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PORTUGUESE CULTURAL STANDARDS

FROM COLOMBIAN PERSPECTIVE

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- Spine -

*To God who always shows the way, to my family who taught me how to walk on that way and to Catarina for walking with me now.*

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**Abstract**

Working and doing business with people from other cultures and countries has become the most common situation in the globalized world of today. The way we deal with perceptions, judgments, ways of thinking and actions are some of the most important factors for good performance or for successfully achieving an objective either individually or within a team, hence identifying cultural differences is crucial in helping us avoid unnecessary misinterpretations.

The objective of this work is to look for cultural differences with a qualitative approach and identify cultural standards of Portuguese people from the perspective of Colombian people working in Portugal. For this purpose the author will interview Colombian people working in Portugal in order to gather experiences and analyze multiple situations to find common points that can lead us to identify Portuguese cultural standards and eventually make a comparison with Hosftede's findings about the countries studied in this research.

**Sumário**

Trabalhar e negociar com pessoas de diferentes culturas e países tornou-se uma realidade muito comum hoje em dia. O modo como lidamos com pré conceitos, juizos de valor e modos de pensar e agir são factores importantíssimos para um bom desempenho e para atingir os objectivos individualmente ou dentro de uma equipa, pelo que a chave para evitar obstáculos ou constrangimentos é identificar as diferenças culturais.

O objectivo deste trabalho é determinar as diferenças culturais através de uma abordagem qualitativa e identificar os padrões culturais dos portugueses a partir da perspectiva de pessoas de nacionalidade colombiana a trabalhar em Portugal. Para este proposito serão realizadas 20 entrevistas narrativas a colombianos a trabalhar em Portugal com vista a recolher várias experiências e analisar episódios que indiquem pontos em comum, a partir dos quais poder-se-ão identificar padrões culturais portugueses e, eventualmente, levar a cabo uma comparação com as descobertas de Hosftede sobre estes dois países.

**Keywords:** cultura, gestão intercultural, Cultural Standards, Portugal – Colômbia

**Classificação JEL:** A14 – Sociologia da Economia; F23 – Empresas Multinacionais;

Negócios Internacionais.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasing globalized world, misunderstandings between people from different cultures and countries can jeopardize the success of companies and societies, hence identifying cultural differences is crucial in helping us avoid unnecessary misinterpretations.

Cross-cultural research has responded to this reality, developing a method to identify cultural standards that helps managers in avoiding incompatibilities when working with people from different cultures. Literature in this field has already identified multiple dimensions that are used to explain cultural differences within this line of study, the most known being the 4 dimensions theory created by Geert Hofstede in his study "*Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*" which has become as a major point of reference for researchers on this topic.

The objective of this work is to identify for cultural differences through a qualitative approach and then set out cultural standards of Portuguese people from the perspective of Colombian people working in Portugal. Colombian people working in Portugal will be interviewed in order to gather experiences, analyse multiple situations and find common points that can lead us to identify Portuguese cultural standards and eventually make a comparison with Hosftede's findings on both countries.

Since many of the cultural and historical links between Latin American countries and Europe starts from Spain, including Colombia and the main contact that Portugal has with Latin America clearly points to Brazil, the knowledge that both countries have of one another is limited. The reason behind this choice of topic responds to the author's interest in giving more information and a wider idea to the people of his country of origin about the way of thinking and idiosyncrasies of Portuguese people by approaching this culture in a more scientific and hence more accurate way. Whereby facilitating overcoming any cultural obstacle that a person from Colombia or similar culture would face when doing business or interacting with Portuguese people.

This work follows the main guidelines and procedures suggested by Gerhard Fink, Marcus Kölling and Anne-Katrin Neyer in their paper about the cultural standards method and also in the work of Frank Bruek and Astrid Kainzbauer titled "*The Cultural Standards Method: A Qualitative approach on the cross-cultural management research*" both articles have been used as reference for the main guidelines and procedures of the narrative interview and on the transcription and content analysis.

The first chapter of this work introduces the subject, while the second chapter reviews the concept of culture and how it is related to this line of investigation, in order to proceed with a literature review of the work that has already been done in the area in the second part of the chapter, focusing specifically on the approach given by Hofstede on his theory of the four cultural dimensions.

In the third chapter Colombia and Portugal are compared from a historical perspective, giving a historical overview of the two countries and providing a better understanding of each nations particular characteristics. Thus enabling the author to establish a relationship between these comparisons and the findings of Hofstede's research.

Following the theoretical and historical comparisons, the application of the cultural standards method begins in the fourth chapter, giving a detailed explanation of the technique and how it was applied to this work. Chapter five presents the results of the cultural standards identified in this research after the content analysis, categorization of the narrative interviews and the feedback of the interviewees from those results as is laid out in the method. To finish, chapter six sets out the general conclusions of this research project.

