) in German-Dutch interactions by concurrently providing a manageable corpus. The study thus provides an additional value to intercultural analysis by combining the aspects single popular science and guidebooks state, putting them into perspective and showing how much emphasis the authors put on certain characteristics.

Second, it could be illustrated that the majority of the main categories of both book corpora are consistent: most of the authors stated equal or similar contexts and situations in which the main categories manifest in bicultural interactions and only a few statements from the authors contradicted the majority opinion within most main categories (RQB). This allowed minority opinions to be clearly pointed out and analyzed. The added value of the book corpus analysis with respect to single popular science and guidebooks is thus that the book corpus analysis can — to a certain extent — validate or disprove the results of single books. The analysis showed that there are some authors whose observations, descriptions and advices are differentiated. They put their statements in perspective, pointing out that they are making rather general statements that might not apply to all German or Dutch people, nor to all contexts and situations. Other authors make rather categorical statements about cultural characteristics, declare them valid in all contexts and situations, and hold in parts rather extreme views about the members of the culture about which they write. With the results of the book corpus analysis, it is possible

to evaluate the single books to a certain degree with regard to the statements their authors make about the German or Dutch culture and to show which authors hold clear minority opinions.

Third, the relevance that the authors of the German and the Dutch book corpus attribute to the single main categories could be determined (RQB). With respect to this, the book corpus analysis not only offers an added value compared to single popular science and guidebooks (which do not point out the relevance of single cultural characteristics or do this only very rudimentarily) but also compared to other methods of analyzing culture. The cross-cultural dimension models do not make or allow statements about which cultural dimensions are most relevant in bicultural German-Dutch interactions. With the intercultural concept of culture standards, it is possible to point out hierarchical relations between the single culture standards for the German culture (this has not yet been done for the Dutch culture standards). However, they describe rather abstract and superordinate aspects of culture. The main categories from the book corpora extend these hierarchies by showing the relevance of the visible aspects of culture. In doing so, they can provide a more nuanced picture than the concept of culture standards.

In addition, the results from the book corpus analysis also complement the German culture standards in other ways. While the culture standards show abstract, superordinate and underlying aspects of culture, the main categories from the book corpus analysis show how these culture standards manifest in concrete interactions, and in which contexts and situations. The combination of culture standards, main categories from the book corpus analysis and dimensions from dimension models that was achieved by a triangular comparison can thus indeed reach the main aim of this study by providing a comprehensive scientific overview of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch encounters.

3.6.1 Theoretical implications

Just like the culture standards study, the results from the book corpus analysis show that cross-cultural methods are not well suited for explaining and/or predicting which cultural characteristics will play a role in intercultural interaction situations. In some cases, they can even be misleading when used for intercultural analysis.

Even though their authors do not claim it, dimension models convey the impression that in a comparison of two cultures a small difference on a dimension means that irritations, communication breakdowns and/or misunderstandings are unlikely to occur with regard to this dimension and that, on the other hand, big differences mean that these are more likely to occur in intercultural interaction. The culture standards study has shown that this suggestion is questionable because with regard to some dimensions on which Germany and the Netherlands differ only slightly, the interviewees nevertheless reported critical incidents. This implies

that in bicultural interaction irritations, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns actually do occur.

The results of this study point in the same direction and even go a step further. Not only do they suggest that small differences with regard to a dimension do not necessarily mean that irritations, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns are unlikely to occur and vice versa, but they suggest that it is actually the relevance that determines the potential for conflict. One of the central findings of this study is the probability that not only those cultural characteristics on which Germany and the Netherlands differ the most (e.g., *hierarchies*) can lead to irritations, problems and communication breakdowns. The book corpus analysis showed that these cultural characteristics are dealt with in the vast majority of popular science and guidebooks about the German or Dutch culture. They are thus likely to be known to German and Dutch people who use popular science and guidebooks or take part in intercultural trainings to prepare themselves for a stay in the neighboring country or for dealing with people from that country. It can therefore be assumed that these cultural characteristics are considered in bicultural interactions and thus lead to fewer or no irritations or communication breakdowns (at least not for people who have actually familiarized themselves to some extent with the neighboring culture). In the book corpus analysis it became apparent that those cultural characteristics can probably lead to irritations in bicultural interactions that are perceived as differently relevant in the German and Dutch book corpora (e.g., *perception of time* and *planning*). If this was indeed the case, the findings of the book corpus analysis would add a new perspective to the field of intercultural research.

The comparison of different methods of analyzing culture revealed other important findings. First, it showed that one method of culture is indeed not sufficient for an intercultural analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interactions. Each method has weaknesses and advantages compared to the other methods and each method can reveal things that the others cannot reveal. However, the comparison also shows that intercultural research has limitations and cannot fully encompass the complexity of reality. The discrepancies between different methods of analyzing culture (e.g., with regard to individualism) show that intercultural interactions are often more complex and multilayered than popular science and guidebooks, dimension models and culture standards suggest. In these interaction situations, a variety of factors play a role that cannot be depicted by methods and models of analyzing culture.

3.6.2 Practical implications

In the course of the book corpus analysis, I was able to determine a comprehensive number of main categories that cover a great part of the cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch encounters. The results can be used to comple-

ment and enrich intercultural trainings and workshops and to improve the quality of how-to and guidebooks for German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country. As already mentioned in the conclusion of the culture standard study (Section 2.8), cross-cultural models are often used in today's intercultural workshops and trainings to point out the differences between the two cultures. However, both the culture standards study and the book corpus analysis illustrated that these models are not well suited for intercultural training. They can provide a person with a good overview of another culture and an understanding of the major differences between his own and the other culture, but can only insufficiently explain and/or predict behavior in intercultural interaction which is of great importance for people who want to interact with people from another culture.

The book corpus analysis also revealed that German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves for intercultural interaction by reading popular science and guidebooks about the neighboring culture are faced with problems as well. Some of the books describe different aspects than others; some authors describe things that contradict what other authors describe. Furthermore, the books describe predominantly concrete manifestations of culture but usually do not explain them or point out relations and interdependencies between cultural characteristics. This makes it difficult for the readers to apply their knowledge across different contexts and situations. Furthermore, single popular science and guidebooks do not describe which aspects of culture are most important in German-Dutch interaction and which aspects the people from the other culture consider to be most relevant.

The results from the book corpus analysis, in combination with the results from the culture standards study, can reduce these problems and therefore improve both intercultural workshops and guidebooks. The culture standards show rather abstract, underlying and superordinate aspects of culture. They therefore give German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring culture a comprehensive overview of cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction. The culture standards are valid beyond certain contexts and situations, explain most manifestations of culture and show how these aspects are interdependent and interrelated. The results from the book corpus analysis complement the culture standards by showing how cultural characteristics manifest in bicultural interaction, and in which situations and contexts. The two studies can therefore give German and Dutch people a comprehensive but yet detailed, abstract but yet concrete, overview of the other culture.

Furthermore, the book corpus analysis could show discrepancies between the authors and point out minority opinions. These discrepancies can now be addressed in intercultural workshops and guidebooks. In addition, the book corpus analysis provides an additional value by pointing out the relevance that cultural characteristics have for German and Dutch people in bicultural interaction. With this knowledge, people can better estimate how to deal with cultural differences.

If, for example, a German knows that the German *separation of work and private life* is (probably) very relevant for his Dutch counterpart (even though he does not find the Dutch behavior with regard to this main category relevant), he can adjust his behavior to the Dutch person's behavior.

In conclusion, the results of this study in combination with the culture standards study can offer additional value to existing intercultural preparation courses and cultural guidebooks.

3.6.3 Further research

First, in the analysis of the consistency of the main categories it became apparent that some main categories are inconsistent. With regard to the main categories *directness* and *individualism* (German book corpus) and *modesty and status, communication, separation of work and private life* and *individualism* (Dutch book corpus), some of the authors expressed diverging opinions or statements that cannot be disregarded as negligible. A closer inspection of these main categories allows the assumption that these main categories might have to be further differentiated because the authors' statements might be context-related. It is possible that the main categories manifest differently in different situations and contexts. However, the analysis of the popular science and guidebooks cannot definitely confirm or reject this assumption. It would therefore be reasonable to conduct further research on this issue.

In this respect, the main category *individualism* is particularly interesting. Not only is there no clear majority opinion among the authors (as there is with regard to the other main categories), but the comparison with dimensions from dimension models and culture standards also showed that all three methods of analyzing culture contradict each other on the questions of whether or not (and in which situations and contexts) Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch and if individualism actually plays a role in bicultural interactions.

Second, one of the central findings of this study is that it may not only be those cultural characteristics on which Germany and the Netherlands differ the most that can lead to irritations, problems and communication breakdowns, but rather those aspects that are dealt with in only one of the book corpora or that are perceived as differently relevant in the German and Dutch book corpora. However, this study could only point out that this is possible; it could not investigate if this is indeed the case in actual bicultural interactions. It is therefore necessary to conduct a further study to analyze whether cultural characteristics that are perceived as differently relevant or noticed in only one of the book corpora indeed lead to more or different problems in bicultural interactions. This will be done in Chapter 4.

4 The potential of conflict of cultural differences in intercultural interaction

4.1 Introduction

One of the Dutch interviewees from the culture standards study stated the following:

> "I had a meeting with the mayors of the cities Duisburg and Kleve. During the official program, both acted very formal and showed a reserved and rather distanced attitude toward me. After the official part was over, we met for a pub crawl. Now both appeared in informal clothing and acted jovial and informally and we had a pleasant evening. This change in behavior was very surprising to me."

In another interview, another Dutch interviewee stated:

> "Yes, German supervisors definitely give orders in a more commanding tone. 'Do this, do that! Make sure the product is ready for shipping by tomorrow!' But I already knew this before I came to Germany and I also knew that this should not be taken personally. It is just the way Germans are."

The responses of the Dutch interviewees from the culture standards study show that with regard to some critical incidents, the interviewees were not or were only slightly surprised by German behavior because they had known about it in advance. However, with regard to other critical incidents, the interviewees were totally surprised by the German behavior because they had not expected it. Apparently there are cultural differences that the Dutch are aware of and others that they are less aware of. It seems likely that this applies to Germans who establish contact with the Dutch as well.

The question that arises is therefore what is more likely to cause irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in intercultural interaction: those cultural characteristics on which Germans and Dutch differ the most or those that they are least aware of?

In the book corpus analysis (Chapter 3), I analyzed a German book corpus (popular science and guidebooks about the German culture, written by Dutch authors for Dutch readers) and a Dutch book corpus (popular science and guidebooks about the Dutch culture, written by German authors for German readers). In the course of this analysis, I created 20 main categories in the German corpus and 19 in the Dutch corpus, all describing cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interaction. Subsequently, I calculated the relevance of each main category, using different variables for the calculation. For the German book corpus, I calcu-
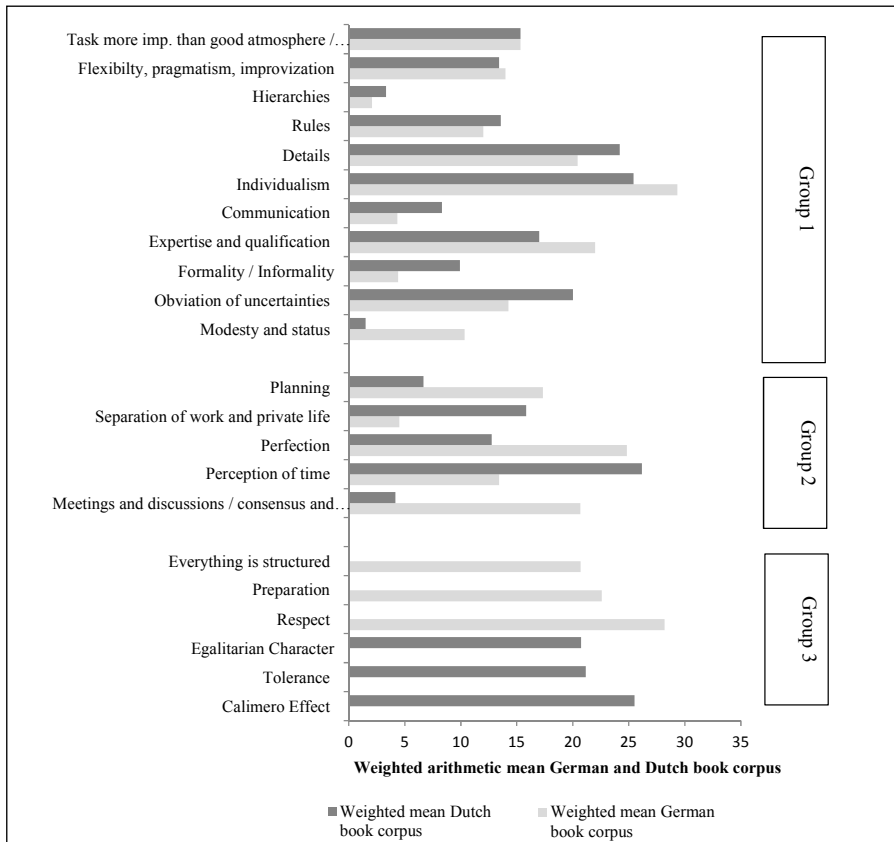
Fig. 6   Weighted arithmetic means of the main categories and level of accordance
         (0 = high relevance, 30 = low relevance)

lated for each main category how relevant the Dutch consider it to be in bicultural interactions and vice versa. This allowed the main categories in each book corpus to be ordered in a ranking of relevance (see Tables 3 and 4 in Section 3.3.2).

My comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora regarding this relevance revealed that there are cultural characteristics that German and Dutch people consider to be equally relevant in bicultural interactions. However, there are also characteristics to which they attribute different relevance.

Based on their relevance, the main categories can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of main categories that both the Dutch and Germans consider to be similarly important in bicultural interactions. The second group consists of main categories that German and Dutch people consider to be differently relevant in bicultural interactions. The third group consists of main categories that are only considered relevant by either Germans or the Dutch (i. e., categories that have no counterpart in the other book corpus). These three groups are graphically
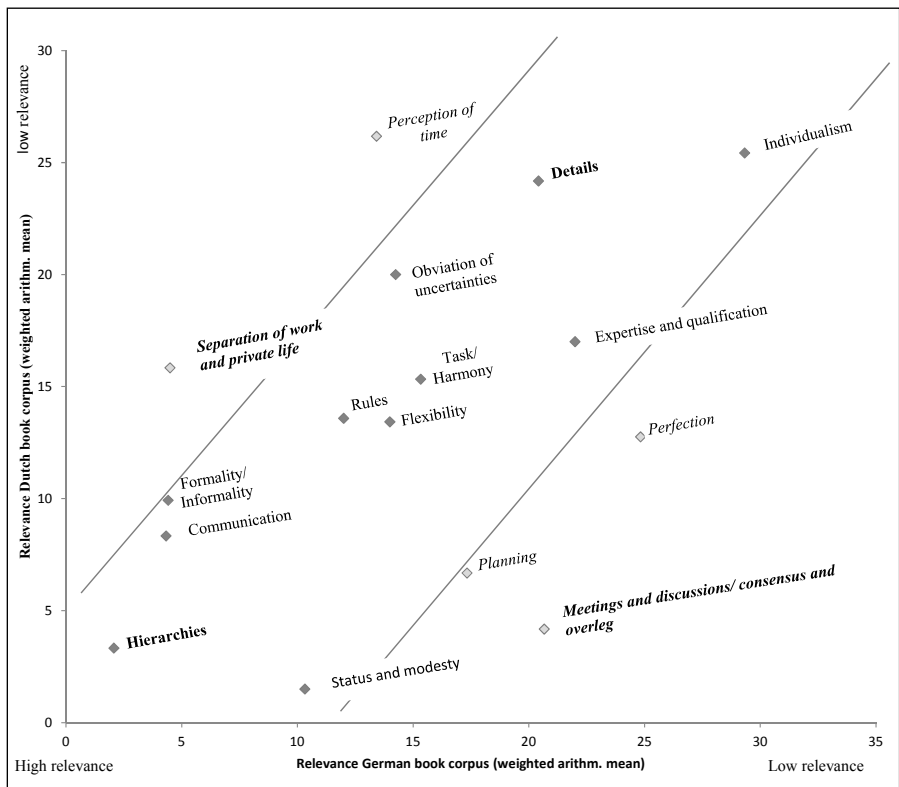
Fig. 7   Relevance of main categories in the German and Dutch book corpora. The higher
          the relevance, the lower the weighted arithmetic mean. Main categories from group
          1 are written in a normal font, and main categories from group 2 are in italics.
          Main categories chosen to test the hypothesis are highlighted in bold.

displayed in Figure 6. The weighted arithmetic mean (see x-axis) is the key ratio
for determining the relevance (the methodology for determining the relevance can
be found in Section 3.3.1.2). The higher the mean, the less relevant a main category
was considered to be. For the main categories in the first group, the difference of
the weighted arithmetic means attributed to them in the German and in Dutch book
corpora was not higher than 9.0. For the main categories from the second group,
it was higher than 10 (the reason for this distinction is explained in Section 3.3.1).

Figure 7 also shows the relevance that is attributed to the main categories in the
German and Dutch book corpora, but in a different way. The x-axis displays the
relevance that is attributed to a main category in the German book corpus, while
the y-axis displays the relevance that is attributed to it in the Dutch book corpus.

Main categories that can only be found in one of the corpora (i. e., the main
categories from the third group) are not displayed because the lack of a missing
second coordinate means they cannot be represented graphically here. The main

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categories from the first group can be found in a corridor that stretches from the lower left to the upper right. The main categories from the second group are written in italics and can be found to the left (high relevance in the German corpus and low relevance in the Dutch corpus) and the right (high relevance in the Dutch corpus but low relevance in the German corpus) of this corridor.

A comparison of the relevance of the main categories and the answers of the interviewees from the culture standards study (although it was not explicitly conducted in the culture standards study or the book corpus analysis) allows the assumption that the interviewees were predominantly surprised by such cultural differences which — according to the book corpus analysis — the Germans and Dutch regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction.

Deduction of a hypothesis

Scientific literature, popular science and guidebooks, and intercultural trainings and workshops (implicitly) assume that the cultural characteristics on which people from different cultures differ the most are also the characteristics that are most likely to lead to irritations in intercultural interaction. Reuter (2010) even claimed that a central assumption of most interculturalists (i. e., intercultural trainers, consultants and mediators) is that the bigger cultural differences are, the more likely they are to cause problems in intercultural interaction. And Dahlen (1997) stated that, especially in the field of business communications, many authors assume that cultural differences automatically lead to irritations in bicultural encounters. The same applies for the German-Dutch context. Even though the authors of popular science and guidebooks about the German and Dutch cultures, as well as intercultural coaches, consultants and mediators, usually do not explicitly claim that the cultural characteristics on which German and Dutch people differ the most (e. g., hierarchies in companies, informality) are also the characteristics which are most likely to lead to irritations in German-Dutch interaction, most of them implicitly assume this. However, the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to certain cultural characteristics is usually not taken into consideration.

However, based on the results from the book corpus analysis (Section 3.4.2), there is reason to assume that the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to cultural characteristics of the other culture that play a role in bicultural interaction might also influence whether or not these characteristics lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns.

Both Thomas, Kinast, and Schroll-Machl (2005, p. 45 ff.) and Barmeyer, Genkova, and Scheffler (2010, p. 52 ff.) claimed that when people from different cultures interact, their cultural orientation systems collide. Only when interculturality is established, successful and undisturbed is intercultural cooperation possible. The term *interculturality* has different definitions and is used in different contexts. For the purpose of this study, I used Thomas's (2005, p. 46) definition. He regards

interculturality as a (usually unconscious and non-verbal) negotiation process in which the interacting partners decide how a situation can be handled with their different cultural orientation systems. The partners have four options: domination (the other person has to adjust to one's own orientation system), assimilation (one adjusts one's own orientation system to the other's), divergence (both cultural orientation systems coexist compatibly) or synthesis (both orientation systems merge into a synthesis). Each of these options can lead to successful interaction, as long as both partners (unconsciously or consciously, non-verbally or verbally) agree to it. From this, it can be deduced that it is first necessary to know one's own and the other's orientation systems to be able to establish interculturality and be successful in intercultural interaction and cooperation (cf. Lösche & Püttker, 2009, p. 29; Thomas, 2005, p. 47).

It can be reasonably assumed that most German or Dutch people who want to establish business contacts with people from the other culture prepare themselves (at least to a certain degree) for the interaction. This means that they are generally willing to understand the other's cultural orientation system and to establish interculturality, for example by reading popular science and guidebooks about the neighboring culture or following intercultural trainings or workshops. This was also stated by Gersdorf (2015), a Dutch journalist who has interviewed dozens of Dutch managers and skilled workers who experienced problems in their business dealings with Germans. He found that these Dutch people had, in most cases, prepared themselves for the interaction and tried to familiarize themselves with the German culture. However, their preparation was mostly superficial. They had all underestimated the cultural differences and most had only read about the most obvious cultural differences such as the attitude toward hierarchies.

If this assumption (i.e., that German and Dutch people who want to establish business contacts with people from their neighboring culture usually prepare themselves for the bicultural interaction, but this preparation often only covers the most obvious cultural differences) is accurate, it can be assumed that, with regard to the main categories from the first group, German and Dutch people who prepare themselves for the interaction and have a certain cultural sensibility are aware that situations in which these main categories play a role might be a source of misunderstanding. They could start a (conscious or unconscious, non-verbal or verbal) negotiation process (Lösche & Püttker, 2009, p. 29) about how to deal with these situations. In this way, problems, irritations and communication breakdowns are likely to be avoided. However, if one of the interaction partners is unaware that there is a potential source of misunderstanding (this is usually the case if a main category can either be found in only one of the book corpora or if it is found in both book corpora but a different relevance is attributed to in the German and Dutch book corpora), the partners are less likely to start a negotiation process about how to deal with situations in which these main categories play a role. It can therefore

be assumed that problems, irritations and communication breakdowns are most likely to appear in these situations.

Based on this premise and the results from the book corpus analysis, the following hypothesis can be deduced: the main categories that Dutch and German people regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction (e. g., *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*) are more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interactions than the main categories that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant (first group, e. g., *hierarchies* and *details*).

4.2   Aims of the study

The aim of this study is to find out whether the differences in relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to cultural characteristics have an impact on the potential for conflict in intercultural interaction. To achieve this aim, I will analyze whether the main categories with a high difference in relevance (the second group) lead to more or different sorts of irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in intercultural interactions situations than the main categories that German and Dutch people find similarly relevant (the first group).

By taking this approach, the study helps to answer the general research question of this dissertation project: *which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction and which role do they play in these interactions?* In Chapters 2 and 3, I analyzed which cultural characteristics play a role in German-Dutch encounters and how relevant German and Dutch people consider these characteristics to be. In this study, I will analyze the potential for conflict related to these cultural characteristics, which gives an even better picture of the roles they play in bicultural interaction.

4.3   Methodology

4.3.1   Choice of approach

Different approaches can be used to test the hypothesis. The most obvious approach would be a direct observation of intercultural interaction situations between German and Dutch people. However, this is not feasible for various reasons. First, problems and irritations that emerge in intercultural encounters are not usually directly visible and observable. When different cultural orientation systems collide, this normally does not lead to an open conflict or the direct termination of the business relationship. It does not even necessarily lead to a visible reaction. Instead, what happens is that cultural differences that emerge in such situations can lead to a (often even unconscious) feeling of discomfort or antipathy which leads

to problems in the medium or long term (cf. Lösche & Püttker, 2009, p. 29). It can therefore be assumed that direct observation of binational encounters is not a suitable method of testing the hypothesis.

Another possible approach to testing the hypothesis is by using a survey. At first glance, the use of a questionnaire that asks German and Dutch people who have (or have had) contact with people from their neighboring country to describe which cultural differences have led to problems and irritations seems most suitable. However, as Chapter 2 made clear, this approach would probably not be expedient either. In the pretest of the culture standards study (Section 2.4.3), the interviewees were not only asked to relate critical incidents but also to tell which cultural characteristic the critical incident could be related to. Since they could usually not state the reasons, the question was eventually discarded from the interviews. Furthermore, in the interviews and the preliminary talks, it became clear that the respondents (for the most part) could not say whether the critical incidents had actually led to problems and/or irritations. Even when the Dutch respondents described actual problems or misunderstandings they had experienced with Germans, they could not say if or to what extent the reasons for these were cultural differences or interpersonal matters.

Since a direct approach was not feasible, I chose to use a survey with a more indirect approach. It allowed me to analyze the attitudes of German and Dutch people toward certain cultural characteristics and to thereby draw conclusions about the potential for irritations or conflicts. Therefore, I developed fictitious cases for Dutch and German respondents, based on and related to the main categories from the book corpus analysis. For each case, I developed questions for the respondents; the answers allowed me to draw conclusions about whether and to what extent a main category actually leads to problems, irritations and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interactions.

4.3.2   Selection of main categories for the analysis

First, I had to select a sample of main categories on which the hypothesis could be tested. Ideally, the hypothesis would have been tested on all the main categories (thus ten main categories from the first group that German and Dutch people consider to be similarly relevant in bicultural interaction, five from the second group that they consider to be differently relevant and six from the third group that either German and Dutch people do not find relevant in bicultural interaction at all). However, this was not practicable. Since the hypothesis was to be tested by using a survey, testing all the main categories would have required a disproportionate amount of time and effort for the respondents.

Therefore, I decided to test the hypothesis on only four main categories. I chose two main categories from the similar relevance group (group 1) and two from the different relevance group (group 2). In principle, main categories from the third

group would have been suitable for testing the hypothesis as well. However, since they can only be found in one of the book corpora, it would have been rather hard and arbitrary to create cases for non-existent main categories. Therefore these main categories were excluded from analysis. For the similar relevance group (group 1), I chose one main category that was rather relevant in both book corpora and one main category that was rather irrelevant in both corpora. For the different relevance group (group 2), I chose one main category regarded as relevant in the German corpus but not the Dutch corpus and one main category regarded as relevant in the Dutch corpus but not the German corpus.

As illustrated in Figure 7, several main categories are similarly relevant in both the German and Dutch book corpora, with a high relevance attributed to them by both German and Dutch people. These are *rules, flexibility, formality/informality, communication* and *hierarchies*. I selected the main category *hierarchies* since it is, on average, the most relevant main category (the main category *modesty and status* has a higher relevance in the Dutch corpus but a far lower relevance in the German one).

The following main categories are also similarly relevant in both book corpora but are considered of little relevance by both Germans and Dutch: *details* and *individualism*. The book corpus analysis (see Section 3.3.2) showed that the consistency of the main category *individualism* is low, so I selected the main category *details*.

The following main categories are relevant in the German corpus but not in the Dutch corpus: *separation of work and private life* and *perception of time*. Since *separation of work and private life* showed a higher difference in relevance, I chose to use it to test the hypothesis.

From the main categories that are relevant in the Dutch corpus but not in the German corpus (*planning* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg')*, I chose *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* to test the hypothesis because it shows the highest difference in relevance.

I expected that the main categories *hierarchies* and *details* would have less potential for irritations, conflicts and/or communication breakdowns than the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*. I expected this even though both German and Dutch writers considered *hierarchies* to be relevant while they considered *details* to be rather irrelevant.

4.3.3   Cases for the main categories

I developed cases for each of the four main categories. Each case describes a situation in which the main category (or item to which it refers) plays a role. For example, with regard to the main category *details*, I developed the following case:

A public relations agency is planning a Facebook campaign for a client. In the initial meeting, the client tells them roughly what he wants. When they call him to ask him for more details he says, "You are the experts for this. I have full trust that you will do it well."

This case deals with a general Dutch attitude toward details that I discovered in the book corpus analysis. The cases were based on the results of the book corpus analysis (Chapter 3) and on the critical incidents that were stated in the culture standards study (Chapter 2).

I chose to use cases to test the hypothesis because this method has different advantages than other methods. If an interviewer simply stated the main category and asked questions about it — for example, "In your opinion, how much does the German *separation of work and private* life bother Dutch people?" — the respondents would possibly be biased. There would be a great chance that they would give socially acceptable answers (cf. *social desirability bias*, Paulhus, 1991) or that they would be influenced by stereotyping and/or prejudices. Asking the respondents to assess presented cases (i.e., real-life situations, sometimes fictional) reduced this bias (although it could not be ruled out completely).

Asking certain questions about the cases allowed me to determine the respondents' attitudes toward the main categories and to test the hypothesis comparing the answers from the German and Dutch respondents. These questions and the approach will be presented and explained in Section 4.3.4.

As already mentioned, some main categories encompass different aspects and characteristics that emerge in different contexts and situations. The main category *separation of work and private life*, for example, encompasses three items: a) Talking about private things at work/not talking much about private things at work, b) Colleagues are not automatically regarded as friends/colleagues are quickly granted access to other living spheres such as private life and c) Germans distinguish between role and person/the Dutch distinguish less between role and person. Therefore, to be able to analyze a main category thoroughly and comprehensively, all its items had to be analyzed, which means that a case had to be developed for each item. It was important that each main category be tested with the same number of cases. Since the main categories *hierarchies* and *separation of work and private life* each have three items while the other main categories have fewer (see Appendix 19), three cases were developed for each main category. In total, 12 cases were developed.

Each of these 12 cases consists of two versions. The first version describes a situation in which one or more people show(s) behavior that — according to the book corpus analysis — is regarded as 'German.' The second version describes the same situation or context, but the person(s) show(s) behavior that is regarded as typically 'Dutch.' For example, with regard to the main category *details*, I developed the following case: *A person has an idea: he wants to start his own model construction magazine.* In the 'German' version, the following behavior is described:

Before starting, he writes a detailed business plan. He starts extensive market research, takes care of the funding for the next two years, and researches advertising customers, distribution channels and the best method to get his magazine known. It takes roughly two years before the first edition is launched.

In the 'Dutch' counterpart of this case, the following behavior is described: *Without much planning, he gets to work. Problems such as funding, advertising and distribution are dealt with when they appear.*

The main categories, their items and the related cases can be found in Appendices 19 and 20.

4.3.4   Questions for the cases

By comparing the German and Dutch respondents' answers with each other, I could test the hypothesis. I developed four different questions to do this. In addition, I developed a fifth question that served to verify an important premise of this study by testing if and to what extent the Dutch survey respondents were actually typically Dutch and the German respondents were typically German. This section will describe the four questions initially used to test the hypothesis and will explained how they were used. The fifth question will be explained separately at the end of this section.

I surveyed German and Dutch respondents (their selection will be explained in Section 4.3.6). Both groups of respondents were presented with the cases (i.e., both the 12 describing 'Dutch' and 12 describing 'German' behavior, 24 in total).

With regard to the 12 cases describing 'Dutch' behavior, the German respondents were first asked the following question: 'What is your attitude toward the described behavior?' This question could be used to analyze whether a main category holds potential for conflict or frictions. It will hence be referred to as Q1G (=question 1 for German survey).

Subsequently, with regard to the 12 cases describing 'Dutch' behavior, the German respondents were asked: 'How characteristic do you regard this behavior/reaction for the Dutch?' This question will hence be referred to as Q2G. This question could be used to analyze whether — with regard to the four tested main categories — the respondents were even aware that there is a difference between German and Dutch people. Furthermore, the answers to this question could be used to test the results from the book corpus analysis because they allow conclusions to be drawn about how relevant Germans consider certain cultural characteristics in bicultural interaction.

I developed the following case to test the main category *details*. It describes 'Dutch' behavior and gives an example of how Q1G and Q2G were used in the survey (the answer options and scales are presented in Section 4.3.5):

A new project is introduced in a company. The person presenting the project keeps her presentation short; she only presents basic data and a rough time schedule and scope of action. She has not anticipated possible mistakes and problems yet and when asked about them she answers, "We'll take care of this if and when it actually happens."

- Q1G: Which attitude do you have toward the presenter's method of operating?
- Q2G: Suppose the presenter had the Dutch nationality. How typical do you regard her method of operating for *Dutch* people?

Regarding the 12 cases describing 'German' behavior, the German respondents were first asked the following question: 'What attitude is a Dutch person likely to show toward this behavior?' This question will hence be called Q3G.

The second question for those cases describing 'German' behavior was: 'In your opinion, how typical would a Dutch person regard this behavior for Germans?' This question will hence be called Q4G.

I developed the following case to test the main category *details*. It describes 'German' behavior and gives an example of how Q3G and Q4G were used in the survey:

A new project is introduced in a company. The person presenting the project gives very detailed and comprehensive information in her presentation, not only about the project itself and the time schedule but also about possible problems and obstacles that could possibly occur. When she is asked additional questions by the audience, she also has comprehensive answers.

- Q3G: Which attitude would a *Dutch* person likely have toward the presenter's method of operating?
- Q4G: How typical would a *Dutch* person regard the presenter's method of operating for Germans?

The Dutch respondents were asked the same questions inversely. With regard to the cases describing 'German' behavior, they were first asked: 'What is your attitude toward the described behavior?' (Q1D) Second, they were asked: 'How typical do you regard this behavior/reaction for Germans?' (Q2D)

With regard to the cases describing 'Dutch' behavior, the Dutch respondents were first asked: 'What attitude is a German person likely to have toward this behavior?' (Q3D) Second, they were asked: 'In your opinion, how typical would a German person regard this behavior for the Dutch?' (Q4D).

To provide better understanding and to simplify reading, each time that henceforth one of the questions or a comparison of questions is mentioned, I will indicate in parentheses whether it deals with attitude (Q1 and Q3) or typicality (Q2 and Q4).

Table 10 summarizes the questions for the Dutch and the German respondents. The column "cases" shows the type of case that the question refers to. Cases can be either German (describing 'German' behavior) or Dutch (describing 'Dutch' behavior).

Table 10   Questions for German and Dutch respondents

	German respondents	Cases		Dutch respondents	Cases
Q1G	What is your *attitude* toward the described behavior?	D	Q1D	What is your *attitude* toward the described behavior?	G
Q2G	How *typical* do you regard this behavior/reaction for Dutch people?	D	Q2D	How *typical* do you regard this behavior/reaction for Germans?	G
Q3G	What *attitude* is a Dutch person likely to have toward this behavior?	G	Q3D	What *attitude* is a German person likely to have toward this behavior?	D
Q4G	How *typical* would a Dutch person regard this behavior for Germans?	G	Q4D	How *typical* would a German person regard this behavior for Dutch people?	D
Q5G	What is your *attitude* toward this behavior?	G	Q5D	What is your *attitude* toward this behavior?	D

D = case describes 'Dutch' behavior, G = case describes 'German' behavior

By comparing the answers to the questions Q2G (*typicality*), Q4G (*typicality*), Q2D (*typicality*) and Q4D *(typicality)*, it can be determined whether German and Dutch people are aware of a cultural difference and whether they are aware of this difference in equal measure. This comparison can thus point out potential sources of irritations or conflicts.

If both German and Dutch people are aware of a certain cultural difference, it can be assumed that in bicultural interactions they (unconsciously or consciously, non-verbally or verbally) negotiate how to deal with this difference. This means the chance that problems, irritations and/or communication breakdowns will arise from this difference is small. Suppose, for example, that a Dutch secretary starts working for a German supervisor. She is aware that (from a Dutch perspective) German supervisors often give orders in a rather commanding tone and that this is nothing personal. The German supervisor, on the other hand, also knows that in Dutch companies, orders are formulated as a kind request. Both thus know about the cultural difference and will probably find a way to deal with it.

If, on the other hand, one of the interacting partners is unaware that there is a cultural difference, it can be assumed that problems, irritations or communication breakdowns might arise. If, for example, the German supervisor does not know about the cultural differences with regard to *hierarchies*, he would not even notice that he needs to find a way to deal with the difference.

Furthermore, a comparison of the answers to the questions Q1G (*attitude*), Q3G (*attitude*), Q1D (*attitude*) and Q3D *(attitude)* also allows assumptions about which main categories are more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions. This comparison is not merely about awareness of cultural differences but shows how much a cultural difference that emerges in German-Dutch encounters bothers German and/or Dutch people. Regarding this comparison there are different possible constellations:

a) Neither German nor Dutch people are bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture. If a certain cultural characteristic bothers neither German nor Dutch people, it is unlikely to cause any problems in German-Dutch encounters. In the interaction, everyone can simply maintain their behavior without disturbing the others or the communication process.

b) Both German and Dutch people are bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture. If a certain cultural characteristic bothers both groups, the effect depends on whether they are aware that the members of the other culture are also bothered by their own behavior. If both are aware of this, it can be assumed that problems, irritations and communication breakdowns in bicultural interaction are less likely because both see the need to find a way to deal with the cultural difference. However, if only the members of one culture (A) are aware that the members of the other culture (B) are bothered by their behavior, problems and irritations are more likely. In this case, the members of culture A estimate correctly that their behavior (i. e., the alleged behavior of members of their own culture) bothers the members of culture B. They thus recognize that both parties have to negotiate how to deal with this cultural difference. However, since the members of culture B do not recognize that their own behavior bothers the members of culture A, they are unlikely to join in a negotiation process. They will simply assume that the members of culture A will adjust their behavior but do not see the need to also adjust their own behavior.

c) Germans are bothered by Dutch behavior while the Dutch are not bothered by German behavior or vice versa. If in an intercultural interaction a certain cultural characteristic bothers only members of culture A, the effect depends on whether the members of culture B are aware of this. If the members of culture B are aware that the members of culture A are bothered by their behavior, they are likely to start a negotiation process about how to deal with this cultural difference. In this case, irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns are unlikely to occur. On the other hand, if the members of culture B are unaware that the members of culture A are actually bothered by their behavior, they are unlikely to start a negotiation process because they do not see a need for this. Since they are not bothered by the behavior of the members of culture A, the members of culture B will probably assume that the members of culture A are also not bothered by their behavior. In this case, irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns are likely.

A table showing all possible constellations of the questions and the likeliness of each constellation to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns can be found in Appendix 23.

In conclusion, a comparison of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents can be used to analyze how likely the cultural differences described in each of the four main categories are to cause irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions. If the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* are indeed more likely to cause irritations in German-Dutch encounters than the main categories *hierarchies* and *details*, the hypothesis can be assumed to be verified.

Question Q5: Attitude toward cultural characteristics of one's own culture

The 'German' and 'Dutch' behavior described in the cases for the survey was based on the results from the book corpus analysis. A basic premise for this study was that most of the German respondents are indeed 'German' in their behavior and attitudes, and that most of the Dutch respondents are indeed 'Dutch' in their attitudes and behavior. This means that I assumed that the German respondents (predominantly) would show behavior and attitudes which are described in the German book corpus and that the Dutch respondents would show behavior and attitudes that are described in the Dutch book corpus.

It was crucial to analyze if and to what extent this premise is accurate because if it were wrong, the results of this study might have been biased. For example, for this study I assumed that the Dutch are less inclined to accept hierarchies than Germans because this is one of the findings from the book corpus analysis. Based on this, it could be assumed that the Dutch are bothered by German behavior related to hierarchies. However, if by chance a considerable number of the Dutch respondents of this study actually (strongly) approved of hierarchies, they would have biased the results. Therefore I added a fifth question (Q5) to the survey:

With regard to the cases that describe 'German' behavior, Germans were asked: 'What is your attitude toward this behavior?' (Q5G) The Dutch respondents were asked the same questions with regard to the cases that describe 'Dutch' behavior (Q5D).