## 2. THE CONCEPTS AND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE

### 2.1 The Concept of Culture

Since the main objective of this work is to identify cultural standards, having a conceptual framework that specifically defines the meaning of culture and that can be used in this work becomes very important. Hence it is necessary to review of the evolution of the concept of culture within this line of study.

When the concept first emerged in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century in Europe, it connoted a process of cultivation or improvement, as in agriculture or horticulture. In the nineteenth century, it began to refer to the betterment or refinement of the individual, especially through education, and then to the fulfillment of national aspirations or ideals. In the mid-nineteenth century, some scientists used the term "culture" to refer to a universal human capacity. For the German nonpositivist sociologist, Georg Simmel, culture referred to "the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms which have been objectified in the course of history".

In the twentieth century, "culture" emerged as a central concept to anthropology, encompassing all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term "culture" in American anthropology had two meanings: (1) the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and (2) the distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world used to classify and represent their experiences, and act creatively. [1]

In the nineteenth century, humanists such as the English poet and essayist Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) used the word "culture" to refer to an ideal of individual human refinement, of "the best that has been thought and said in the world."[4] This concept of culture is comparable to the German concept of *bildung*: "...culture being a pursuit of

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[1] Levine, Donald (ed) 'Simmel: On individuality and social forms' Chicago University Press, 1971. p6.

our total perfection by means of getting to know, in all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world."[2]

In practice, *culture* referred to an élite ideal and was associated with such activities as art, classical music, and haute cuisine. As these forms were associated with urbane life, "culture" was identified with "civilization" (from lat. *civitas*, city). Another facet of the Romantic movement was an interest in folklore, which led to identifying a "culture" among non-elites. This distinction is often characterized as that between "high culture", namely that of the ruling social group, and "low culture." In other words, the idea of "culture" that developed in Europe during the 18th and early 19th centuries reflected inequalities within European societies.[3]

Matthew Arnold contrasted "culture" with "anarchy;" while other Europeans, following philosophers Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, contrasted "culture" with "the state of nature." According to Hobbes and Rousseau, the Native Americans who were being conquered by Europeans from the 16th century onwards, were living in a state of nature; this opposition was expressed through the contrast between "civilized" and "uncivilized." According to this way of thinking, one could classify some countries and nations as more civilized than others and some people as more cultured than others. This contrast led to Herbert Spencer's theory of Social Darwinism and Lewis Henry Morgan's theory of cultural evolution. Just as some critics have argued that the distinction between high and low cultures is really an expression of the conflict between European elites and non-elites, some critics have argued that the distinction between civilized and uncivilized people is really an expression of the conflict between European colonial powers and their colonial subjects.

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[2] Arnold, Matthew. 1869. *Culture and Anarchy.*

[3] Bakhtin, M. M. (1981) The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Press.

Other 19th century critics, following Rousseau, have accepted this differentiation between higher and lower culture, but have seen the refinement and sophistication of high culture as corrupting and unnatural developments that obscure and distort people's essential nature. These critics considered folk music (as produced by working-class people) to honestly express a natural way of life, while classical music seemed superficial and decadent. Equally, this view often portrayed indigenous peoples as "noble savages" living authentic and unblemished lives, uncomplicated and uncorrupted by the highly stratified capitalist systems of the West.

In 1870 Edward Tylor (1832–1917) applied these ideas of higher versus lower culture to propose a theory of the evolution of religion. According to this theory, religion evolves from more polytheistic to more monotheistic forms.[4] In the process, he redefined culture as a diverse set of activities characteristic of all human societies. This view paved the way for the modern understanding of culture.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) formulated an individualist definition of "enlightenment" similar to the concept of *bildung*: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity."[5] He argued that this immaturity comes not from a lack of understanding, but from a lack of courage to think independently. Against this intellectual cowardice, Kant urged: *Sapere aude*, "Dare to be wise!" In reaction to Kant, German scholars such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) argued that human creativity, which necessarily takes unpredictable and highly diverse forms, is as important as human rationality. Moreover, Herder proposed a collective form of *bildung*: "For Herder, Bildung was the totality of experiences that provide a coherent identity, and sense of common destiny, to a people."[6]

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[4] McClenon, James. "Tylor, Edward B(urnett)". *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*. Ed. William Swatos and Peter Kivisto. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 1998. 528-29.

[5] Immanuel Kant 1974 "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (German: "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?") *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December (Berlin Monthly)

[6] Michael Eldridge, "The German Bildung Tradition

In 1795, the great linguist and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) called for an anthropology that would synthesize Kant's and Herder's interests. During the Romantic era, scholars in Germany, especially those concerned with nationalist movements—such as the nationalist struggle to create a "Germany" out of diverse principalities, and the nationalist struggles by ethnic minorities against the Austro-Hungarian Empire—developed a more inclusive notion of culture as "worldview." According to this school of thought, each ethnic group has a distinct worldview that is incommensurable with the worldviews of other groups. Although more inclusive than earlier views, this approach to culture still allowed for distinctions between "civilized" and "primitive" or "tribal" cultures.

In 1860, Adolf Bastian (1826–1905) argued for "the psychic unity of mankind". He proposed that a scientific comparison of all human societies would reveal that distinct worldviews consisted of the same basic elements. According to Bastian, all human societies share a set of "elementary ideas" (*Elementargedanken*); different cultures, or different "folk ideas" (*Volkergedanken*), are local modifications of the elementary ideas.[7] This view paved the way for the modern understanding of culture. Franz Boas (1858–1942) was trained in this tradition, and he brought it with him when he left Germany for the United States.

In 1952 Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled a list of 164 definitions of "culture" in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. This work has set the guideline in multiple areas of investigation when the concept of culture is involved including management, specifically in Hofstede's work where this author takes this definition of culture as the starting point to explain his 4 dimensions theory, this definition has been quoted by Hofstede as below:

*Culture has been defined in many ways. One well-known anthropological consensus definitions runs as follows:*

*"Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and*

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[7] "Adolf Bastian", *Today in Science History*; "Adolf Bastian",

*Transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values."[8]*

The definition chosen by Hofstede is also determined by the use of the concept of values assigned by Kluckhohn and Kroeber in their definition of culture, and is used by the author to base his own culture concept of "Collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another", which is going to be applied further on Hofstede's 4 main dimensions.

Despite defining culture as some sort of "Collective software", Hofstede also points out that those values, in which he bases his concept of culture, have also visible signs that express themselves on 3 elements; which are heroes, rituals and symbols and he explains the influence of these values with a layers diagram, using the structure of an onion as a metaphor (See Figure 1).

According to the onion diagram, of the 3 visible elements of culture recognized by Hofstede the symbols in first place are defined by the author as words, gestures, pictures and objects that often carry complex meanings recognized as such, only by those who share the culture. In second place, he defines the heroes as persons alive or dead, real or imaginary who have features that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as a model for behavior, and finally the rituals which are collective activities that are technically unnecessary to the achievement of the desired ends, but that within a culture are considered socially essential, keeping the individual bound within the norms of the collectivity.

Values according to Hofstede are reflected in every layer through practices and are even visible to the outsiders. The common meaning of each practice given by those values on each layer is only understood by the insiders.

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[8] Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions And Organizations Across Nations*; Sage Publications, 2nd ed (1st ed 1980), 596 p.
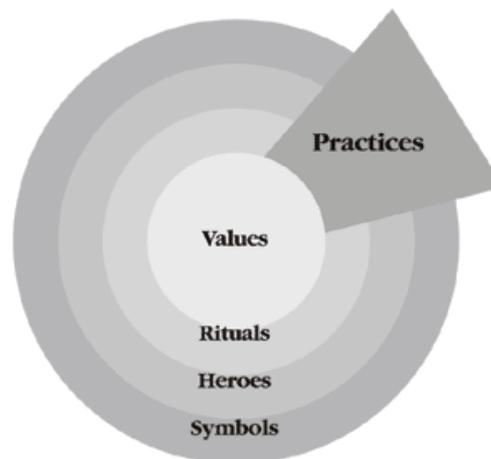
**Figure 1:** The influence of values over the different layers of culture "Onion Diagram" (Source: Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*; Sage Publications, 2nd Ed.)

## 2.2 The Cultural Standard Concept

Now that the concept of culture has been defined it will provide a foundation to help understand the concept of cultural standards. The values have a strong influence over the symbols, heroes and rituals of culture, hence we can define cultural standards as the manifestation of those visible signs seen by outsiders which will allow them the recognition of a different culture without providing the real meaning under that sign.

Alexander Thomas, another researcher in this field proposed a definition of cultural standards by taking multiple elements of Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition of culture as well as Hofstede did, according to Thomas, Cultural standards can be defined by 5 main points.[9]

- Culture Standards are processes of perception, thought, evaluation and action, that for the majority of the members of a particular culture are regarded, and are taken by themselves and by others, as normal typical and obligatory.

- Personal behavior and the behavior of others is judged and regulated according to these culture standards.

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[9] Thomas, A (2001), Research into the influence of Culture Standards, Universität Regensburg.

- Central Culture Standards regulate wide areas of thought, evaluation and action whereas peripheral culture standards are the rule only for specific situations or groups of people.

- The individual and group-specific manner of handling central cultural standards for behavior regulation can vary within a certain range of tolerance.