Those respondents who with regard to Q5G/Q5D chose an answer option between five and seven were considered typical representatives of their culture (in the sense that their attitudes and behavioral patterns matched the attitudes and behavioral patterns that, according to the results from the book corpus analysis, were typical for their culture).

4.3.5 Scaling the answers

To scale the survey responses, I used a Likert scale. According to Schnell, Hill, and Esser (1999, p. 173), this is the most widely used scaling method in social sciences. Since it was impossible to estimate how large the differences in the answers would be before evaluating the answers, I decided to use seven answering options. That way, if there were only minor differences between the answers, a seven-point scale would be better suited to show nuances than a five-point scale. Furthermore, I deliberately decided to use an uneven number of answer options because a central position is useful for this study. Since the questions are about attitudes and perceptions, a forced choice was not appropriate. The choice of the central answer position ("neither/nor") shows that a respondent is indifferent toward a certain behavior rather than that he does not know.

Basically, I developed two different answer scales: one to analyze the respondents' attitude toward people from the other culture (or the estimated attitude of people from the other culture toward the behavioral patterns of his own culture), and the other to analyze how typical a respondent regards certain behavior of people from the other culture (or how typical he thinks that a person from the other culture regards behavioral patterns from his culture).

- Answer scale 1: Would bother me considerably – would bother me – would bother me alittle – neither/nor – would rather not bother me – would not bother me – would not bother me at all
- Answer scale 2: Very typical – typical – little typical – neither/nor – rather atypical – atypical – absolutely atypical

The scale level could not be clearly categorized; it was somewhere between an ordinal and an interval scale (cf. Mayer, 2009, p. 87 ff.). For an interval scale the principle of equidistance applies (i. e., there has to be an absolute reference point and the precise distance between the single answer positions must be definable; Rost, 1996). This was not the case with the answer options on this survey. However, they went beyond a mere ordinal scale level. There was a clear ranking order of the single answer positions and the distance between them was approximately equal and could be factually justified. Therefore, as Mayer (2009, p. 69 ff.) suggests for such cases, the interpretation of the answers was done on an interval scale level (which meant, for example, that the arithmetic mean could be calculated while an interpretation on the ordinal scale level would have only allowed for the calculation of the median). At the same time, I considered that the single answer positions were not 100% static and fixed and that therefore there was some room for interpretation of the results. The evaluation was therefore done very cautiously and keeping in mind that minor differences in the answers would not allow reliable statements by all means.

To evaluate the results, I assigned numerical values to the single answer positions. The answer positions 'would bother me considerably' and 'very typical' were assigned a numerical value of 1, while the answer positions 'would not bother me at all' and 'very atypical' were assigned a numerical value of 7. Both German and Dutch people are accustomed to such scales. The calculations for evaluating and interpreting the answers were based on the numerical values.

4.3.6   Selection of respondents

The selection of respondents for this study was difficult for various reasons. First, I did not know whether there were factors — besides culture — that might influence the respondents' answers. As — among others — Yousefi (2014, p. 25) and Heringer (2010, p. 158) have stated, factors related to biology (age, sex) or education (highest education level) might influence differences in attitudes and perceptions between members of different cultures. To check whether the respondents' answers were biased by such factors, I asked them to state the following: their sex, age, highest education level, distance of residence from the German-Dutch border, frequency of contact with people from the other culture and foreign language skills (German or Dutch). These factors were introduced as a co-variable in each analysis and tested by a univariate analysis.

However, since it was not known in advance whether any of the factors mentioned above actually had an influence on the respondents' attitudes or perceptions, they were not used as a criterion for selecting respondents. In fact, for respondents to be allowed to take part in the survey, they had to meet only one requirement: they had to have (or have had) regular contact with people from their neighboring country. For the purpose of this study, I defined the term 'regular' as repeatedly and for at least once a year. The survey asked the respondents how typical they found certain behavior for people from the neighboring countries and how typical — in their opinion — people from the neighboring country would find their own behavior (respectively, how many people from the neighboring country feel bothered by their own behavior?). Therefore the respondents needed to be able to base their answers on their own observations and experiences.

Another problem in the selection process was that the population of people who met the requirements mentioned above was unknown. There was no sampling frame and the population could not be estimated. Correspondingly, it was also impossible to draw a random sample; this meant that it could not be concluded with absolute certainty that the sample that was eventually drawn was indeed representative of the population.

However, I took various steps to minimize the sampling error. First, I tried to find as many respondents as possible. As Hudec and Neumann (2010, p. 25) stated, larger samples have a higher possibility of representing the population than smaller samples (even though the size of the sample cannot completely rule out sampling

errors). Second, as already mentioned, I tested the possible influence of different socio-demographic and other factors on the respondents' answers by introducing those factors as a co-variable in the analysis.

I used various methods to search for potential survey respondents. First, I contacted intermediary organizations such as Euregios, chambers of commerce, the German-Dutch Chamber of Commerce and companies that operate in a cross-border context (e. g., consultancies, public relations agencies). I sent each of them an email and asked them to forward it to potential respondents from their databases. The email contained a short explanation of the survey, its context and the requirements for participation. It also contained a link to the study that could be directly clicked on. In addition, the recipients were asked to forward the email to acquaintances who also met the survey requirements.

Second, I contacted 35 people from another database that had been established for a study about German-Dutch cooperation between local and regional authorities. It contained the addresses of Dutch people living in Germany, most of them members of German-Dutch cultural associations. I also sent them the email with the link to the surveys. People who had participated in earlier studies I had conducted were not asked to participate in this study because they might have been biased.

These efforts resulted in 75 German and 82 Dutch respondents. In the survey, each person had to confirm their nationality and native language. They filled in the surveys during the survey period (from August 10 through September 11, 2014). Only surveys that were filled in completely were supposed to be used for further analysis. However, even though the software used for the survey claimed that 75 German and 82 Dutch respondents had fully completed the survey, it turned out that five of them were not completed. Since the reason for this discrepancy could not be detected, the five incomplete surveys were excluded from the analysis, leaving 77 Dutch surveys for analysis.

Socio-demographic and other characteristics of the respondents

The respondents were asked to state the following socio-demographic and other characteristics: their sex, age, education level, distance of residence from the German and Dutch border, frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture and foreign language skills (German or Dutch). It is widely acknowledged that sex, age and education can influence people's attitudes and perceptions (cf. e. g., Lustig & Koester, 2003) and various studies have shown their influence on respondent's answers in surveys about cross- and intercultural issues as well. The possible influence of the variables 'distance of residence from the German-Dutch border' and 'frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture' was tested because it can be assumed that people who live closer to the border or have regular cross-border contact might have (or have developed) another attitude toward the be-
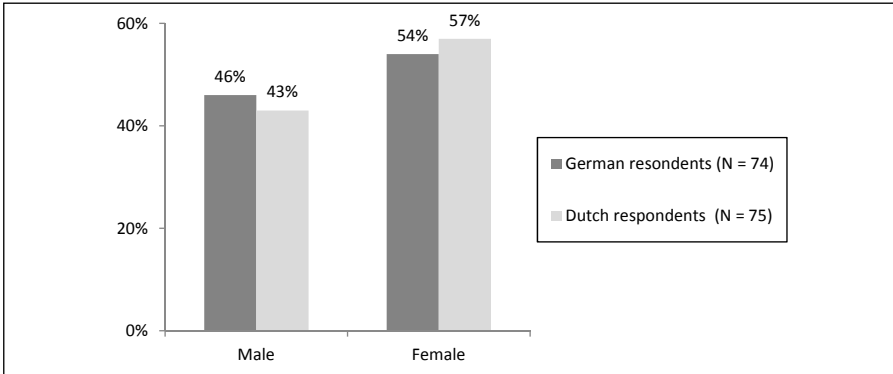
Fig. 8   Sex of respondents
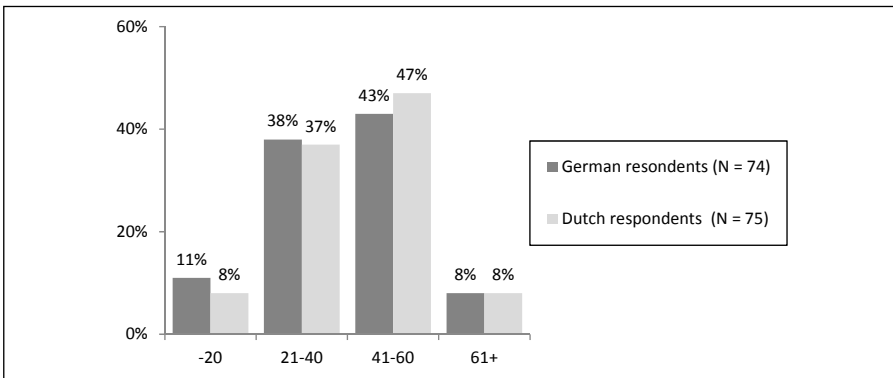
Fig. 9   Age distribution of respondents

havior of people from the neighboring culture. Language skills were also suspected to possibly influence the respondents' attitudes and perceptions, because it can be assumed that people who learn the language of the neighboring culture might have a more positive attitude toward that culture and/or be more familiar with it.

The sex distribution within and between the German and Dutch respondent groups was similar. In the German group, 35 of the 74 respondents were male and 39 were female. In the Dutch group, 33 of the 75 respondents were male and 42 were female. Figure 8 shows the sex distribution of the respondents as a percentage.

The survey initially differentiated between four age groups: 20 years or younger, 21 to 40 years, 41 to 60 years and older than 60 years. In the German group, 8 respondents were 20 years or younger, 28 were between 21 and 40 years, 32 were between 41and 60 years, and 6 were older than 60 years. In the Dutch group, six respondents were 20 years or younger, 28 were between 21 and 40 years, 35 were between 41 and 60 years, and 6 were older than 60 years. Since the first and last groups were not large enough to allow for reliable results in the comparison of the means, the four groups were summed up into two groups: respondents between 0
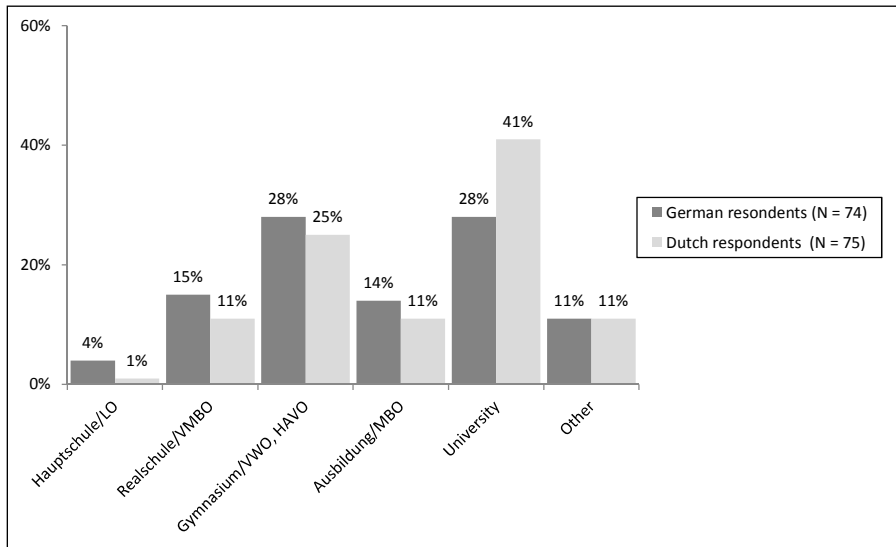
Fig. 10   Highest education of respondents

and 40 years and respondents older than 40 years. This division was reasonable because in both the German and Dutch groups, roughly 50% of the respondents were younger and 50% were older than 40 years. Figure 9 shows the age distribution of the respondents as a percentage.

With regard to education, it must be noted that the types of German and Dutch education that were compared are not completely equal, due to the different educational systems in each country. However, for the purposes of this study, they are similar enough to allow a comparison (cf. e. g., Tigges & Huijnen, 2008). The survey initially differentiated between six different educational groups: Hauptschule/lager onderwijs, Realschule/MAVO/LBO/VMBO, Gymnasium/Atheneum, Ausbildung/MBO, Hochschulabschluss/WO and other education. In the German group, 3 respondents had completed Hauptschule/lager onderwijs, 11 had completed Realschule/MAVO/LBO/VMBO, 21 had completed Gymnasium/Atheneum, 10 had completed Ausbildung/MBO, 21 had a university or college degree (Hochschulabschluss/WO) and 8 had another degree. In the Dutch group, 1 person had completed Hauptschule/lager onderwijs, 8 had completed Realschule/MAVO/LBO/VMBO, 19 had completed Gymnasium/Atheneum, 8 had completed Ausbildung/MBO, 31 had a university or college degree (Hochschulabschluss/WO) and 8 had another degree. Since some of the groups were not big enough to allow reliable statements about the influence of education on the respondents' answers, I decided to combine the groups into two groups for analysis: lower education (Hauptschule/lager onderwijs, Realschule/MAVO/LBO/VMBO, Ausbildung/MBO) and higher education (Gymnasium/Atheneum, Hochschule/WO). I excluded the 'other education' group (N = 11 for German and Dutch group of respondents) from the analysis.

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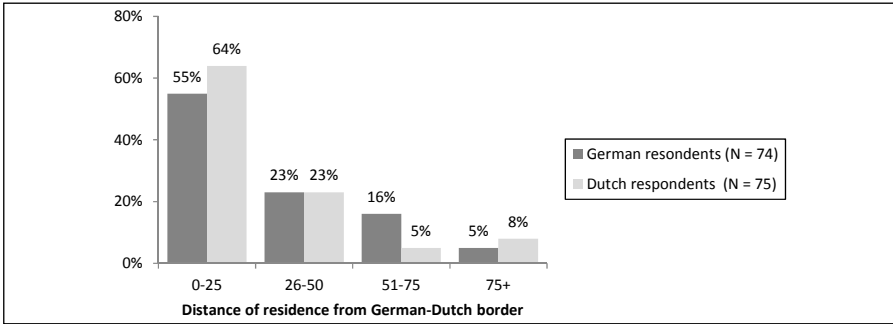
Fig. 11   Distance of residence from the German-Dutch border
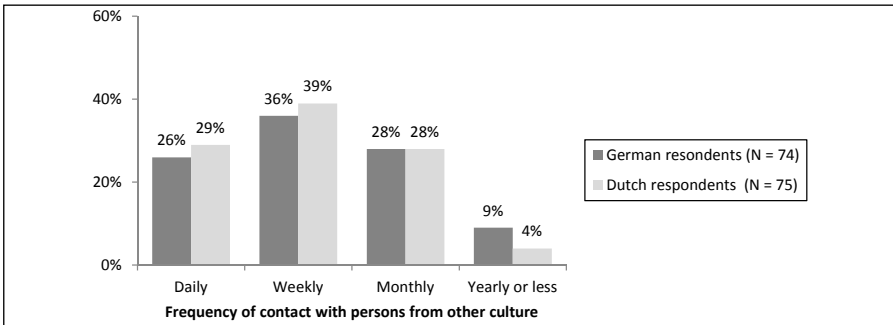
Fig. 12   Frequency of contact with people from other culture

Figure 10 shows the educational distribution of the German and Dutch respondents as a percentage.

With regard to the variable 'distance of residence from the German-Dutch border,' the survey initially differentiated between four groups: people living closer than 25 kilometers from the German-Dutch border, people living between 26 and 50 kilometers from the border, people living between 51 and 75 kilometers from the border and people living further than 75 kilometers from the border. In the German group, 41 of the respondents lived closer than 25 kilometers from the border, 17 lived between 26 and 50 kilometers from the border, 12 lived between 51 and 75 kilometers from the border and 8 lived further than 75 kilometers from the border. In the Dutch group, 48 respondents lived closer than 25 kilometers from the border, 17 lived between 26 and 50 kilometers from the border, 4 lived between 51 and 75 kilometers from the border and 6 live further than 75 kilometers from the border. Since the last two groups were not large enough to allow for reliable results in the comparison of the means, for the analysis of the possible influence of distance of residence from the German-Dutch border, the four groups were combined into three groups: people living closer than 25 kilometers from the border, people living between 26 and 50 kilometers from the border and people living further than 50 kilometers from the border. Figure 11 shows the different groups as a percentage.
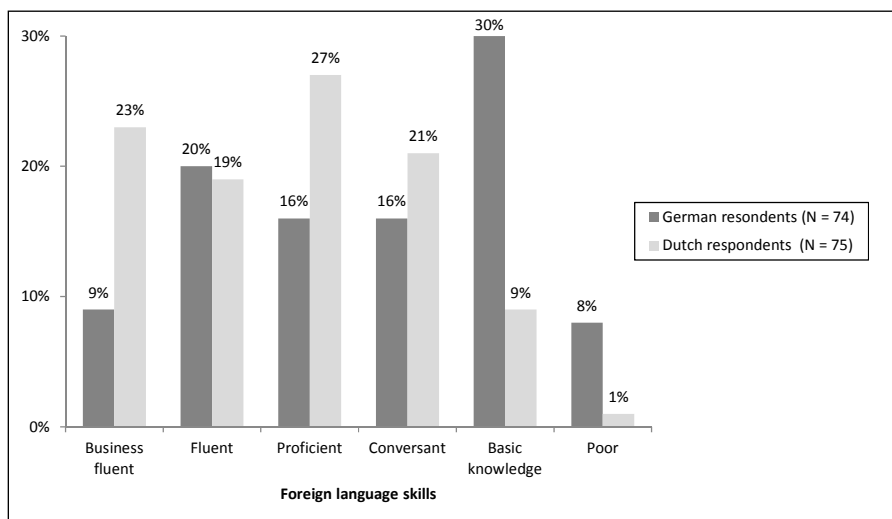
Fig. 13   Foreign language skills of respondents (German or Dutch)

With regard to 'frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture,' the survey differentiated between four groups: respondents having daily, weekly, monthly and yearly or less contact with people from the other culture. In the German group, 19 respondents had daily contact, 27 had weekly contact, 21 had monthly contact and 7 had yearly or less contact with Dutch people. In the Dutch group, 22 respondents had daily contact, 29 had weekly contact, 21 had monthly contact and 3 had yearly or less contact with Germans. Since the last group was not big enough to allow for reliable results in the comparison of the means, the last two groups were merged into one group: respondents having monthly or less contact with people from the other culture. Figure 12 shows the different group as a percentage.

   With regard to the variable 'foreign language skills' (Dutch for the German respondents and German for the Dutch respondents), the respondents had six answer options in the survey: business fluent, fluent, proficient, conversant, basic knowledge and no knowledge. This is the most common classification of language skills used in surveys (Riehl, 2014). In the German group, 7 respondents regarded their Dutch language skills as business fluent, 15 as fluent, 12 as proficient, 12 as conversant, 22 as basic and 6 as poor or no knowledge. In the Dutch group, 17 respondents regarded their German language skills as business fluent, 14 as fluent, 20 as proficient, 16 as conversant, 7 as basic and 1 as poor (no knowledge). Since some of the groups were not big enough to allow for a reliable analysis of the comparison of the means, the respondents were divided into three groups: respondents with good language skills (fluent and excellent), respondents with medium language skills (very good and good command) and respondents with poor language skills (basic or no communication skills). Figure 13 shows the different groups as a percentage.

As can be seen in Figures 8 through 13, with regard to sex, age, frequency of contact with people from the other country and distance of residence from the German-Dutch border, the socio-demographic variables are relatively evenly distributed among the two populations. With regard to education, the percentage of Dutch respondents with a university degree is considerably higher than the percentage of German respondents. The same applies to language skills; here the percentage of Dutch respondents with high language skills is higher than the percentage of German respondents with high language skills.

4.3.7   Pretest

Before conducting the survey, I conducted a pretest to determine the practical feasibility, potential ambiguities and problem areas or sources for misunderstandings. For this, I developed two preliminary surveys (one in German for the German respondents, the other in Dutch for the Dutch respondents) based on the cases and the corresponding questions. Subsequently, the surveys were printed out and filled in by German and Dutch test groups of respondents. Each person in the test group fulfilled the requirements stated in Section 4.3.6.

In total, 19 Germans and 8 Dutch people took part in the pretest. After completion, they were asked questions about the surveys.

First, they were asked to monitor the time they needed for the surveys. It turned out that the majority of the respondents needed between 10 and 20 minutes to complete their survey. Since (as already mentioned) the willingness to take part in or complete online surveys decreases with increasing processing time, the processing time for the two surveys had to be reduced by a few minutes. To do so, I removed some of the test questions that had originally been used to familiarize the respondents with the methods and approach used in the survey. This reduced the processing time for the majority of the respondents to less than 15 minutes while, as they stated, they still understood how to fill in the surveys.

Second, I asked the respondents questions about the content. For each case, I asked whether the content was clearly understandable and unambiguous and whether the respondents knew without a doubt which part of the case (the behavior of the people in the case, not the general situation described) the questions referred to. For some cases, this was indeed not completely clear. Therefore those cases were slightly modified to make them unambiguous. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to state for each case whether they were able to answer the questions based on their own experiences and observations or whether they were merely taking a guess. It turned out that that their answers were indeed based on the former and not on the latter.

In addition, I asked the respondents if they had general remarks about the surveys. Some of them answered that they were slightly irritated by the word 'bother' (in German 'stören,' in Dutch 'storen') on the answer scales (answers ranging from

'would bother me considerably' to 'would not bother me at all'). They all stated that they would rather have this word replaced by a 'softer' word. I gave this some consideration, but eventually decided not to change the word because the survey's aim was to determine possible sources of conflict. The word 'bother' is indeed the best word for this because it refers explicitly to a negative attitude toward a certain behavior.

Furthermore, before conducting the study, I had some concern that a central-tendency error might occur with regard to the scales. However, such an error did not occur; the most extreme answer options (i.e., 'would be bothered considerably/ absolutely typical' and 'would not be bothered at all/absolutely atypical') were also chosen by some respondents.

In conclusion, the pretest showed that the preliminary surveys had to be only slightly modified to be used for the online survey.

4.3.8   Procedure

I conducted the survey online using Qualtrics Research Suite, a software program for online surveys that is widely recognized and used in academic research. In principle, online surveys are comparable to traditional written (i.e., offline) surveys (Brosius, Haas & Koschel, 2012, p. 140 f.). However, for this study I chose the online approach because it offers some advantages compared to traditional written or oral surveys. It is efficient (low personnel and material expenditure), allows a quick data collection and — since it is location-independent — has a high geographic reach. The results can be included directly in a database and are immediately accessible and evaluable. They do not need to be coded, which excludes input errors. Especially important is that an online survey could reduce the social desirability bias. In the survey for this study, the respondents were asked to state their personal attitudes toward certain behavioral patterns. If the questions had to be answered in my presence, they might have given answers that they believed were expected from them. By conducting the survey online, the respondents remained anonymous, which reduced the chance of such a bias.

For this study, I conducted two separate surveys: one in German for the German respondents and one in Dutch for the Dutch respondents. To avoid confusion, the German respondents were only provided with the link to the German survey website while the Dutch respondents only received the link to the Dutch survey website. Each survey was composed of 27 separate blocks; the questions were placed in a random order. Every German respondent got exactly the same survey, with all questions presented in the same order. The same applied for the Dutch respondents.

The first page contained an introduction. The respondents were welcomed and thanked for their willingness to take part in the survey. The survey and the context in which it takes place were briefly described; the respondents were informed of how many questions they would have to answer and how much time this would

approximately take. Furthermore, it explained how to answer the questions and gave some examples.

Pages 2 through 25 each contained one case and the five questions corresponding to this case. The response scales were arranged horizontally under the questions (ensuring they were also readable for people using smart phones), from left to right in a descending order (i.e., from 'would bother me considerably' to 'would not bother me at all' and from 'very typical' to 'very atypical.' Only after completely answering all the questions on a page could the next page be accessed (by clicking on the 'further' button). This ensured that the surveys were filled in completely.

Page 26 asked the respondents to fill in socio-demographic and other data that might influence their answers. They were asked about their age, sex, highest education, distance of residence from the German-Dutch border, frequency of contact with people from the neighboring country and foreign language skills (German or Dutch).

Various measures were taken to stimulate a high response rate. First, the structure of the survey made it easy to complete. Furthermore, I kept the survey short (see Section 4.3.7) and included a progress bar on every page to show the respondents how much of the survey they had already completed. To further increase the response rate, shopping vouchers were raffled among the participants. On page 27, they could voluntarily provide their email address to take part in the raffle.

According to Kaczmirek (2009), a disadvantage of online surveys is non-coverage. It is possible that the whole population relevant for the survey cannot be reached because not everyone has internet access. Especially older people often have no internet access or are not skilled enough to take part in online surveys. To avoid coverage errors, I decided to also give people the chance to take part in the survey offline. I therefore printed the survey and mailed it to people who were willing to take part but were unable or unwilling to fill in the online survey. Eventually, 18 German and 19 Dutch respondents chose this option. They received a printed version of the survey by mail, filled it in and sent it back to me. I then added their answers to the online surveys in Qualtrics.

Statistical analysis

I conducted statistical tests to compare the answers from the German and Dutch respondents and to analyze the potential interfering factors. First, I verified the premise that most of the German respondents were indeed 'German' in their behavior and attitudes and that most Dutch respondents were indeed 'Dutch' (Section 4.4.1). I did this to verify that they did exhibit the attitudes and behavioral patterns that were assigned to them in the book corpora. The verification was done by comparing the answers to question Q5 (*attitude*) for each of the three cases of each main category. I used a one-way analysis of variance with a Bonferroni correction, to determine whether the three cases of each main category differed significantly from each other.

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I then compared the answers from the German and Dutch respondents with regard to the comparisons of the questions Q1G/Q3D (*attitude*), Q3G/Q1D (*attitude*), Q2G/Q4D (*typicality*) and Q4G/Q2D (*typicality*) (Section 4.4.3). I used a univariate analysis to test whether the differences were significant.

To analyze whether potential influencing factors could have an effect on the respondent's answers (Section 4.4.2), I introduced those factors as covariates in the univariate analysis that compared the answers from the German and Dutch respondents (in this way, making it an ANCOVA). In those cases where a covariate actually had a significant effect, I used an independent samples t-test to determine whether the differences between the different groups were still significant after eliminating the covariate.

I used a significance level of .01 for the statistical analyses (including the Bonferroni correction). I used this level because I performed a high number of statistical analyses. As Bortz (2005) stated, a high number of comparisons usually also leads to more statistically significant differences, which do not necessarily have a high level of expressiveness. The more comparisons that are conducted, the more results will be significant by "chance." Since 288 analyses were conducted in this study, there was a chance that at least some of them were "significant by chance" even with a significance level of .01. Furthermore, conducting a large number of comparisons meant that falsely significant results can also be a problem (since a 99% chance of something being true means that there is a 1% chance of it being false).

4.4 Results

The results of the comparison of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents (i.e., those comparisons that were conducted to test the hypothesis) will be presented in Section 4.4.3. Prior to this, I will address two important issues that might influence those results and analyze whether and to what extent they could possibly bias them.

4.4.1 Verification of premises

As mentioned in Section 4.3.4 (questions for the cases), a basic premise for this study is that most of the German respondents are indeed 'German' in their behavior and attitudes and that most Dutch respondents are indeed 'Dutch' in their attitudes and behavior. If this is not the case, the results of this study might be biased. The answers the German and Dutch respondents gave to question Q5 showed whether this premise was indeed accurate. With regard to the case that describes 'German' behavior, Germans were asked: 'What is your attitude toward this behavior (Q5G)?' The Dutch respondents were asked the same question with regard to the

cases that described 'Dutch' behavior (Q5D). Each respondent's answer to question Q5 showed how characteristic his or her attitude was for the German or the Dutch culture.

For both questions Q5G and Q5D, I calculated the mean of the respondents' answers for each case of each main category. A low mean indicates that the respondents were rather bothered by the behavior of their own culture and were therefore not characteristic representatives of their culture. A high mean, on the other hand, indicates that they were hardly or not bothered by the behavior of their own culture and could therefore be considered typical representatives of their culture.

The results of questions Q5G and Q5D are presented in Tables 11 and 12. The tables show the means for each case and the mean for each main category (i. e., the mean of the means of all three cases of a main category, presented in the column *mean*). The last column shows whether the three cases of each main category differed significantly at a significance level of .01 according to one-way analyses of variance with a Bonferroni correction.

Table 11 Q5G (German respondents): Means (and standard deviation) for each main category and case

Main category	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Mean	Significance of differences
Details	5.03 (1.25)	5.25 (1.22)	4.75 (1.42)	5.01	ns
Hierarchies	5.47 (1.17)	5.05 (1.35)	5.09 (1.45)	5.20	ns
Separation of work and private life	5.09 (1.11)	5.08 (1.27)	4.88 (1.26)	5.02	ns
Meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'	5.29 (1.28)	5.05 (1.09)	4.89 (1.76)	5.08	ns

N=75. Scale from 1 (would bother me considerably) to 7 (would not bother me at all).

Table 12 Q5D (Dutch respondents): Means (and standard deviation) for each main category and case

Main category	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Mean	Significance of differences
Details	5.19 (1.38)	5.14 (1.63)	5.43 (1.39)	5.25	ns
Hierarchies	5.69 (1.84)	5.36 (1.50)	5.40 (1.26)	5.48	ns
Separation of work and private life	5.47 (1.26)	5.73 (1.08)	5.51 (1.11)	5.57	ns
Meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'	5.81 (.92)	5.56 (1.14)	4.66 (1.72)	5.34	ns

N=77. Scale from 1 (would bother me considerably) to 7 (would not bother me at all).

Table 11 shows that the means of the answers to Q5G are, without exception, higher than 5. The German respondents can thus indeed be considered characteristic representatives of the German culture (as described in the German book corpus analysis). Furthermore, there are no significant differences between any of the cases, which means that the German respondents can be considered similarly characteristic representatives of the German culture for each case.

The same applies to the Dutch respondents, as shown in Table 12. The means of the answers to Q5D are also all higher than 5 and there are no significant differences between the single cases of the main categories. The Dutch respondents can also be considered typical representatives of their culture (as described in the Dutch book corpus).

In both the German and the Dutch groups of respondents, there were some statistical outliers. However, since there were very few strongly deviating answers (i. e., German respondents who were rather bothered by the described German behavior and Dutch respondents who were rather bothered by the described Dutch behavior) and those answers occurred only with regard to a few of the cases (there were three such outliers among the German respondents and three among the Dutch respondents), the outliers were not removed from the data sheet.

These results also further substantiate the results from the culture standards study and the book corpus analysis because they show that German and Dutch people do indeed show the attitudes and perceptions that these two studies described as characteristic for them.

4.4.2   Possible interfering factors

As mentioned in Section 4.3.6, because the population of potential respondents for this study was unknown and a random sample could therefore not be drawn, there was a chance that this study would lack representativeness for the whole population. To check whether this was the case, I introduced socio-demographic and other characteristics that could influence the respondents' attitude and perceptions (and, in this way, their answers) as covariates in the univariate analysis that compared the answers of the German and Dutch respondents (making it an ANCOVA). These characteristics were: sex, age, education, distance of residence from the German-Dutch border, frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture and language skills (language of the neighboring culture).

Table 13 gives an overview of the results of the univariate analysis. The column *significance of difference* shows whether the comparison of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents revealed a significant difference for each main category, case and question. The columns under the caption *covariates* show whether each covariate had a significant effect on the respondents' answers.

Table 13 Overview of possible influencing factors (introduced as covariates) on the comparison of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents

Main category, case, compared questions	Covariates						
	Sign. of difference	sex ord.	age ord.	educa-tion ord.	distance ord.	frequen-cy ord.	language ord.
Hierarchies, case 1							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	p<.01 (D)	ns	ns	ns
Hierarchies, case 2							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Hierarchies, case 3							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Details, case 1							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Details, case 2							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	p<.01 (D)	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	p<.01 (D)	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Details, case 3							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Main category, case, compared questions	Sign. of difference	sex ord.	age ord.	educa-tion ord.	distance ord.	frequen-cy ord.	language ord.
Covariates							
Separation, case 1							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Separation, case 2							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Separation, case 3							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	P<.01	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	p<.01 (G)	ns	ns
Consensus, case 1							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Consensus, case 2							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	p<.01 (D)	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	p < .01	ns	ns	p<.01 (D)	ns	ns	ns
Consensus, case 3							
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	p < .01	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Abbreviations and explanations: Separation = main category separation of work and private life; consensus = main category meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'; education = highest education of respondents; distance = distance of residence from German-Dutch border, frequency = frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture; language = language skills (language of neighboring culture), (D) = significant differences in the group of Dutch respondents, (G) = significant difference in the group of German respondents, ord. = ordinal scale. Bold text: the covariate had an effect that could have influenced the results of the comparison of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents.

As the table shows, some of the covariates did indeed have a significant effect on the answers to some of the cases and questions. Therefore, for each of these covariates, I analyzed the size of this influence and whether it could bias the results of the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers. For example, if a comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers to a certain question showed no significant difference but the covariate *age* had a significant impact on the respondents' answers, it would only influence the results of the comparison if the differences in the answers of the German and Dutch respondents would be significant if only younger or older respondents had participated in the survey.

The analysis of covariance showed that the covariates *sex*, *age*, *frequency of contact with people from the neighboring culture* and *language skills* (language of the neighboring culture) had no significant effect on the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers. However, in some cases, the covariates *education* and *distance of residence from the German-Dutch border* had a significant effect on the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers.

4.4.2.1 Education

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) showed that the covariate *education* had a significant impact on the respondents' answers for the following five questions: main category *hierarchies*, case 1, Q3G/Q1D (attitude); main category *details*, case 2, Q2G/Q4D (typicality); main category *details*, case 2, Q1G/Q3D (attitude); main category *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*, case 2, Q4G/Q2D (typicality); and main category *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*, case 2, Q3G/Q1D (attitude). For those five questions, I used an independent samples t-test to test whether the differences between the different groups were still significant if the factor *education* was eliminated. For three of the questions (*details*, case 2, Q2G/Q4D; *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*, case 2, Q4G/Q2D; *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*, case 2, Q3G/Q1D) the differences were no longer significant after *education* was eliminated. Even if only respondents with a higher or a lower education had participated in the survey, the difference in the answers from the German and Dutch respondents would still remain insignificant.

However, for two of the questions, the differences were still significant after eliminating the factor *education*. The ANCOVA with the factor *nationality* showed that for the main category *hierarchies*, case 1, Q3G/Q1D (attitude), the covariate *education* had a significant effect on the respondents' answers ($F_{(1.150)} = 9.02$, $p < .01$). After controlling for the effect of education on the respondents' answers, there was a significant difference between the German and Dutch respondents ($F_{(1.79)} = 7.58$, $p < .01$, $\eta p^2 = 0.93$). A subsequent t-test showed a significant difference of .92 between the Dutch respondents with a higher education (M = 3.91, SD = 2.07) and the German respondents with a higher education (M = 4.83,

SD = 1.52) (t (79) = 2.28, p < .01). That indicates that the higher educated German respondents were less bothered by the behavior described in this case than the Dutch respondents believed that Germans are generally bothered by such behavior. It can therefore be concluded that with regard to this question the comparison of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents might be biased by the covariate *education*. If only respondents with a higher education had participated in the survey, a comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers would have shown a significant difference.

Furthermore, with regard to the main category *details*, case 2, Q1G/Q3D (attitude), the ANCOVA showed that the covariate *education* also had a significant influence on the respondents' answers (F (1.150) = 11.67, p < .01). After controlling for the effect of *education* on the respondents' answers, there was a significant difference between the German and Dutch respondents (F (1.79) = 9.28, p < .01, ηp^2 = .11). A subsequent t-test showed a significant difference of 1.50 between the Dutch respondents with a higher education (M = 3.31, SD = 2.04) and the German respondents with a higher education (M = 4.81, SD = 1.74) (t (79) = 3.50, p < .01). That indicates that the higher educated German respondents were less bothered by the behavior described in this case than the Dutch respondents believed that Germans are generally bothered by such behavior. It can therefore be concluded that with regard to this question the comparison of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents might be biased by the covariate *education*. If only respondents with a higher education had participated in the survey, a comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers would have shown a significant difference.

4.4.2.2 Distance of residence from the German-Dutch border

The ANCOVA showed a significant impact of the covariate *distance of residence from the German-Dutch border* on the respondents' answers for the following two questions: main category *separation of work and private life*, case 3, Q3G/Q1D (attitude); and main category *separation of work and private life*, case 3, Q4G/Q2D (typicality). However, further analysis showed that for both questions the differences were no longer significant after eliminating the factor *distance of residence from the German-Dutch border*. Even if only respondents living closer than 25 kilometers from the border, 26 to 50 kilometers from the border or further than 51 kilometers from the border had participated in the survey, it would not have changed the results from the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers to this question; in each case, the difference in answer means between the German and Dutch respondents would still remain significant.

4.4.2.3 Conclusion

Even though some of the socio-demographic variables had a significant effect on some of the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that this influence was marginal and did not influence the outcome of the comparison. First, the ANCOVA showed that out of 288 tests, only seven revealed a significant difference. Even with the applied significance level of .01, chances are high that at least some of these differences were significant 'by chance.'

Second, of these seven significant effects, only two could have possibly influenced the results of the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers (i. e., non-significant differences would have become significant if only respondents with a high education level had participated in the survey). In the other five cases, a covariate had an effect on the respondents' answers but this effect could not lead to different results in the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers. Regardless of the interviewed groups (higher or lower education, people living closer or further away from the German-Dutch border) non-significant differences would remain non-significant and significant differences would remain significant.

Third, one has to keep in mind that each main category consists of three cases. The covariate *education* could have influenced the results of the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers with regard to the main category *details*, case 2, Q1G/Q3D (attitude). However, it did not influence cases 1 and 3. The same applies to the main category *hierarchies*. Here the covariate *education* could have influenced the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers to Q3G/Q1D (attitude) in case 1, but not in cases 2 and 3.

It can therefore be concluded that the respondents' socio-demographic and other characteristics did not have a noteworthy influence on the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers that was conducted in Section 4.4.3 to test the hypothesis.

4.4.3 Results of the comparison of the German and Dutch respondents' answers

In Section 4.1, the following hypothesis was stated: *Main categories that Dutch and German participants regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction (e. g., separation of work and private life and meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg') are more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interactions than main categories that Germans and Dutch regard as similarly relevant (e. g., hierarchies and details).*

Based on the answers from the German and Dutch surveys, I tested the hypothesis by comparing the means of the answers to questions Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*, Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*, Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)* and Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*. In the comparisons of Q1G/Q3D and Q3G/Q1D, I analyzed whether there were differ-

ences in perception about how much members of culture A are bothered by the behavior of members from culture B and of how much members of culture B think that members of culture A are bothered by their behavior. With the comparisons of Q2G/Q4D and Q4G/Q2D, I analyzed whether there were differences in perception about how typical members from culture A regard the behavior of the members of culture B and of how typical the members of culture B think their behavior is perceived by members of culture A. The questions can be found in Appendix 22.