- Manners of conduct that are outside the given limits are rejected and discredited.

These main points allow us to identify the shared ideas of this author and Hofstede as Thomas takes the definition of thinking, feeling and acting implicit in the values concept taken by Hofstede to explain the way a cultural standard works. Further comparison of this work with Hosftede's findings about Portugal and Colombia would be an interesting exercise to make this common theoretical point a useful tool to proceed in further chapters. Nevertheless, the presence of these two previously defined concepts will be common throughout the reviewed literature and research in this project.

## 2.3 The Literature Review

Situations such as the internationalization of a company or a new deal with a foreign partner creates cross cultural scenarios, for these and many other situations cross cultural research has become a key tool for managers across the world. The application of this line of study in management can be adapted according to the situation. In some cases, the research could be about studying a particular culture or the comparison between two cultures, as this work is to a certain extent. Alternatively it could be the analysis and comparison of multiple cultures clustered within certain categories created according to a defined theoretical framework. It is this exercise that has developed the most well known methodologies in this field, and will be described in this review.

### 2.3.1 The 4 Dimensions of Hofstede

As described in the introduction, one of the most known theories on cross cultural research in terms of management is the one proposed by Geert Hofstede who compared and studied the country cultures throughout all the branches of IBM across the world.

This author presents the results of his study, ranking the different countries and giving each specific score according to 4 main variables.

The first variable presented is called Power Distance, which is defined by Hofstede as "the interpersonal power of influence that the boss has over his subordinate from the perspective of the second one". The intention of the author is to measure the level of inequality in a particular culture given the implicit dominance behavior contained in human nature.

In cultures with a small power distance (e.g. Australia, Austria, Denmark, Ireland, New Zeeland), people expect and accept power relationships that are more consultative or democratic. People relate to one another more as equals regardless of formal positions. Subordinates are more comfortable with and demand the right to contribute to and criticize the decisions of those in power. In cultures with a large power distance (e.g. Malaysia); the less powerful accept power relationships that are autocratic or paternalistic. Subordinates acknowledge the power of others based on their formal, hierarchical positions

The second dimension has been called by the author Uncertainty avoidance and it's explained by him, as follows:

*"A basic fact of life is that time goes only one way. We are caught in a present that it's just an infinitesimal borderline between past and future that moves away as fast as we try to approach it, but onto which we project our present hopes and fears. In other word, we are living with an uncertainty of which we are conscious"[10]*

Essentially this dimension describes how people in a given culture can cope with the projection of a future context which is unknown, unstructured and changing constantly. In cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance, people prefer explicit rules (e.g. about religion and food) and formally structured activities, and employees tend to remain longer with their present employer. In cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance, people

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[10] Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions And Organizations Across Nations*; Sage Publications, 2nd ed (1st ed 1980), 596 p.

prefer implicit or flexible rules or guidelines and informal activities. Employees tend to change employers more frequently.

Individualism and collectivism is the third dimension identified by Hofstede, which is measured by how each member of a given culture identifies themselves within the group they belong. In individualist cultures, people are expected to develop and display their individual personalities and to choose their own affiliations. In collectivist cultures, people are defined and act mostly as a member of a long-term group, such as the family, a religious group, an age cohort, a town, or a profession, among others. This dimension was found to move towards the individualist end of the spectrum in relation to increasing national wealth.

The last dimension identified by Hofstede is masculinity Vs. feminity which measures where the values of a particular culture can be placed according to what each gender represents. In so-called 'masculine' cultures, people (whether male or female) value competitiveness, assertiveness, ambition, and the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. In the cultures categorized by the author as 'feminine', people (whether male or female) value relationships and quality of life. This dimension is often renamed by users of Hofstede's work, e.g. to *Quantity of Life vs. Quality of Life*.

Michael Harris Bond and his collaborators subsequently found a fifth dimension which was initially called Confucian dynamism. Hofstede later incorporated this into his framework as *Long vs. short term orientation*.

A society's "time horizon" or the importance attached to the future versus the past and present. In long term oriented societies, people value actions and attitudes that affect the future: persistence/perseverance, thrift, and shame. In "short term" oriented societies, people value actions and attitudes that are affected by the past or the present: normative statements, immediate stability, protecting one's own face, respect for tradition, and reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts.

## 2.3.2. Another Perspective: the 7 Dimensions of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner defined a different set of dimensions during their cross-cultural studies, using a database containing more than 30.000 survey results. The following classification shows the main dimensions defined by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2005) and summarized by Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003).

*Universalism versus particularism* – The first dimension defines how people judge the behaviour of their colleagues. People from universalistic cultures focus more on rules, are more precise when defining contracts and tend to define global standards for company policies and human resource practices. Within more particularistic national cultures, the focus is more on the relationships; contracts can be adapted to satisfy new requirements in specific situations and local variations of a company and human resource policies are adapted to different requirements.