Even though, in a strict sense, the answers to two different questions were compared to each other, this comparison was (statistically) possible because each compared pair of questions is about the same case and situation and asks almost the same question: either the respondents' attitude toward the described behavior or an estimate of the typicality of the described behavior.

If the hypothesis were true, one would thus expect low differences in means of the compared questions for the main categories that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant (*hierarchies* and *details)* and higher differences in means of the compared questions for the main categories that German and Dutch people regard as differently relevant (*separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg')*.

The following sections will show the results of these comparisons for each main category and each tested item (i.e., each case). Each case is supplemented with a brief description of its content. All cases in both their 'German' and 'Dutch' manifestations can be found in Appendices 20 and 21. The statistical significance of the differences was tested by a univariate analysis (independent samples t-test); the predetermined significance level was .01. In the *significance level* column of each table, it is indicated whether a difference is significant at an alpha level of .01 (indicated by p < .01) or not significant (indicated with ns). All compared samples are normally distributed.

4.4.3.1 Main category *hierarchies* (similar relevance)

Case 1 (Tasks, functions and responsibilities are clearly/less clearly defined)

The accounts department has prepared the annual balance sheet. The manager who has to sign it notices a serious mistake that — if overlooked — would have led to a severe loss of money.

'German' behavior: The person responsible for the mistake can easily be found because everyone on the team has a clearly defined task for which he or she is responsible.

'Dutch' behavior: The manager holds the whole team responsible for this mistake; since people have been working on the balance sheet as a team, he cannot backtrack to find who exactly made the mistake.

Table 14 Comparison of main category 'hierarchies', case 1: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi-cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	2.37	1.16	2.27	1.05	.10	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	2.63	.98	2.14	.91	.48	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	2.41	1.24	2.05	.97	.36	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	2.99	1.15	3.51	1.95	.52	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The comparison of the means of questions Q2G *(M = 2.37, SD = 1.16)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 2.27, SD = 1.05)* shows that the difference is not significant *(t (147) = .56, p = .74).* The comparison of the answers to questions Q4G and Q2D *(typicality)* shows similar results. Here the difference in means of Q4G *(M=2.63, SD = .98)* and Q2D *(M=2.14, SD = .91)* is statistically insignificant *(t (148) = 3.14, p = .32).* The results of these two comparisons show that with regard to this case, both German and Dutch respondents regarded the behavior of the members of the other culture as typical for this culture. Concurrently, both assumed that the members of the other culture also perceive the behavior of their own culture as typical and — as the small differences in the answers to the compared questions show — (approximately) correctly assessed how typical the members of the other culture regard their own behavior.

The comparisons of the means of the answers to questions Q1G *(M=2.41, SD = 1.24)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M=2.05, SD = .97)* show that the difference is not significant *(t (138) = 1.97, p = .05)* and the comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q3G *(M=2.99, SD = 1.15)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M=3.51, SD = 1.95)* also shows no significant difference *(t (118) = 2.00, p = .04).* This indicates that with regard to this case, both the German and Dutch respondents were bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture but were also aware that the members of the other culture were also bothered by their own behavior.

Case 2 (Direct and commanding tone vs. indirect, kind request)

There is a stressful situation in a company and a deadline is approaching rapidly. The boss notices that some files have been forgotten up to now.

'German' behavior: He approaches an employee's desk, hands him some files and says, "Have these ready by 3 pm, please."

'Dutch' behavior: He approaches an employee with the files in his hand. Instead of telling him directly what to do, he beats around the bush. He asks the employee, "If you find the time, would you mind doing this for me?"

Table 15   Comparison of main category 'hierarchies', case 2: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi-cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	2.40	.96	2.48	1.13	.08	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	2.37	.98	2.05	.96	.32	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	2.39	1.10	2.56	1.23	.17	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	2.45	1.15	2.36	1.55	.09	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The results of the comparisons of the means of the answers to the compared questions for case 2 are similar to the results for case 1.

There is no significant difference in means *(t (146) = .47, p = .32)* between questions Q2G *(M = 2.40, SD = .96)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 2.48, SD = 1.13)*. There is also no significant difference in means *(t (149) = 2.04, p = .28)* between questions Q4G *(M = 2.37, SD = .98)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 2.05, SD = .96)*. This indicates that both German and Dutch respondents were aware of the difference with regard to case 2 and found it typical for the other culture. Concurrently, both were also aware that the members of the other culture regard their own behavior as typical and (almost) correctly estimated how typical they find it in bicultural interactions.

The comparison of the means between questions Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* shows a similar picture. The difference in means between questions Q1G *(M = 2.39, SD = 1.10)* and Q3D *(M = 2.56, SD = 1.23)* is statistically insignificant *(t (148) = .91, p = .72)*. The difference in means between Q3G *(M = 2.45, SD = 1.15)* and Q1D *(M = 2.36, SD = 1.55)* is not significant either *(t (140) = .41, p = .16)*. This indicates that with regard to this case both German and Dutch respondents were bothered by the others' behavior. Furthermore, both were also aware that the members of the other culture were also bothered by their own behavior and could correctly estimate the extent to which they feel bothered.

Case 3 (Boss makes decisions vs. delegation of decision making)

There is a strategy meeting in a company. 'German' behavior: The boss defines specific objectives and targets, stating: "One year from now, I want the unit sale of our product X to be 50% higher than now. Production costs per unit have to decrease by 15%, production errors by 10%." Moreover, he demands to be informed about the approach the employees choose to use to reach these objectives and has to approve the approach before they get to work.

Table 16 Comparison of main category 'hierarchies', case 3: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference	Signifi-
	M	SD	M	SD	in means	cance
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	2.47	.98	2.51	1.11	.04	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	2.41	.93	2.21	.88	.20	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	3.15	1.29	2.65	1.08	.49	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	2.45	.86	2.51	1.43	.06	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

'Dutch' behavior: The boss only defines general objectives and targets, stating: "We should try to raise the unit sale of our product X by 50% over the next 12 months." He then tells the employees that they can decide for themselves how they reach those objectives.

The comparisons for case 3 show a similar picture as the comparisons for cases 1 and 2.

The comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q2G $(M = 2.47, SD = .98)$ and Q4D (typicality) $(M = 2.51, SD = 1.11)$ shows that the difference is not significant $(t (148) = .23, p = .34)$. The comparison of the answers to Q4G $(M = 2.41, SD = .93)$ and Q2D (typicality) $(M = 2.21, SD = .88)$ shows that the difference is also not significant $(t (148) = 1.40, p = .82)$. This shows that both the German and Dutch respondents found the behavior of the members of the other culture typical and estimated that the members of the other culture found their behavior typical.

The comparison of the answer means of questions Q1G $(M = 3.15, SD = 1.29)$ and Q3D (attitude) $(M = 2.65, SD = 1.08)$ shows no significant difference $(t (144) = 2.56, p = .17)$. The comparison of the means of the answers to Q3G $(M = 2.45, SD = .86)$ and Q1D (attitude) $(M = 2.51, SD = 1.43)$ shows that the difference is not significant $(t (125) = .28, p = .03)$.

4.4.3.2 Main category *details* (similar relevance)

The comparisons of the questions for the main category *details* found similar results as the comparisons for the main category *hierarchies*.

Case 1 (Detailed vs. rough planning)

A person has an idea: he wants to start his own model construction magazine. 'German' behavior: Before starting, he writes a detailed business plan. He starts extensive market research, takes care of the funding for the next two years and

researches advertising customers, distribution channels and the best method to get his magazine known. It takes roughly two years before the first edition is launched.

'Dutch' behavior: Without much planning, he gets to work. Problems such as funding, advertising and distribution are dealt with when they appear.

Table 17 Comparison of main category 'details', case 1: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Significance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	4.68	1.65	4.64	1.95	.02	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	4.51	2.12	4.10	1.97	.41	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	4.79	1.60	4.44	1.89	.35	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	4.60	1.38	4.88	1.25	.28	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The difference in means of the answers to Q2G *(M = 4.68, SD = 1.65)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 4.64, SD = 1.95)* is not significant *(t (147) = .15, p = .88)*. The difference in means between the answers to Q4G *(M = 4.51, SD = 2.12)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.10, SD = 1.97)* is also not significant *(t (148) = 1.21, p = .31)*. The results show that, with regard to this case, both German and Dutch respondents found the behavior of the members of the other culture neither typical nor atypical and correctly estimated that the members of the other culture would regard the behavior of the members of their own culture as neither typical nor atypical.

The comparison of Q1G/Q3D and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* shows a similar picture. The comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q1G *(M = 4.79, SD = 1.60)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M = 4.44, SD = 1.89)* shows that the difference is not significant *(t (150) = 1.21, p = .23)*. The comparison of the means of questions Q3G *(M = 4.60, SD = 1.38)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M = 4.88, SD = 1.25)* also shows no significant difference *(t (147) = 1.32, p = .18)*. These results show that the German and Dutch respondents were neither bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture nor approved of it. Concurrently, both estimated that the members of the other culture were also neither bothered by their behavior nor approved of it.

Case 2 (Detailed presentations vs. short and rough overview)

A new project is introduced in a company. 'German' behavior: The person presenting the project gives very detailed and comprehensive information in her presentation: not only about the project itself and the time schedule, but also about possible

problems and obstacles that could occur. When she is asked additional questions by the audience, she also has comprehensive answers.

'Dutch' behavior: The person presenting the project keeps her presentation short; she only presents basic data and a rough time schedule and scope of action. She has not considered possible mistakes and problems yet. When asked about them, she answers, "We will take care of that if and when it actually happens."

The comparisons for case 2 show a similar picture as the comparisons for case 1.

Table 18　Comparison of main category 'details', case 2: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference	Signifi-
	M	SD	M	SD	in means	cance
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	4.57	1.64	4.38	2.09	.19	ns
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	4.35	1.76	4.16	1.97	.19	ns
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	4.79	1.58	4.20	2.04	.59	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	4.75	1.38	5.22	1.36	.47	p = .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The difference in means between the answers to Q2G *(M = 4.57, SD = 1.64)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 4.38, SD = 2.09)* is not significant *(t (143) = .64, p = .72)*. The difference in means between the answers to Q4G *(M = 4.38, SD = 1.75)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.07, SD = 2.00)* is also not significant *(t (152) = 1.00, p = .31)*. These small differences indicate that with regard to this case, both German and Dutch respondents found the behavior of the others neither typical nor atypical and both correctly estimated that the members of the other culture would also regard their own behavior as neither typical nor atypical.

The comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* indicates the same. The comparison of the means of the answers to question Q1G *(M = 4.79, SD = 1.58)* and Q3D *(M = 4.20, SD = 2.04)* shows that the difference is not significant *(t (142) = 2.31, p = .46)*. This indicates that the Germans were not bothered by the Dutch behavior described in this case and that the Dutch respondents correctly assumed that the Germans would not be bothered by the Dutch behavior. The comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q3G *(M = 4m75, SD = 1.38)* and Q1D *(M = 5.22, SD = 1.36)*, however, shows a significant difference of .54 *(t (151) = 2.45, p = .01)*. This indicates that the Dutch respondents were not bothered by the German behavior described in this case. The German respondents correctly assumed that the Dutch respondents would not be bothered by the German behavior, but believed that they would be slightly more bothered than they actually were.

Case 3 (Detailed vs. rough wishes with regard to commissioning)

A public relations agency is planning a Facebook campaign for a client. 'German' behavior: At their first meeting, the client already has detailed ideas and wishes. In the following weeks, he calls the agency several times a day to ask if they have considered this fact and that fact, and what they would do if this or that event occurred.

'Dutch' behavior: In the initial meeting the client tells the agency roughly what he wants. When they call him to ask for more details, he says, "You are the experts for this. I have full trust that you will do it well."

The comparisons for case 3 show a similar picture as the comparisons for cases 1 and 2.

Table 19   Comparison of main category 'details', case 3: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi-cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	4.75	1.55	4.57	1.90	.17	ns
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	4.43	1.82	4.35	1.89	.07	ns
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	4.79	1.33	4.60	1.74	.19	ns
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	5.05	1.77	4.42	1.88	.63	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The difference in means between the answers to Q2G *(M = 4.75, SD = 1.55)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 4.57, SD = 1.90)* is not significant *(t (145) = .62, p = .11)*. The difference in means between the answers to Q4G *(M = 4.45, SD = 1.83)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.43, SD = 1.87)* is also not statistically significant *(t (150) = .25, p = .74)*. As with cases 1 and 2, the small differences indicate that with regard to this case, both German and Dutch respondents found the behavior of the others neither typical nor atypical and both estimated that the members of the other culture would also regard their own behavior as neither typical nor atypical.

The results of the comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* point in the same direction. The comparison of the means of the answers to questions Q1G *(M = 4.79, SD = 1.33)* and Q3D *(M = 4.60, SD = 1.74)* shows no significant difference *(t (142) = .75, p = .35)*. The difference between Q3G *(M = 5.05, SD = 1.77)* and Q1D *(M = 4.42, SD = 1.88)* is not significant either *(t (149) = 2.15, p = .49)*. The results thus indicate that German and Dutch respondents were neither bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture, nor did they approve of it. Concurrently, they estimated that the members of the other culture would feel bothered by the behavior of their own culture to the same extent.

4.4.3.3 Main category *separation of work and private life* (different relevance)

Case 1 (Colleagues are only colleagues vs. colleagues are also seen as friends)

'German' behavior: An employee has been working in an office for a year. One day he — in the presence of his colleagues — talks to someone on the phone about his upcoming birthday and states, "I will invite all my friends." However, the colleagues who work with him in the same office are never invited.

'Dutch' behavior: A new employee has been working in an office for only two weeks. One day he tells the people who work in the same office, "I will celebrate my birthday on Friday night. You are cordially invited."

The comparison of the means of the answers to the compared questions for this case show completely different results than the comparisons conducted for the cases for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details*.

Table 20   Comparison of main category 'separation of work and private life', case 1: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi- cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	4.53	1.81	2.24	.88	2.11	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	4.49	1.54	2.22	.90	2.28	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	5.17	1.24	2.71	1.01	2.46	p < .01
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	4.63	1.17	2.65	1.14	1.98	p < .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The difference in means between Q2G *(M = 4.53, SD = 1.81)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 2.24, SD = .88)* is 2.11, which is significant *(t (106) = 9.14, p < .01)*. The difference in means between Q4G *(M = 4.49, SD = 1.54)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 2.22, SD = .90)* is slightly higher (2.28) and significant *(t (118) = 11.04, p < .01)*. These results show that with regard to case 1, the German respondents found the Dutch behavior neither typical nor atypical for Dutch people, while the Dutch respondents believed that Germans would find this behavior typical. On the other hand, the Dutch respondents found the German behavior typical for Germans, while the German respondents believed that the Dutch would find the German behavior neither typical nor atypical. This illustrates a discrepancy in perception on both sides.

The comparisons between Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* convey a similar impression. The difference in means between the answers to questions Q1G *(M = 5.17, SD = 1.24)* and Q3D *(M = 2.71, SD = 1.01)* is 2.46, which

is significant *(t (142) = 13.38, p < .01)*. The difference in means between Q3G *(M = 4.63, SD = 1.17)* and Q1D *(M = 2.65, SD = 1.14)* is 1.98, which is also significant *(t (149) = 7.80, p < .01)*. These results show that while the German respondents were not bothered by the Dutch behavior regarding case 1, the Dutch respondents believed that Germans would be bothered by it. Inversely, the Dutch respondents were bothered by the German behavior regarding this case, while the German respondents believed that the Dutch respondents would actually not be bothered by it.

Case 2 (Talking about private matters at work vs. distanced behavior)

A new employee is hired. 'German' behavior: To get to know him, his colleagues who work in the same office ask him about his family and hobbies. He is rather reluctant and monosyllabic. He also does not ask them about their families and hobbies.

'Dutch' behavior: He is a little intrusive and asks his colleagues who work in the same office about private things such as hobbies and family. He also tells a lot about himself even though his colleagues have not asked him to do so. Case 2 shows a similar picture as case 1.

Table 21   Comparison of main category 'separation of work and private life', case 2: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi-cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	4.55	1.52	2.25	.83	2.30	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	4.49	1.74	2.38	1.02	2.11	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	4.85	1.34	2.48	.87	2.37	p < .01
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	4.76	1.57	2.43	1.24	2.33	p < .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The comparison of the means of Q2G *(M = 4.55, SD = 1.52)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 2.25, SD = .83)* shows a significant difference of 2.30 *(t (114) = 11.54, p < .01)*. The comparison of the means of Q4G *(M = 4.49, SD = 1.74)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 2.38, SD = 1.02)* shows a significant difference of 2.11 *(t (118) = 9.12, p < .01)*. This indicates that, just as in case 1, there is a discrepancy in perception between the German and Dutch respondents. While the former find the Dutch behavior neither typical nor atypical and believe that the Dutch respondents will find the German behavior neither typical nor atypical, the latter find the German behavior typical and believe that the Germans will find the Dutch behavior typical.

The comparison between Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D shows a similar picture. The difference in means between Q1G *(M = 4.85, SD = 1.34)* and Q3D *(M = 2.48, SD = .87)* is 2.37, which is statistically significant *(t (126) = 12.90, p < .01)*. The difference between Q3G *(M = 4.76, SD = 1.57)* and Q1D *(M = 2.43, SD = 1.24)* is 2.33, which is also significant *(t (140) = 10.12, p < .01)*. These results also indicate that there is a discrepancy in perception between the German and Dutch respondents. While the German respondents were not bothered by the Dutch behavior, the Dutch respondents believed that the Germans would be bothered by it. Inversely, the Dutch respondents were bothered by the German behavior regarding this case, while the German respondents believed that the Dutch respondents would actually not be bothered by it.

Case 3 (Separation/little separation of role and person)

A person tells his colleague with whom he is working on the same project, "You totally messed up the task. I guess you are not skilled enough for this."

'German' behavior: When he asks his colleague to join him for lunch in the cafeteria a few hours later, the colleague agrees. They go to the cafeteria together and get along totally fine.

'Dutch' behavior: When he asks his colleague to join him for lunch in the cafeteria a few hours later, the colleague refuses.

The differences in means between the compared answers to the questions for case 3 also point in the same direction.

Table 22 Comparison of main category 'separation of work and private life', case 3: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

| Compared questions | German answers | | Dutch answers | | Difference | Signifi- |
	M	SD	M	SD	in means	cance
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	5.04	1.20	2.73	1.10	2.30	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	5.04	1.20	2.94	1.54	2.10	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	4.85	1.40	2.55	1.18	2.30	p < .01
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	4.93	1.18	2.75	1.49	2.18	p < .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The comparison of the means of the answers for Q2G *(M = 5.04, SD = 1.20)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 2.73, SD = 1.10)* shows a significant difference of 2.31 *(t (148) = 12.35, p < .01)*, which is the highest difference of all the comparisons regarding the main category *separation of work and private life*. The comparison of the means of the answers for Q4G *(M = 5.04, SD = 1.20)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 2.94, SD = 1.54)* shows a significant difference of 2.10 *(t (145) = 9.27,*

p < .01). These results also indicate a discrepancy in perception between the German and Dutch respondents.

The difference in means between Q1G *(M = 4.85, SD = 1.40)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M = 2.55, SD = 1.18)* is 2.30 and significant *(t (144) = 10.98, p < .01)*. The difference between Q3G *(M = 4.93, SD = 1.18)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M = 2.75, SD = 1.49)* is 2.18 (also significant, with *t (144) = 10.03, p < .01)*. This shows that with regard to case 3, the German respondents were not bothered by the Dutch behavior and believed that the Dutch respondents would also not be bothered by German behavior. However, the Dutch respondents were bothered by the German behavior and believed that the German respondents would also be bothered by the Dutch behavior. The results thus show a discrepancy in perception between the German and Dutch respondents.

4.4.3.4 Main category *discussion culture/consensus and 'overleg'* (different relevance)

Case 1 (Experts decide vs. general consensus)

There is a meeting within a company's sales department about the introduction of a new product.

'German' behavior: With regard to each topic discussed, only those people who are familiar and/or engaged with it state their opinions. The others only listen. They are neither asked to state their opinions nor do they insist on doing so.

'Dutch' behavior: Each participant may state his or her opinion about each topic that is discussed. The manager of the company gathers the different opinions and points out agreements. Eventually, they work out a consensus on which everyone agrees.

The comparisons of the means of the answers to the compared questions for this case show results that are inverse to the comparisons conducted for the main category *separation of work and private life*.

Table 23 Comparison of main category 'meetings and discussions/consensus and "overleg"', case 1: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference in means	Signifi-cance
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	2.93	1.34	3.89	1.94	.96	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	3.03	1.45	4.10	1.90	1.07	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	3.12	1.60	4.26	1.73	1.14	P< .01
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	3.27	1.62	4.34	1.91	1.07	p < .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The comparison of the means of the answers for Q2G *(M = 2.93, SD = 1.34)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 3.89, SD = 1.94)* shows a significant difference of .96 *(t (132) = 3.47, p < .01)*. The comparison of the means of the answers for Q4G *(M = 3.03, SD = 1.45)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.10, SD = 1.90)* shows a significant difference of 1.07 *(t (146) = 3.91, p < .01)*. This shows that with regard to case 1, the German respondents found the Dutch behavior typical for the Dutch, while the Dutch respondents believed that Germans would find the Dutch behavior neither typical nor atypical. On the other hand, the Dutch respondents found the German behavior neither typical nor atypical for Germans, while the German respondents believed that the Dutch would actually find it typical. There is thus a discrepancy in perception.

The difference in means between Q1G *(M = 3.22, SD = 1.60)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M = 4.26, SD = 1.73)* is 1.14 and significant *(t (149) = 1.99, p < .01)*. The difference in means between Q3G *(M = 3.27, SD = 1.62)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M = 4.34, SD = 1.91)* is 1.07. This difference is also significant *(t (147) = 3.70, p < .01)*. These results indicate that with regard to this case, the German respondents were bothered by the Dutch behavior, while the Dutch respondents believed that the Germans would approve of their behavior. On the other hand, the Dutch respondents approved of the German behavior, while the German respondents believed that the Dutch would actually be bothered by it. There is thus also a discrepancy in perception.

Case 2 (Negative vs. positive attitude toward consensus)

After the election's coalition negotiations start, a coalition agreement is worked out. However, before it can be signed, it has to be approved by the party's base.

'German' behavior: Many of the participants express the opinion that they feel that their party leaders have given in to the other party too quickly. They state that such a compromise is a bad solution, that it can never be the best solution by nature and that they are not content with this.

'Dutch' behavior: Most of the participants express the opinion that they feel that their party leaders have achieved a good compromise that both parties can be content with. They state that this is the best solution because it reflects the will of the majority of the country's voters.

The comparison of the means of the answers for Q2G *(M = 2.62, SD = 1.03)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 4.64, SD = 1.64)* shows a significant difference of 2.02 *(t (129) = 9.08, p < .01)*. The comparison of the means of the answers for Q4G *(M = 2.53, SD = .81)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.92, SD = 1.63)* shows a significant difference of 2.38 *(t (107) = 11.30, p < .01)*. The results thus point in the same direction as the results from the comparisons for case 1: they indicate that there is a discrepancy in perception between the German and Dutch respondents.

Table 24   Comparison of main category 'meetings and discussions/consensus and "overleg"', case 2: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference	Signifi-
	M	SD	M	SD	in means	cance
Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)*	2.62	1.03	4.64	1.64	2.02	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*	2.53	.81	4.92	1.63	2.38	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)*	2.99	1.19	5.00	1.25	2.01	p < .01
Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*	2.69	1.01	4.66	1.76	1.97	p < .01

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The difference in means between Q1G *(M = 2.99, SD = 1.19)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M = 5.00, SD = 1.25)* is 2.01, which is statistically significant *(t (121) = 8.45, p < .01)*. The difference in means between Q3G *(M = 2.69, SD = 1.01)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M = 4.66, SD = 1.76)* is 1.97, which is also significant *(t (121) = 8.46, p < .01)*. These results indicate that the German respondents were bothered by the Dutch behavior in this case, while the Dutch respondents believed that the Germans would approve of their behavior. The Dutch respondents, on the other hand, approved of the German behavior while the German respondents believed that the Dutch would actually be bothered by it. There is thus also a discrepancy in perception.

Case 3 (Discussion culture: rough disputes vs. maintaining a good atmosphere)

There is a meeting within a company's sales department about the introduction of a new product. It is clearly noticeable that two people have totally contradictory opinions on a certain issue.

'German' behavior: The opponents vividly defend their views, backing them up with facts and references but also raising their voices and getting louder. The atmosphere grows more aggressive because nobody wants to give in.

'Dutch' behavior: No one directly brings this up. Instead, the two people beat around the bush, saying things like: "You are right, but you also have to consider …" or "You have a point here, but you also have to think about …"

The comparisons of the questions for this case show similar results as the comparisons for case 2: there are discrepancies in perception between the German and Dutch respondents.

Table 25 Comparison of main category 'meetings and discussions/consensus and "overleg"', case 3: Difference in means (M), standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance of the comparison

Compared questions	German answers		Dutch answers		Difference	Signifi-
	M	SD	M	SD	in means	cance
Q2G/Q4D (typicality)	2.66	1.17	4.68	1.74	2.02	p < .01
Q4G/Q2D (typicality)	2.50	1.02	4.49	1.60	1.99	p < .01
Q1G/Q3D (attitude)	2.53	1.11	4.62	1.75	2.09	ns
Q3G/Q1D (attitude)	2.65	1.27	4.51	1.71	1.86	ns

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

The comparison of the means of the answers for Q2G *(M = 2.66, SD = 117)* and Q4D *(typicality) (M = 4.68, SD = 1.74)* shows a significant difference of 2.02 *(t (127) = 8.23, p < .01)*. This indicates that while the German respondents found the Dutch behavior described in this case to be typical for Dutch people, the Dutch respondents assumed that this was not the case. The comparison of the means of the answers for Q4G *(M = 2.50, SD = 1.02)* and Q2D *(typicality) (M = 4.49, SD = 1.60)* shows a significant difference of 1.99 *(t (107) = 9.04, p < .01)*. This indicates that while the German respondents assumed that Dutch people would find the German behavior described in this case to be very typical, the Dutch respondents actually found it rather atypical.

The difference in means between Q1G *(M = 2.53, SD = 1.11)* and Q3D *(attitude) (M = 4.62, SD = 1.75)* is 2.09, which is statistically significant *(t (124) = 8.70, p < .01)*. This difference indicates that the Germans were bothered by the Dutch behavior described in this case, while the Dutch did not believe that this was the case. The German respondents assumed that the Dutch were not bothered by the described Dutch behavior. The difference in means between Q3G *(M = 2.65, SD = 1.27)* and Q1D *(attitude) (M = 4.51, SD = 1.71)* is 1.86, which is also significant *(t (135) = 7.50, p < .01)*. This indicates that the German respondents believed that the Dutch would be bothered by the German behavior described in this case, which was not actually the case.

4.5 Conclusion

In the introductory section of this study (Section 4.1), I proposed the following hypothesis:

Main categories that Dutch and German participants regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction (second and third group, e.g., separation of work and private life and meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg') are more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in Ger-

man-Dutch interactions than main categories that Germans and Dutch regard as similarly relevant (first group, e. g., hierarchies and details).

The results from the comparison of the means of the answers to the questions from the German and Dutch surveys confirm this hypothesis.

It must first be noted that each comparison of the four main categories was internally consistent (i. e., the differences calculated for each case are similar and point in the same direction). I ran a reliability test (Cronbach's alpha, cf. Field, 2013), in which the level of concordance of the differences for the three cases of each main category was calculated and confirmed this (see Appendix 24). For each main category, the concordance of the single cases was between .7 and .9, which, according to Field (2013, p. 712), indicates a good reliability.

Since the single cases of the main categories all point in the same direction and have similar means, the mean of the differences of all three cases can be calculated for each main category. The main categories can then be compared based on the differences of their means. Table 26 shows the mean in difference for each main category and each compared pair of questions.

Table 26   Differences in means per question and main category

Compared questions	Hierarchies	Details	Separation of work and private life	Meetings and discussions/ consensus and 'overleg'
Q2G/Q4D	.07	.13	2.24	1.67
Q4G/Q2D	.33	.22	2.17	1.81
Q1G/Q3D	.34	.38	2.38	1.74
Q3G/Q1D	.22	.46	2.16	1.63

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). German respondents: N = 75, Dutch respondents: N = 77

As can be seen in Table 26, there is a clear threshold between the main categories *hierarchies* and *details* on the one side and the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* on the other side. With regard to the comparison of Q2G/Q4D and Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)*, the difference in means of the answers to the compared question pairs is considerably smaller among the former (the highest difference here is .33) than among the latter (the smallest difference here is 1.67). The same applies to the comparison of the questions Q1G/Q3D and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)*. While the difference in means for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details* is at most .46, the difference in means for the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* is at least 1.63. The hypothesis is thus confirmed for each of the analyzed main categories.

4.5.1 Hierarchies

The mean of the differences calculated for the comparisons Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)* is .07, which (on a seven-level answer scale) can be considered small. The mean of the differences for Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)* is slightly higher (.33), but can also be considered small. With regard to *hierarchies*, the German respondents regarded the Dutch behavior described in the book corpus analysis as typical of Dutch people, but also correctly assumed that the Dutch would also find their own behavior typical. The same applies to the Dutch respondents, who found the German behavior described in the book corpus analysis to be typical for Germans, but also correctly estimated that Germans would find the Dutch behavior to be typical for Dutch people (and to what extent).

The means of the differences calculated for the comparisons of Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* (M=.34) and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* (M=.22) can also be considered small. This indicates that both German and Dutch people felt bothered by the other culture's behavior, while concurrently correctly estimating that (and how much) the members of the other culture would feel bothered by their own behavior.

These results indicate that with regard to *hierarchies* both German and Dutch people felt bothered by the behavior of the members of the other culture; they also knew that and knew how much the members of the other culture were bothered by their own behavior. It can therefore be assumed that in German-Dutch encounters, irritations, conflicts and/or communication breakdowns are unlikely to occur because both German and Dutch people know that it is necessary to (unconsciously or consciously, non-verbally or verbally) negotiate how to deal with this cultural difference.

4.5.2 Details

The results show that for the main category *details* the hypothesis can also be regarded as confirmed. The mean of the differences calculated for the comparison Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)* is .13; for the comparison Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)* it is .22. The means of the differences calculated for the comparisons Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* and Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* are slightly higher, namely .38 and .46. These differences can also be regarded as small.

These results indicate that with regard to *details*, both German and Dutch people regarded the behavior of the members of the other culture to be neither typical nor atypical, and correctly estimated that the members of the other culture would also regard their own behavior as neither typical nor atypical. Furthermore, the members of both cultures were neither bothered by the other culture's behavior nor did they approve of it. They also correctly estimated the other culture's attitude toward their own behavior. It can therefore be assumed that irritations, problems and/or communication problems with regard to details are potentially unlikely to occur.

4.5.3 Separation of work and living spheres

The results for this main category also confirm the hypothesis. The mean of the differences calculated for the comparison Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)* is 2.24; for the comparison Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)* it is 2.17. The means of the differences calculated for the comparison Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* is 2.38; for the comparison Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* it is 2.16. These differences can be regarded as considerable; in fact, they are about four times higher than the differences that were calculated for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details*. Furthermore, these differences are all statistically significant.

With regard to the main category *separation of work and private life*, Germans regarded Dutch behavior as rather atypical for Dutch people and were rather unbothered by it. Dutch people, on the other hand, believed that Germans would find the Dutch behavior typical for Dutch people and feel bothered by it.

On the other hand, Dutch people regarded the German behavior as typical for Germans and felt bothered by it, while the Germans believed that the Dutch would find the German behavior rather atypical for Germans and be rather unbothered by it. This discrepancy indicates that in bicultural interactions Dutch people are likely to try to start to negotiate how to deal with cultural differences regarding a *separation of work and private life*. They potentially expect the members of the German culture to join this negotiation process. However, the Germans are unlikely to join in this process because they see no need for it. It can therefore be assumed that irritations, conflicts and/or communication breakdowns are more likely to occur.

4.5.4 Meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'

The results for this main category also confirm the hypothesis. The mean of the differences calculated for the comparison Q2G/Q4D *(typicality)* is 1.67; for the comparison Q4G/Q2D *(typicality)* it is 1.81. The mean of the differences calculated for the comparison Q1G/Q3D *(attitude)* is 1.74; for the comparison Q3G/Q1D *(attitude)* it is 1.63. On a seven-level scale, these differences can be regarded as considerable; in fact, they are about three times higher than the differences that were calculated for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details*. Furthermore, the differences are statistically significant.

With regard to the main category *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*, the Dutch regarded German behavior as rather atypical for Germans and felt rather unbothered by it. Germans, on the other hand, believed that the Dutch would find the German behavior typical for Germans and feel bothered by it. On the other hand, Germans regarded the Dutch behavior as typical for Dutch people and felt bothered by it, while the Dutch believed that the Germans would find the Dutch behavior rather atypical for Dutch people and not be bothered by it. This discrepancy allows the assumption that in bicultural interactions Germans

are likely to try to start (consciously or unconsciously, verbally or non-verbally) negotiations on how to deal with cultural differences regarding this main category. They potentially expect the members of the Dutch culture to join into this negotiation process. However, the Dutch are unlikely to join in this process because they see no need for it. Therefore, the results allow the assumption that the chance for irritations, problems and/or communication to occur is higher than for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details*.

4.5.5   Possible interfering factors

Section 4.4.2 showed that socio-demographic and other characteristics (that were suspected to possibly affect the respondents' answers) had a very small influence on the comparison of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents is. Only the covariate *education* could have possibly influenced the respondents' answers with regard to 2 of the 12 cases. However, as shown in that section, the results of the comparison of the answers given by the German and Dutch respondents show a very clear distinction between the main categories *details* and *hierarchies* on the one side, and *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* on the other side.

Even if the covariate *education* had indeed influenced the respondents' answers with regard to two of the cases, this would not have had a noticeable influence on the results of the comparisons of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents. The results would still be equally unambiguous.

4.5.6   Further findings

In addition to confirming the hypothesis, the comparison of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents revealed other important findings. With *hierarchies* and *details*, two main categories were analyzed that — with regard to the relevance that is attributed to them — are diametrically opposed. While both German and Dutch people find *hierarchies* to be very relevant in bicultural interactions, they consider *details* to have relatively little relevance. Nevertheless, the differences in means of the answers regarding both main categories were very similar. This indicates that the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to a main category does not have an impact on its potential for conflict. Main categories that are regarded as highly relevant do not have a higher potential for irritations or conflicts than main categories that are regarded as less relevant. There is thus reason to believe that it is only the difference in relevance that has potential for irritations or conflict.

With *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and "overleg,"* another two diametrically opposed main categories were

chosen. While the former is highly relevant in the German book corpus but not in the Dutch one, the latter is highly relevant in the Dutch book corpus but not in the German one. Nevertheless, the differences in means of the answers regarding both main categories are also very similar. This indicates that for the potential for conflicts, only the difference in relevance matters. However, it does not matter whether it is the German or Dutch people who find a certain cultural characteristic more relevant.

One should keep in mind that the findings from this study only apply to German or Dutch people who actually prepare themselves for interaction with people from their neighboring country by studying their culture. An important premise of this study is that most German or Dutch people who want to establish contact with people from their neighboring country indeed do this, but there might also be people who do not prepare themselves for intercultural interaction before establishing contact. This study's findings do not apply to them. Since they have no or only very little awareness of the cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interaction, it is likely that the cultural characteristics on which German and Dutch people differ the most (e.g., hierarchies) will also be the ones that are most likely to lead to their irritations, conflicts and/or communication breakdowns.

Furthermore, it could be illustrated that socio-demographic and other factors had little to no influence on the answers. It can therefore be concluded that these factors also have only a little influence on the potential for conflict based on certain cultural differences.

In conclusion, in this study, I developed a new perspective on intercultural research. Up to now, the question of whether or not (and to what extent) cultural differences actually lead to irritations or conflicts in intercultural interaction has not been scientifically addressed (or has only been done in a very rudimentary way). Of course, studies have been conducted that analyze culture-related irritations or conflicts in individual situations or contexts (e.g., in cross-border cooperation of administrations or authorities). However, the findings from these studies usually cannot be generalized or used for other contexts or situations. This study contributes to closing the scientific gap by providing a general framework for analyzing the potential for conflict of cultural differences and by showing that in a German-Dutch context, there are actually cultural differences that bear more potential for conflict than others.

4.5.7   Theoretical implications

The results of this study have some theoretical implications for the field of intercultural research. As already mentioned, the actual potential for conflict of certain cultural characteristics in intercultural interaction situations has up to now received little attention in intercultural research. Some studies have analyzed culture-related

irritations or conflicts in individual situations or contexts, but for the most part their findings cannot be generalized and do not supply a general framework of analysis.

It is remarkable that many studies and textbooks that deal with intercultural issues do not give a hierarchization of cultural characteristics. Most of these studies describe cultural differences and commonalities that play a role in intercultural interaction. However, the question of the potential for conflict of these cultural characteristics either does not arise or it is implicitly and sometimes even explicitly (cf. e. g., Ajami, Cool, Goddard, & Khambata, 2006; Buckley, Burton, and Mirza, 1998) assumed that a large difference with regard to certain characteristics means a high potential for conflict while a small difference means a low potential for conflict. However, the results from this study show that this is not necessarily the case. They add a new dimension to the field of intercultural research by drawing attention to the potential of conflict related to certain cultural characteristics and by pointing out a way to analyze this potential.

4.5.8   Practical implications

The results of this study also have practical implications. First, the findings can help people better and more comprehensively understand the culture of the neighboring country. Knowing about cultural differences is the first important step. It enables people to understand when and why people from the other culture behave in certain ways in intercultural interactions, and it helps them to anticipate to a certain extent the behavior of their counterparts.

The results of the book corpus study (Chapter 3) added a further advantage to intercultural preparation by showing how relevant certain cultural differences are regarded by German and Dutch people. With this knowledge, people preparing themselves for intercultural interaction can better estimate which cultural characteristics are most relevant for the members of the other culture and in which contexts and situations they should act with particular sensitivity. This knowledge thus helps people prioritize cultural differences and determine which cultural differences should be given the most consideration in intercultural courses and trainings.

However, the results of the study presented in this chapter add another important aspect to this. They enable German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country to estimate the potential for conflict of certain cultural characteristics by providing guidelines on how to act in certain situations and contexts. Barmeyer (2011a, p. 52) offered four different options for dealing with situations in which cultural orientation systems collide: dominance (the other person has to adapt to one's own orientation system), assimilation (one subordinates one's own orientation system to the other's), divergence (both interaction partners keep their own orientation systems while knowing about and acknowledging the differences) or synthesis (both orientation systems are merged). The results of this study enable people to find better ways to deal with

cultural differences. If, for example, with regard to a certain cultural difference, Germans are bothered considerably by the Dutch behavior while the Dutch are not at all bothered by the German behavior, it would be reasonable for the Dutch to choose assimilation.