*Individualism and Communitarianism* - This dimension classifies countries according to the balance between the individual and group interests. Generally, team members with individualist mindsets see the improvements to their groups as the means to achieve their own objectives. By contrast, the team members from communitarian cultures see the improvements to individual capacities as a step towards the group prosperity.

*Achievement versus ascription* - This dimension, presented in Trompenaars studies, is very similar to Hofstede's power distance concept. People from achievement-oriented countries respect their colleagues based on previous achievements and the demonstration of knowledge, and show their job titles only when relevant. On the other hand, people from ascription-oriented cultures use their titles extensively and usually respect their superiors in hierarchy.

*Neutral versus affective* - According to Trompenaars, people from neutral cultures admire cool and self-possessed conducts and control their feelings, which can suddenly

explode during stressful periods. When working with stakeholders from neutral countries you may consider avoiding warm, expressive or enthusiastic behaviour, prepare beforehand, concentrate on the topics being discussed and look carefully for small clues showing that the person is angry or pleased. Cultures that give a great importance to affectivity, use all forms of gesturing, smiling and body language to openly voice their feelings, and admire heated, vital and animated expressions.

*Specific versus diffuse* - Trompenaars researched differences in how people engage colleagues in specific or multiple areas of their lives, classifying the results into two groups: people from more specific-oriented cultures tend to keep private and business agendas separate, having a completely different relation of authority in each social group. In diffuse-oriented countries, the authority level at work can reflect into social areas, and employees can adopt a subordinated attitude when meeting their managers outside office hours.

*Human-nature relationship (internal vs external control)* - Trompenaars shows how people from different countries relate to their natural environment and changes. Global project stakeholders from internal-oriented cultures may show a more dominant attitude, focus on their own functions and groups and be uncomfortable in change situations. Stakeholders from external-oriented cultures are generally more flexible and willing to compromise, valuing harmony and focusing on their colleagues, being more comfortable with change.

*Human-time relationship* - Trompenaars identified that different cultures assign diverse meanings to the past, present and future. People in past-oriented cultures tend to show respect for ancestors and older people and frequently put things in a traditional or historic context. People in present-oriented cultures enjoy the activities of the moment and present relationships. People from future-oriented cultures enjoy discussing prospects, potentials and future achievement.

A second division of country cultures is based on the time orientation, in which sequential cultures drive people to do one activity at a time and to follow plans and schedules strictly. People from synchronic cultures can do work in parallel, and follow

schedules and agendas loosely, taking the priorities of the individual tasks being performed as a major rule.

### 2.3.3. A practical perspective from Gesteland

Another perspective on the same line of study that has a number of points in common with Trompenaars-Turner dimensions is the theory presented by Richard Gesteland in his work "*Cross-cultural business behavior: marketing, negotiating and managing across cultures.*". This theory is specially characterized by it's practical basis, as the information gathered for this theory arose from the professional experience of the author.

Gesteland proposed the following dimensions:

1. Deal-Focus versus Relationship-Focus

2. Informal versus Formal Cultures

3. Rigid- Time versus Fluid- Time Cultures

4. Expressive versus Reserved Cultures

Though some aspects of these dimensions may overlap the Trompenaars-Turner study, Gesteland is recognized as having a more hands on approach, as he designs a draft of the profiles of a negotiator or businessman according to their nationality.

# 3. COLOMBIA AND PORTUGAL: A GENERAL COMPARISON.

The first common point that can be found without too much difficulty when comparing these two countries is the existence of the Latin element within both cultures. Implying the traditional friendly and kind spirit that characterizes these people, which can be partly explained by the common historical roots of both nations. Nevertheless, the different geographical locations contextualize both countries on different continents and hence different realities. Demographically and in terms of territory, the difference between Colombia and Portugal is clearly wide and hence it's one of the most important factors that determines each reality. On the other hand, the contact with the sea of both countries is a common element in their history's, with Portugal formally being recognized as the most powerful empire in the world and Colombia formally being recognized as one of the richest countries in terms of natural resources.

The first part of this chapter briefly reviews the history of both countries and highlights how factors such as violence or dictatorships have left an indelible mark on their cultures.

## 3.1 Colombia

Like most  Latin American countries, Colombian history finds its origins on indigenous cultures being colonized by Spain after the discovery of America. Within Colombia, the two cultures with the most complex cacicazgo systems were the Tayronas in the Caribbean Region, and the Muiscas in the highlands around Bogotá, both of which were from the Chibcha language family. The Muisca people are considered to have had one of the most developed political systems in South America, after the Incas.[11] The territory's main population was made up of hundreds of tribes of the Chibchan and Carib, currently known as the Caribbean people, whom the Spaniards conquered through warfare and alliances. In the sixteenth century, Europeans began to bring slaves from Africa which generated a mixture and diversity of races that forms today's Colombian population.