Second, this study clears up a common misconception. As already mentioned, the majority of popular science and guidebooks about the German and Dutch cultures, as well as most intercultural trainings and workshops, neither refer to the relevance that certain cultural characteristics have for German and Dutch people in intercultural interaction nor do they point out how likely they are to actually lead to irritations or conflicts. However, they often convey — purposely or unconsciously — the impression that those cultural characteristics in which German and Dutch people differ the most are also the characteristics that are most likely to cause irritations or conflicts.

For example, it is likely that both German and Dutch people read about the main category *hierarchies* when preparing themselves for intercultural interaction with the help of popular science and guidebooks. After all, the book corpus analysis revealed that this main category can be found in all the books from the German book corpus and in 22 of the 23 books from the Dutch book corpus, and it is described very comprehensively (Appendix 11). The main category *meetings and discussions/consensus and "overleg,"* on the other hand, can be found in only 16 of the 24 books from the German book corpus and the main category *separation of work and private life* can only be found in 15 of the 23 books from the Dutch book corpus (see Appendix 11). The prominent role of the main category *hierarchies* thus conveys the impression that it is also the main category with the highest potential for conflict. This study shows that the correlation the popular science and guidebooks implicitly make and that is also made in many intercultural workshops and trainings is inaccurate.

This study can thus contribute in different ways to improving popular science and guidebooks and intercultural trainings and to better preparing people to interact with people from the other culture. By combining the results from this study with the results from the culture standards study and the book corpus analysis, German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring culture can be provided with a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the other culture and the cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction.

4.5.9   Further research

In this study, I analyzed four main categories from the book corpus analysis. As explained in the methodology section, these main categories covered the four different areas of main categories: the main category *details* is regarded as not very relevant in bicultural interaction by both German and Dutch people, the main cat-

egory *hierarchies* is considered relevant by both German and Dutch people, the main category *separation of work and private life* is considered relevant by Dutch people but not by Germans, and the main category *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'* is considered relevant by Germans but not by Dutch people. In this way, the four chosen main categories can be assumed to be exemplary for all main categories that were identified in the book corpus analysis (i. e., 20 German and 19 Dutch main categories). However, one has to keep in mind that the four analyzed main categories were 'extreme' categories (i. e., either categories that both German and Dutch people consider to be the most or least relevant in bicultural interaction, or main categories that show the highest difference in relevance). It would therefore be interesting to also analyze 'average' main categories (i. e., main categories that German and Dutch people do consider to be differently relevant in bicultural action but with regard to which the difference in relevance is not as high as with the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg'*; for example, *rules* or *flexibility*) to test whether the results would be similarly unambiguous as they are in this study.

Furthermore, it would be expedient to test the ecological validity of this study, to analyze whether the results can be generalized to real-life settings. This study is rather theoretical and abstract. As already mentioned in the methodology section, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the potential for conflict of cultural differences with a direct approach. However, it would be worthwhile to try to substantiate the results of this study, for example by observing real-life business interactions between German and Dutch people or by interviewing people who have regular contact with people from the neighboring country.

Another interesting follow-up research project would be a comparison of other cultures. The results of this study confirmed the hypothesis and showed that there is a high probability that, with regard to certain cultural characteristics, differences in relevance actually influence the potential for conflict. However, the study was conducted in a certain and narrowly defined context. Therefore, it has yet to be tested whether the results also apply to other cultures, for example by conducting a similar study for cultural differences that play a role in bicultural interaction situations between cultures than German or Dutch.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze whether the results from this intercultural study also have implications for cross-cultural dimension models. It could be analyzed whether in the comparison of two cultures only the difference in scores with regard to certain dimensions is relevant or if the relevance that the members of these two countries attribute to certain dimensions also plays a role.

5 General conclusion

One of the interviewees from the culture standards study stated:

"Before I came to Germany, I had learned that Germans are obedient to authority and always obey their supervisors. That is why I was very surprised when I noticed that in meetings the employees quite often not only disagreed with the boss, but also started to argue about the right way to handle things."

Another Dutch interviewee stated:

"Yes, rules are definitively more important for Germans than for the Dutch; that is not just a cliché. I have been working for a number of German companies and in each of them everything was thoroughly regularized. The employees almost always stuck to the rules and did not question them. In the Netherlands, I have never seen this behavior to such an extent."

Another statement from the interviews was:

"Before I moved to Germany, I worked as a sales representative for a Dutch company. Here I often had professional contact with Germans, predominantly at exhibitions. I had heard from others that Germans have no sense of humor and my business contacts seemed to confirm this preconception. Even when I moved to Germany and started working for my current employer, my German colleagues were rather humorless and distanced at work. However, at our first company Christmas party, I was very surprised because here my colleagues acted totally differently than they used to at work. They were easy-going, mocked each other and made jokes. Later, when I had established private relationships with Germans as well, I noticed that the 'German humorlessness' apparently only applies at work."

Another interviewee stated the following:

"From their interactions with Dutch people, many Germans told me that they find the Dutch way more direct than Germans. However, I could not confirm this from my own experiences; I experienced rather the opposite."

These statements show that despite a variety of popular science and guidebooks, intercultural trainings and courses about the German and Dutch cultures, there are still irritations, misunderstandings, problems and communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction. In some cases, intercultural literature and trainings even contribute to these irritations instead of minimizing them, for example, when different or even contradictory statements are made about how to deal with people

from the neighboring country. It is thus apparent that (further) research on cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interaction is necessary.

As illustrated in the introductory chapter, a comprehensive scientific analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interaction has not been conducted; it has only been partly done or with regard to certain cultural characteristics. Therefore the general aim of this dissertation project was to perform a general intercultural analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural encounters between German and Dutch people. The general research question of this dissertation was: *Which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction and which role do they play in these interactions?*

Though different social scientists and practitioners have (in parts) analyzed differences and commonalities of the German and Dutch cultures and the cultural characteristics that play a role in intercultural interaction, an analysis of these studies and the methodologies used showed that none of them is sufficient to answer the research question. Each method has weaknesses and disadvantages compared to other methods, but can also reveal things that the other methods cannot reveal. Therefore, different methods of analyzing culture had to be used to answer the research question. Three independent studies were conducted, each with their own research question and methodology and each approaching the general aim from a different perspective. By using a triangular comparison and combining the results of these studies, the general research question could be answered.

In the first study, German culture standards from a Dutch perspective were identified. The results show general, rather superordinate and underlying aspects of culture that play a role in German-Dutch interaction. In combination with the Dutch culture standards from a German perspective that have been identified by Thomas and Schlizio (2009), they thus answer the first part of the general research question: *Which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction?* Furthermore, the first study analyzed how the culture standards are related to each other and which culture standards are most dominant and play the most important role in bicultural interaction. Through this, the second part of the general research question could also be answered: *Which role do certain cultural characteristics play in German-Dutch interactions?*

While the results from the first study could be used to answer the general research question in a rather general, abstract and superordinate way, the second study took a different approach and analyzed the concrete manifestations of cultural characteristics in bicultural interaction. By conducting a content analysis of popular science and guidebooks from German authors about the Dutch and from Dutch authors about the Germans, I was able to identify main categories that — by showing concrete cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction and by pointing out in which contexts and situations they manifest in which way — could answer the first part of the general research question in a more concrete and detailed way. Furthermore, the relevance that German and Dutch people at-
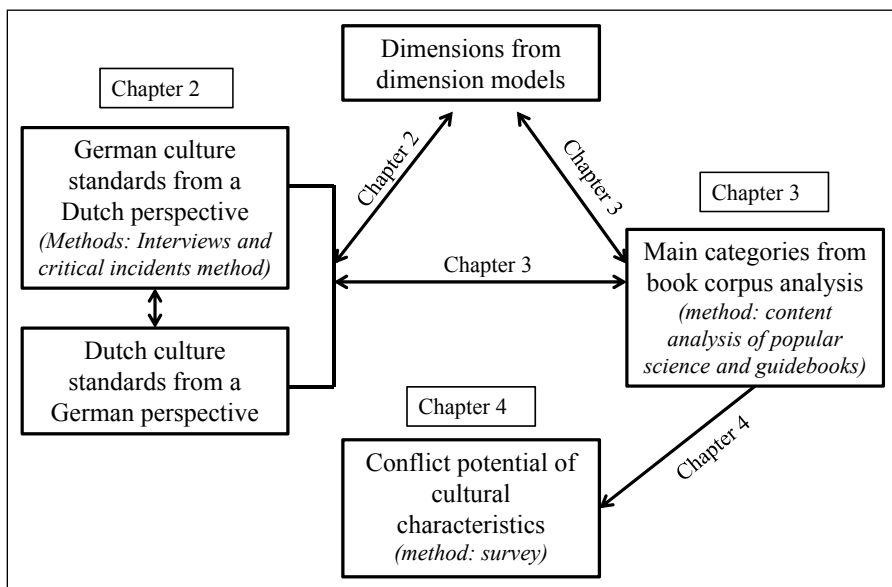
Fig. 14   Triangular entanglement of methods of analyzing culture

tribute to certain cultural characteristics were pointed out and the main categories were placed in a ranking order of relevance. This answered the second part of the general research question in more detail.

The third study analyzed the actual conflict potential of the main categories in bicultural interaction. That study showed more clearly which role certain cultural characteristics play in German-Dutch interaction. While the second study showed the relevance of the main categories, the third study showed how likely they are to actually lead to irritations, problems and communication breakdowns in bicultural interaction. The results of the three studies thus complemented and completed each other, and could thereby answer the general research question.

Furthermore, the results of the first and second studies were compared to each other and to other methods of analyzing culture. I did this to try to minimize the disadvantages of each single method and create additional value by finding aspects that could not be found by a single method.

Figure 14 summarizes the methods of analyzing culture that were used in this study and illustrates how (and in which chapter) the studies were compared to each other and to the dimension models and Dutch culture standards from a German perspective.

5.1 The three studies

The following sections will briefly summarize the results of the three studies. Subsequently, they will point out how the triangular comparison of the results of the studies created additional value and contributed to answering the general research question comprehensively.

5.1.1 Culture standards study (Chapter 2)

The aim of the first study was to identify general, rather superordinate and underlying aspects of culture that play a role in German-Dutch interaction and to find potential sources for misunderstandings, irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction. The intercultural concept of culture standards was best suited to addressing this aim.

Since Thomas and Schlizio (2009) had already identified Dutch culture standards from a German perspective, the following research question was addressed: *Which German culture standards exist from a Dutch perspective and how do they relate to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective and other methods of analyzing culture?* Eventually, I identified six German culture standards from a Dutch perspective (see Section 2.5):

- Fear of losing control
- Separation of living spheres
- Task orientation
- Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations
- Time planning
- Status orientation

Since these six culture standards include and explain all critical incidents that were stated by the respondents who were interviewed for this study, it can be concluded that they actually cover most of the cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns that play a role in German-Dutch interaction. They help explain these characteristics and behavioral patterns and even allow predictions about how Germans will behave in interaction situations with the Dutch. However, one has to keep in mind that in concrete interaction situations national culture is usually just one of the influencing factors; other factors on the micro- and meso-levels can influence individual behavior as well.

Furthermore, the culture standards study enabled interdependencies and interrelations between the culture standards to be pointed out. The knowledge about which culture standard plays the biggest role in binational encounters — in this case, *fear of losing control* — enables the Dutch to prioritize cultural characteristics in binational encounters and further facilitates a prediction and explanation of German behavior.

In addition, the identified German culture standards were compared to Dutch culture standards from a German perspective (identified by Schlizio and Thomas, 2009). This further illustrated in which areas and situations in bicultural interactions the German and Dutch cultural orientation systems are likely to collide and correspondingly irritations, problems, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns are likely to occur. For example, the German *appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* is almost diametrically opposed to the Dutch culture standard *informality*, which can explain the variety of rule-related critical incidents stated by the interviewees.

With this comparison, both German and Dutch people can better understand their counterparts in bicultural interactions because — as Thomas and Kinast (2010, p. 48) claimed — only people who are not only familiar with the foreign but also with their own cultural orientation system can be successful in intercultural cooperation. Not only can they detect and avoid potential sources of irritation and conflict, but they can also estimate the extent to which the different orientation systems can coexist without leading to conflicts or irritations and the extent to which one must adapt to the other's orientation system to get along well. With this knowledge, they could even try to estimate how a combination of both orientation systems could create cultural synergies.

5.1.2   Book corpus analysis (Chapter 3)

The German culture standards from a Dutch perspective that were identified in the first study could be used to illustrate the rather abstract, underlying and superordinate aspects of culture. To complement these results, the aim of the second study was to analyze the rather concrete aspects of culture (i. e., how cultural differences manifest in German-Dutch interaction, and in which situations and contexts). An analysis of popular science and guidebooks from German authors about the Dutch culture ("Dutch book corpus") and from Dutch authors about the German culture ("German book corpus") was well suited to this because those books describe predominantly concrete aspects of culture and are therefore a rich source for analysis.

The research question for this study is: which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German and Dutch book corpora and how do they relate to each other? This main research question was translated into the following three subquestions:

A) Which cultural aspects and characteristics are described in the German book corpus and which in the Dutch book corpus?
B) How do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpora?
C) Are there differences or commonalities between the cultural characteristics the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora describe?

Table 27   Main categories of the German and Dutch book corpora

Main categories of German book corpus	Main categories of Dutch book corpus
Hierarchies	Modesty and status
Communication	Hierarchies
Formality	Consensus and 'overleg'
Separation of work and private life	Planning
Modesty and status	Communication
Rules	Informality
Directness	Perfection
Perception of time	Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation
Flexibility	Rules
Obviation of uncertainties	Harmony as important as task
Task more important than good atmosphere	Separation of work and private life
Planning	Expertise and qualification
Details	Obviation of uncertainties
Meetings and discussions	Egalitarian character
Everything is structured	Tolerance
Expertise and qualification	Details
Preparation	Individualism
Perfection	Calimero effect
Respect	Perception of time
Individualism	

Research question A could be answered by conducting a qualitative content analysis of the book corpora, in the course of which I found 20 main categories for the German book corpus and 19 main categories for the Dutch book corpus. They are presented in Table 27.

These main categories show, for both the German and Dutch book corpora, which cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns the authors considered relevant in intercultural interactions between German and Dutch people. For each main category, it could be illustrated to which areas and situations it applies and if there are discrepancies between the authors about the main category or single aspects of it. The results of the first research question thus give both German and Dutch people a practical conspectus of the concrete manifestations of the culture of the neighboring country in German-Dutch interaction.

Research question B — How do the cultural aspects and characteristics that are stated by the authors relate to each other in the German and Dutch book corpora? — could be answered by a quantitative analysis of the results of research question A. Even though the authors of the popular science and guidebooks did

Table 28 Ranking of relevance for the main categories from the German and Dutch book corpora

Rank	German book corpus	Dutch book corpus
1	Hierarchies	Modesty and status
2	Communication	Hierarchies
3	Formality	Consensus and 'overleg'
4	Separation of work and private life	Planning
5	Modesty and status	Communication
6	Rules	Informality
7	Perception of time	Perfection
8	Flexibility	Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation
9	Obviation of uncertainties	Rules
10	Task more imp. than good atmosphere	Harmony as important as task
11	Planning	Separation of work and private life
12	Details	Expertise and qualification
13	Expertise and qualification	Obviation of uncertainties
14	Perfection	Egalitarian character
15	Individualism	Tolerance
16	Meetings and discussions	Details
17	Respect	Individualism
18	Directness	Calimero effect
19	Everything is structured	Perception of time
20	Preparation	

not (explicitly) make statements about which cultural characteristics they considered most relevant in German-Dutch interaction, different indicators could be used to place the main categories in a ranking order of relevance (see Section 3.3.1). This pointed out which main categories the authors of the popular science and guidebooks (implicitly) considered most relevant in German-Dutch interaction. This gives German or Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring country a better orientation, because it enables them to estimate which cultural characteristics the people from the other culture consider to be especially relevant and which cultural characteristics they have to pay particular attention to. Table 28 shows the ranking of relevance for the main categories from the German and Dutch book corpora.

Furthermore, the internal consistency of the single main categories was pointed out. Most of the main categories are consistent (i. e., they either contain no contradictory subcategories or the contradictory subcategories they contain represent only a minority opinion). However, some of them were not consistent, which indi-

cates a need for further research into these main categories. These finding can help German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country to estimate whether or not the single main categories are valid in all situations and contexts or if they might manifest differently in different situations and contexts.

Research question C — Are there differences or commonalities between the cultural characteristics the authors of the German and Dutch book corpora describe? — could be answered by using the results from research questions A and B and comparing the results from the German and Dutch book corpora. The comparison showed that most of the main categories can be found in both corpora. It was notable that that German and Dutch people find some main categories similarly relevant in bicultural interaction, but find others differently relevant in such interactions.

Figure 15 illustrates this. The main categories that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant are written in normal font (and can be found in the corridor that stretches from the lower left to the upper right), while the main categories that German and Dutch people regard as differently relevant in such interactions are written in italics.

This is an important finding because it allows German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country to estimate whether and the extent to which those people are even aware of a cultural difference.

In conclusion, the results of the book corpus analysis show concrete manifestations of culture in intercultural interaction between German and Dutch people. The main categories can be used to point out which cultural characteristics German and Dutch people find relevant in such interaction, in which situations and contexts they manifest, and how relevant German and Dutch people consider them to be. This can help German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring country to estimate how the others might behave or react. It can also help them to prioritize the cultural differences that can help them determine how best to deal with those differences: domination (the other person has to adjust to one's own orientation system), assimilation (one adjusts one's own orientation system to the other's), divergence (both cultural orientation systems coexist with being compatible) or synthesis (both orientation systems merge into a synthesis). The combination of the three studies thus allowed the research question to be thoroughly answered.
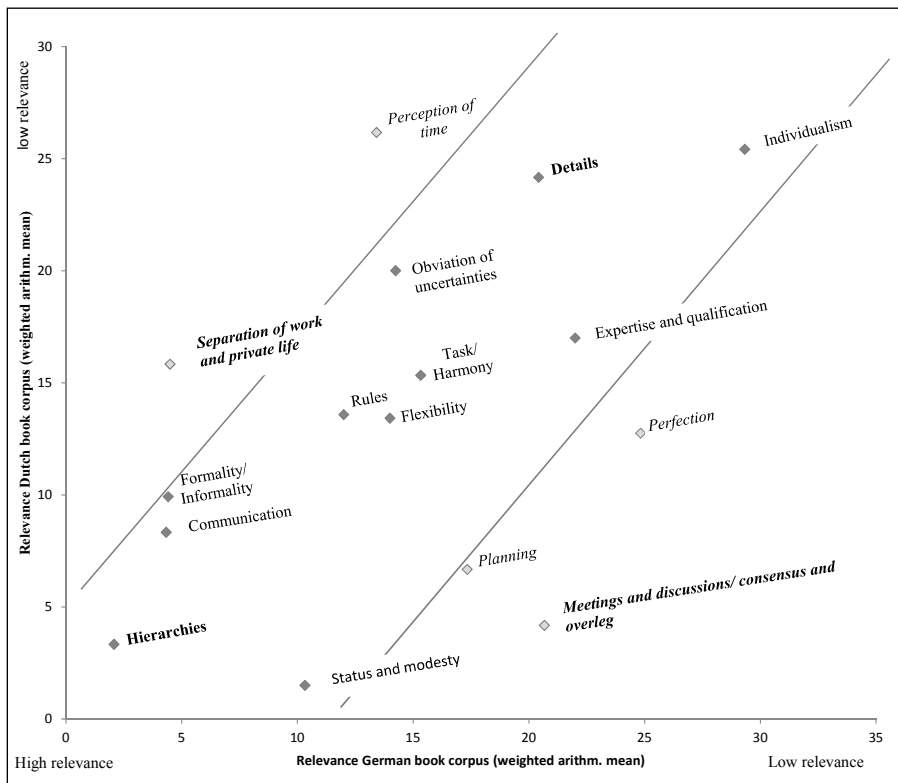
Fig. 15   Relevance of main categories in the German and Dutch book corpus. The higher
the relevance, the lower the weighted arithmetic mean. The arithmetic mean is
an indicator on which the calculation of the relevance of the main categories was
based.

5.1.3   Conflict potential of cultural differences (Chapter 4)

The aim of the third study was to analyze the potential for conflict of different cultural characteristics. The research question was: *Are cultural characteristics that German and Dutch people regard as differently relevant in bicultural interaction more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interactions than cultural characteristics that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant?* I conducted an online survey with German and Dutch respondents to analyze this question.

For this, I tested two main categories that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant in bicultural interaction (*hierarchies* and *details*) and two main categories that they regard as differently relevant in such interaction (*separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/consensus and 'overleg')* for their conflict potential. The results of the study show that the latter are actu-

ally more likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction. The reason for this is that with regard to the main categories that German and Dutch people regard as similarly relevant in bicultural interaction, the members of the one culture do not correctly estimate how relevant the members of the other culture will regard these main categories and therefore see no need to find a modus vivendi on how to deal with the cultural differences.

Table 29 shows the differences in the means of the answers from the German and Dutch respondents for each main category and each question. As can be seen, the differences in means for the main categories *hierarchies* and *details* are rather low, which indicates that both German and Dutch people are able to estimate the relevance that the others will attribute to them. The differences in means for the main categories *separation of work and private life* and *meetings and discussions/ consensus and 'overleg'* are considerably higher, which indicates that neither German nor Dutch people are able to correctly estimate the relevance that people from the other culture attribute to them.

Table 29   Differences in means per question and main category

Compared questions	Hierarchies	Details	Separation of work and private life	Meetings and discussions/ consensus and 'overleg'
Q2G/Q4D	.04	.15	2.30	1.67
Q4G/Q2D	.33	.18	2.18	1.81
Q1G/Q3D	.42	.46	2.42	1.62
Q3G/Q1D	.21	.46	2.20	1.72

Answer scales from 1 (bothered considerably/very typical) to 7 (not bothered at all/very atypical). Q2G/Q4D and Q4G/Q2D refer to typicality, Q1G/Q3D and Q3G/Q1D refer to attitude.

These findings make an important contribution to answering the central research question of this dissertation by further illustrating the role that certain cultural characteristics play in German-Dutch interaction. By pointing out the conflict potential of certain cultural differences, they allow people to prioritize these differences in bicultural interaction and help them determine how to deal with them. For German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country, they thus provide a guideline for how to act in certain situations and contexts.

5.2   Triangular comparison

As already mentioned, a single method of analyzing culture was not sufficient to comprehensively answer the general research question of this dissertation because each method has advantages and disadvantages and can reveal things that others cannot reveal. Therefore, different methods of analyzing culture were used to ana-

lyze which cultural characteristics are relevant in German-Dutch interaction and which role they play in these interactions. By comparing the results of the culture standards study, the book corpus analysis and dimensions from dimension models, the weaknesses of each single method could be compensated for and additional value could be created. By supplementing these results with a third study that tested the conflict potential of cultural characteristics, the central research question could be comprehensively answered.

The culture standards that were identified in the culture standards study are rather abstract. For the most part, they show the underlying and superordinate aspects of culture. A comparison with dimensions from different dimension models (which also show the rather abstract, superordinate and underlying aspects of culture) showed that they are better suited to describing, explaining and predicting irritations, problems and communication breakdowns in concrete interactions between Dutch and German people. First, the comparison showed that in interactions between Dutch and German people, the differences between the two cultures with regard to single dimensions are sometimes perceived as stronger or weaker than would be expected from the differences in the dimension's scores. There is even one dimension, *individualism*, on which Germany and the Netherlands differ considerably but which — according to the culture standards — apparently does not lead to irritations or problems in interaction situations because I found no critical incidents that can be directly related to individualism. (However, as pointed out, it is possible that individualism and directness could be related to each other. This will have to be analyzed in further research.) This illustrates that cross-cultural models such as dimension models are not well suited for explaining and predicting behavior and cultural characteristics in actual intercultural interaction and that, in some cases, they can even be misleading when used for such purposes.

The comparison also shows that the culture standards can provide a more nuanced picture when it comes to describing, explaining and predicting what happens in bicultural interactions between German and Dutch people. While some dimensions show only minor differences between Germany and the Netherlands, the concept of culture standards made it possible to show that some cultural characteristics manifest differently in different areas and situations. While, for example, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012) dimension *affective/neutral* shows only minor differences between Germany and the Netherlands, the culture standards show that there are situations and contexts in which Dutch people perceive Germans to be far more neutral (e. g., formal behavior at work) while in other situations and contexts they perceive them to be more affective (e. g., in discussions). The identified culture standards can thus provide a better understanding of and knowledge about cultural characteristics and behavioral patterns in bicultural interactions than the dimension models.

Furthermore, in this study it was also possible to show hierarchical relationships between the German culture standards in a more unambiguous and explicit

way than the dimension models can with dimensions. The knowledge about which culture standard plays the biggest role in binational encounters enables Dutch people to prioritize cultural characteristics in binational encounters and facilitates a prediction and explanation of German behavior. Finally, the comparison with the dimension models suggests that the identified culture standards are indeed central culture standards (i. e., that they are valid beyond certain contexts and cultural sectors) because, for the most part, they are reflected in the dimension models.

While the culture standards show the rather abstract, underlying and superordinate (both visible and invisible) aspects of culture, the main categories from the book corpus analysis predominantly show the concrete manifestations of cultural characteristics in German-Dutch interaction. A comparison of the main categories with the dimensions from different dimension models further substantiated that the latter are often not well suited for intercultural analysis. The comparison showed that it is hardly possible to clearly assign the main categories. Such an assignment would be rather arbitrary and it remains unclear whether or not a concrete manifestation of culture can indeed be explained by a certain dimension or interplay of certain dimensions. Correspondingly, since the main categories cannot be clearly assigned to dimensions, it is also hardly possible to use dimension models to predict what happens in bicultural interactions.

A comparison of the main categories from the book corpus analysis with the culture standards from the culture standards study revealed different things. First, almost all main categories (and the different aspects they subsume) resemble culture standards and can be explained by them. However, the comparison allows the assumption that most of the main categories resemble more than one culture standard and can only be explained by an interplay of different culture standards. As pointed out in the culture standards study, even though the culture standards also describe some situations and contexts in which they manifest in German-Dutch interaction, they predominantly describe superordinate and underlying aspects of culture. This makes it hard to use them to deduce concrete manifestations of culture in German-Dutch encounters. One additional value of the main categories is thus that they complement the culture standards by showing how they manifest in concrete bicultural interactions.

Furthermore, the comparison showed that the culture standards are in most cases better suited to explaining certain behavior in German-Dutch interaction. Since the authors in the book corpora usually only described concrete aspects of culture but did not only provide rudimentary reasons for certain behavior or cultural characteristics, the comparison with the culture standards can thus add an underlying motivation for why Dutch or German people act in certain ways when they interact.

The comparison with culture standards could also point out the interrelationships between the single main categories. Even though the book corpus analysis could show the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to separate main

categories in bicultural interactions, it could not (or could only in a rudimentary way) show how the single aspects interrelate. The comparison with the culture standards could reveal these interdependencies. For example, it could be pointed out that the main categories *planning*, *details* and *everything structured* from the German book corpus are to some extent linked to each other because they resemble the same culture standards (*appreciation for rules, structures and regulations* and *fear of losing control*). On the other hand, the comparison also showed that the fact that in some cases the culture standards subsume different cultural characteristics (which can be found in separate main categories in the book corpus analysis) can provide a blurred picture. For example, the main categories *informality* and *rules*, which are regarded as separate in the Dutch book corpus, are subsumed in the culture standard *informality* (in the culture standards study from Thomas and Schlizio, 2009). This conveys the impression that the Dutch informality is the only reason behind how they deal with rules. The book corpus analysis could provide a more nuanced picture by suggesting that the main category *rules* cannot merely be explained by Dutch *informality*, but rather by an interplay of different culture standards (e.g., *pragmatism*, *informality*, *flat hierarchies* and *relation orientation*).

Finally, the comparison with culture standards and dimension models showed that further research is necessary with regard to some cultural characteristics such as *individualism.* This is necessary because, in this case, the results from the book corpus analysis (implying that individualism is relevant in bicultural interaction and that Germans are more individualistic than the Dutch), the dimension models (according to Hofstede (2008), the Dutch are more individualistic than Germans) and the culture standards study (which implies that individualism does not play a role in bicultural interaction) apparently contradict each other.

The third study of this dissertation, in which I analyzed the conflict potential of certain cultural characteristics in intercultural interaction situations, further complements the results of the other studies and the triangular comparison and creates additional value. The book corpus analysis allowed me to point out the relevance that German and Dutch people attribute to certain cultural differences in bicultural interaction, enabling them to prioritize those differences in bicultural interaction and to determine how to deal with cultural differences. The results of the third study further supplement and facilitate this effort.

In conclusion, the combination of culture standards, main categories from the book corpus analysis and dimensions from dimension models that was achieved by a triangular comparison and entanglement, in addition to the analysis of the conflict potential of cultural differences, can thus indeed reach the main aim of this study. It provides a comprehensive scientific overview of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch encounters.

The culture standards show rather abstract, underlying and superordinate aspects of culture. They therefore give German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from the neighboring culture a comprehen-

sive overview of cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction. They are valid beyond certain contexts and situations, explain most manifestations of culture and show how these aspects are interdependent and interrelated. The results from the book corpus analysis complement the culture standards by showing how cultural characteristics manifest in bicultural interaction, and in which situations and contexts. The two studies can therefore give German and Dutch people a comprehensive but yet detailed, abstract but yet concrete, overview of their neighboring culture. In addition, the book corpus analysis provides additional value by pointing out the relevance that cultural characteristics have for German and Dutch people in bicultural interaction, enabling and facilitating a prioritization of cultural differences. The results of the third study further supplement this by pointing out which cultural characteristics are actually most likely to lead to irritations, problems, misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns in German-Dutch interaction.

5.3   Theoretical implications

An examination of the results from a broader perspective shows that this dissertation project makes some contributions to both the research about the German and Dutch cultures and the field of intercultural research in general. Up to now, a general intercultural analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interaction has not been conducted (or has only been conducted in a rudimentary way and with regard to certain specific differences or situations). This dissertation thus contributes to closing a scientific gap. Furthermore, the methodology and results of this dissertation can give some new impulses to the field of intercultural research.

First, the comparison of the three studies' results to dimensions from dimension models shows that it is important to use different methods for intercultural questions. As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, cross-cultural methods and concepts of analyzing culture such as dimension models are frequently used to explain or predict what happens in intercultural interaction. This is not only done in intercultural workshops and trainings and in popular science and guidebooks (cf. Dahlen, 1997), but sometimes also in scientific studies (e. g., Gawron & Theuvsen, 2009). All three studies in this dissertation indicate that this can be problematic. The comparison of the results of the culture standards study with dimensions revealed that the latter can be misleading, that some cultural differences in intercultural interaction are perceived as much stronger or weaker than the differences in the scores of certain dimensions imply, and that they cannot show all the cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction. The comparisons of the main categories from the book corpus analysis additionally suggest that the attempt to explain or predict concrete behavior in intercultural interaction with di-

mensions is often rather arbitrary. Based on the results of this dissertation, it is thus recommended that intercultural methods be used to answer intercultural questions.

Second, up to now, the actual potential for conflict of certain cultural characteristics in intercultural interaction situations has received little attention in the field of intercultural research. Many studies have analyzed culture-related irritations or conflicts in individual situations or contexts, but for the most part their findings cannot be generalized and do not supply a general framework of analysis. Furthermore, in scientific literature, popular science and guidebooks, and in intercultural trainings and workshops, it is currently often (implicitly) assumed that the cultural characteristics on which people from different cultures differ the most are also the characteristics that are most likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in intercultural interaction. Reuter (2010) even claimed that this is a central assumption of most interculturalists (i. e., intercultural trainers, consultants and mediators). The results of this dissertation show that this assumption is not necessarily true (at least not for people who prepare themselves to interact with people from the other culture by reading popular science and guidebooks or following intercultural workshops or courses). Furthermore, these results indicate that relevance and awareness can also be important factors in determining the conflict potential of cultural differences. As the third study in this dissertation shows, in bicultural interaction, it is especially those cultural characteristics that can lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns that German and Dutch people regard as differently relevant but with regard to which they are not aware of this difference in perception. This dissertation thus adds a new perspective to intercultural research by drawing attention to the conflict potential of certain cultural characteristics and by pointing out a way to analyze this potential. In doing so, it also addresses a common criticism of the field of intercultural research. Busch (2013) and others have criticized intercultural research, characterizing it as a self-defining field of study that (unjustifiably) postulates that cultural differences generally lead to problems in intercultural interaction to make itself relevant. The results of this study indicate that this might indeed be the case with some cultural characteristics, but it is not true with regard to others.

Another theoretical implication of this dissertation is that one method of culture is indeed not sufficient to make an intercultural analysis of cultural characteristics that play a role in German-Dutch interactions. As I argued, each method has weaknesses and advantages compared to other methods and by entangling different methods it was possible to create additional value.

Finally, there are controversies in the scientific community about whether the concept of national cultures is a suitable distinguishing feature for groups of people. Critics such as Reuter (2010), Reiche, Carr, and Pudelko (2010) and Au (1999) have suggested that culture scientists should abstain from making general statements about (national) cultures because there is significant intra-cultural variation within the societies of most countries and other factors on the meso- and micro-

levels have a far bigger influence on people's behavior, perception and attitudes than their national culture. Other social scientists, such as d'Iribarne (2009) or Ghemawat (2001), have claimed that the opposite is true and that the influence of national culture on peoples' behavior, perceptions and attitudes is relevant. The results of this study indicate that — at least for the German and Dutch cultures — the concept of national cultures is actually relevant. Especially in the third study of this dissertation, there was a high in-group homogeneity among the German and Dutch respondents who had different socio-demographic backgrounds and lived in different areas of their countries.

5.4   Practical implications

The results of this study also have some practical implications. First, the findings can help German and Dutch people better and more comprehensively understand the culture of their neighboring country. The results can be used to enhance, complement and enrich intercultural trainings and workshops and to improve the quality of how-to and guidebooks for German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country.

The culture standards, which show rather abstract, underlying and superordinate aspects of culture, give German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring culture a comprehensive overview of cultural characteristics that play a role in bicultural interaction. They are valid beyond certain contexts and situations, explain most manifestations of culture and show how these aspects are interdependent and interrelated.

The results of the book corpus analysis complement the culture standards by showing how cultural characteristics manifest in bicultural interaction, and in which situations and contexts. The two studies can therefore give German and Dutch people a comprehensive but yet detailed, abstract but yet concrete, overview of their neighboring culture. Furthermore, the book corpus analysis was able to show discrepancies between the authors and clearly point out minority opinions. These discrepancies can now be addressed in intercultural workshops and guidebooks. In addition, the book corpus analysis provides additional value by pointing out the relevance that cultural characteristics have for German and Dutch people in bicultural interaction. This knowledge can help them prioritize cultural differences and determine which cultural differences should be given the most consideration in intercultural courses and trainings.

The results of the third study enable German and Dutch people who want to prepare themselves to interact with people from their neighboring country to estimate the potential for conflict of certain cultural characteristics. This can help improve their preparation for cultural interactions by providing guidelines on how to act in certain situations and contexts.

Even though most intercultural guidebooks, trainings and workshops neither refer to the relevance that certain cultural characteristics have for German and Dutch people in intercultural interaction nor point out how likely they are to actually lead to irritations or conflicts, they often (unconsciously or explicitly) convey the impression that those cultural characteristics in which German and Dutch people differ the most are also the characteristics that are most likely to cause irritations or conflicts. The results of the third study in this dissertation show that this assumption is not necessarily accurate and can therefore clear up a common misconception.

5.5   Further research

Each of the three studies led to suggestions for further research that arose from or were related to the methodology or results of that particular study. Since the studies are complementary and were designed to reduce each other's limitations and weaknesses, some suggestions for further research from the culture standards study could be addressed and carried out in the book corpus analysis, and suggestions for further research from the book corpus analysis could be addressed and carried out in the study about the conflict potential of cultural characteristics. However, in addition to the suggestions for further research from each single study, there are also some suggestions for further research that arise from the whole project.

First, a socio-historical anchoring of the cultural characteristics, commonalities and differences that play a role in German-Dutch interaction would be expedient. As Thomas (2008) stated, embedding cultural characteristics into a historical context certainly helps enable a better understanding of cultural differences. Hofstede (2008) even claimed that cultural differences and characteristics cannot be understood without the study of their history because they are a "crystallization of history in the minds, hearts, and hands of the present generation" (p. 11). Demorgon and Molz (1996) also articulated the view that a diachronic analysis of cultural characteristics is necessary if one wants to comprehend them thoroughly because they are often the result of particularly shaping time periods of a culture, for example a war, an economic crisis or a famine. However, as already mentioned, it is hard if not impossible to derive today's cultural characteristics unambiguously from particular developments or events in the past (cf. Daniel, 2001; Lorenz, 2002). Since an embedding of the results of this dissertation project in a socio-historical context would not have been empirically justifiable, it was not conducted in this dissertation. Nevertheless such an embedding would make perfect sense for a popular science or guidebook about the Dutch and/or German culture because it would help the reader gain a deeper understanding of the German culture. Of course, there are certain developments or events or developments in history that allow a better understanding of today's cultural characteristics, even though a link between history and today's cultural characteristics cannot be empirically justified.

Second, this dissertation showed that by using a combination of different methods of analyzing culture, the limitations and disadvantages of each single method can be reduced and additional value can be created. Furthermore, it was shown that the conflict potential of certain cultural characteristics in intercultural interactions is not necessarily only determined by the extent to which the members of two cultures differ from each other with regard to these characteristics, but that the relevance that they attribute to them also plays a role. However, this was only analyzed in a German-Dutch context. It would therefore make sense to apply the methodology used in this dissertation to other binational contexts, as well to analyze whether the results from this study can be generalized.

Third, as already mentioned in the first and second studies, there were certain aspects that could not be determined with the methodology of the three conducted studies or to which the three studies gave contradictory answers. It would therefore be expedient to conduct follow-up research to analyze these aspects. While the results of the culture standards study suggest that differences in individualism play no or only a rudimentary role in German-Dutch interaction, the results from the book corpus analysis suggest that they do play a role. In addition, while Hofstede's (2008) dimension *individualism* implies that Dutch are more individualistic than Germans, the results of the book corpus analysis suggest the opposite. It would therefore be interesting to analyze which role individualism actually plays in German-Dutch interactions. Furthermore, the culture standards study could also not determine which role directness plays in intercultural interactions and whether German or Dutch people are more direct. This question might be related to individualism because — as Hofstede (2008) suggested — there might be a correlation between individualism and directness. A survey might be suited to analyzing the role directness and individualism play in German-Dutch interaction. It could ask German and Dutch respondents to state their attitudes toward certain situations or contexts in which individualism and/or directness play a role, or ask them how they would react in certain situations related to directness or individualism.

6   German summary

Interkulturelle Kommunikation in deutsch-niederländischen (geschäftlichen) Interaktionen

Deutschland und die Niederlande unterhalten enge und vielfältige Kontakte und Kooperationen im politischen, wirtschaftlichen, kulturellen sowie im Forschungs- und Bildungsbereich. Naturgemäß entfällt hierbei der Großteil der grenzüberschreitenden Kooperationen auf privatwirtschaftliche Kontakte, beide Länder sind wirtschaftlich eng miteinander verflochten. Tausende deutsche und niederländische Unternehmen sind im Nachbarland aktiv, zehntausende Deutsche leben und arbeiten in den Niederlanden und umgekehrt. Die Niederlande gehören zu den wichtigsten Handelspartnern Deutschlands, während Deutschland mit Abstand der wichtigste Handelspartner für die Niederlande ist.

Eine Vielzahl von Studien zeigt, dass und auf welche Weise kulturelle Unterschiede und vor allem Unkenntnis über die Kultur des Partners in interkulturellen Interaktionen zu Irritationen und Problemen führen und somit auch konkrete finanzielle Auswirkungen haben können. Auch im deutsch-niederländischen Kontext bleibt festzuhalten, dass trotz guter und intensiver Kooperation auf den verschiedensten Gebieten Potenziale aufgrund von Kulturunterschieden nicht ausgeschöpft werden. Dies zeigt, dass es für Deutsche und Niederländer bei grenzüberschreitender Interaktion essentiell ist, die Kultur des Nachbarlandes zu kennen.

Aus diesem Grund haben sich bereits diverse Wissenschaftler und Autoren mit deutsch-niederländischen Kulturunterschieden befasst. Eine generelle wissenschaftliche interkulturelle Analyse deutsch-niederländischer Kulturunterschiede und kultureller Charakteristika, die in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen eine Rolle spielen, wurde bislang jedoch noch nicht durchgeführt. Ziel des Dissertationsprojekts ist es deshalb, durch eine solche Analyse einen Beitrag zur Schließung dieser Forschungslücke zu leisten.

Eine Inventur bestehender Methoden und Modelle der Kulturanalyse zeigte, dass keine dieser Methoden dazu geeignet ist, dieses Ziel vollumfänglich zu erreichen, da jede einzelne eine Reihe von Vor- und Nachteilen gegenüber den anderen aufweist. Aus diesem Grund wurde beschlossen, sich dem Forschungsthema durch eine Kombination verschiedener Methoden zu nähern und dadurch die Nachteile der einzelnen Methoden zu minimieren und einen Mehrwert zu generieren.

Die zentrale Forschungsfrage lautete: Welche kulturellen Merkmale sind in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionssituationen relevant und welche Rolle spielen sie in diesen Interaktionen? Die Dissertation besteht aus drei separaten Studien sowie einem Vergleich bzw. einer Kombination der Ergebnisse untereinander und mit den Ergebnissen anderer Kulturstudien.

Kulturstandardsstudie (Studie 1)

Ziel der ersten Studie (Kapitel 2) war die Identifikation, Beschreibung und Erklärung genereller kultureller Aspekte, die in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionen eine Rolle spielen. Hierzu eignete sich das Konzept der Kulturstandards. Kulturstandards sind die zentralen Kennzeichen einer Kultur, die als Orientierungssystem des Wahrnehmens, Denkens und Handelns dienen und auf deren Basis eigenes und fremdes Handeln beurteilt wird. Sie beschreiben eher abstrakte, übergeordnete Aspekte der Kultur, die aus der spezifischen Perspektive einer anderen Kultur in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen eine Rolle spielen. Da Thomas und Schlizio (2009) bereits in einer früheren Studie niederländische Kulturstandards aus deutscher Perspektive analysiert haben, wurde mit dieser Studie die deutsch-niederländische Kulturanalyse mittels der Kulturstandardsmethode komplettiert. Die Forschungsfrage lautete: Welche deutschen Kulturstandards aus niederländischer Perspektive gibt es und in welcher Beziehung stehen sie zu niederländischen Kulturstandards aus deutscher Perspektive und anderen Methoden der Kulturanalyse?

Methodik

Die Identifizierung der Kulturstandards erfolgte auf Basis der Critical-Incidents-Methode, die Critical Incidents wurden in qualitativen, teilstrukturierten Interviews mit Niederländern, die in Deutschland leben und arbeiten, erhoben. Hierbei wurde auf eine Heterogenität der Stichprobe geachtet, d. h. es wurden Personen mit unterschiedlichen sozialdemografischen Merkmalen, die in unterschiedlichen Branchen und Unternehmen arbeiten, interviewt. In 16 Interviews wurden insgesamt 225 Critical Incidents erhoben, die mittels qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse kategorisiert wurden. Anschließend leiteten zehn bikulturelle Experten (d. h. Personen mit langjährigen profunden Kenntnissen der deutschen und niederländischen Kultur, die sich mit beiden Kulturen auf methodische, reflektierte und wissenschaftliche Weise beschäftigt haben) anhand vorab festgelegter Kriterien in einem diskursiven Prozess aus den Kategorien sechs deutsche Kulturstandards aus niederländischer Perspektive ab.

Ergebnisse

Diese Kulturstandards sind:

1) Angst vor Kontrollverlust: Aus niederländischer Sicht haben Deutsche eine starke Aversion gegen Kontrollverlust. Deshalb versuchen sie – stärker als Niederländer – Unsicherheiten, Risiken und vorhersehbare Situationen durch Planung oder Vermeidung zu verringern.

2) Trennung von Arbeit und Privatleben: Aus niederländischer Perspektive trennen Deutsche stärker zwischen den Lebensbereichen Arbeit und Privatleben. Bei der Arbeit verhalten sich Deutsche reservierter und formeller, Gefühle und Humor werden weniger als im Privatleben gezeigt. Kollegen werden in erster Linie als Kollegen und nicht als Freunde betrachtet.

3) Aufgabenorientierung: Bei der Arbeit steht die Aufgabe im Mittelpunkt, Gefühle und eine angenehme Arbeitsatmosphäre spielen eine weniger wichtige Rolle als in den Niederlanden. Gute Zusammenarbeit erfordert deshalb nicht erst das Etablieren persönlicher Beziehungen. Hierarchien und direkte Anordnungen werden in Deutschland eher akzeptiert als in den Niederlanden, da sie als Mittel zur effizienten Durchführung der Aufgaben gesehen werden.

4) Vorliebe für Regeln, Strukturen und Vorschriften: Regeln werden in Deutschland stärker als in den Niederlanden als universell gültig betrachtet und kontextunabhängig befolgt. Zudem planen Deutsche mehr und detaillierter als Niederländer und versuchen, alle Unwägbarkeiten vorab zu eliminieren, wodurch sie aus niederländischer Perspektive oft unflexibel wirken.

5) Zeitplanung: Aus niederländischer Sicht planen Deutsche viel weiter in die Zukunft und strukturieren sie ihre Zeit stärker. Termine sind wichtig, kurzfristige unangekündigte Besuche werden als störend empfunden. Man versucht, Multitasking zu vermeiden, Pünktlichkeit wird als überaus wichtig betrachtet.

6) Statusorientierung: Statussymbole werden in Deutschland stärker gezeigt als in den Niederlanden, sie gelten als Zeichen des Erfolgs und verdeutlichen die Stellung in der Hierarchie. Auch akademische Titel gelten als Statussymbole.

Sind miteinander verflochten und voneinander abhängig. Grafik 16 zeigt, wie die einzelnen Kulturstandards miteinander verbunden sind.

Mit diesen sechs Kulturstandards lassen sich die meisten kulturellen Aspekte der deutschen Kultur, die in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionssituationen eine Rolle spielen, beschreiben und zu einem gewissen Grad auch erklären und antizipieren. Sie können somit potenzielle Quellen für Irritationen und Missverständnisse in der deutsch-niederländischen Interaktion aufzeigen und zudem helfen, in interkulturellen Interaktionen relevante kulturelle Charakteristika zu priorisieren. Dadurch bieten Sie – in Kombination mit den von Thomas und Schlizio identifizierten niederländischen Kulturstandards aus deutscher Perspektive – Deutschen und Niederländern einen Orientierungsrahmen für bikulturelle Interaktionssituationen.
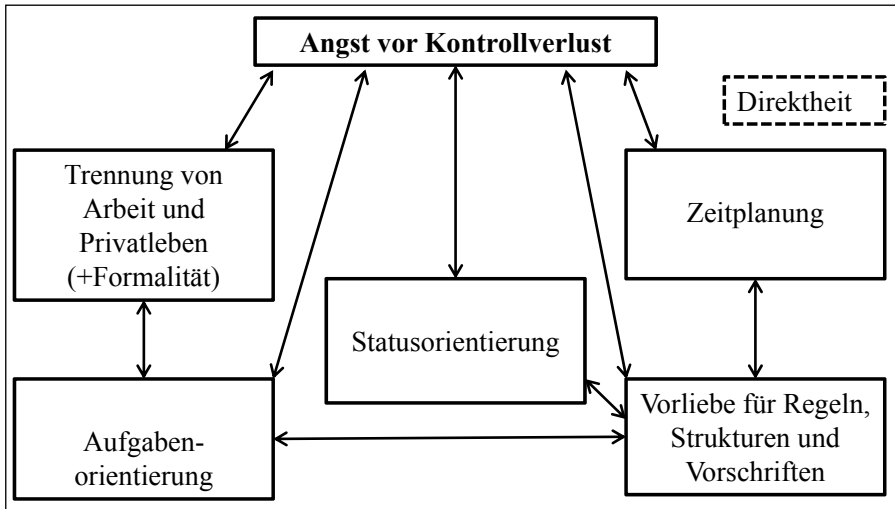
Fig. 16 Wirkungszusammenhang und Hierarchien der deutschen Kulturstandards aus niederländischer Perspektive. Die Pfeile zeigen die wechselseitigen Abhängigkeiten auf.

Bücherkorpusanalyse von Ratgeberbüchern über die deutsche und niederländische Kultur (Studie 2)

In der zweiten Studie (Kapitel 3) erfolgte eine Analyse konkreter Manifestationen kultureller Charakteristika in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionssituationen. Hierzu erfolgte eine Analyse von (populärwissenschaftlichen) Ratgeberbüchern deutscher Autoren über die niederländische Kultur (niederländischer Bücherkorpus) und niederländischer Autoren über die deutsche Kultur (deutscher Bücherkorpus). Ziel der Studie war es herauszufinden, welche kulturellen Aspekte die Autoren beschreiben, wie diese miteinander in Verbindung stehen und ob es Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen dem deutschen und dem niederländischen Bücherkorpus gibt. Die zentrale Forschungsfrage lautete: Welche konkreten kulturellen Charakteristika spielen eine Rolle in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionssituationen und in welchen Kontexten und Situationen sind sie relevant? Sie wurde in drei aufeinander aufbauende Forschungsfragen unterteilt:

1) Welche kulturellen Aspekte werden im deutschen und im niederländischen Bücherkorpus beschrieben?
2) In welchem Zusammenhang stehen die einzelnen genannten kulturellen Aspekte innerhalb des jeweiligen Bücherkorpus?
3) Welche Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten bestehen zwischen den im deutschen und im niederländischen Bücherkorpus genannten kulturellen Aspekten?

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Methodik

Für die Korpusanalyse wurden populärwissenschaftliche und Ratgeberbücher niederländischer Autoren über die deutsche und deutscher Autoren über die niederländische Kultur analysiert. Die Literaturrecherche erfolgte über Suchmaschinen, (universitäre) Bibliothekskataloge und thematische Datenbanken. Auf diese Weise konnten jeweils ca. 55 Bücher für den deutschen und den niederländischen Bücherkorpus gefunden werden. Ein Abgleich mit der deutschen Nationalbibliothek sowie der Koninklijke Bibliotheek implizierte, dass tatsächlich der überwiegende Teil der Grundgesamtheit erfasst worden war.

Die erste Frage wurde mittels einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse beantwortet, im Zuge derer die in den Büchern beschriebenen Charakteristika kategorisiert wurden. Die Bücher wurden hierbei in zufälliger Reihenfolge analysiert, bis ein Sättigungspunkt erreicht war, d. h. weitere Bücher keine neuen kulturellen Charakteristika lieferten. Insgesamt wurden 24 Bücher des deutschen und 23 Bücher des niederländischen Bücherkorpus analysiert. Aus diesen wurden für den deutschen Bücherkorpus 20 und für den niederländischen 19 Hauptkategorien abgeleitet, die bestimmte kulturelle Charakteristika beschreiben.

Zur Beantwortung der zweiten Forschungsfrage wurde zunächst analysiert, welche Relevanz die Autoren der Bücherkorpora den einzelnen Kategorien zumessen. Dazu erfolgte eine Gewichtung der einzelnen Kategorien anhand bestimmter Parameter (u. a. die Häufigkeit der Nennung sowie die Ausführlichkeit der Beschreibung einer Kategorie), die es erlaubte, die einzelnen Kategorien bezüglich der ihr von den Autoren zugemessenen Relevanz zu hierarchisieren. Zudem wurde die interne Konsistenz der einzelnen Kategorien untersucht. Hierzu wurde analysiert, ob die Autoren bezüglich einer Kategorie oder deren Ausprägung übereinstimmten oder ob es auch abweichende Meinungen gab.

Für die Beantwortung der dritten Forschungsfrage wurde zunächst analysiert, ob die Autoren des deutschen und des niederländischen Bücherkorpus ähnliche oder unterschiedliche Kategorien nennen. Hierbei zeigte sich, dass die Autoren überwiegend ähnliche Kategorien nennen. Anschließend wurde für diejenigen Kategorien, die in beiden Bücherkorpora genannt wurden, analysiert, ob die Autoren des deutschen und des niederländischen Bücherkorpus diesen eine ähnliche oder eine unterschiedliche Relevanz zumessen. Dabei zeigte sich, dass es einerseits Kategorien gibt, die in beiden Bücherkorpora als ähnlich relevant in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen gesehen werden, andererseits aber auch Kategorien, denen von den Autoren des deutschen Bücherkorpus eine viel höhere oder niedrigere Relevanz in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen beigemessen wird.

Ergebnisse

In der Studie wurden zunächst 20 deutsche und 19 niederländische kulturelle Aspekte identifiziert, die in bikulturellen Interaktionen eine Rolle spielen. Sie ergänzen die Ergebnisse der Kulturstandardsstudie, indem sie aufzeigen, wie, in welchen Situationen und Kontexten sich Kulturunterschiede konkret manifestieren. Zudem konnte die Relevanz, die Deutsche und Niederländer den kulturellen Charakteristika in interkulturellen Interaktionen beimessen, ermittelt werden. Diese ermöglicht es Deutschen und Niederländern, in bikulturellen Interaktionen zu beurteilen, welche Relevanz der Interaktionspartner bestimmten Verhaltensweisen beimisst und erleichtert somit das Finden eines Modus Vivendi zum Umgang mit Kulturunterschieden.

Tabelle 31 zeigt die 20 deutschen und 19 niederländischen kulturellen Aspekte (eine detaillierte Beschreibung dieser Aspekte findet sich in Kapitel 3.3.2).

Table 30   Kulturelle Aspekte deutscher und niederländischer Bücherkorpus

| Deutscher Bücherkorpus	Niederländischer Bücherkorpus
Hierarchien	Hierarchien
Kommunikation	Kommunikation
Formalität	Informalität
Trennung von Beruf und Privatleben	Trennung von beruf und Privatleben
Statusdenken und Bescheidenheit	Statusdenken und Bescheidenheit
Regeln und Vorschriften	Regeln und Vorschriften
Umgang mit Zeit	Umgang mit Zeit
Flexibilität	Flexibilität, Pragmatismus, Improvisation
Vermeidung von Unsicherheiten	Vermeidung von Unsicherheiten
Aufgabe wichtiger als gute Arbeitsatmosphäre	Harmonie ebenso wichtig wie Aufgabe
Planung	Planung
Details	Details
Expertise and Qualifikation	Expertise and Qualifikation
Perfektion	Perfektion
Individualismus	Individualismus
Versammlungen und Diskussionskultur	Konsens und „Overleg"
Respekt	Calimero Effect
Direktheit	Toleranz
Strukturiertheit	Egalitärer Charakter
Gute Vorbereitung	
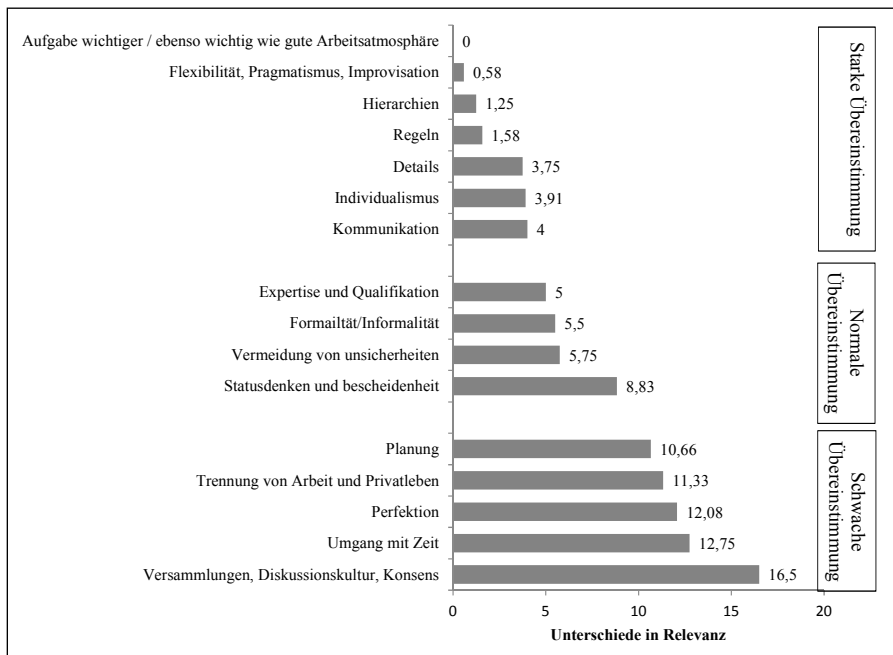
Fig. 17   Übereinstimmung der Relevanz, die die Autoren des deutschen und niederländischen Bücherkorpus kulturellen Charakteristika in bikulturellen Interaktionen beimessen (geringer Wert = starke Übereinstimmung und vice versa).

Zudem zeigte sich, dass es bestimmte kulturelle Aspekte gibt, die in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen von Deutschen und Niederländern als unterschiedlich relevant betrachtet werden. Grafik 17 zeigt für diejenigen kulturellen Aspekte, die sich in beiden Bücherkorpora finden lassen, den Unterschied in der jeweils zuerkannten Relevanz der deutschen und niederländischen Autoren.

Hierzu lässt sich die Hypothese aufstellen (und kulturpsychologisch begründen), dass es gerade diese Aspekte sind (und nicht unbedingt diejenigen Aspekte, bezüglich derer sich Deutsche und Niederländer am offensichtlichsten unterscheiden), die in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionen zu Irritationen und Problemen führen können.

Analyse des Konfliktpotenzials kultureller Unterschiede in interkulturellen Interaktionssituationen (Studie 3)

Ziel der dritten Studie (Kapitel 4) war die Überprüfung dieser Hypothese. Die Forschungsfrage lautete: Werden in bikulturellen Interaktionssituationen Probleme, Irritationen und/oder Missverständnisse eher durch kulturelle Unterschiede verur-

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sacht, denen Deutsche und Niederländer eine unterschiedliche Relevanz beimessen oder durch kulturelle Unterschiede, denen sie eine ähnliche Relevanz beimessen?

Methodik

Ein direkter Ansatz zur Überprüfung der Hypothese war aus diversen Gründen nicht sinnvoll bzw. möglich. Deshalb wurde ein indirekter Ansatz gewählt, bei dem Niederländer und Deutsche in einer Onlineumfrage zu ihrer Einstellung gegenüber bestimmten kulturellen Charakteristika befragt wurden. An der Umfrage nahmen 77 Niederländer und 75 Deutsche teil.

Für die Umfrage wurden zunächst exemplarisch zwei kulturelle Charakteristika ausgewählt, denen Deutsche und Niederländer in interkulturellen Interaktionssituationen eine ähnliche Relevanz beimessen und zwei, die sie als unterschiedlich relevant betrachten. Für jedes dieser Charakteristika wurden fiktive Fälle entwickelt, die jeweils ein „typisch deutsches" und ein „typisch niederländisches" Verhalten bezüglich des Charakteristikums beschrieben. Anschließend wurden die deutschen Studienteilnehmer bezüglich der Fälle mit „typisch niederländischem" Verhalten zu ihrer Einstellung gegenüber diesem Verhalten befragt. Die niederländischen Studienteilnehmer wurden bezüglich der gleichen Fälle zu ihrer Einschätzung der Einstellung Deutscher gegenüber diesem Verhalten befragt. Das gleiche erfolgte umgekehrt für die Fälle, die ein „typisch deutsches" Verhalten beschreiben. Die Teilnehmer konnten ihre Antworten auf einer siebenstufigen Likert-Skala (1 = würde mich sehr stören/sehr typisch, 7 = würde mich überhaupt nicht stören/untypisch) ankreuzen.

Anschließend wurden die Antworten der deutschen und niederländischen Studienteilnehmer per univariater Analyse (Signifikanzniveau von 0,01) verglichen, wobei sozialdemografische Merkmale der Studienteilnehmer als Kovariaten in die Berechnung eingingen.

Ein Unterschied in der Einschätzung der deutschen und niederländischen Studienteilnehmer wurde als Hinweis betrachtet, dass den Mitgliedern der einen Kultur nicht bewusst ist, dass ihr Verhalten die Mitglieder der anderen Kultur stört. Es ist somit anzunehmen, dass die Mitglieder dieser Kultur aufgrund dieser fehlerhaften Einschätzung keine Notwendigkeit sehen, bezüglich des Kulturunterschiedes einen Modus Vivendi zu finden. Dadurch erhöht sich die Chance auf Irritationen, Probleme und/oder Missverständnisse in der Interaktion.

Ergebnisse

Tatsächlich konnte die Hypothese bestätigt werden. Bezüglich der beiden kulturellen Charakteristika, denen Deutsche und Niederländer eine ähnliche Relevanz beimessen, konnten die deutschen und niederländischen Studienteilnehmer korrekt

einschätzen, wie sehr die Mitglieder der anderen Kultur ein bestimmtes Verhalten stört. Somit ist anzunehmen, dass sie auch die Notwendigkeit, in der Interaktion einen Modus Vivendi zum Umgang mit dem Kulturunterschied zu finden, korrekt einschätzen und dadurch Irritationen und Probleme vermeiden können. Bezüglich der kulturellen Charakteristika, denen Deutsche und Niederländer unterschiedliche Relevanz beimessen, zeigten sich deutliche signifikante Unterschiede in der Einschätzung, was darauf schließen lässt, dass bezüglich dieser Kulturunterschiede Irritationen und Missverständnisse in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionssituationen wahrscheinlicher sind. Die statistische Analyse zeigte zudem, dass die Ergebnisse nicht durch sozialdemografische und andere Merkmale der Studienteilnehmer verzerrt wurden. Da das Konfliktpotenzial kultureller Unterschiede in dieser Form bislang noch nicht untersucht wurde, liefert diese Studie neue Impulse für die interkulturelle Forschung.

Ergebnisse der Kombination der drei Studien

Durch die Kombination der drei Studien sowie den Vergleich mit anderen Methoden der Kulturanalyse ließ sich die zentrale Forschungsfrage der vorliegenden Arbeit umfassend beantworten. Die Kulturstandards zeigen die abstrakten, grundlegenden und übergeordneten kulturellen Charakteristika, die in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionen eine Rolle spielen, zeigen auf, wie diese Zusammenhängen und ermöglichen es, Verhalten in solchen Situationen zu einem gewissen Grad zu erklären und zu antizipieren. Die Bücherkorpusstudie ergänzt die Kulturstandardsstudie, indem sie aufzeigt, wie sich Kulturunterschiede konkret in bikulturellen Interaktionen manifestieren. Zudem zeigt sie auf, welche Relevanz Deutsche und Niederländer bestimmten kulturellen Charakteristika beimessen, wodurch sie eine Priorisierung ermöglichen. Die Ergebnisse der Studie zum Konfliktpotenzial stellt eine weitere Ergänzung der ersten beiden Studien dar, indem sie aufzeigt, welche Kulturunterschiede am wahrscheinlichsten zu Irritationen oder Problemen in der deutsch-niederländischen Interaktion führen.

Theoretische Implikationen

Die Ergebnisse dieses Dissertationsprojekts bringen einige neue Impulse für die interkulturelle Forschung. Zunächst einmal zeigt der Vergleich der Ergebnisse der drei Studien mit Dimensionsmodellen die Wichtigkeit auf, interkulturelle Fragen mit interkulturellen Methoden zu analysieren. Wenn man, wie es in der heutigen Kultur- und Managementforschung sowie in interkulturellen Trainings und Workshops oft geschieht, cross-kulturelle Modelle zur Erklärung oder Vorhersage von Verhalten in interkulturellen Interaktionen verwendet, erhält man unter Umständen unvollständige, verzerrte oder sogar falsche Ergebnisse.

Zudem wurde in der interkulturellen Forschung das Konfliktpotenzial kultureller Unterschiede bislang kaum erforscht. Vielmehr wird in vielen populärwissenschaftlichen und Managementbüchern sowie in interkulturellen Trainings implizit davon ausgegangen, dass diejenigen Kulturunterschiede, bezüglich derer die größten Unterschiede zwischen zwei Kulturen bestehen, auch automatisch die konfliktträchtigsten sind. Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie zeigen auf, dass hier auch andere Faktoren eine Rolle spielen und stellen eine Methode zur Erforschung des Konfliktpotenzials vor. Außerdem konnte in dieser Dissertation der Mehrwert einer Kombination verschiedener Methoden der interkulturellen Analyse aufgezeigt werden, da auf diese Weise Dinge aufgezeigt werden konnten, die man mit nur einer Methode nicht oder nur unzureichend hätte analysieren können.

Praktische Implikationen

Mit den Ergebnissen dieser Dissertation lassen sich populärwissenschaftliche und Ratgeberbücher über die deutsche und niederländische Kultur sowie interkulturelle Trainings ergänzen und verbessern. Die Kulturstandards, die eher abstrakte und übergeordnete Aspekte der Kultur zeigen, bieten eine umfassende Übersicht über in der Interaktion relevante kulturelle Unterschiede. Die Ergebnisse der Bücherkorpusanalyse ergänzen die Kulturstandards, indem sie aufzeigen, wie und in welchen Kontexten und Situationen kulturelle Unterschiede sich in deutsch-niederländischen Interaktionen konkret manifestieren und welche Relevanz Deutsche und Niederländer ihnen beimessen. Die Ergebnisse der dritten Studie stellen eine weitere Ergänzung dar, indem sie das Konfliktpotenzial kultureller Unterschiede erläutern. Dadurch können Deutsche und Niederländer in der bikulturellen Interaktion besser abschätzen, wie sie mit kulturellen Unterschieden umgehen können. Durch die Kombination dieser drei Methoden erhalten Deutsche und Niederländer, die sich auf die Interaktion mit Personen aus dem Nachbarland vorbereiten wollen, ein profundes Wissen über die kulturellen Unterschiede und den Umgang mit diesen.

7   Dutch summary

Interculturele communicate in Duitse-Nederlandse (zakelijke) interacties

Nederland en Duitsland onderhouden nauwe banden en werken in het bedrijfsleven, op politiek en cultureel vlak alsmede op het gebied van onderwijs en onderzoek veelvuldig met elkaar samen. Logischerwijze is een groot deel van de grensoverstijgende samenwerkingsverbanden gebaseerd op contacten in de particuliere sector, de twee landen zijn economisch nauw met elkaar verbonden. Duizenden Nederlandse en Duitse bedrijven zijn in het buurland actief, tienduizenden Duitsers wonen en werken in Nederland en omgekeerd. Nederland is een van de belangrijkste handelspartners van Duitsland, terwijl Duitsland met afstand de belangrijkste handelspartner voor Nederland is.

Uit een groot aantal onderzoeken blijkt dat culturele verschillen en vooral ontbrekende kennis over de cultuur van de partner in interculturele interacties tot irritaties en problemen kunnen leiden en daarmee ook concrete financiële gevolgen kunnen hebben. Ook in de Duits-Nederlandse context geldt dat er door cultuurverschillen op de meest uiteenlopende gebieden kansen blijven liggen. Dat laat zien dat het voor Duitsers en Nederlanders bij grensoverschrijdende interactie essentieel is om de cultuur van het buurland te kennen.

Om deze reden hebben verschillende wetenschappers en auteurs zich al beziggehouden met Duits-Nederlandse cultuurverschillen. Tot op heden werd er echter nog geen algemeen wetenschappelijke interculturele analyse van Duits-Nederlandse cultuurverschillen en culturele kenmerken, die in biculturele interacties een rol spelen, uitgevoerd. Doel van dit proefschrift is dan ook om met behulp van een dergelijke analyse een bijdrage te leveren aan de sluiting van dit onderzoekshiaat.

Uit een inventarisatie van bestaande methodes en modellen van de cultuuranalyse bleek dat geen van deze methodes geschikt is om dit doel in de volle omvang te bereiken. Elk van de methodes beschikt namelijk over andere voor- en nadelen. Daarom is besloten om het onderzoek met behulp van een combinatie van diverse methoden uit te voeren om daarmee de nadelen van de afzonderlijke methodes te minimaliseren en een meerwaarde te creëren.

De centrale onderzoeksvraag luidde: Welke culturele kenmerken zijn in Duits-Nederlandse interacties relevant en welke rol spelen zij in deze interacties? Het proefschrift bestaat uit drie afzonderlijke onderzoeken alsmede een vergelijking resp. een combinatie van de resultaten onder elkaar en met de resultaten van andere cultuuronderzoeken.

Onderzoek culturele standaarden (Onderzoek 1)

Doelstelling van het eerste onderzoek (hoofdstuk 2) was de identificatie, beschrijving en toelichting van algemene culturele aspecten die in Duits-Nederlandse interacties een rol spelen. Hiervoor was het concept van culturele standaarden geschikt. Culturele standaarden zijn de centrale kenmerken van een cultuur die als oriëntatiesysteem voor de waarneming, denk- en handelwijze dienen en op basis waarvan het eigen handelen en het handelen van anderen wordt beoordeeld. Ze beschrijven vooral abstracte, overkoepelende culturele aspecten die vanuit het specifieke perspectief van een andere cultuur in biculturele interacties een rol spelen. Omdat Thomas en Schlizio (2009) al in een eerder onderzoek Nederlandse culturele standaarden vanuit Duits perspectief hebben geanalyseerd, werd met dit onderzoek de Duits-Nederlandse cultuuranalyse met behulp van de culture standards methode aangevuld. De onderzoeksvraag luidde: Welke Duitse culturele standaarden bestaan er vanuit Nederlands perspectief en wat is hun relatie tot Nederlandse culturele standaarden vanuit Duits oogpunt en andere methoden van de cultuuranalyse?

Methodiek

De identificatie van de culturele standaarden geschiedde op basis van de Critical-Incidents methode, de Critical Incidents werden tijdens kwalitatieve, deels gestructureerde interviews met Nederlanders die in Duitsland wonen en werken, bepaald. Daarbij werd gelet op de heterogeniteit van de steekproef, d. w. z. dat er personen met verschillende sociaaldemografische kenmerken werden geïnterviewd, die in verschillende branches en bedrijven werken. In 16 interviews werden in totaal 225 Critical Incidents vastgesteld, die door middel van een kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyse werden gecategoriseerd. Vervolgens leidden tien biculturele experts (d. w. z. personen met jarenlange, diepgaande kennis van de Duitse en Nederlandse cultuur die zich op methodische, gereflecteerde en wetenschappelijke wijze met de twee culturen hebben beziggehouden) aan de hand van vooraf bepaalde criteria in een discursief proces uit de categorieën zes Duitse culturele standaarden vanuit Nederlands perspectief af.

Resultaten

Deze culturele standaarden zijn:

1) Angst om de controle te verliezen: volgens Nederlanders zijn Duitsers extreem bang om de controle te verliezen. Daarom proberen ze – meer dan Nederlanders – onzekerheden, risico´s of voorspelbare situaties door een goede planning te voorkomen of te verminderen.

2) Scheiding van werk en privéleven: volgens Nederlanders maken Duitsers een duidelijker onderscheid tussen werk en privéleven. Op het werk zijn Duitsers gereserveerder en formeler, er is minder ruimte voor gevoelens en humor dan privé. Collega´s worden vooral als collega´s en niet als vrienden gezien.

3) Taakgerichtheid: tijdens het werk staan de werkzaamheden centraal, gevoelens en een prettige werksfeer zijn veel minder belangrijk dan in Nederland. Daarom zijn persoonlijke banden geen voorwaarde voor een goede samenwerking. Hiërarchie en directe aanwijzingen zijn in Duitsland meer geaccepteerd dan in Nederland, omdat ze worden beschouwd als middel om het werk efficiënt te kunnen doen.

4) Voorliefde voor regels, structuren en voorschriften: regels worden in Duitsland vaker dan in Nederland als algemeen geldend beschouwd en onafhankelijk van de context nageleefd. Bovendien plannen Duitsers meer en gedetailleerder dan Nederlanders en proberen, alle risico's al van te voren uit de weg te ruimen, waardoor Nederlanders Duitsers vaak onflexibel vinden.

5) Tijdsplanning: vanuit Nederlands oogpunt plannen Duitsers veel verder in de toekomst en delen ze hun tijd strakker in. Afspraken zijn belangrijk, onvoorziene, onaangekondigde bezoekjes worden als storend ervaren. Men probeert multitasking te vermijden, stiptheid is extreem belangrijk.

6) Statusgerichtheid: statussymbolen worden in Duitsland vaker getoond dan in Nederland, ze worden beschouwd als teken van succes en verduidelijken de plaats binnen de hiërarchie. Ook academische titels worden gezien als statussymbool. Culturele standaarden staan onderling met elkaar in verband en zijn van elkaar afhankelijk.

In figuur 18 is te zien, hoe de afzonderlijke culturele standaarden met elkaar zijn verbonden.

Met deze zes culturele standaarden kunnen de meeste culturele aspecten van de Duitse cultuur, die in Duits-Nederlandse interacties een rol spelen, beschreven worden en tot op zekere hoogte worden voorspeld en verklaard. Daarmee kunnen potentiële bronnen voor irritaties en misverstanden in de Duits-Nederlandse interactie worden aangetoond en bovendien helpen bij de priorisering van relevante culturele kenmerken in interculturele interacties. Daardoor bieden ze – in combinatie met de door Thomas en Schlizio geïdentificeerde Nederlandse culturele standaarden vanuit Duits perspectief – Nederlanders en Duitsers een houvast voor biculturele interacties.
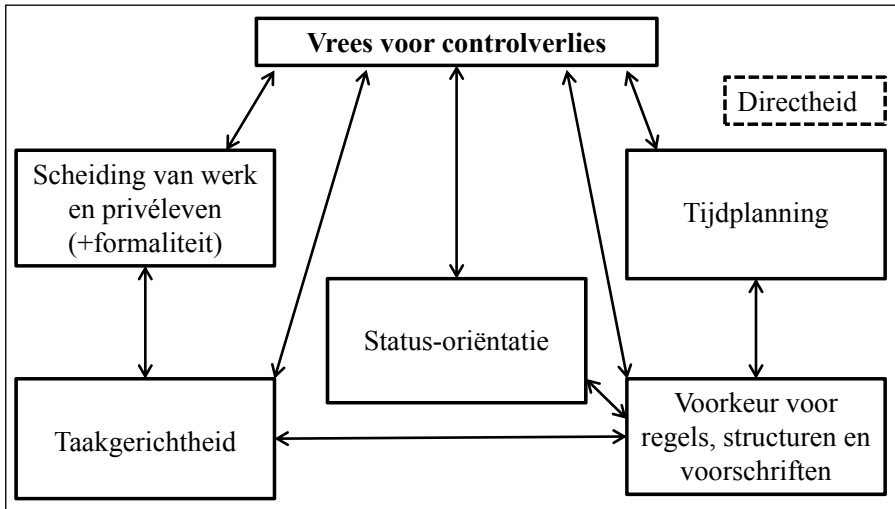
Fig. 18   Verband en hiërarchieën tussen de Duitse cultuurstandaards. De pijlen tonen de wederzijdse relaties.

Analyse van een boekencorpus van handboeken over de Duitse en Nederlandse cultuur (Onderzoek 2)

In het tweede onderzoek (hoofdstuk 3) werd een analyse van de aanwezigheid van concrete culturele kenmerken in Duits-Nederlandse interacties uitgevoerd. Daartoe werden (populairwetenschappelijke) handboeken van Duitse auteurs over de Nederlandse cultuur (Nederlands boekencorpus) en Nederlandse auteurs over de Duitse cultuur (Duits boekencorpus) geanalyseerd. Doel van het onderzoek was om te bepalen welke culturele aspecten de auteurs beschrijven, hoe deze verband houden met elkaar en of er verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen het Duitse en Nederlandse boekencorpus bestaan. De centrale onderzoeksvraag luidde: Welke concrete culturele kenmerken spelen een rol in Duits-Nederlandse interacties en in welke contexten en situaties zijn ze relevant? Ze werden opgedeeld in drie met elkaar in verband staande onderzoeksvragen

1) Welke culturele aspecten worden in het Duitse en in het Nederlandse boekencorpus beschreven?
2) Hoe houden de verschillende culturele aspecten in elke boekencorpus verband met elkaar?
3) Welke verschillen en overeenkomsten bestaan er tussen de in het Duitse en in het Nederlandse boekencorpus genoemde culturele aspecten?

Methodiek

Voor de corpusanalyse werden populairwetenschappelijke publicaties en handboeken van Nederlandse auteurs over de Duitse en van Duitse auteurs over de Nederlandse cultuur geanalyseerd. Via zoekmachines, (universitaire) bibliotheekcatalogi en thematische databanken werd literatuuronderzoek gedaan. Op deze manier werden per land ca. 55 boeken voor het Duitse en Nederlandse boekencorpus gevonden. Uit een vergelijking met de Deutsche Nationalbibliothek en de Koninklijke Bibliotheek bleek dat het grootste deel van de publicaties daadwerkelijk in de corpora was opgenomen.

De eerste vraag werd door middel van een kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyse beantwoord, waarin de in de boeken beschreven kenmerken werden gecategoriseerd. De boeken werden daarbij in willekeurige volgorde geanalyseerd tot een verzadingspunt was bereikt, d. w. z. andere boeken geen nieuwe culturele kenmerken meer opleverden. In totaal werden 24 boeken van het Duitse en 23 boeken van het Nederlandse boekencorpus geanalyseerd. Daaruit werden voor het Duitse boekencorpus 20 en voor het Nederlandse 19 hoofdcategorieën afgeleid, die bepaalde culturele kenmerken beschrijven.

Ter beantwoording van de tweede onderzoeksvraag werd eerst geanalyseerd hoe relevant de auteurs van de boekencorpora de afzonderlijke categorieën vinden. Vervolgens werden de afzonderlijke categorieën aan de hand van bepaalde parameters (o. a. het aantal keren dat de categorie werd genoemd en de uitvoerigheid van de beschrijving van de categorie) op volgorde van belangrijkheid gezet. Op deze manier konden de categorieën op basis van de relevantie die de auteurs hieraan hadden toegedicht, worden opgesomd. Bovendien werd de interne samenhang van de individuele categorieën onderzocht. Daartoe werd geanalyseerd of de auteurs het eens waren over een categorie en het belang ervan of dat er ook afwijkende meningen waren.