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[11] Broadbent, Sylvia 1965: Los Chibchas: organización socio-política. Série Latinoamericana 5. Bogotá: Facultad de Sociología, Universidad Nacional de Colombia

From the beginning of the periods of conquest and colonization, there were several rebel movements under Spanish rule, most of them either being crushed or remaining too weak to change the overall situation The last one which sought outright independence from Spain sprang up around 1810, following the independence of St. Domingue in 1804 (present-day Haiti), who provided a non-negligible degree of support to the eventual leaders of this rebellion: Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander.

A movement initiated by Antonio Nariño, who opposed Spanish centralism and led the opposition against the viceroyalty, led to the independence of Cartagena in November 1811. This led to the formation of two independent governments which fought a civil war, a period known as La Patria Boba. The following year Nariño proclaimed the United Provinces of New Granada, headed by Camilo Torres Tenorio. Despite the successes of the rebellion, the emergence of two distinct ideological currents among the liberators (federalism and centralism) gave rise to an internal clash between these two, thus contributing to the reconquest of territory by the Spanish, allowing restoration of the viceroyalty under the command of Juan de Samano, whose regime punished those who participated in the uprisings. This stoked renewed rebellion, which, combined with a weakened Spain, made possible a successful rebellion led by Simón Bolívar, who finally proclaimed independence in 1819. The pro-Spanish resistance was finally defeated in 1822 in the present territory of Colombia and in 1823 in Venezuela.

The territory of the Viceroyalty of New Granada became the Republic of Colombia organized as a union of Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela (Panama was then an integral part of Colombia). The Congress of Cucuta in 1821 adopted a constitution for the new Republic. The first President of Colombia was the Venezuelan-born Simón Bolívar, and Francisco de Paula Santander was Vice President. However, the new republic was very unstable and ended with the rupture of Venezuela in 1829, followed by Ecuador in 1830.

Internal political and territorial divisions led to the secession of Venezuela and Quito (today's Ecuador) in 1830. The so-called "Department of Cundinamarca" adopted the name "Nueva Granada", which it kept until 1856 when it became the "Confederación Granadina" (Grenadine Confederation). After a two-year civil war in 1863, the "United States of Colombia" was created, lasting until 1886, when the country finally became known as the

Republic of Colombia. Internal divisions remained between the bipartisan political forces, occasionally igniting very bloody civil wars, the most significant being the Thousand Days civil war (1899–1902).

This, together with the United States of America's intentions to influence the area (especially the Panama Canal construction and control) led to the separation of the Department of Panama in 1903 and the establishment of it as a nation. The United States paid Colombia $25,000,000 in 1921, seven years after completion of the canal, for redress of President Roosevelt's role in the creation of Panama, and Colombia recognized Panama under the terms of the Thomson-Urrutia Treaty. Colombia was engulfed in the Year-Long War with Peru over a territorial dispute involving the Amazonas Department and its capital Leticia.

Soon after, Colombia achieved a relative degree of political stability, which was interrupted by a bloody conflict that took place between the late 1940s and the early 1950s, a period known as *La Violencia* ("The Violence"). Its cause was mainly mounting tensions between the two leading political parties, which subsequently ignited after the assassination of the Liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948. This assassination caused riots in Bogotá and became known as El Bogotazo. The violence from these riots spread throughout the country and claimed the lives of at least 180,000 Colombians.

From 1953 to 1964 the violence between the two political parties decreased first when Gustavo Rojas deposed the President of Colombia in a coup d'état and negotiated with the guerrillas, and then under the military junta of General Gabriel París Gordillo.

After Rojas' deposition the two political parties Colombian Conservative Party and Colombian Liberal Party agreed to the creation of a "National Front", whereby the Liberal and Conservative parties would govern jointly. The presidency would be determined by an alternating conservative and liberal president every 4 years for 16 years; the two parties would have parity in all other elective offices. The National Front ended "La Violencia", and National Front administrations attempted to institute far-reaching social and economic reforms in cooperation with the Alliance for Progress. In the end, the contradictions between each successive Liberal and Conservative administration made the results decidedly mixed. Despite the progress in certain sectors, many social and political problems continued, and

guerrilla groups were formally created such as the FARC, ELN and M-19 to fight the government and political apparatus. These guerrilla groups were dominated by Marxist doctrines.

Emerging in the late 1970s, powerful and violent drug cartels further developed during the 1980s and 1990s. The Medellín Cartel under Pablo Escobar and the Cali Cartel, in particular, exerted political, economic and social influence in Colombia during this period. These cartels also financed and influenced different illegal armed groups throughout the political spectrum. Some enemies of these allied with the guerrillas and created or influenced paramilitary groups.