Ter beantwoording van de derde onderzoeksvraag werd eerst geanalyseerd of de auteurs van het Duitse en Nederlandse boekencorpus soortgelijke of verschillende categorieën noemden. Daaruit bleek dat de auteurs grotendeels soortgelijke categorieën noemden. Vervolgens werd voor die categorieën, die in beide boekencorpora werden genoemd, geanalyseerd of de auteurs van het Duitse en Nederlandse boekencorpus aan deze categorieën een soortgelijke of verschillende relevantie toedichten. Daaruit bleek dat er enerzijds categorieën zijn die in beide boekencorpussen als net zo relevant in biculturele interacties worden beschouwd, anderzijds echter ook categorieën, die door de auteurs van het Duitse boekencorpus als veel relevanter of minder relevant in biculturele interacties worden beoordeeld.

Resultaten

In het onderzoek werden in eerste instantie 20 Duitse en 19 Nederlandse cultu-rele aspecten geïdentificeerd die in biculturele interacties een rol spelen. Ze vullen de resultaten van het onderzoek naar culturele standaarden aan doordat ze laten zien in welke situaties en contexten cultuurverschillen concreet een rol spelen. Bovendien kon de relevantie die Duitsers en Nederlanders in culturele interacties toedichten aan culturele kenmerken, worden bepaald. Daarmee kunnen Duitsers en Nederlanders in biculturele interacties beoordelen, hoe relevant de gespreks-partners bepaalde gedragingen vinden en vereenvoudigt op die manier het vinden van een modus vivendi voor de omgang met cultuurverschillen. Figuur 32 toont de 20 Duitse en 19 Nederlandse aspecten (een gedetailleerde beschrijving van deze aspecten is in sectie 3.3.2 te vinden).

Table 31   Culturele aspecten Duits en Nederlands boekencorpus

| **Duits boekencorpus**	**Nederlands boekencorpus**
Hiërarchieën	Hiërarchieën
Communicatie	Communicatie
Formaliteit	Informaliteit
Scheiding van werk en privéleven	Scheiding van werk en privéleven
Status en bescheidenheid	Status en bescheidenheid
Regels en voorschriften	Regels en voorschriften
Omgang met tijd	Omgang met tijd
Flexibiliteit	Flexibiliteit
Vermijding van onzekerheden	Vermijding van onzekerheden
Taak belangrijker dan goed werkklimaat	Taak even belangrijk als goed werkklimaat
Planning	Planning
Details	Details
Expertise en kwalificatie	Expertise en kwalificatie
Perfectie	Perfectie
Individualisme	Individualisme
Meetings en discussies	Consensus en „overleg"
Respect	Calimero effect
Direktheid	Tolerantie
Gestructureerdheid	Egalitair Karakter
Goede voorbereiding	
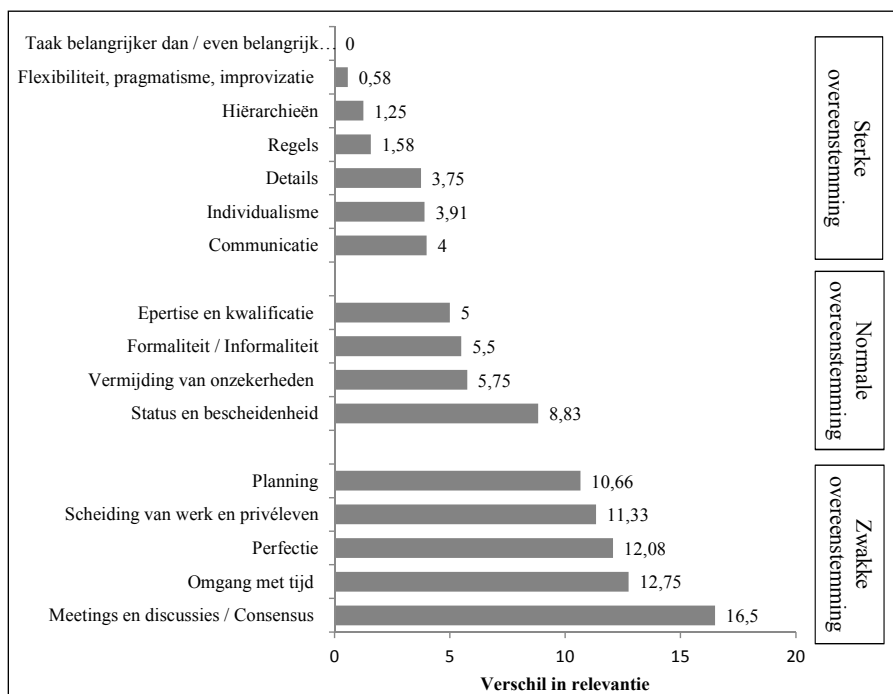
Fig. 19   Overeenstemming van de relevantie die de auteurs van het Duitse en het
Nederlandse boekencorpus culturele aspecten in biculturele interacties toekennen
(kleine waarde= sterke overeenstemming en vice versa).

Bovendien werd aangetoond dat er bepaalde culturele aspecten zijn waaraan Duitsers en Nederlanders in biculturele interacties onderling verschillende relevantie toekennen. Figuur 19 toont voor de culturele aspecten die in beide boekencorpora beschreven worden het verschil in relevantie dat de Duitse en Nederlandse auteurs deze aspecten toekennnen.

Daartoe kan de hypothese worden opgesteld (en cultuurpsychologisch worden beredeneerd) dat het juist deze aspecten zijn (en niet per se de aspecten) waarop Duitsers en Nederlanders het meest van elkaar verschillen), die in Duits-Nederlandse interacties tot irritaties en problemen kunnen leiden.

Analyse van het conflictpotentieel van cultuurverschillen in interculturele interacties (Onderzoek 3)

Doelstelling van het derde onderzoek (hoofdstuk 4) was de verificatie van deze hypothese. De onderzoeksvraag luidde: Worden problemen, irritaties en/of misverstanden in biculturele interacties vooral veroorzaakt door culturele verschillen,

waaraan Duitsers en Nederlanders onderling verschillende relevantie aan toekennen of door cultuurverschillen, die ze beiden net zo relevant vinden?

Methodiek

Een directe aanleiding om de hypothese te toetsen was vanwege diverse redenen niet zinvol resp. mogelijk. Daarom werd een indirecte aanleiding gekozen, waarbij Nederlanders en Duitsers via een online enquête gevraagd werd naar hun houding ten opzichte van bepaalde culturele kenmerken. Aan de enquête namen 77 Nederlanders en 75 Duitsers deel.

Voor de enquête werden om te beginnen exemplair twee culturele kenmerken gekozen, waaraan Duitsers en Nederlanders in interculturele interacties een soortgelijke relevantie toedichten en twee, die ze als verschillend relevant beoordelen. Voor elk van deze kenmerken werden fictieve gevallen ontwikkeld waarin "typisch Duits" en "typisch Nederlands" gedrag werden beschreven. Vervolgens werden de Duitse onderzoeksdeelnemers gevraagd naar hun instelling ten opzichte van het "typisch Nederlandse gedrag". De Nederlandse deelnemers gaven tegelijkertijd hun inschatting over de instelling van Duitsers ten opzichte van dit gedrag. Hetzelfde gebeurde omgekeerd voor de gevallen waarin een "typisch Duits" gedrag werd beschreven. De deelnemers konden hun antwoorden met behulp van een 7-punts Likertschaal (1 = zou ik zeer storend vinden/zeer typisch, 7 = zou ik in het geheel niet storend vinden/atypisch) aankruisen. Vervolgens werden de antwoorden van de Duitse en Nederlandse deelnemers aan het onderzoek met behulp van een univariate analyse (significantieniveau van 0,01) vergeleken, waarbij sociaal-demografische kenmerken als covariaten in de berekening werden meegenomen.

Een verschil in de inschatting van de Duitse en Nederlandse deelnemers werd beschouwd als aanwijzing dat de leden van de ene cultuur zich er niet van bewust zijn dat hun gedrag de leden van de andere cultuur stoort. Derhalve is aanneembaar dat de leden van deze cultuur als gevolg van deze foutieve inschatting geen noodzaak zien om wat betreft dit cultuurverschil een modus vivendi te vinden. Daardoor stijgt de kans op irritaties, problemen en/of misverstanden in de interactie.

Resultaten

De hypothese kon inderdaad worden bevestigd. Wat betreft de twee culturele kenmerken, waaraan Duitsers en Nederlanders een soortgelijke relevantie toekennen, konden de Duitse en Nederlandse deelnemers aan het onderzoek correct inschatten hoezeer de leden van de ene cultuur een bepaald gedrag storend zouden vinden. Derhalve is aannemelijk dat ze ook de noodzaak om in de interactie een modus vivendi voor de omgang met het cultuurverschil te vinden, correct inschatten en daardoor irritaties en problemen kunnen voorkomen. Wat betreft de culturele ken-

merken waaraan Duitsers en Nederlanders een verschillende relevantie toekennen, waren duidelijke, significante verschillen in de inschatting zichtbaar. Dit wijst erop dat de waarschijnlijkheid dat deze cultuurverschillen in Duits-Nederlandse interacties voor irritaties en misverstanden zorgen, groter is. De statistische analyse toonde bovendien aan dat de resultaten niet werden vertekend door sociaaldemografische en andere kenmerken van de onderzoeksdeelnemers. Omdat het conflictpotentieel van culturele verschillen in deze vorm tot op heden nog niet werd onderzocht, levert dit onderzoek nieuwe impulsen voor het intercultureel onderzoek.

Resultaten van de combinatie van de drie onderzoeken

Door de combinatie van de drie onderzoeken alsmede de vergelijking met andere methodes uit de cultuuranalyse kon de centrale onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift uitgebreid worden beantwoord. De culturele standaarden laten de abstracte en overkoepelende culturele kenmerken, die in Duits-Nederlandse interacties een rol spelen, zien, tonen aan hoe deze verband met elkaar houden en maken het mogelijk om tot op zekere hoogte op dit gedrag te anticiperen en het te verklaren. Het onderzoek van de boekencorpora vormt een aanvulling op het onderzoek naar culturele standaarden door aan te tonen hoe cultuurverschillen concreet in biculturele interacties optreden. Bovendien laat het zien welke relevantie Duitsers en Nederlanders aan bepaalde cultuurkenmerken toekennen, waardoor een priorisering kan worden aangebracht. De resultaten van het onderzoek naar het conflictpotentieel vormen een verdere aanvulling op de eerste twee onderzoeken door te laten zien welke cultuurverschillen het meest waarschijnlijk tot irritaties en problemen zullen leiden.

Theoretische implicaties

De resultaten van dit project hebben een aantal nieuwe impulsen voor het interculturele onderzoeksveld opgeleverd. In de eerste plaats toont de vergelijking van de resultaten van de drie onderzoeken met dimensiemodellen aan dat het belangrijk is om interculturele vraagstukken met interculturele methodes te analyseren. Als je, zoals vaak gebeurt in het huidige cultuur en managementonderzoek en tijdens interculturele trainingen en workshops, cross-culturele modellen gebruikt om het gedrag in interculturele interacties te voorspellen of te verklaren, krijg je in sommige gevallen een onvolledig of zelfs verkeerd beeld.

Bovendien is binnen het interculturele onderzoek het conflictpotentieel van culturele verschillen tot op heden nauwelijks onderzocht. In veel populairwetenschappelijke onderzoeken en managementboeken en interculturele trainingen wordt er impliciet vanuit gegaan dat de cultuurverschillen, die tussen twee culturen het grootst zijn, ook automatisch die verschillen zijn die tot de grootste conflicten lei-

den. De onderzoeksresultaten tonen aan dat hier ook andere factoren een rol spelen. Er wordt een methode gepresenteerd waarmee het conflictpotentieel kan worden onderzocht. Bovendien kon in dit proefschrift de meerwaarde van een combinatie van verschillende methoden worden aangetoond omdat op deze manier zaken aan het licht kwamen, die bij toepassing van slechts een methode niet of onvoldoende geanalyseerd had kunnen worden.

Praktische implicaties

Met de resultaten uit dit proefschrift kunnen populairwetenschappelijke boeken en handboeken over de Duitse en Nederlandse cultuur en interculturele trainingen worden aangevuld en verbeterd. De culturele standaarden, die vooral abstracte en brede culturele aspecten laten zien, bieden een uitgebreid overzicht van in interacties relevante cultuurverschillen. De resultaten van het literatuuronderzoek vormen een aanvulling op de culturele standaarden doordat ze laten zien, hoe en in welke contexten en situaties cultuurverschillen in Duits-Nederlandse interacties concreet voorkomen en hoe belangrijk Nederlanders en Duitsers deze vinden. De resultaten van het derde onderzoek vormen een verdere aanvulling door het conflictpotentieel van cultuurverschillen toe te lichten. Daardoor kunnen Nederlanders en Duitsers in biculturele interacties beter inschatten hoe ze met cultuurverschillen om kunnen gaan. Door de combinatie van deze drie methoden krijgen Duitsers en Nederlanders die zich willen voorbereiden op de interactie met mensen uit het buurland, een grondige kennis over cultuurverschillen en de omgang hiermee.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendices to the Culture Standards Study (Study 1)

8.1.1 Appendix 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Table 32   Socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Inter-viewee	Age	Sex	Years of stay in Germany	Profession/industry
In 1	42	M	10	Production manager in the mechanical engineering sector (large organization)
In 2	26	M	3	Postgraduate at university
In 3	65	F	42	Secretary (medium organization), assistant to the executive management in architect's office (small organization), foreign language correspondent (medium organization)
In 4	29	F	6	Public relations bureau (medium organization)
In 5	68	F	48	Trade union (medium organization), healthcare worker (medium organization), office staff in the service industry (medium organization)
In 6	58	F	38	Teacher (medium organization), scientific assistant (medium organization)
In 7	50	F	11	Independent estate agent (small organization)
In 8	49	M	4	Manager in the leisure sector (medium organization)
In 9	-	M	9	Army officer (medium organization), manager in an educational center (medium organization)
In 10	32	M	2	Automotive industry (medium organization)
In 11	38	F	3	Foreign language correspondent in an industrial production company (medium organization)
In 12	34	M	4	Teacher (medium organization)
In 13	40	M	4	Tourism (small organization)
In 14	45	M	16	Independent estate agent (small organization)
In 15	-	M	9	Consultant in Public relations and advertising bureau (small organization)
In 16	40	M	1	Distribution manager for a BeNeLux automotive industry (medium organization)

M = male, F = female. Small organization = 1–10 employees, medium organization = 11–500 employees, large organization = more than 500 employees

Sixteen Dutch people living and working in Germany were interviewed to gather the critical incidents. Since I guaranteed that their names, addresses and exact workplaces would be treated confidentially, this information has been made anonymous. I replaced their names with the pseudonyms In 1 through In 16.

For every interviewee, the following table states their age (in years), sex, duration of stay in Germany (in years), profession or industry and the size of the organization he or she works or worked for. A distinction is made between small (fewer than ten employees), medium (11–500 employees) and large (more than 500 employees) organizations.

8.1.2   Appendix 2: Distribution of the critical incidents according to interviewees and categories

The following table illustrates how many critical incidents each interviewee stated (broken down by the categories described in Section 2.4.4).

Table 33   Distribution of the critical incidents according to interviewees and categories

Category	Interviewee																Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Separation of professional and private life	2	1	0	4	1	3	4	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	27
Dealing with time	1	1	1	3	2	1	4	2	3	3	2	5	1	1	1	0	31
Rules	1	2	2	1	0	1	1	3	2	2	1	0	3	2	2	2	25
Status	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	14
Academic titles and qualifications	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	15
Formality	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	17
Planning, preparation and attention to details	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	19
Task orientation	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	3	3	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	17
Hierarchies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	18
Flexibility and improvisation	3	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	15
Directness and straightforwardness	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	10
Competitiveness	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Tradition	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Rituals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	4
Trust	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Total	20	12	15	17	13	12	15	18	15	14	10	16	15	10	11	12	225

8.1.3 Appendix 3: Socio-demographic characteristics of the experts

I identified German culture standards from a Dutch perspective in collaboration with ten experts: six Dutch and four Germans. Since some of the experts asked to remain anonymous, I replaced all their names with the pseudonyms Ex 1 through Ex 10.

Table 34   Socio-demographic characteristics of the experts

Expert	Nationality	Sex	Profession
Ex 1	Dutch	M	Historian
Ex 2	Dutch	M	Historian
Ex 3	Dutch	F	Scientist of language and literature
Ex 4	Dutch	F	Professor of language and culture
Ex 5	Dutch	M	Consultant in a German-Dutch business consultancy
Ex 6	Dutch	M	Consultant in a German-Dutch business consultancy
Ex 7	German	F	Communication scientist
Ex 8	German	M	Communication scientist
Ex 9	German	F	Dutch-German PR officer
Ex 10	German	M	Consultant in a German-Dutch business consultancy

M = male, F = female

8.1.4 Appendix 4: Expert evaluation of the categories and critical incidents

8.1.4.1 Appendix 4.1: Sample questionnaire

Each expert filled out 15 questionnaires, one for each of the 15 categories. The German experts got German questionnaires and the Dutch experts got Dutch questionnaires. Each expert could also comment on the questionnaires filled out by the other experts. The following is an English translation of those questionnaires.

Questionnaire:

1. How typical are the statements from this category?
   - □ very typical
   - □ typical
   - □ neither … nor
   - □ a little typical
   - □ atypical

2. How important are the statements from this category when it comes to binational encounters?
   - □ very important
   - □ important
   - □ neither … nor
   - □ a little important
   - □ unimportant

3. Is this category a separate and independent category or is it part of another or can it be assigned to another category?
4. Are there fundamental values or norms underlying this category?
5. Are there additional aspects to this category that have not been stated by the interviewees?
6. How should a Dutch person react in critical interaction situations that have been stated by the interviewees regarding this category to avoid misunderstandings or irritations?
7. Has this category undergone changes in the last years or decades or is it likely to change in the near future?

8.1.4.2 Appendix 4.2: Experts' answers to question 1

The experts could select from five different answers to question 1 (How typical are the statements from this category?). Each possible answer was subsequently assigned a numerical value: very typical (4), typical (3), neither … nor (2), a little typical (1) atypical (0). Based on the expert's answers, an average was calculated.

Table 35   Experts' answers to question 1: How typical are the statements from this category?

Category	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10	M
Separation of professional and private life	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3.4
Dealing with time	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.4
Rules	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
Status	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	3.2
Academic titles and qualifications	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3.6
Formality	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3.4
Planning, preparation, attention to details	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
Task orientation	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3.6
Hierarchies	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.8
Flexibility and improvisation	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	3	2	3	3.1
Directness and straightforwardness	2	2	3	3	2	2	-	2	-	2	2.3
Competitiveness	3	2	2	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1.5
Tradition	2	4	3	2	2	2	-	-	3	2	2.2
Rituals	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	-	2	2	2.2
Trust	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	-	1	1	1.6

Answer scale from 0 to 4 (0 = atypical, 4 = very typical), M = mean

8.1.4.3 Appendix 4.3: Experts' answers to question 2

The experts could select from five different answers to question 2 (How important are the statements from this category when it comes to binational encounters?). Each possible answer was subsequently assigned a numerical value: very typical (4), typical (3), neither … nor (2), a little typical (1) atypical (0). Based on the expert's answers, an average was calculated.

Table 36   Experts' answers to question 2: How important are the statements from this category when it comes to binational encounters?

Category	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10	M
Separation of professional and private life	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.8
Dealing with time	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.2
Rules	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
Status	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3.0
Academic titles and qualifications	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.4
Formality	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.4
Planning, preparation, attention to details	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
Task orientation	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3.6
Hierarchies	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.8
Flexibility and improvisation	3	2	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.1
Directness and straight-forwardness	3	2	3	1	3	3	-	3	3	3	2.7
Competitiveness	3	2	1	-	-	2	0	-	2	-	1.7
Tradition	1	2	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	2	1.5
Rituals	0	2	2	1	1	1	2	-	1	1	1.2
Trust	2	2	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2.3

Answer scale from 0 to 4 (0 = atypical, 4 = very typical), M = mean

8.1.4.4 Appendix 4.4: Experts' answers to question 3

The following table shows the experts' answers to question 3 (Is this category a separate and independent category or is it part of another or can it be assigned to another category?). For some of the categories, the experts gave more than one answer.

Table 37   Experts' answers to question 3: Is this category a separate and independent category (S) or is it part of another (P) or can it be assigned to another category (A)?

No	Category/Expert	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10
1	Separation of professional and private life	S	S	S	A6 A8	S A8	S A6 A8	S	S	S A8	S
2	Dealing with time	S	S	S	A7	S	A7	S	S	A7	A7
3	Rules	S A7	A7	A7	A7	A7	A7	A7	A7	A7	A7
4	Status	S	S A9	S A9	A1	-	S	S	S	S	S
5	Academic titles and qualifications	P6 P4	P8	A4	A4 A8	A4	P8	P8	A4	S P8	P8
6	Formality	S	P1	S A1	A1 A8	A8	A1	P1	A8	A8	P1
7	Planning, preparation, attention to details	S A3	S A3	S	A3	A3	A3	A3	A3	A3	-
8	Task orientation	S	S	S A1	S A6	S A6	A1	S	S A6	S A6	S
9	Hierarchies	P8 P3	S A4	P8 P3	P8 A1	P8	A1	P8 A1	P8	P8	P8
10	Flexibility and improvisation	P3 P7	P7	P3 P7	P7	P7	P7 P3	P7 P3	P3 P7	P3 P7	-
11	Directness and straightforwardness	P8	P8	-	P1	-	-	P8	-	-	P1 P8
12	Competitiveness	P1	-	-	-	P1	P1	P8	P1	-	-
13	Tradition	S	S	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-
14	Rituals	S	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-
15	Trust	S	-	A8	-	-	-	P8	-	P8	P8

No = Number of category. S = This category is a separate and independent category. P = This category is part of category … (number shows which category it is part of). A = This category is assigned to category … (number shows which category it is assigned to)

8.1.4.5 Appendix 4.5: Experts' answers to question 4

The following table shows the experts' answers to question 4 (Are there fundamental values or norms underlying this category?). For some of the categories, the experts gave more than one answer. Expert 1, for example, stated that generally there are no underlying norms or values to category 2. However, he also acknowledged that this category might at least slightly have to do with a German *fear of losing control*. Therefore, he gave two answers to the question of whether there are underlying norms or values to category 2.

Explanation of abbreviations:

- N: No, there are no underlying norms and values
- R …: There are no underlying norms or values but the category is strongly related to …
- Y …: Yes, there are underlying norms or values. The number refers to the underlying norm or value stated by the expert:
  - 1: Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations
  - 2: Fear of losing control
  - 3: Separation of professional and private life
  - 4: Task orientation

Table 38   Experts' answers to question 4: Are there fundamental values or norms underlying this category?

Category	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10
Separation of professional and private life	N	N	N	Y2	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dealing with time	R2	R2	N	R2	-	R2	Y2	R2	N	-
Rules	Y1 Y2	Y1 Y2	Y1 Y2	N/ Y1	Y2	Y2	Y2	R2	Y2	Y2
Status	N	-	R2	R2	Y2	Y2	Y2	N	N	N
Academic titles and qualifications	Y2	-	N	N	N	-	Y2	N	-	N
Formality	N	-	N	Y2	-	-	N	N	-	-
Planning, preparation, attention to details	Y2	R2	R2	Y1 Y2	-	-	Y2	Y2	-	-
Task orientation	Y2	Y3	N	Y3	Y3	N	Y3	N	N	-
Hierarchies	Y2 Y1	-	Y4 Y1	N	Y4 Y2	N	Y4	N	Y4	Y4
Flexibility and improvisation	Y2	Y2	N	R2	Y2	-	-	N	Y2	Y2
Directness and straightforwardness	N	-	N	Y3	-	-	-	-	-	Y3
Competitiveness	N	-	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	-
Tradition	N	N	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N
Rituals	N	N	N	N	-	N	N	N	N	N
Trust	N	N	Y2	N	N	Y2	N	N	N	N

Y = Yes, N = No, R = Not underlying but strongly related to … (number shows which category it is assigned to)

8.1.4.6 Appendix 4.6: Experts' answers to question 7

The following table shows the experts' answers to question 7 (Has this category undergone changes in the last years or decades or is it likely to change in the near future?). For some of the categories, the experts gave more than one answer.

Explanation of abbreviations:

- S: The category is stable, has not undergone changes
- M: The category has undergone minor changes
- C: The category has undergone changes

Table 39   Experts' answers to question 7: Has this category undergone changes in the last years or decades or is it likely to change in the near future?

Category	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10
Separation of professional and private life	M	S	S	M	-		M	S	-	-
Dealing with time	S	S	S	M	-		S	S	-	-
Rules	M	S	-	M	-		M	S	-	-
Status	S	M	S	M	-		M	S	-	-
Academic titles and qualifications	S	S	M	C	-		M	M	-	-
Formality	M	M	M	C	M	M	C	M	M	M
Planning, preparation, attention to details	S	S	S	S	-	-	S	M	-	-
Task orientation	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Hierarchies	M	M	M	M	-	-	M	M	M	M
Flexibility and improvisation	M	M	C	M	M	C	M	C	C	M
Directness and straightforwardness	S	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	-
Competitiveness	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tradition	S	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rituals	S	-	S	S	S	-	S	S	M	-
Trust	S	-	S	-	S	-	-	-	-	-

S = the category is stable, has not undergone changes. M = the category has undergone minor changes. C = the category has undergone changes.

8.1.5 Appendix 5: Interdependency and hierarchies of German culture standards

After the identification of the six German culture standards, the experts were asked to analyze if and how they are linked to each other and in what hierarchical relationship they stand. The numbers in the table refer to the number of the other culture standard(s) a culture standard is linked to.

Table 40   Interdependency and hierarchies of German culture standards

No	Culture Standard	Ex1	Ex2	Ex3	Ex4	Ex5	Ex6	Ex7	Ex8	Ex9	Ex10
1	Fear of losing control	4,5, 6	2,3, 4,5	2,3, 4,5, 6	3,4, 5	2,3, 4,5, 6	3,4, 5	4,5, 6	4,5, 6	2,3, 4,5, 6	2,4, 5
2	Separation of living spheres	3	1,3	1,3	-	1,3	3	-	3	1,3	1,3
3	Task orientation	2,4	1,2, 4	1,2	1,4	1,2, 4	1,2, 4	4	2,4	1,2	2,4
4	Appreciation for rules, structures and regulations	1,3, 5	1,3, 5	1,6, 5	1,3, 5	1,3, 5,6	1,3, 5	1,3, 5,6	1,3, 5,6	1,6, 5	1,3, 5,6
5	Time planning	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4
6	Status orientation	1	-	1,4	-	1,4	-	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4

No = number. The numbers illustrate which other culture standards a culture standard is interrelated with.

8.1.6 Appendix 6: Preparatory email for the interviewees

I sent the following email (originally in Dutch) to the interviewees one week before the interviews took place:

Dear Mr. ___/Ms. ___,

Thank you once again for taking part in my research and for agreeing to be interviewed by my colleague ___.
Since the interview will take place next week, this email will give you some information that will help you prepare yourself for the interview.
My colleague will bring a recorder and record the interviews. Later, I will transcribe the records. My colleague and I will be the only people who know your name and address. For my study, your data will be anonymized. Of course, your data will only be used for the purpose of my study and will not be passed to third parties.
The interviews will take about one hour.

First, you will be asked to state socio-demographic data (e. g., sex, age, duration of stay in Germany, industry(s) and companies in which you work or have worked in Germany).

Subsequently, you will be asked to related critical incidents. Critical incidents are situations in which you were confronted with unexpected behavior and reactions from Germans. These can be situations in which Germans acted or reacted differently, unexpectedly or inexplicably, in which you would have expected a different behavior or reaction, and/or in which a Dutch person would have acted or reacted differently. The critical incidents you describe can be negative, positive or neutral. You may describe critical incidents from all areas of life. Think about you German supervisors, colleagues, friends or strangers. Think about work and leisure. Think about meetings, parties, get-togethers, discussions and conversations, etc.

It might be a good idea to start remembering and writing down critical incidents before the interview takes place.

Kind regards,

8.2   Appendices to the Book Corpus Analysis (Study 2)

Some appendices to this study contain too much information to be presented in a Word document and can therefore be found in the Excel spreadsheet (published under www.christopherthesing.de). These are Appendices 9, 11, 12, 15 and 17.

8.2.1   Appendix 7: German and Dutch book corpora

The following list contains the authors and titles of the texts from the German and Dutch book corpora. The nationality of the authors is also stated (in square brackets). Appendices 9 and 11 only state the numbers that are assigned to these texts.

German book corpus (books from Dutch authors describing the German culture)

1:   Huijser, M. [Dutch] (2005). *Culturele intelligentie: thuis in de internationale arena*. Am-sterdam: Business Contact
2:   Koentopp, D. [German] (2000). *Gruppenarbeit im interkulturellen Kontext: Deutschland-Niederlande*. Osnabrück: Koentopp
3:   Thomas, A. [German] &Schlizio, B. U. [German] (2009). *Leben und arbeiten in den Niederlanden: Was Sie über Land und Leute wissen sollten*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

4: Linthout, D. [Dutch] (2006). *Onbekende buren: Duitsland voor Nederlanders, Nederland voor Duitsers.* Amsterdam: Atlas

5: Pechholt, M. [Dutch], Douven, C. [Dutch], & Essers, G. [Dutch] (2008). *Als verhuizen emigreren is – Duitsland: Wonen in Duitsland en werken in Nederland.* Amsterdam: Kluwer

6: Busse, G. [German] (2006*). Klein grensverkeer: De Nederlands-Duitse arbeidsmarkt.* Nijmegen: ROC

7: Hesseling, R. [Dutch] (2001). *Bedrijfscultuur in Duitsland voor Nederlanders in Duitsland.* In Euregio Rijn Waal (2001). *Euregionaal grensverkeer en de interculturele communicatie in het bedrijfsleven. Een oriëntatie op cultureel bepaalde gedrags- en handelswijzen in beroep en bedrijf in Duitsland en Nederland.*

8: Mole, J. [British], Snijders, M. [Dutch], & Jacobs, I. [Dutch] (1997). *Zo doen we dat – over het omgaan en samenwerken met Europeanen.* Amsterdam

9: Breukel, E. [Dutch] & Eijk, I. van [Dutch] (2003). *19 landen – Wereldwijd zakendoen.* Amsterdam: Contact

10: Magazine voor secretaresses en office managers over de landsgrenzen (2/2011). *Duitsland.* Amsterdam

11: Gesteland, R. [Born in USA, has been living in the Netherlands and working in Germany and the Netherlands for decades] (2010). *Cross-cultural business behavior – Negotiating, Selling, Sourcing and Managing across cultures.* Copenhagen

12: Kwintessential [Dutch] (2008). *Intercultureel management training Duitsland.* Berlin: Kwintessential

13: Metzmacher, M. [German] (2010). *Dutch-German: Cultural differences.* Frankfurt

14: Gerisch, L. [German] (1994). *„Holland" geschäftlich – Ein Leitfaden für den deutschen Geschäftsmann in den Niederlanden.* Den Haag: DNHK.

15: Schürings, U. [German] (2010). *Anders als man denkt. Die niederländische Unternehmenskulturals Chance und Herausforderung.* In Wilp, M. & Wielenga, F. (Eds). *Zwei Nachbarn in Europa – Beiträge zum deutsch-niederländischen Verhältnis und Studien- und Beschäftigungsmöglichkeiten im grenzüberschreitenden Kontext.* Münster: Waxmann

16: Vaessen, A. [Dutch] (2009). *Deutsche unter Niederländern-Erfahrungen in der neuen Heimat.* Münster: Agenda

17: Meines, R. [Dutch] (1990). *Duitsland Duitsland – Kracht en Zwakte van een Land.* Amsterdam: Balans

18: Versluis, K. [Dutch] (2008). *De sympathieke reus – cultuurwijzer voor het modern Duitsland.* Amsterdam: Bert Bakker

19: Zeidenitz, S. [German] & Barkow, B. [German] (1994). *Dat zijn nou typisch Duitsers.* Leiden: Krikke

20: Kerres, M. [Dutch] (2008). *De nieuwe buren – hoe Duitsland zijn lichtvoeligheid ontdekte*. Amsterdam: Prometheus

21: Gemert, G. van [Dutch] (2004). *Cultuurverschillen tussen Nederland en Duitsland: "Zijn we echt hetzelfde?"* Nijmegen

22: Reyskens, C. [Dutch] (2007). *Onderhandelingen tussen Nederlanders en Duitsers*. Hasselt

23: Jacobs, L. [Dutch] (2008). *Zakelijke onderhandelingen met Duitsers*. Utrecht

24: Birschel, A. [German] (2008). *Do is der Bahnhof. Nederland door Duitse ogen*. Amsterdam: Bakker

Dutch book corpus (books from German authors describing the Dutch culture)

1: Vossenstein, J. [Dutch] (2010). *Dealing with the Dutch: the cultural context of business and work in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: KIT Publ.

2: Vaessen, A. [Dutch] (2009). *Deutsche unter Niederländern: Erfahrungen in der neuen Heimat*. Münster: Agenada

3: Müller, B. [German] (1998). *Vorbild Niederlande – Tips und Informationen zu Alltagsleben, Politik und Wirtschaft*. Münster: Agenda-Verl.

4: Ernst, H. [German] (2007). *Grenzüberschreitung als Unternehmen*. In Thomas, A. & Schlizio, B.U. *Leben und arbeiten in den Niederlanden – Was Sie über Land und Leute wissen sollten*: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

5: Schürings, U. [German] (2010). *Zwischen Pommes und Praline-Mentalitätsunterschiede, Verhandlungs- und Gesprächskultur in den Niederlanden, Belgien, Luxemburg und Nordrhein-Westfalen*. Münster: Agenda-Verl.

6: Linthout, D. [Dutch] (2006). *Onbekende buren: Duitsland voor Nederlanders, Nederland voor Duitsers*. Amsterdam: Atlas

7: Pechholt, M. [Dutch], Douven, C. [Dutch], & Essers, G. [Dutch] (2008). *Als verhuizen emigreren is – Duitsland – Wonen in Duitsland en werken in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Kluwer

8: Busse, G. [German] (2006). *Klein grensverkeer – De Nederlands-Duitse arbeidsmarkt*. Nijmegen: ROC

9: Gerisch, L. [German] (1994). *"Holland" geschäftlich – Ein Leitfaden für den deutschen Geschäftsmann in den Niederlanden*. Den Haag: DNHK

10: Schürings, U. [German] (2010). *Anders als man denkt. Die niederländische Unternehmenskultur als Chance und Herausforderung*. In Wilp, M. & Wielenga, F. (eds.). *Zwei Nachbarn in Europa – Beiträge zum deutsch-niederländischen Verhältnis und Studien- und Beschäftigungsmöglichkeiten im grenzüberschreitenden Kontext*. Münster: Waxmann

11: Hesseling, R. [Dutch] (2001). *Betriebskultur in den Niederlanden für Deutsche in den Niederlanden*, In: Euregio Rijn Waal (2001). *Euregionaal grensverkeer en de interculturele communicatie in het bedrijfsleven. Een oriëntatie op cul-*

tureel bepaalde gedrags- en handelswijzen in beroep en bedrijf in Duitsland en Nederland.

12: Fichtinger, H. [German] & Sterzenbach, G. [German] (2006). *Knigge fürs Ausland – Niederlande*. München: Hauffe

13: Metzmacher, M. [German] (2010). *Dutch-German: Cultural differences*. Frankfurt

14: Koentopp, D. [German] (2000). *Gruppenarbeit im interkulturellen Kontext: Deutschland – Niederlande*. Osnabrück: Koentopp

15: Horst, H. van der [Dutch] (2000). *Der Himmel so tief-Niederlande und Niederländer verstehen*. Münster: Agenda-Verl.

16: Linthout, D. [Dutch] (2008). *Frau Antje und Herr Mustermann – Niederlande für Deutsche*. Berlin: Links

17: Birschel, A. [German] (2008). *Do is der Bahnhof. Nederland door Duitse ogen*. Amsterdam: Bakker

18: Tiburzy, R. [German] (2002). *Holland*. Köln: Dumont

19: Schots, M. [Dutch] (2004). *Waarom Nederland nooit een finale van Duitsland zal winnen*. Utrecht: A.W. Bruna.

20: Schroevers, S. [Dutch] & Lewis, I.R. [British] (2010). *Negotiations in English*. Amsterdam: Haufe-Lexware

21: Huijser, M. [Dutch] (2005). *Culturele intelligentie – thuis in de internationale arena*. Amsterdam: Business Contact

22: Thomas, A. [German] & Schlizio, B.U. [German] (2009). *Leben und arbeiten in den Niederlanden – Was Sie über Land und Leute wissen sollten*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

23: Crijns, R. [Dutch] (2001). *Niederländische Geschäftsleute in interkulturellen Verhandlungen – Paradigmen zur Beschreibung von Stereotypen in der interkulturellen Unternehmenskommunikation*, In: Rösch, O. (2001). *Stereotypisierung des Fremden – Auswirkungen in der Kommunikation*. Wildau: News & Media.

8.2.2   Appendix 8: Saturation point

Tables 41 and 42 show the saturation points for the German and Dutch book corpora, respectively. For each corpora, they show how many cultural characteristics each book stated that had not been stated in the previously analyzed books. For example, book 1 in the German book corpus included 18 cultural characteristics. Book 2 included 12 cultural characteristics that had not been previously stated, and so forth.

The *new* columns for each book show how many of the stated cultural characteristics were completely new and bore no resemblance to already stated characteristics. For example, in the German book corpus, book number 23 contained one cultural characteristic that had not been stated in the preceding books. However,

this aspect bore some resemblance to a previously stated aspect; it was thus not completely new.

Table 41   German book corpus saturation point (as defined by Ostertag (2010))

Book number	Number of cultural characteristics not stated in preceding books	New
1 (Huijser 2005)	18	18
2 (Koentopp 2000)	12	12
3 (Thomas & Schlizio 2009)	12	12
4 (Linthout 2006)	14	14
5 (Pechholt, Douven, & Essers 2008)	4	4
6 (Busse 2006)	1	1
7 (Hesseling 2001)	14	14
8 (Mole, Snijders, & Jacobs 1997)	0	0
9 (Breukel & Eijk 2003)	6	6
10 (Magazine voor secretaresses 2011)	1	1
11 (Gesteland 2010)	1	1
12 (Kwintessential 2008)	1	1
13 (Metzmacher 2010)	0	0
14 (Gerisch 1994)	6	6
15 (Schürings 2010)	0	0
16 (Vaessen 2009)	3	3
17 (Meines 1990)	6	6
18 (Versluis 2008)	0	0
19 (Zeidenitz & Barkow 1994)	3	2
20 (Kerres 2008)	0	0
21 (Gemert 2004)	0	0
22 (Reyskens 2007)	4	0
23 (Jacobs 2008)	1	0
24 (Birschel 2008)	3	0

Table 42 Dutch book corpus saturation point (as defined by Ostertag (2010))

Book number	Number of cultural characteristics not stated in preceding books	New
1 (Vossenstein 2010)	39	39
2 (Vaessen 2009)	8	8
3 (Müller 1998)	3	3
4 (Ernst 2007)	8	8
5 (Schürings 2004)	5	5
6 (Linthout 2006)	5	5
7 (Pechholt, Douven, & Essers 2008)	2	2
8 (Busse 2006)	0	0
9 (Gerisch 1994)	3	3
10 (Schürings 2010)	2	2
11 (Hesseling 2001)	3	3
12 (Fichtinger & Sterzenbach 2006)	3	3
13 (Metzmacher 2010)	1	1
14 (Koentopp 2000)	4	4
15 (Horst, H. van der 2000)	6	6
16 (Linthout 2008)	4	4
17 (Birschel 2008)	5	5
18 (Tiburzy 2002)	0	0
19 (Schots 2004)	4	4
20 (Schroevers & Lewis 2010)	1	1
21 (Huijser 2005)	1	0
22 (Thomas & Schlizio 2009)	0	0
23 (Crijns 2001)	0	0

8.2.3   Appendix 9: Creation of subcategories (Excel sheet)

Appendix 9 shows the 110 subcategories from the German book corpus and 107 subcategories from the Dutch book corpus. Column A lists the subcategories. For each subcategory, it shows in which of the analyzed texts and on which pages of these texts it can be found (in columns B through Y for the German book corpus, and columns AD through AZ for the Dutch book corpus). Furthermore, for each of the analyzed texts from the book corpora, it shows the total number of pages on which a subcategory is described. It also shows the percentage of pages that this subcategory has of the whole text (i.e., the part of the text that deals with culture) in brackets after the page reference. For example, for the subcategory "Meetings

and presentations: Germans are well prepared" the following is stated for the first analyzed book from the German book corpus: 19–22 (4=6%). This means that statements about the subcategory can be found on page 19–22. It is described on four pages, thus on six percent of the pages of book number 1 in which German cultural characteristics are described.

For each subcategory, columns Z and AA show on how many pages it is stated in the entire German book corpus and what percent this is of the entire book corpus. Columns BA and BB show the same information for the Dutch book corpus.

For each subcategory in the German book corpus, column AB shows in how many of the texts it can be found. Column BC shows the same information for the Dutch book corpus.

For each subcategory in the German book corpus, column AC shows the average number of pages on which it is described, in relation to the number of books in which it is described. Column BD shows the same information for the subcategories from the Dutch book corpus.

8.2.4 Appendix 10: Coding template for the creation of main categories

Aim of the coding

The aim of the coding is to subsume the statements from the German and Dutch book corpora into main categories.

Coding rules

- Two sets of main categories have to be created: one for the German book corpus and one for the Dutch book corpus.
- The main categories for the German book corpus have to be based on the 110 subcategories that were extracted from the German book corpus in the first step of qualitative analysis and have to contain statements about German culture. The main categories for the Dutch book corpus have to be based on the 107 subcategories extracted from the Dutch book corpus and have to contain statements about Dutch culture.
- A main category is defined as a bundle of subcategories that are thematically identical or similar. A verbatim correlation between the subcategories that make up a main category is not necessary. The reason for this is that in some cases subcategories that show no verbatim resemblance can nevertheless describe a similar content. For example, the subcategory *Germans prefer known, established and approved approaches and methods* and the subcategory *Germans are less flexible and pragmatic than the Dutch, improvisation is seen as poor planning* both deal with flexibility but describe it in totally different words.

- A main category has to describe a certain cultural characteristic or behavior. It must not merely describe a situation. However, if there are certain cultural characteristics or behavioral patterns that just occur in, apply to or come into effect in certain situations, they can form a main category.
- Each main category has to be provided with a caption describing a cultural characteristic, a certain behavior or a situation in which a certain cultural characteristic comes to light.
- It is possible that some of the subcategories that were extracted from the book corpora in the first step of the qualitative analysis can be attributed to more than one main category.
- Furthermore, the main categories have to meet the general requirements for categories in social sciences:

  A) They have to be complete (i. e., they have to include every single subcategory from the first step of the qualitative analysis).
  B) They have to be mutually exclusive.
  C) They have to be independent from each other.
  D) They have to be explicitly defined.

8.2.5 Appendix 11: Main categories and the subcategories they subsume (Excel sheet)

For the German and Dutch book corpora, column A lists the main categories that have been created from the subcategories (column B) by using the coding template (Appendix 10). In addition to Appendix 9, it is calculated not only for the subcategories but also for each main category in which of the texts and on how many pages they can be found (see lines labeled 'total,' which are highlighted in yellow).

8.2.6 Appendix 12: Intercoder reliability in the process of creation of main categories (Excel sheet)

To assess the reliability of the main categories determined by me (coder 1), I calculated the intercoder reliability between three coders. Three pairs of coders (coder 1/coder 2, coder 1/coder 3 and coder 2/coder 3) were compared to each other and the arithmetic mean from the three intercoder reliability values was then calculated. For the calculation of intercoder reliability (and for each of the subcategories from the first step of the qualitative analysis), I analyzed which main category or main categories the two coders whose results were being compared assigned it to.

Subsequently, for each pair of coders, I analyzed on which of the subcategories their results matched and on which they did not match. A subcategory was regarded as a match if the main category to which it was assigned by one of the coders

and the main category to which it was assigned by the other coder were thematically identical or very similar. Appendix 12 highlights the matching subcategories.

8.2.7   Appendix 13: Reliability test

8.2.7.1   Appendix 13.1: Matches and mismatches in the German and Dutch book corpora

Tables 43 and 44 illustrate the matching categories in the German and Dutch book corpora. The line labeled *main categories* shows how many main categories each coder created from the categories in the first step of the qualitative analysis (listed in Appendix 9). The line labeled *matching main categories* shows how many of the main categories the two coders stated can be matched (i.e., how many of the main categories they believe are thematically identical or very similar). Note: the number of matching main categories can exceed the number of main categories stated by one of the coders (e.g., as in the comparison of coders 1 and 2 in the German book corpus). The reason for this is that in some of his main categories, coder 1 subsumed two or more of the main categories from coder 2. The line labeled *total matches* shows how many of the subcategories from the first step of the qualitative analysis (thus from the 110 German and the 107 Dutch subcategories) were assigned to the same main category by both coders.

Table 43   Matches and mismatches in the German book corpus

Coders	C1	C2	C1	C3	C2	C3
Main categories	20	29	20	29	29	29
Matching main categories	22		25		23	
Mismatching main categories	7		4		6	
Total matches	87		103		80	
Total mismatches	49		32		54	

Main categories = number of categories created by each coder; matching main categories = number of thematically identical or similar main categories (the number can exceed the number of main categories stated by one coder because in some cases one of the coder subsumed two or more main categories from the other coder in one main category). Total matches = number of subcategories that the two compared coders assigned to the same main category.

Table 44   Matches and mismatches in the Dutch book corpus

Coders	C1	C2	C1	C3	C2	C3
Main categories	19	27	19	30	27	30
Matching main categories	21		25		24	
Mismatching main categories	6		7		6	
Total matches	87		94		76	
Total mismatches	36		27		46	

Main categories = number of categories created by each coder; matching main categories = number of thematically identical or similar main categories (the number can exceed the number of main categories stated by one coder because in some cases one of the coder subsumed two or more main categories from the other coder in one main category). Total matches = number of subcategories that the two compared coders assigned to the same main category.

8.2.7.2   Appendix 13.2: Matching categories

Tables 45 and 46 show, for each pair of coders (coders 1/2, coders 1/3, coders 2/3) for the German and Dutch book corpora, which of the main categories they stated actually match (i.e., which main categories were stated by both coders). Since every coder had to label the main categories himself and was not allowed to consult the other coders in the process of coding, there was sometimes not a literal but a thematic accordance between the coders. For example, while coder 1 labeled one main category *hierarchies*, coder 2 labeled a main category *hierarchy and authority*. Both main categories matched thematically, they subsumed (mostly) the same subcategories. Therefore, each matching main category has only one label in the tables.

Table 45 Matching main categories in the German book corpus

	Coder 1/coder 2	Coder 1/coder 3	Coder 2/coder 3
	Planning and preparation	Planning and preparation	Planning and preparation
	Education, knowledge, qualification	Expertise	Education, knowledge, qualification
	Rules	Rules	Rules
	Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
	Details	Details	Details
	Hierarchies and authority	Hierarchy	Hierarchies and authority
	Communication	Communication	Communication
	Perfection	Perfection	Perfection
	Directness	Directness	Directness
	Uncertainty avoidance	Obviation of uncertainties	Uncertainty avoidance
	Time Orientation	Time	Perception of time
	Different behavior at work and in private life	Distinction work and private	Distinction work and private
	Formality	Formality	Formality
	Modesty	Modesty	Modesty
	Results more important than feelings	Concentration on the job	Results are more important than feelings
	Individualism	Individualism	Individualism
	Discussion	Discussions	Discussions
	Respect	Objectivity	Criticism
		Respect	Respect
		Responsibility	Sense of responsibility
		Efficiency	Efficiency
		Consensus	Consensus
	Application		
	Information		
	Distance		
	Reliability		
	Privacy		
		Clear conditions	
		Everything structured	
			Courtesy
Total matches	22	25	23

Table 46   Matching main categories in the Dutch book corpus

	Coder 1/coder 2	Coder 1/coder 3	Coder 2/coder 3
	Equality	Equality	Equality
	Hierarchies	Hierarchies	Hierarchies
	Education/knowledge/ qualification	Expertise	Education/knowledge/ qualification
	Different behavior at work and in private life	Distinction work and private life	Distinction between work and private life
	Consensus	Consensus	Consensus
	Directness	Directness	Directness
	Modesty	Modesty	Modesty
	Communication	Communication	Communication
	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
	Informality	Informality	Informality
	Planning and preparation	Planning	Planning and preparation
	Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
	Individualism/collectivism	Individualism	Individualism
	Harmony	Harmony and coziness	Harmony
	Details	Details	Details
	Rules	Rules	Rules
	Time orientation	Time	Perception of time
	Obviation of uncertainties	Obviation of uncertainties	Uncertainty avoidance
	Calimero effect	Calimero effect	Calimero effect
	Pragmatism	Pragmatism	Pragmatism
	Perfection	Perfection	Perfection
		Everything structured	
		Individual responsibility	
		Concentration on the job	
		Sympathy	
			Privacy
			Trust
			Courtesy
Total matches	21	25	24

8.2.8   Appendix 14: Weighting the main categories and ranking order of relevance

8.2.8.1   Appendix 14.1

For the German and Dutch book corpora, I ranked the main categories for each variable determined in Section 3.3.1. In some cases, two or more main categories within a variable had the same number (total or median). In these cases, I assigned the main categories that were equal with regard to a certain variable to two successive ranks. To avoid distorting the results of subsequent calculations, I subsequently assigned each rank a numerical value. The main category on rank 1 was assigned the numerical value 1, rank 2 was assigned the numerical value 2, etc. For those main categories that were equal with regard to a certain variable, I calculated the arithmetic mean of their ranks and assigned it to both as their numerical value.

To take their different levels of expressiveness into account, I assigned each variable a weighting factor. Subsequently, I calculated the weighted value for each variable and main category.

Table 47 German book corpus, variable 1: Number of books in which a main category is stated

Category	Number of books	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Communication	24	1	1.5	2	3
Hierarchies	24	2	1.5	2	3
Separation of work and private life	23	3	3	2	6
Formality	21	4	4.5	2	9
Rules	21	5	4.5	2	9
Directness	21	6	6	2	12
Modesty and status	20	7	7	2	14
Task more imp. than good atmosphere	19	8	8	2	16
Flexibility	17	9	9.5	2	19
Obviation of uncertainties	17	10	9.5	2	19
Perception of time	16	11	11	2	22
Everything is structured	16	12	11	2	22
Meetings and discussions	16	13	11	2	22
Planning	15	14	14	2	28
Expertise and qualification	13	15	15.5	2	31
Perfection	13	16	15.5	2	31
Preparation	9	17	17	2	34
Details	6	18	18	2	36
Individualism	5	19	19	2	38
Respect	4	20	20	2	40

Table 48   Dutch book corpus, variable 1: Number of books in which a main category is stated

Category	Number of books	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Modesty and status	23	1	1	2	2
Hierarchies	22	2	2.5	2	5
Consensus and 'overleg'	22	3	2.5	2	5
Communication	21	4	4	2	8
Planning	20	5	5	2	10
Harmony as important as task	18	6	6	2	12
Informality	17	7	7	2	14
Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation	16	8	8.5	2	17
Perfection	16	9	8.5	2	17
Separation of work and private life	15	10	10	2	20
Rules	13	11	11.5	2	23
Egalitarian character	13	12	11.5	2	23
Obviation of uncertainties	12	13	13	2	26
Expertise and qualification	12	14	14.5	2	29
Tolerance	10	15	14.5	2	29
Perception of time	8	16	16	2	32
Individualism	7	17	17	2	34
Details	6	18	18	2	36
Calimero effect	4	19	19	2	38

Table 49   German book corpus, variable 2: Total number of pages on which a category is described

Category	Number of pages	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Hierarchies	211	1	1	1	1
Formality	175	2	2	1	2
Separation of work and private life	171	3	3	1	3
Communication	157	4	4	1	4
Modesty and status	143	5	5	1	5
Rules	92	6	6	1	6
Directness	90	7	7	1	7
Obviation of uncertainties	81	8	8	1	8
Task more imp. than good atmosphere	79	9	9	1	9
Perception of time	68	10	10	1	10
Flexibility	66	11	11	1	11
Planning	63	12	12	1	12
Meetings and discussions	50	13	13	1	13
Expertise and qualification	48	14	14	1	14
Perfection	42	15	15	1	15
Everything is structured	31	16	16	1	16
Details	28	17	17	1	17
Preparation	25	18	18	1	18
Respect	12	19	19	1	19
Individualism	11	20	20	1	20

Table 50 Dutch book corpus, variable 2: Total number of pages on which a category is described

Category	Number of pages	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Modesty and status	431	1	1	1	1
Hierarchies	327	2	2	1	2
Consensus and 'overleg'	240	3	3	1	3
Planning	215	4	4	1	4
Communication	183	5	5	1	5
Informality	151	6	6	1	6
Perfection	126	7	7	1	7
Rules	106	8	8	1	8
Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation	99	9	9	1	9
Harmony as important as task	98	10	10	1	10
Separation of work and private life	91	11	11	1	11
Tolerance	73	12	12	1	12
Egalitarian character	59	13	13	1	13
Expertise and qualification	49	14	14.5	1	14.5
Obviation of uncertainties	49	15	14.5	1	14.5
Individualism	36	16	16	1	16
Details	28	17	17	1	17
Perception of time	22	18	18	1	18
Calimero effect	21	19	19	1	19

Table 51 German book corpus, variable 3: Median percentage of pages on which a category
is described

Category	Median percentages	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Hierarchies	27	1	1.5	1.5	2.25
Formality	27	2	1.5	1.5	2.25
Separation of work and private life	24	3	3	1.5	4.5
Communication	18.5	4	4	1.5	6
Details	12.5	5	5.5	1.5	8.25
Perception of time	12.5	6	5.5	1.5	8.25
Planning	12	7	8	1.5	12
Flexibility	12	8	8	1.5	12
Modesty and status	12	9	8	1.5	12
Preparation	10	10	10.5	1.5	15.75
Obviation of uncertainties	10	11	10.5	1.5	15.75
Directness	9.5	12	12	1.5	18
Task more important	9	13	14	1.5	21
Rules	9	14	14	1.5	21
Expertise and qualification	9	15	14	1.5	21
Everything is structured	8	16	16	1.5	24
Respect	7.5	17	17	1.5	25.5
Meetings and discussions	6	18	18	1.5	27
Perfection	4	19	19	1.5	28.5
Individualism	2.5	20	20	1.5	30

Table 52   Dutch book corpus, variable 3: Median percentage of pages on which a category is described

Category	Median percentages	Rank	Numerical value	Weighting factor	Weighted value
Modesty and status	29.5	1	1	1.5	1.5
Hierarchies	22	2	2	1.5	3
Consensus and 'overleg'	16	3	3	1.5	4.5
Planning	14	4	4	1.5	6
Expertise and qualification	13	5	5	1.5	7.5
Informality	11.5	6	6.5	1.5	9.75
Rules	11.5	7	6.5	1.5	9.75
Communication	10.5	8	8	1.5	12
Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation	10	9	9.5	1.5	14.25
Perfection	10	10	9.5	1.5	14.25
Separation of work and private life	8.5	11	11	1.5	16.5
Details	8	12	13	1.5	19.5
Calimero effect	8	13	13	1.5	19.5
Obviation of uncertainties	8	14	13	1.5	19.5
Tolerance	6.5	15	15	1.5	22.5
Harmony as important as task	6	16	16	1.5	24
Egalitarian character	4	17	17.5	1.5	26.25
Individualism	4	18	17.5	1.5	26.25
Perception of time	3	19	19	1.5	28.5

8.2.8.2 Appendix 14.2

To calculate the relevance of each main category, I calculated the arithmetic mean from the weighted values of the three variables. Table 53 shows the ranking of relevance for the German book corpus and Table 54 shows it for the Dutch book corpus.

Table 53 German book corpus weighted arithmetic mean

Category	Weighted value V1	Weighted value V2	Weighted value V3	Arithm. mean	Rank
Hierarchies	3	1	2.25	2.08	1
Communication	3	4	6	4.33	2
Formality	9	2	2.25	4.42	3
Separation of work and private life	6	3	4.5	4.50	4
Modesty and status	14	5	12	10.33	5
Rules	9	6	21	12.00	6
Directness	12	7	18	12.33	7
Perception of time	22	10	8.25	13.42	8
Flexibility	19	11	12	14.00	9
Obviation of uncertainties	19	8	15.75	14.25	10
Task more imp. than good atmosphere	16	9	21	15.33	11
Planning	28	12	12	17.33	12
Details	36	17	8.25	20.42	13
Meetings and discussions	22	13	27	20.67	14
Everything is structured	22	16	24	20.67	14
Expertise and qualification	31	14	21	22.00	16
Preparation	34	18	15.75	22.58	17
Perfection	31	15	28.5	24.83	18
Respect	40	19	25.5	28.17	19
Individualism	38	20	30	29.33	20

V1 = variable 1 (number of books in which a main category is stated); V2 = variable 2 (total number of pages on which a category is described); V3 = variable 3 (median percentage of pages on which a category is described).

Table 54   Dutch book corpus weighted arithmetic mean

Category	Weighted value V1	Weighted value V2	Weighted value V3	Arithm. mean	Rank
Modesty and status	2	1	1.5	1.50	1
Hierarchies	5	2	3	3.33	2
Consensus and 'overleg'	5	3	4.5	4.17	3
Planning	10	4	6	6.67	4
Communication	8	5	12	8.33	5
Informality	14	6	9.75	9.92	6
Perfection	17	7	14.25	12.75	7
Flexibility, pragmatism, improvisation	17	9	14.25	13.42	8
Rules	23	8	9.75	13.58	9
Harmony as important as task	12	10	24	15.33	10
Separation of work and private life	20	11	16.5	15.83	11
Expertise and qualification	29	14.5	7.5	17.00	12
Obviation of uncertainties	26	14.5	19.5	20.00	13
Egalitarian character	23	13	26.25	20.75	14
Tolerance	29	12	22.5	21.17	15
Details	36	17	19.5	24.17	16
Individualism	34	16	26.25	25.42	17
Calimero effect	38	19	19.5	25.50	18
Perception of time	32	18	28.5	26.17	19

V1 = variable 1 (number of books in which a main category is stated); V2 = variable 2 (total number of pages on which a category is described); V3 = variable 3 (median percentage of pages on which a category is described).

8.2.9   Appendix 15: Consistency of the main categories (Excel sheet)

8.2.9.1   Appendix 15.1

In this appendix, those subcategories that contradict the majority opinion of a main category are highlighted in gray (column B).

8.2.9.2   Appendix 15.2

For each main category containing conflicting subcategories, I divided the conflicting subcategories into groups (group 1 and group 2). Some of the subcategories

are neither part of group 1 nor group 2; they describe other cultural characteristics about which there is no dissent among the authors.

8.2.9.3   Appendix 15.3

For each main category containing conflicting subcategories, I quantified the majority and minority opinions. I then calculated the three variables determined in Section 3.3.1 for the majority and minority opinions of each main category containing conflicting subcategories (see columns AB through AE).

8.2.10   Appendix 16: original quotes from the German and Dutch book corpora

8.2.10.1 Appendix 16.1: Original quotes from German book corpus

- "In Deutschland und den Niederlanden herrschen unterschiedliche Führungsstile vor. Dies hat zur Folge, das festere Strukturen und klar beschriebene ungeschriebene Regeln und Normen vorhanden sind. Die Funktionen und Kompetenzen sind in Deutschland genau beschrieben und stark voneinander getrennt. Ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Vorgesetzten ist seine Autorität. Ein Widerspruch der Mitarbeiter ist nur erlaubt, wenn die Funktionsbeschreibung dazu die Befugnis erteilt." (Koentopp, 2000, p. 45)
- "Macht is in Nederland informeler, minder grijpbaar […] omdat ze minder in de formele functie schuilt […]. Duitsers zijn veel meer bekleders van functies, denken veel sterker in termen van rollenhiërarchie en formele structuren – dat zorgt voor zekerheid, berekenbaarheid en beheersbaarheid. […] terwijl Duitse ambtenaren […] vooral heel precies hun positie binnen de organisatie schilderen." (Linthout, 2006, p. 288)
- "Waarschijnlijk zijn er medewerkers of leidinggevenden van andere afdelingen aanwezig maar de beslissing wordt toch uiteindelijk door de baas genomen." (Hesseling, 2001, p. 8)
- "Der Respekt gegenüber dem Vorgesetzten wird in Deutschland stärker betont. Vorgesetzte begeben sich beispielsweise in der Mittagspause oft nicht in die Kantine zu den Mitarbeitern und Mitarbeiter setzen sich nicht unaufgefordert zu Vorgesetzten an den Tisch." (Koentopp, 2000, p. 48)
- "De verhouding tussen een meerdere en mindere is om die reden vaak door angst vormgegeven, het contact is daarom vooral zakelijk." (Hesseling 2001, p. 16)
- "[…] antwoordt de kapitein: 'Het was simpel, tegen de Amerikanen heb ik gezegd dat ze verzekerd zijn, tegen de Engelsen dat het sportief is, tegen de

Japanners dat het sterk maakt, tegen de Italianen en de Nederlanders dat het verboden is en tegen de Duitsers dat het een bevel is'." (Linthout, 2006, p. 289)

- "Eine Anweisung ist für deutsche Angestellte normal. Im niederländsichen Arbeitsleben hingegen haben direkte Anweisungen keinen Platz." (Thomas & Schlizio, 2009, p. 44 f.)
- "In Duitse bedrijven heet iedereen, van de Directeur tot de schoonmaakster, 'Mitarbeiter', en dit is niet louter retoriek. Ze beschouwen elkaar als gelijk, hierarchien zijn zwak." (Zeidenitz & Barkow, 1994, p. 57)
- "De verhouding tussen een meerdere en mindere is om die reden vaak door angst vormgegeven." (Hesseling 2001, p. 17)
- "De meerdere verwacht respect die soms grenst aan onvoorwaardelijke gehoorzaamheid." (Hesseling 2001, p. 17)
- "In het 1995 opgerichte Duits-Nederlandse legerkorps in Münster zorgden de verschillen in groetgedrag voor zulke grote problemen dat de algemene formele groetplicht per 1 januari 2001 weer werd ingevoerd. Het Du is in Duitsland veelal verbonden met diepe vriendschap en schept grote verplichtingen. Daarom wordt het niet zomaar aangeboden." (Linthout, 2006, p. 297)
- "Humor is geen sterke kant van de Duitsers. Als bijv. kraanmachinisten in Nederland gewoon via hun intercom grapjes te maken, elkaar uitschelden, mopperen of zo, dan denken de Duitsers: 'Wat oncollegiaal,' en: 'daar kan nooit een goed resultaat uit voortkomen'." (Hesseling 2001, p. 8)
- "Trek geen opvallende kleren aan en gebruik geen felle kleuren." (Hesseling 2001, p. 4)
- "In Duitsland heeft de vergadering veel meer structuur en is behoorlijk formeel. De directeur (of hooggeplaatste) geeft de aanwezigen één voor één de gelegenheid om kort en beargumenteerd hun mening over een bepaalde kwestie te uitten. Het is de baas die na ieder exposé een beslissing neemt." (Versluis, 2008, p. 65)
- "Paul Medendorp, ehemaliger Vorstandsvorsitzender einer großen deutschen Versicherung, vermisste in Deutschland, 'dass man nicht einfach so bei jemandem ins Büro gehen kann, Kaffee trinkt, die Füße auf den Tisch legt und erzählt, wie das Wochenende war'." (Schürings, 2010, p. 89)
- "Voor Duitsers bestaat het leven uit twee, welhaast gescheiden delen: openbaar en privé." (Zeidenitz & Barkow, 1994, p. 5)
- "Kennis is macht en macht deel je niet zomaar. Hoewel een duitse baas zelf uitgebreid en frequent geïnformeerd wil worden, zal hij zijn informatie niet ruimhartig delen met zijn ondergeschikten. Zijn positie wordt mede bepaald door het feit dat hij op een knooppunt van informatiekanalen zit en controle kan uitoefenen." (Huijser, 2005, p. 61)
- "Aus niederländischer Sicht haben Deutsche die Neigung, auch die kleinsten Einzelheiten im Vorhinein zu besprechen, alle Eventualitäten zu bedenken und

das Ganze dann in einem seitenlangen Protokoll festzuhalten." (Schürings, 2010, p. 98)

- "In Duitsland worden wetenschappelijke teksten geschreven voor vakgenoten en deskundigen. Het taalgebruik bepaald ook de status. De schrijver toont ermee dat hij de materie beheerst en het onderwerp en de lezer serieus neemt." (Linthout, 2006, p. 246)
- "Duitsers gaan het debat alleen aan als ze kennis van zaken hebben en dan gaat het er bij hen ook om wie er gelijk heeft. Ze geven de ander bijna nooit gelijk en blijven het ook op ondergeschikte punten oneens. Voor Duitsers zijn een wankelmoedige benadering en een snelle instemming met de ander het bewijs van een gebrek aan kennis en kritische intelligentie."
- "Nederlandse zakenmensen moeten er in Duistland rekening mee houden dat opleiding, titel, auto, kleding en uiterlijk een belangrijke rol spelen. Ze werden in Duitsland als Bèta-mannetjes aangeduid: ze zitten weliswaar strak in het pak maar dragen regelmatig goedkoop en vaak ongepoetst schoeisel." (Linthout, 2006, p. 306)
- "Terwijl we in Nederland een lachje niet kunnen onderdrukken als iemand zijn mailtje afsluit met zijn academische titel voor zijn naam, is dat in Duitsland volstrekt normaal. De doctorstitel is in Duitsland heilig: het geeft aan dat je 'gebildet' bent, dat je iets te bieden hebt. Waag het dus niet om in een brief aan een zakenpartner in München in de aanhef de doctorstitel te vergeten." (Versluis, 2008, p. 36)
- "In Duitsland vinden mensen het vanzelfsprekend dat Duitse producten de beste zijn en dat regelingen en gebruiken zoals die in Duitsland gelden het grondigst, het best doordacht en dus het werkzaamst zijn." (Meines, 1990, p. 24)
- "De Duitse ziel wordt getergd door onzekerheid. Duitsers knokken ononderbroken om de chaos op afstand te houden. Ze zijn niet in staat hun twijfels opzij te zetten, hun problemen even te vergeten en ongedwongen plezier met hun collega's te hebben." (Zeidenitz & Barkow, 1994, p. 12 f.)
- "Het compromis, of genoegen nemen met minder dan het beste, is niet goed genoeg. Strikt genomen is alleen het allerbeste aanvaardbaar. De Duitsers zijn het grondig eens met Plato: ze hebben niet de geringste twijfel dat het ideale bestaat, ergens tussen hemel en aarde. Uiteraard zullen we op de aarde het volmaakte nooit bereiken, maar wel iets wat er dicht in de buurt komt. Plato mag dan Grieks geweest zijn, hij dacht Duits." (Zeidenitz & Barkow, 1994, p. 14)
- "De enigszins op het proces georiënteerde Duitsers houden juist van een negatieve benadering van een onderwerp. Ze voelen zich bijna niet serieus genomen als iemand zegt dat ze iets in hun vakgebied goed gedaan hebben. Dat weten ze zelf al. Dat soort commentaar hebben ze niet nodig. Wat voor hen telt, is wat er niet goed was, wat er kan worden verbeterd. Ze zijn altijd op weg naar de perfectie en teleurgesteld als die net niet bereikt kan worden." (Huijser, 2005, p. 63)

- "Die Zeitperspektiven in Deutschland und den Niederlanden sind unterschiedlich. Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft stehen in Wechselwirkung zueinander, wobei die Tradition und der Kenntnisstand über die Zukunft die Basis der Planung bilden. Diese Zukunftsorientierung besteht in den Niederlanden nicht minder, jedoch wird die Gegenwart im Vergleich zu Deutschland stärker betont. Der Ausdruck ‚ewiger Verlierer' ist deutsch." (Koentopp, 2000, p. 43)
- "Duitsers denken altijd en onder alle omstandigheden op lange termijn." (Mole, Snijders, & Jacobs, 1997, p. 45 f.)
- "Voor een Duitser is tijd een serie van gebeurtenissen die elkaar in minuten, uren, dagen, maanden en jaren opvolgen. Raakt deze orde verstoord dan is een Duitser onzeker. Onverwachte problemen zorgen voor grote problemen binnen de Duitse cultuur. Multitasking wordt daarom vermeden." (Jacobs, 2008, p. 45)
- "Opmerkelijk is in Duitsland het ontzag voor de wet, voor de vertegenwoordigers van de wet, voor verkeersborden en voor allerlei borden met al dan niet gratuite, gebiedende mededelingen. Borden met verbodsbepalingen worden vrijwel kritiekloos geaccepteerd. Ze gaan ervan uit dat zulke borden er niet voor niks staan." (Huijser, 2005, p. 65)
- "De baas wordt niet bekritiseerd en ook tegenover collega's wordt niet direct kritiek geuit." (Jacobs, 2008, p. 144)
- "Naderhand komt de ontdekking dat dit een opstakel is in de maatschappij en niet alleen op de werkvloer: het onvermogen, misschien wel de onwil, om zich te verplaatsen in de positie van iemand anders. De combinatie van onvriendelijkheid en zich in niet in iemand anders positie kunnen (willen) verplaatsen was een permanent thema onder de buitenlanders in Duitsland." (Meines, 1990, p. 15)
- "Fouten toegeven. Van het idee alleen kan een Duitser nachtmerries krijgen. Dat is voor hem hetzelfde als in een bak met haaien z'n arm open te snijden." (Meines, 1990, p. 30)
- "In Deutschland sieht man Veränderungen eher als Bedrohung und weniger als Chance." (Schürings, 2010, p. 97)
- "Het presenteren van veel details is mogelijk kenmerkend voor het duitse bedrijfsleven." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 90)
- "Cv's en getuigschriften zijn veel uitgebreider en gedetailleerder dan in Nederland. Door schooldiploma's worden formele kwalificaties gedocumenteerd. Sollicitanten noemen ook hobby's en activiteiten. Aanbevelingsbrieven van uw voormalige werkgevers onderbouwen uw brief." (Hesseling, 2001, p. 34)
- "In Deutschland wird man zunächst beurteilt nach der fachlichen Kompetenz und dem Unternehmen, wo man zuvor gearbeitet hat – dann erst nach Persönlichkeit. In Deutschland ist der Respekt vor Leistung und Fachkompetenz viel ausgeprägter. Eine Aussage wie ‚Der ist zwar ein Schweinehund, aber er

weiß, wovon er spricht' ist in den Niederlanden nur schwer nachvollziehbar." (Schüring, 2010, p. 91)

- "Een bezoeker kan zich dan ook maar beter grondig voorbereiden op de onderhandeling want een duitse onderhandelaar heeft een hekel aan onvoorbereide, slordige en ongedetailleerde discussies. Men moet duidelijke en degelijke stukken meebrengen, uiteraard bij voorkeur in het Duits. Bij de presentatie van zijn voorstel moet men de wetten en voorwaarden waaraan het bewuste project of product moet voldoen al meenemen." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 151 f.)
- "Samenspraak houdt bij duitse bedrijven in dat je stem gehoord wordt, niet dat je inspraak hebt bij het nemen van beslissingen. Het compromis staat niet in hoog vaandel." (Versluis, 2008, p. 37).
- "Duitsers beklemtonen in discussies vooral de meningsverschillen. Zij discussiëren daardoor indringender, diepen hun standpunten meer uit, vermelden meer feiten, onderbouwen en illustreren hun uitspraken en lichten hun bronnen toe. De ander wordt voortdurend naar het waarom van zijn standpunt gevraagd en men lokt een reactie en kritiek als het ware uit." (Mole, Snijders & Jacobs 1997, p. 74)
- "Zelfkritiek, relativerende opmerkingen over het eigen doen en laten zijn not done in Duitsland." (Meines, 1990, p. 15)
- "Voor een Duister is het gevoel gerespecteerd te worden het allerbelangrijkste element in onderlinge contacten. Op een veel lagere plaats staat bij hem vriendelijkheid." (Meines, 1990, p. 12)
- "Omdat alle taken en verantwoordelijkheden zijn vastgelegd is het makkelijk te herkennen wie voor een fout verantwoordelijk is. Diegene neemt daarvoor de verantwoording." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 121)
- "Het ligt zeker niet in hun bedoeling om hun zakenpartners te beledigen. Eerst komen de zaken, dan pas is er tijd om elkaar te leren kennen." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 99)
- "Directheid lijkt een heel duitse eigenschap te zijn. […] bijna een duitse levensinstelling." (Reyskens, 2007, p. 89 f.)

8.2.10.2 Appendix 16.2 Original quotes from the Dutch book corpus

- "Wer sich in den Niederlanden von anderen abhebt, erntet Misstrauen oder macht sich lächerlich. ‚Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg.' Diesen Satz kennt jeder Niederländer und Deutsche sollten ihn im Umgang mit Niederländern beherzigen. In die gleiche Richtung gehen Aussprüche wie ‚Hoge bomen vangen veel wind' und ‚Wie zijn hoofd boven het maaiveld uitsteekt, raakt het kwijt'." (Linthout, 2006, p. 59 f.)
- "In Dutch society, the use of such academic titles is limited to the functional working environment. A German student quoted: 'I find the teachers here much

more approachable than those in Germany. You have to address the latter with 'Herr Professor' but in Holland that isn't so'." (Vossenstein, 2010, p. 30)

- "Bemerkenswert ist dabei vor allem die Diskrepanz zwischen dem Selbstbild der Niederländer und dem Bild, das sie von uns Deutschen haben. Obwohl jeder Akademiker voller Stolz auch den kleinsten akademischen Titel ‚doctorandus' mit dem Kürzel drs. im Namen führt, macht man sich mit großem Vergnügen über die angebliche Titelsucht der Deutschen lustig." (Müller, 1998, p. 29)

- "Den erhobenen Zeigefinger trifft man in den Niederlanden oft an, man fühlt sich als moralisches Vorbild für die Welt." (Birschel, 2008, p. 84 ff.)

- "For instance: riding a bike on a one-way street against the traffic. In the beginning, when I first saw someone do that, I thought, 'How can you do that?' When I myself did it the first time, I felt rather wicked; a police car stopped me and the officer gestured towards me. So I started apologizing but he just said, 'Look, we are coming from the right side, you from the wrong, so move over a bit'." (Vossenstein, 2008, p. 23)

- "[…] is macht in Nederland informeler, minder grijpbaar en voor buitenstaanders nauwelijks waarneembaar. Nederlandse chefs moeten hun opdrachten tot uitdrukking en vooral toelichten. Ze moeten op tal van terreinen met hun medewerkers onderhandelen en overleggen over de uitvoering van werkzaamheden." (Linthout, 2006, p. 287)

- "Man erteilt ungefragt Rat wie der andere seine Arbeit am besten organisieren oder überhaupt besser bewältigen kann. Als Chef kann man nicht einfach anordnen was die Mitarbeiter zu tun haben, denn diese wollen mitentscheiden. Und wenn sie nicht mitentscheiden dürfen, wenn sie sich übergangen fühlen, ist die Folge eine Art passiver Widerstand." (Fichtinger & Sterzenbach, 2006, p. 30 f.)

- "Man sollte also nicht davon ausgehen, dass ähnlich lautende Rangbezeichnungen auch Auskunft über Befugnisse und Aufgaben geben. Niederländische Chefs delegieren mehr. Und wenn nicht gleich der Chef anreist, sollte man als Deutscher nicht glauben, die Niederländer seien nicht interessiert." (Schürings, 2010, p. 96)

- "I find it hard accepting the collective decision making. It only causes delay. There are meetings on everything here, and people have a say even when they have no information to add at all" (Vossenstein 2010, p. 68).

- "Obwohl auch die Niederländer leistungsorientiert sind, wird bei der Arbeit – häufiger als in Deutschland – zwischendurch mit anderen eine Tasse Kaffee getrunken und man nimmt sich Zeit, um gezellig een beetje te kletsen. Es geht darum, dem anderen so schnell wie möglich ein Gefühl der Behaglichkeit zu vermitteln." (Ernst, 2007, p. 54)

- "Nederlanders vinden dat Duitsers zich volkomen onnodig zorgen maken over zaken die nog in de verre toekomst liggen. Nederlanders denken veel meer doelgericht, regelen dingen op de korte termijn, pakken onvoorziene problemen aan wanneer die zich voordoen en plannen hun projecten globaal en zonder

al te veel details, doen de hoofdzaken eerst en timmeren alles pas later af." (Linthout, 2006, p. 280)

- "Diese Arbeitsweise erfordert präzises Protokollieren und möglichst genaues und unzweideutiges Formulieren der letztendlich gefassten Beschlüsse. Vereinbarungen muss man schriftlich festhalten, sonst entstehen hinterher Differenzen über die Interpretation. Dann kann keine höhere Macht dem erneuten Geschwätz ein Ende bereiten. Bis heute halten die Niederländer möglichst viel schriftlich fest und was schwarz auf weiß geschrieben steht ist heilig." (van der Horst, 2000, p. 145)

- "Nederlanders zijn wat minder direct dan Duitsers. De Nederlandse discussietechniek is duidelijk: men ontziet elkaars gevoelens. Tegenover de Nederlandse 'Ja, maar-techniek' staat de Duitse 'Nee. Want-techniek'." (Linthout, 2006, p. 275)

- "'Voetnoten,' beet Melkert hem toe. Voetnoten? Oh, hij eiste bronvermeldingen. Hij bedoelde dat hij verwijzingen wilde horen naar de bronnen waaruit geput werd voor de ridiculisering van het paarse beleid. Alsof het niet overduidelijk was dat de paarse lankmoedigheid verantwoordelijk was voor de ellenlange wachtlijsten …" (Schots, 2004, p. 113)

- "Granted, the Dutch do tend to get down to business without allowing much time to get to know their counterparts. Within minutes they will zoom in on the purpose of the meeting." (Vossenstein, 2008, p. 104)

- "In den Niederlanden mit ihrem Egalitätsdenken und ihrer Tradition der Beratung, des Konsenses und des gegenseitigen Vertrauens dagegen sind Verbote die Wurzel allen Übels. Die übliche Reaktion auf Verbote ist: ‚Das bestimme ich selbst'." (Linthout, 2008, p. 184)

- "In den Niederlanden wird nicht so streng zwischen dem Privaten, dem Öffentlichen und dem Arbeitsbereich getrennt wie in Deutschland. Man duzt sich schnell bei der Arbeit, nach Feierabend können Sie zu einer gemeinsamen Aktivität eingeladen werden, damit man sich kennenlernt. Ihre Kollegen reden ziemlich locker über ihre Hobbys, ihre Familie und darüber, wie und wo sie wohnen." (Hesseling, 2001, p. 44 ff.)