The new Colombian Constitution of 1991 was ratified after being drafted by the Constituent Assembly of Colombia. The constitution included key provisions on political, ethnic, human and gender rights. The new constitution initially prohibited the extradition of Colombian nationals, causing accusations that drug cartels had lobbied for the provision; extradition was allowed again in 1996 when the provision was repealed. The cartels had previously promoted a violent campaign against extradition, leading to many terrorist attacks and mafia-style executions. They also tried to influence the government and political structure of Colombia through corruption, as in the case of the 8000 Process scandal.[12]

Nowadays after a four-decade long conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups, mainly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) heavily funded by the drug trade, escalated during the 1990s. The insurgents lack the military or popular support necessary to overthrow the government and violence has been decreasing since about 2002, but insurgents continue attacks against civilians and large areas of the countryside are under guerrilla influence or are contested by security forces. More than 31,000 former paramilitaries had demobilized by the end of 2006 and the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) as a formal organization had ceased to function. In the wake of the paramilitary demobilization, emerging criminal groups arose, whose members include some former paramilitaries. The Colombian Government has stepped up efforts to reassert government control throughout the country, and now has a presence in every one of

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[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colombia

its administrative departments. However, neighboring countries worry about the violence spilling over their borders.[13]

## 3.2 Portugal

The territory known nowadays as Portugal had been continually occupied very early in History. In 29 B.C. was occupied by various tribes like the Lusitanos who where conquered by the Roman Empire and added to their territories as the province of Lusitania. This conquest has strongly influenced Portuguese culture, a clear evidence of this is found in the Latin origins of the Portuguese language, as with many European countries. After the fall of the Roman Empire the land was occupied by various Germanic and Visigoth tribes and in the VII century by the Arab tribes known as the Moors.

During the conquest by Christianity, Portugal was founded as the "Condado Portucalense" first as part of the Spanish kingdom of Galiza and afterward by the Spanish kingdom of Leon. With the establishment of the Portugal kingdom whose independency was recognized in 1143 and the stabilization of the frontiers in 1249, Portugal claims the title of having the most ancient European nation- state.[14]

Following its heyday as a global maritime power during the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal lost much of its wealth and status with the destruction of Lisbon in a 1755 earthquake, occupation during the Napoleonic Wars, and the independence of its wealthiest colony of Brazil in 1822.

On the 1st of February 1908, the King Carlos I of Portugal and his apparent heir, Prince Luis Filipe, were murdered in Lisbon. Under his rule, Portugal was twice declared bankrupt – on the 14th of June 1892, and again on the 10th of May 1902 - causing social turmoil, economic disturbances, protests, revolts and criticism of the monarchy. Manuel II of Portugal became the new king, but was eventually overthrown by the 5th of October 1910 revolution, which

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[13] CIA — The World Factbook – Colombia".

[14] Herculano, Alexandre, "História de Portugal, Volume", p. 391, Volume 3 Herculano, Alexandre, 1853

abolished the regime and instated republicanism in Portugal. Political instability and economic weaknesses were fertile ground for chaos and unrest during the Portuguese First Republic, aggravated by the Portuguese military intervention in World War I, which led to a military coup d'état in 1926 and the creation of the National Dictatorship (*Ditadura Nacional*). This in turn led to the establishment of the right-wing dictatorship of the Estado Novo under António de Oliveira Salazar in 1933. Portugal was one of only five European countries to remain neutral in World War II. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Portugal was a founding member of NATO, OECD and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Gradually, new economic development projects and relocation of white mainland Portuguese citizens into the overseas colonies in Africa were initiated, with Angola and Mozambique, as the largest and richest overseas territories, being the main targets of those initiatives.

In 1961, São João Baptista de Ajudá's annexation by Dahomey was the start of a process that led to the final dissolution of the centuries-old Portuguese Empire. According to the census of 1921 São João Baptista de Ajudá had 5 inhabitants and, at the moment of the ultimatum by the Dahomey Government, it had only 2 inhabitants representing Portuguese Sovereignty. Another forcible retreat from overseas territories occurred in December 1961 when the Portuguese army and navy were involved in armed conflict in its colony of Portuguese India against an Indian invasion. The operations resulted in the defeat of the isolated and relatively small Portuguese defensive garrison, which was forced to surrender. The outcome was the loss of the Portuguese territories in the Indian subcontinent.