- "It is a sport among Dutch students to work exactly hard enough for an exam or assignment so that they pass with minimum effort. Dutch students will not settle for sixes, that is too risky, but a seven or eight will do." (Vossenstein, 2010, p. 29)

- "Niederländer machen sich über die Lösung von Problemen erst Gedanken, wenn Probleme auftreten […]. Der Fokus liegt auf dem Ziel, man passt die Prozesse den Umständen an." (Koentopp, 2000, p. 50 f.)

- "Wenn Arbeitsabläufe verändert werden müssen, ist das aus deutscher Sicht unter Umständen ein Zeichen schlechter Vorbereitung, während Niederländer hier Stolz auf die Fähigkeit zur Improvisation sind." (Ernst, 2007, p. 56)

- "Die strikte Scheidung zwischen Arbeitskollegen und Freunden besteht in den Niederlanden so nicht. Üblich ist es, im informellen Kreis nach der Arbeit auf ein Glas in die Kneipe zu gehen. Ein sogenannter Borrel kann auch als eigenständige Feier angeboten werden." (Müller, 1998, p. 36)
- "Solliciteren: Tenslotte zoeken bedrijven meestal teamwerkers en soft skills zijn in dat geval even belangrijk als vakkennis." (Busse 2006, p. 293)
- "Das niederländische Management muss man sich als eine Art umgekehrte Pyramide vorstellen: Der Chef trägt alles, leitet und begleitet. Der Vorgesetzte ist zur Unterstützung seiner Mitarbeiter da." (Schürings, 2010, p. 92)
- "De eeuwenlange republikeinse overlegsamenleving heeft ervoor gezorgd dat er in Nederland een sterk gelijkheidsdenken heerst." (Linthout, 2006, p. 286)
- "Die niederländische Toleranz heißt, alles ist erlaubt, solange es hinter verschlossenen Türen geschieht und den Nachbarn nicht belästigt. Diese Toleranz erwächst zunächst einmal aus dem Fundament des aufrechten Bedürfnisses, moralisch einwandfrei zu handeln. Weitere Elemente sind schlichte Gleichgültigkeit und der Wunsch, sich in der sicheren und bekannten Gesellschaft Gleichgesinnter abzukapseln." (Müller, 1998, p. 62)
- "Fusion deutsche DASA und niederländische Fokker, deutscher Diplomat: Elke Duitse stap wordt per definitie negatief uitgelegd." (Linthout, 2006, p. 278)
- "Die Einstellung zur Sicherheit wird auch bei Vereinbarungen deutlich. Deutsche versuchen, durch schriftliche Abmachungen Unsicherheiten zu vermeiden. In niederländischen Verträgen ist häufig der Zusatz zu finden: "Genaueres wird später geregelt." Niederländer machen sich über die Lösung von Problemen erst Gedanken, wenn die Probleme auftreten […]." (Koentopp, 2000, p. 51)
- "Vergeleken met Duitsland is het werk in Nederland flexibeler georganiseerd. Vaak zijn op de zelfde afdeling verschillende werk- en arbeidsduurmodellen naast elkaar te vinden terwijl functies en verantwoordelijkheden minder duidelijk vastgelegd zijn dan in Duitsland. In Nederland gaat het er daarom vaak hectischer aan toe en het werk is in het geheel afwisselender, omdat men niet zo zeer in categorieën van bevoegdheden en hiërarchieën denkt." (Busse, 2006, p. 19)
- "The reactions of Germans to the Dutch directness range from the positive term 'confident', through rather neutral terms such as 'very straightforward indeed' and 'very honest' to the less positive: 'abrupt', 'blunt' and 'rude'." (Vossenstein, 2010, p. 15)
- "Door het egalitaire karakter van de Nederlandse samenleving is er ook sprake van een spontane, losse omgangstoon, waarin directe kritiek misstaat. Aardig zijn voor elkaar is het opperste gebod en kritiek is een zeldzaam fenomeen." (Linthout, 2006, p. 307)
- "Achten Sie vor allem darauf, dass Sie ihre Bewerbung kurz und prägnant halten. Während die Bewerbungsunterlagen in Deutschland ruhig ausführlicher

und detaillierter sein dürfen, schätzen niederländische Chefs diese Ausführlichkeit nicht." (Pechholt, Douven, & Essers, 2008, p. 123)

- "Virtually all Dutch people, starting when they are still schoolchildren, carry their agenda, a diary full of scheduled meetings and appointments for both business and social engagements. One thing is done after the other, exactly how the agenda tells them to." (Vossenstein 2010, p. 39).

8.2.11   Appendix 17: Comparison of the German and Dutch book corpora, level of accordance of the main categories (Excel sheet)

8.2.11.1 Appendix 17.1: Level of accordance of weighted arithmetic means of categories from the German and Dutch book corpora

For those main categories that can be found in both book corpora, the spreadsheet shows the differential of the weighted arithmetic means and the level of accordance. A scale was applied for the comparison. It distinguishes between three different degrees of accordance in relevance: high accordance (difference between 0 and 4.0), normal accordance (difference between 5 and 9.0) and weak accordance (difference higher than 10). These degrees of accordance were distinguished to create a "natural grouping" of the weighted arithmetic means. There are distinct breaks between the three groups.

8.2.11.2 Appendix 17.2: Level of accordance of subcategories from main categories that can be found in both book corpora

For each main category that can be found in both book corpora, the spreadsheet shows the percentage of matching subcategories (i. e., the percentage of subcategories from a main category from the German book corpus that is reflected in the same main category from the Dutch book corpus). The level of accordance is displayed in columns D (percentage of subcategories that have a direct counterpart in the other book corpus) and E (overall degree of accordance).

8.2.12 Appendix 18: Reliability test for the comparison of main categories with dimension models

8.2.12.1 Appendix 18.1: Coding template

- The coder needs to be an expert in the field of cross- and intercultural communication and especially with dimension models.
- For each main category in the German and Dutch book corpora, the coder will be asked to state which dimensions it resembles.
- Nota bene: Some of the main categories consist of different aspects, each of which might resemble different dimensions.
- For the purpose of this test, "resemble" does not mean that a dimension can unambiguously be attributed to a main category. However, it also does not mean that the linkage is purely hypothetical. The coder must use his or her expertise in the field of cross- and intercultural communication and with the dimension models to assign the main categories to dimensions that can either (at least partly) serve as an explanation for them or show parallels or similarity with regard to their content.
- The coder should use the dimensions from the dimension models of Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990), which are listed in Table 55 for the comparison.

Table 55   Dimensions from Hofstede (2008), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2012) and Hall (1990) for coding

Hofstede	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner	Hall
Power distance	Universalism/particularism	High context/low context
Individualism/collectivism	Individualism/collectivism	Space (high/low territoriality)
Masculinity/femininity	Neutral/emotional	
Uncertainty avoidance	Specific/diffuse	
Indulgence/restraint	Achievement/ascription	
Long-term planning		
	Sequential/synchronic	Monochronic/polychronic
	Internal vs. external control	

8.2.12.2 Appendix 18.2: Results of the reliability test for the comparison of the main categories to the dimension models (Excel sheet)

For each main category, the spreadsheet shows which dimensions coder 1 (the author of this study) and coder 2 assigned to it. Matches are highlighted in yellow; mismatches are highlighted in gray. Since more than one dimension can be assigned to a main category, some main categories are listed more than once. The intercoder reliability was calculated using Holsti's (1969, p. 140) formula. The intercoder reliability for the Dutch book corpus is .31; for the German book corpus it is .34.

8.3 Appendices related to the Potential for Conflict of Cultural Differences in Intercultural Interaction (Study 3)

8.3.1 Appendix 19: Items (characteristics) of the four main categories

Table 56 shows the items from the four main categories that were analyzed in this study. Items are the different aspects of a main category (as identified and described in the book corpus analysis). To be able to thoroughly analyze a main category with all its characteristics, each single item had to be tested with a case. Each item contains two opposing statements: one describing 'German behavior' (i. e., behavior identified in the German book corpus) and the other describing 'Dutch behavior' (i. e., behavior identified in the Dutch book corpus).

Table 56   Main categories and related items

Main category and number of items	Item(s)
Hierarchies (3)	1: In Germany, hierarchies are stronger; in the Netherlands, they are weaker/more concealed
	2: In Germany, orders are given rather directly (in a commanding tone); in the Netherlands, they are given as a kind request
	3: Tasks, functions and responsibilities are more clearly defined in German organizations than in Dutch organizations
Details (1)	1: German appreciation for details/Dutch indifference and/or aversion to details
Consensus and 'overleg'/meetings and discussions (2)	1: Dutch appreciation for consensus/German aversion to consensus
	2: The Dutch prefer a warm and friendly atmosphere/Germans have a harsher discussion culture
Separation of work and private life (3)	1: At work, Germans do not talk about private things quickly; they are more reserved/the Dutch talk about private things quickly to establish good mutual relations; they are less reserved
	2: In German companies, colleagues are not automatically regarded as friends/In Dutch companies, colleagues are granted access to a person's private life more easily
	3: Germans distinguish between role and person, so they do not take criticism very personally/the Dutch do not distinguish between role and person as much as Germans, so they take criticism more personally

8.3.2   Appendix 20: Cases for the surveys

The following are the different cases that were created to test the hypothesis. Each case consists of two versions: a 'German' version and a 'Dutch' version. Both versions are based on the same situation. However, the 'German' case describes 'German' behavior (i. e., behavior described in the German book corpus), while the 'Dutch' case describes 'Dutch' behavior (i. e., behavior described in the Dutch book corpus). Each item (characteristic) of each main category is represented in a case (the items can be found in Appendix 19).

Main Category Hierarchies

Case 1:

Situation: The accounts department has prepared the annual balance sheet. The manager who has to sign it notices a serious mistake that — if overlooked — would have led to a severe loss of money.

- 'Dutch' behavior: The manager holds the whole team responsible for this mistake; since people have been working on the balance sheet as a team, he cannot backtrack to find who exactly made the mistake.
- 'German' behavior: The person responsible for the mistake can easily be found because everyone on the team has a clearly defined task for which he or she is responsible.

Case 2:

Situation: There is a stressful situation in a company and a deadline is approaching rapidly. The boss notices that some files have been forgotten up to now.

- 'Dutch' behavior: He approaches an employee with the files in his hand. Instead of telling him directly what to do, he beats around the bush. He asks the employee, "If you find the time, would you mind doing this for me?"
- 'German' behavior: He approaches an employee's desk, hands him some files and says, "Have these ready by 3 pm, please."

Case 3:

Situation: There is a strategy meeting in a company.

- 'Dutch' behavior: The boss only defines general objectives and targets, stating: "We should try to raise the unit sale of our product X by 50% over the next 12 months." He then tells the employees that they can decide for themselves how they reach those objectives.
- 'German' behavior: The boss defines specific objectives and targets, stating: "One year from now, I want the unit sale of our product X to be 50% higher than now. Production costs per unit have to decrease by 15%, production errors by 10%." Moreover, he demands to be informed about the approach the employees choose to use to reach these objectives and has to approve the approach before they get to work.

Main Category Details

Case 1:

Situation: A person has an idea: he wants to start his own model construction magazine.
- 'Dutch' behavior: Without much planning, he gets to work. Problems such as funding, advertising and distribution are dealt with when they appear.
- 'German' behavior: Before starting, he writes a detailed business plan. He starts extensive market research, takes care of the funding for the next two years and researches advertising customers, distribution channels and the best method to get his magazine known. It takes roughly two years before the first edition is launched.

Case 2:

Situation: A new project is introduced in a company.
- 'Dutch' behavior: The person presenting the project keeps her presentation short; she only presents basic data and a rough time schedule and scope of action. She has not considered possible mistakes and problems yet. When asked about them, she answers, "We will take care of that if and when it actually happens."
- 'German' behavior: The person presenting the project gives very detailed and comprehensive information in her presentation: not only about the project itself and the time schedule, but also about possible problems and obstacles that could occur. When she is asked additional questions by the audience, she also has comprehensive answers.

Case 3:

Situation: A public relations agency is planning a Facebook campaign for a client.
- 'Dutch' behavior: In the initial meeting the client tells the agency roughly what he wants. When they call him to ask for more details, he says, "You are the experts for this. I have full trust that you will do it well."
- 'German' behavior: At their first meeting, the client already has detailed ideas and wishes. In the following weeks, he calls the agency several times a day to ask if they have considered this fact and that fact, and what they would do if this or that event occurred.

Main Category Separation of Work and Private Life

Case 1:

Situation: An employee wants to celebrate his birthday.
- 'Dutch' behavior: A new employee has been working in an office for only two weeks. One day he tells the people who work in the same office, "I will celebrate my birthday on Friday night. You are cordially invited."
- 'German' behavior: An employee has been working in an office for a year. One day he — in the presence of his colleagues — talks to someone on the phone about his upcoming birthday and states, "I will invite all my friends." However, the colleagues who work with him in the same office are never invited.

Case 2:

Situation: A new employee is hired.
- 'Dutch' behavior: He is a little intrusive and asks his colleagues who work in the same office about private things such as hobbies and family. He also tells a lot about himself even though his colleagues have not asked him to do so.
- 'German' behavior: To get to know him, his colleagues who work in the same office ask him about his family and hobbies. He is rather reluctant and monosyllabic. He also does not ask them about their families and hobbies.

Case 3:

Situation: A person tells his colleague with whom he is working on the same project, "You totally messed up the task. I guess you are not skilled enough for this."
- 'Dutch' behavior: When he asks his colleague to join him for lunch in the cafeteria a few hours later, the colleague refuses.
- 'German' behavior: When he asks his colleague to join him for lunch in the cafeteria a few hours later, the colleague agrees. They go to the cafeteria together and get along totally fine.

Main Category Meetings and Discussions/Consensus and 'Overleg'

Case 1:

Situation: There is a meeting within a company's sales department about the introduction of a new product.
- 'Dutch' behavior: Each participant may state his or her opinion about each topic that is discussed. The manager of the company gathers the different opinions

and points out agreements. Eventually, they work out a consensus on which everyone agrees.
- 'German' behavior: With regard to each topic discussed, only those people who are familiar and/or engaged with it state their opinions. The others only listen. They are neither asked to state their opinions nor do they insist on doing so.

Case 2:

Situation: After the election's coalition negotiations start, a coalition agreement is worked out. However, before it can be signed, it has to be approved by the party's base.
- 'Dutch' behavior: Most of the participants express the opinion that they feel that their party leaders have achieved a good compromise that both parties can be content with. They state that this is the best solution because it reflects the will of the majority of the country's voters.
- 'German' behavior: Many of the participants express the opinion that they feel that their party leaders have given in to the other party too quickly. They state that such a compromise is a bad solution, that it can never be the best solution by nature and that they are not content with this.

Case 3:

Situation: There is a meeting within a company's sales department about the introduction of a new product. It is clearly noticeable that two people have totally contradictory opinions on a certain issue.
- 'Dutch' behavior: No one directly brings this up. Instead, the two people beat around the bush, saying things like: "You are right, but you also have to consider …" or "You have a point here, but you also have to think about …"
- 'German' behavior: The opponents vividly defend their views, backing them up with facts and references but also raising their voices and getting louder. The atmosphere grows more aggressive because nobody wants to give in.

8.3.3   Appendix 21: Cases in the German and Dutch languages

Following are the German and Dutch translations of the cases. Since it could not be assumed that each respondent would have a sufficient knowledge of the English language, the cases were translated into German and Dutch for the surveys. In the following texts, the German text is in the first paragraph and the Dutch is in the second.

Main Category Hierarchies

Case 1:

Situation: Die Buchhaltungsabteilung eines Unternehmens hat die Jahresbilanz aufgestellt. Der Manager, der diese unterschreiben muss, entdeckt einen schweren Fehler, der zu hohen finanziellen Verlusten geführt hätte, wäre er nicht entdeckt worden.

De boekhouding van het bedrijf heeft de jaarbalans opgemaakt. De manager, die de balans moet ondertekenen, ontdekt een grove fout die tot grote verliezen zou hebben geleid als hij niet was ontdekt.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Er zieht das gesamte Team der Buchhaltung zur Verantwortung, weil sie ja auch als Team an der Bilanz gearbeitet haben und im Nachhinein nicht mehr feststellbar ist, wer genau für den Fehler verantwortlich ist.

  Hij roept de complete boekhoudafdeling ter verantwoording, omdat ze tenslotte als team aan de balans hebben gewerkt en achteraf niet meer achterhaald kan worden, wie er precies verantwoordelijk is voor de fout.

- 'German' behavior: Die für den Fehler verantwortliche Person lässt sich leicht finden, denn jeder in der Buchhaltungsabteilung hat fest und klar definierte Aufgaben und Verantwortlichkeiten.

  Diegene, die voor de fout verantwoordelijk is, is al snel gevonden, want iedereen in de boekhouding heeft vaste en helder gedefinieerde taken en verantwoordelijkheden.

Case 2:

Situation: In der Abteilung eines Unternehmens ist eine Stresssituation aufgetreten, die Deadline für ein Projekt rückt immer näher. Der Chef bemerkt, dass einige Akten bislang noch nicht bearbeitet wurden.

Op een afdeling van een bedrijf is sprake van een stressvolle situatie. De deadline voor een project komt steeds dichterbij. De chef merkt, dat een aantal documenten nog niet zijn verwerkt.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Er geht mit den Akten zu einem der Mitarbeiter. Anstatt diesem jedoch direkt zu sagen, was er will, druckst er herum: „Wenn Sie es noch schaffen, wäre es toll, wenn Sie diese Akten noch bearbeiten könnten."

  Hij gaat met de documenten naar een van de medewerkers. In plaats van hem direct te zeggen, wat hij wil, komt hij er niet mee voor de dag: "Als het nog lukt, zou het fijn zijn als je deze documenten nog zou kunnen verwerken."

- 'German' behavior: Er geht mit den Akten zu einem der Mitarbeiter, überreicht ihm die Akten und sagt: „Bearbeiten Sie diese bitte bis 15.00 Uhr."

  Hij gaat met de documenten naar een van de medewerker en zegt: "Verwerkt u deze documenten vòòr15:00 uur s. v. p."

Case 3:

Situation: In einem Unternehmen wird eine Strategiesitzung abgehalten.
In een bedrijf vindt strategisch overleg plaats.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Der Chef nennt generelle Unternehmensziele und sagt: „Wir sollten probieren, innerhalb der nächsten 12 Monate den Verkauf von Produkt X um 50% zu steigern." Dann sagte er seinen Mitarbeitern, sie könnten selbst entscheiden, wie sie dieses Ziel erreichen.
  De baas noemt de algemene bedrijfsdoelstellingen en zegt: "We moeten proberen om binnen de komende 12 maanden de verkoop van product X met 50% te verhogen." Vervolgens zegt hij tegen zijn medewerkers dat ze zelf mogen beslissen, hoe ze deze doelstelling willen bereiken.

- 'German' behavior: Der Chef nennt sehr spezifische Unternehmensziele: „Innerhalb eines Jahres muss der Verkauf von Produkt X um 50% steigen. Die Produktionskosten müssen um 15% sinken, Produktionsfehler um 10%. Wir müssen die folgenden Maßnahmen ergreifen …" Zudem verlangt er, dass die Mitarbeiter nicht einfach anfangen, sondern ihre Vorgehensweise zunächst von der Geschäftsführung absegnen lassen.
  De baas noemt zeer specifieke bedrijfsdoelstellingen en zegt: "Binnen een jaar moet de verkoop van product X met 50% stijgen. De productiekosten moeten met 15% worden verlaagd, productiefouten met 10%. De volgende maatregelen moeten worden genomen …" Bovendien verlangt hij, dat de medewerkers niet gewoon beginnen, maar hun plan van aanpak door de directie laten goedkeuren.

Main Category Details

Case 1:

Situation: Ein Mann hat eine Idee: Er will eine Fachzeitschrift für Modellbauer gründen.
Een man heeft een idee: hij wil een vaktijdschrift voor modelbouwers opzetten.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Ohne sich lange mit Planungen aufzuhalten, macht er sich an die Arbeit. Mit möglichen Problemen wie Finanzierung, Akquise von Werbekunden, Werbung und Versand beschäftigt er sich erst, wenn es nötig ist.
  Zonder zich lang met de planning bezig te houden, gaat hij aan de slag. Met zaken als de werving van advertentieklanten, reclame en verzending houdt hij zich pas bezig als het echt nodig is.

- 'German' behavior: Bevor er sich an die Arbeit macht, entwirft er einen detaillierten Geschäftsplan. Er betreibt umfangreiche Marktanalysen, kümmert sich um die kurz- und langfristige Finanzierung, kontaktiert potentielle

Werbekunden, recherchiert Vertriebswege, etc. Bevor die Erstausgabe in den Verkauf geht, vergehen zwei Jahre.

Voordat hij aan de slag gaat, maakt hij een gedetailleerd businessplan. Hij voert uitgebreide marktanalyses uit, houdt zich bezig met de korte- en langetermijn-financiering, neemt contact op met potentiële advertentieklanten, doet research naar verkoopkanalen etc. Het duurt twee jaar voordat het magazine daadwerke-lijk in de verkoop gaat.

Case2:

Situation: Ein neues Projekt wird in einem Unternehmen eingeführt.

Een bedrijf heeft een nieuw project binnengehaald.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Die Person, die es vorstellt, hält ihre Präsentation kurz und knapp. Sie präsentiert lediglich Basisinformationen, einen groben Zeitrahmen und Handlungsrahmen. Bislang hat sie über mögliche Schwierigkeiten und Probleme nicht nachgedacht. Wird sie über diese gefragt, sagt sie: „Damit be-fassen wir uns, wenn es tatsächlich nötig ist."

  De medewerkster, die het presenteert, houdt de presentatie kort en bondig. Er wordt enkel basisinformatie, een grof tijdsbestek en een globaal plan van aan-pak gepresenteerd. Over mogelijke problemen en moeilijkheden is nog niet nagedacht. Als men haar daarnaar vraagt, zegt ze: "Daar houden we ons mee bezig, als het daadwerkelijk nodig is."

- 'German' behavior: Die Person, die es vorstellt, gibt sehr detaillierte und aus-führliche Informationen, nicht nur über das Projekt, den Zeitrahmen und den Handlungsrahmen, sondern auch dazu, wie man mit potentiellen Problemen und Schwierigkeiten umgehen kann. Auf Fragen aus dem Publikum hat sie de-taillierte Antworten.

  De medewerkster, die het presenteert, geeft zeer gedetailleerde en uitgebreide informatie, niet alleen over het project, het tijdsbestek en een plan van aanpak, maar ook over de omgang met mogelijke problemen en moeilijkheden. Ze geeft gedetailleerd antwoord op vragen uit het publiek.

Case 3:

Situation: Eine PR-Agentur plant eine Facebook-Kampagne für einen Kunden.

Een pr-bureau plant een Facebook-campagne voor een klant.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Beim ersten Treffen erzählt der Kunde, wie er sich die Kam-pagne ungefähr vorstellt. Als die Mitarbeiter der Agentur ihn einige Zeit später bezüglich der Details anrufen, sagt er: „Ihr seid die Experten, tut was ihr für richtig haltet. Ich bin mir sicher, dass ihr eine gute Kampagne macht."

Tijdens de eerste afspraak vertelt de klant, hoe hij de campagne ongeveer voor zich ziet. Als de medewerkers van het kantoor hem een tijdje later bellen om de details te bespreken, zegt hij: "Jullie zijn de experts, doe het maar, zoals jullie het goed vinden. Ik weet zeker dat de campagne goed gaat lopen."

- 'German' behavior: Beim ersten Treffen hat der Kunde detaillierte Vorstellungen über die Durchführung. In den folgenden Wochen ruft er – teils mehrmals täglich – an, um zu fragen, ob die Mitarbeiter der Agentur dieses und jenes bedacht haben, was sie im Falle unvorhergesehener Zwischenfälle unternehmen werden, etc.

  Tijdens de eerste afspraak heeft de klant al gedetailleerde ideeën over de opzet en uitvoering. In de weken daarna belt hij, soms meerdere keren per dag, op om te vragen of de medewerkers wel gedacht hebben aan ditjes en datjes, wat ze doen als er onvoorziene zaken gebeuren etc.

Main Category Separation of Work and Private Life

Case 1:

Situation: Ein Mitarbeiter möchte sienen Geburtstag feiern.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Ein neuer Mitarbeiter arbeitet erst seit zwei Wochen in einem Unternehmen. Eines Morgens sagt er zu seinen Bürokollegen: „Am Freitag feiere ich meinen Geburtstag mit Freunden und Verwandten. Ihr seid herzlich eingeladen."

  Een nieuwe medewerker werkt pas twee weken bij een bedrijf. Op een ochtend zegt hij tegen zijn collega´s: "Op vrijdag vier ik mijn verjaardag met vrienden en familie. Jullie zijn van harte uitgenodigd."

- 'German' behavior: Ein Mitarbeiter arbeitet bereits seit einem Jahr in einem Unternehmen. Eines Tages spricht er in Anwesenheit seiner Bürokollegen mit jemandem am Telefon über seinen anstehenden Geburtstag und sagt: „Ich mache eine große Feier und lade all meine Freunde ein." Es zeigt sich jedoch, dass er seine Bürokollegen nicht einlädt.

  Een medewerker werkt al een jaar bij een bedrijf. Op een dag praat hij – in aanwezigheid van zijn collega's – aan de telefoon met iemand over zijn verjaardag en zegt: "Ik geef een groot feest en nodig al mijn vrienden uit." Nu blijkt, dat hij zijn collega´s niet uitnodigt.

Case 2:

Situation: Ein neuer Mitarbeiter wird eingestellt.
Er wordt een nieuwe medewerker aangenomen.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Er ist recht neugierig und fragt seine Kollegen über private Dinge aus, beispielsweise über Familie und Hobbies. Außerdem erzählt er viele private Dinge von sich selbst, obwohl ihn seine Kollegen gar nicht danach gefragt haben.

  Hij is heel nieuwsgierig en vraagt zijn collega´s naar privézaken, bijvoorbeeld naar hun gezin en hobby's. Bovendien vertelt hij veel persoonlijke dingen over zichzelf, hoewel zijn collega´s daar helemaal niet naar gevraagd hebben.
- 'German' behavior: Um ihn besser kennenzulernen, stellen ihm seine Kollegen Fragen zu Familie, Hobbies, etc. Er antwortet jedoch sehr einsilbig und zurückhaltend und stellt seinerseits den Kollegen keine privaten Fragen.

  Om hem beter te leren kennen, vragen zijn collega´s hem naar zijn familie, hobby´s etc. Hij antwoordt echter heel kort en terughoudend en stelt zijn collega´s op zijn beurt geen privévragen.

Case 3:

Situation: Der Mitarbeiter eines Unternehmens sagt zu einem Kollegen, der im gleichen Projekt arbeitet: „Das hast du völlig versaut. Ich glaube, du bist nicht qualifiziert genug für diese Aufgabe."

Een medewerker van een bedrijf zegt tegen een collega, die aan hetzelfde project werkt: "Dat heb je compleet verpest. Ik geloof dat deze opdracht voor jou te hoog gegrepen is."
- 'Dutch' behavior: Als der Mitarbeiter den Kollegen einige Stunden später fragt, ob er Lust habe, mit ihm zu Mittag in der Kantine zu essen, lehnt der Kollege pikiert ab.

  Als de medewerker de collega een paar uur later vraagt of hij zin heeft om samen iets te gaan eten in de kantine, weigert de collega gepikeerd.
- 'German' behavior: Als der Mitarbeiter den Kollegen einige Stunden später fragt, ob er Lust habe, mit ihm zu Mittag in der Kantine zu essen, sagt der Kollege ohne zu zögern zu.

  Als de medewerker de collega een paar uur later vraagt of hij zin heeft om samen iets te gaan eten in de kantine, stemt de collega zonder te aarzelen in.

Main Category Meetings and Discussions/Consensus and 'Overleg'

Case 1:

Situation: In der Verkaufsabteilung eines Unternehmens gibt es ein Treffen, um die Einführung eines neuen Produktes zu besprechen.

Op de verkoopafdeling van een bedrijf vindt een bijeenkomst plaats om de introductie van een nieuw product te bespreken.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Jeder Teilnehmer kann zu jedem besprochenen Thema seine Meinung äußern. Der Chef sammelt alle unterschiedlichen Meinungen und Vorschläge und zeigt Gemeinsamkeiten auf. Schließlich wird ein Konsens ausgearbeitet, mit dem jeder zufrieden ist.

  Elke deelnemer kan over elk besproken onderwerp zijn mening geven. De baas verzamelt alle meningen en voorstellen en bundelt de overeenkomsten. Uiteindelijk wordt er een consensus bereikt, waarmee iedereen tevreden is.
- 'German' behavior: Zu den besprochenen Themen äußern sich jeweils nur diejenigen Mitarbeiter, die mit dem Thema oder der Ausführung vertraut sind. Die anderen Mitarbeiter hören zu und werden auch nicht gebeten, ihre Meinung auszusprechen.

  Alleen die medewerkers, die daadwerkelijk van doen hebben met het onderwerp of de uitvoering, mogen hun mening geven. De andere medewerkers luisteren alleen naar de discussie en worden ook niet naar hun mening gevraagd.

Case 2:

Situation: Nach den Wahlen handeln die Koalitionspartner einen Koalitionsvertrag aus. Bevor dieser unterschrieben werden kann, muss jedoch erst eine Mitgliederabstimmung der Parteibasis erfolgen.

Na de verkiezingen onderhandelen de coalitiepartners over een regeerakkoord. Voordat dit kan worden getekend, moet de achterban eerst stemmen.
- 'Dutch' behavior: Die meisten Mitglieder sind der Meinung, dass die Parteiführungen einen guten Kompromiss ausgehandelt haben, mit dem jeder zufrieden sein kann. Der Koalitionsvertrag sei die beste Lösung, da er die Meinung der Mehrheit der Wähler des Landes berücksichtige.

  Het grootste deel is van mening, dat de partijleiding een goed compromis heeft bereikt waarmee iedereen tevreden kan zijn. Het regeerakkoord is de beste oplossing omdat het gebaseerd is op de mening van de meerderheid van de kiezers in het land.
- 'German' behavior: Viele Mitglieder der Parteibasis sind jedoch unzufrieden mit dem Ergebnis, da sie der Meinung sind, die Parteiführung hätte den Forderungen der anderen Partei zu sehr nachgegeben und eigene Positionen nicht hart genug verteidigt. Sie finden sich notgedrungen mit dem Kompromiss ab, sind jedoch der Meinung, dass Kompromisse nie die beste Lösung sind.

  Veel leden van de achterban zijn echter ontevreden met het resultaat, omdat ze van mening zijn dat de partijleiding teveel heeft toegegeven aan de eisen van de andere partij en de eigen belangen niet goed genoeg heeft verdedigd. Ze gaan noodgedwongen akkoord met het compromis maar vinden dat compromissen nooit de beste oplossing zijn.

Case 3:

Situation: In der Verkaufsabteilung eines Unternehmens wird die Markteinführung eines neuen Produkts besprochen. Man merkt deutlich, dass zwei Teilnehmer bezüglich bestimmter Punkte völlig gegensätzlicher Meinung sind.

Op de verkoopafdeling van een bedrijf wordt de introductie van een nieuw product besproken. Het is duidelijk te merken, dat twee deelnemers het op bepaalde punten helemaal niet met elkaar eens zijn.

- 'Dutch' behavior: Keiner der beiden spricht das jedoch direkt an. Vielmehr reden beide um den heißen Brei herum und sagen: „Du hast zwar recht, aber müsstest auch daran denken, dass …", oder: „Ich stimme dir grundsätzlich zu, aber …"

  Geen van beiden spreekt hier echter open over. Ze draaien er allebei omheen en zeggen: "Je hebt wel gelijk, maar je moet er ook aan denken dat", of: "Ik ben het in principe met je eens, maar …".

- 'German' behavior: Sie verteidigen ihre Meinung heftig, führen Argumente und Fakten an und versuchen, die Argumente des Gegenübers zu entkräften. Die Diskussion heizt sich auf, beide reden lauter, keiner will nachgeben.

  Ze verdedigen hun mening heftig, komen met argumenten en feiten en proberen de argumenten van de ander te ontkrachten. De discussie loopt hoog op, ze verheffen hun stem, geen van beiden wil toegeven.

8.3.4   Appendix 22: Survey questions

Following are the questions from the surveys. Q1G, for example, means question 1 from the German survey, while Q1D means question 1 from the Dutch survey.

Q1G: German respondents are presented a case with "Dutch behavior" and asked, "What is your attitude toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would bother me considerably to 7 = would not bother me at all).

Q2G: German respondents are presented a case with "Dutch behavior" and asked, "How typical do you regard this behavior for Dutch people?" (answers range from 1 = very typical to 7 = totally atypical).

Q3G: German respondents are presented a case with "German behavior" and asked, "Which attitude would a Dutch person likely have toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would be bothered considerably to 7 = would not be bothered at all).

Q4G: German respondents are presented a case with "German behavior" and asked, "How typical would a Dutch person regard this behavior for Germans?" (answers range from 1 = very typical to 7 = totally atypical).

Q5G: German respondents are presented a case with "German behavior" and asked, "What is your attitude toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would bother me considerably to 7 = would not bother me at all).

Q1D: Dutch respondents are presented a case with "German behavior" and asked, "What is your attitude toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would bother me considerably to 7 = would not bother me at all).

Q2D: Dutch respondents are presented a case with "German behavior" and asked, "How typical do you regard this behavior for Germans?" (answers range from 1 = very typical to 7 = totally atypical).

Q3D: Dutch respondents are presented a case with "Dutch behavior" and asked, "Which attitude would a German person likely have toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would be bothered considerably to 7 = would not be bothered at all).

Q4D: Dutch respondents are presented a case with "Dutch behavior" and asked, "How typical would a German person regard this behavior for Dutch people?" (answers range from 1 = very typical to 7 = totally atypical).

Q5D: Dutch respondents are presented a case with "Dutch behavior" and asked, "What is your attitude toward this behavior?" (answers range from 1 = would bother me considerably to 7 = would not bother me at all).

8.3.5 Appendix 23: Constellations of answers that are (un)likely to lead to irritations

With regard to the comparison of questions Q2G, Q4G, Q2D and Q4D, there are different possible constellations that are either likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns or not. The same applies to the comparison of questions Q1G, Q3G, Q1D and Q3D.

The different constellations are illustrated in the following three tables (Tables 57, 58 and 59). While the text in the question columns shows the possible answers to the questions (i.e., "typical" or "atypical", or "bothered" or "not bothered"; gradations are not considered for the time being), the answers in the "irritations" column show whether a constellation is likely to lead to irritations, problems and/or communication breakdowns in bicultural interaction.

Table 57   Constellations of answers to questions Q2G, Q4D and Q2D

Q2G	Q4D	Q2D	Irritations
typical	typical	typical	no
typical	typical	atypical	yes
typical	atypical	typical	yes
typical	atypical	atypical	no
atypical	typical	typical	no
atypical	typical	atypical	yes
atypical	atypical	typical	yes
atypical	atypical	atypical	no

Table 58   Constellations of answers to questions Q2D, Q4G and Q2G

Q2D	Q4G	Q2G	Irritations
typical	typical	typical	no
typical	typical	atypical	yes
typical	atypical	typical	yes
typical	atypical	atypical	no
atypical	typical	typical	no
atypical	typical	atypical	yes
atypical	atypical	typical	yes
atypical	atypical	atypical	no

Table 59   Constellations of the answers to questions Q1G, Q3G, Q1D and Q3D

Q1G	Q3G	Q1D	Q3D	Irritations
bothered	bothered	bothered	bothered	no
bothered	bothered	bothered	not bothered	yes
bothered	bothered	not bothered	bothered	no
bothered	bothered	not bothered	not bothered	yes
bothered	not bothered	bothered	bothered	yes
bothered	not bothered	bothered	not bothered	yes
bothered	not bothered	not bothered	bothered	no
bothered	not bothered	not bothered	not bothered	yes
not bothered	bothered	bothered	bothered	no
not bothered	bothered	bothered	not bothered	no
not bothered	bothered	not bothered	bothered	no
not bothered	bothered	not bothered	not bothered	no
not bothered	not bothered	bothered	bothered	yes
not bothered	not bothered	bothered	not bothered	yes
not bothered	not bothered	not bothered	bothered	no
not bothered	not bothered	not bothered	not bothered	no

8.3.6   Appendix 24: Concordance between the answers to the three cases for each main category

8.3.6.1   Appendix 24.1: Concordance of answers to the three cases for each main category: German respondents

Table 60   Concordance of answers to the three cases for each main category: German respondents

	Details	Hierarchies	Separation	Consensus
Q1G/Q3D	.77	.67	.75	.71
Q2G/Q4D	.87	.71	.76	.73
Q3G/Q1D	.84	.77	.78	.73
Q4G/Q2D	.87	.69	.81	.70

Concordance calculated with Cronbach's alpha reliability test (1 = 100% concordance, 0 = no concordance)

8.3.6.2 Appendix 24.2: Concordance of answers to the three cases for each main category: Dutch respondents

Table 61 Concordance of answers to the three cases for each main category: Dutch respondents

	Details	Hierarchies	Separation	Consensus
Q1G/Q3D	.85	.77	.87	.73
Q2G/Q4D	.88	.73	.85	.75
Q3G/Q1D	.70	.74	.82	.74
Q4G/Q2D	.90	.72	.85	.75

Concordance calculated with Cronbach's alpha reliability test (1 = 100% concordance, 0 = no concordance)

8.3.6.3 Appendix 24.3: Concordance of the differences of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents for the three cases of each main category

Table 62 Concordance of the differences of the answers of the German and Dutch respondents for the three cases of each main category

	Details	Hierarchies	Separation	Consensus
Q1G/Q3D	.85	.77	.87	.73
Q2G/Q4D	.88	.73	.85	.75
Q3G/Q1D	.70	.74	.82	.54
Q4G/Q2D	.90	.72	.85	.74

Concordance calculated with Cronbach's alpha reliability test (1 = 100% concordance, 0 = no concordance)

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