Also in the early 1960s, independence movements in the Portuguese overseas provinces of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea in Africa, resulted in the Portuguese Colonial War (1961–1974). Throughout the colonial war period Portugal had to deal with increasing dissent, arms embargoes and other punitive sanctions imposed by most of the international community. However, the authoritarian and conservative Estado Novo regime, firstly installed and governed by António de Oliveira Salazar and from 1968 onwards led by Marcelo Caetano, tried to preserve a vast centuries-long intercontinental empire with a total area of 2,168,071 km$^2$.

In April 1974 a bloodless left-wing military coup in Lisbon, known as the Carnation Revolution, led the way for a modern democracy as well as the independence of the last colonies in Africa, after two years of a transitional period known as PREC (*Processo Revolucionário Em Curso*, or On-Going Revolutionary Process), characterized by social turmoil and power disputes between left- and right-wing political forces. Some factions, including Álvaro Cunhal's *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP), unsuccessfully tried to turn the country into a communist state. The retreat from the overseas territories and the acceptance of its independence terms by Portuguese head representatives for overseas negotiations, which would create newly-independent communist states in 1975 (most notably the People's Republic of Angola and the People's Republic of Mozambique), prompted a mass exodus of Portuguese citizens from Portugal's African territories (mostly from Portuguese Angola and Mozambique).

Over a million destitute Portuguese refugees fled the former Portuguese colonies. Mário Soares and António de Almeida Santos were charged with organising the independence of Portugal's overseas territories. By 1975, all the Portuguese African territories were independent and Portugal held its first democratic elections in 50 years. However, the country continued to be governed by a military-civilian provisional administration until the Portuguese legislative election of 1976 that took place on April 25, exactly one year after the previous election, and two years after the Carnation Revolution. With a new Constitution approved, the country's main aim was economic recovery and strengthening of the nation's democracy. It was won by the Portuguese Socialist Party (PS) and Mário Soares, its leader, became Prime Minister of the 1st Constitutional Government on July 23.[15]

Portugal has become a diversified and increasingly service-based economy since joining the European Community in 1986. Over the past two decades, successive governments have privatized many state-controlled firms and liberalized key areas of the economy, including the financial and telecommunications sectors. The country qualified for the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1998 and began circulating the Euro on the 1st of January 2002

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[15] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal

along with 11 other EU member economies.[16]

## 3.3 Hofstede Findings about Colombia and Portugal

Regarding the individual results of each country, there is a remarkable difference when comparing the country result with the general average of their region. When making the comparison between the individual results of Colombia and the Latin American average results, the similarity is clearly evident (See Figure 2). Nonetheless, when the same is done with Portugal and European Countries the difference becomes even more evident (See Figure 3).
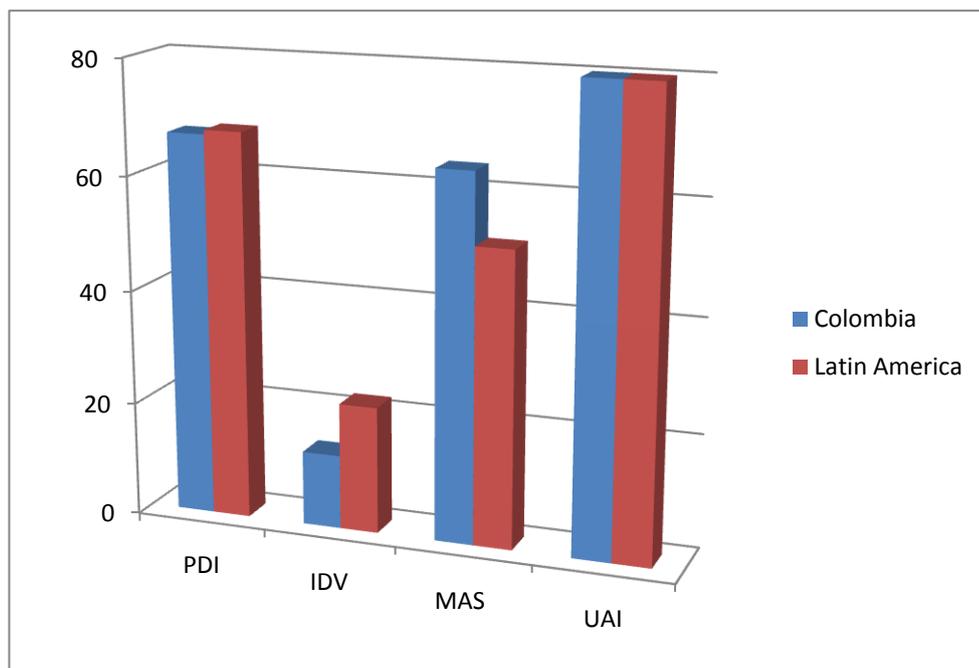


**Figure 2:** Hofstede Cultural Dimensions score comparison between Colombia and Latin America (Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com)

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[16] CIA — The World Factbook – Portugal".
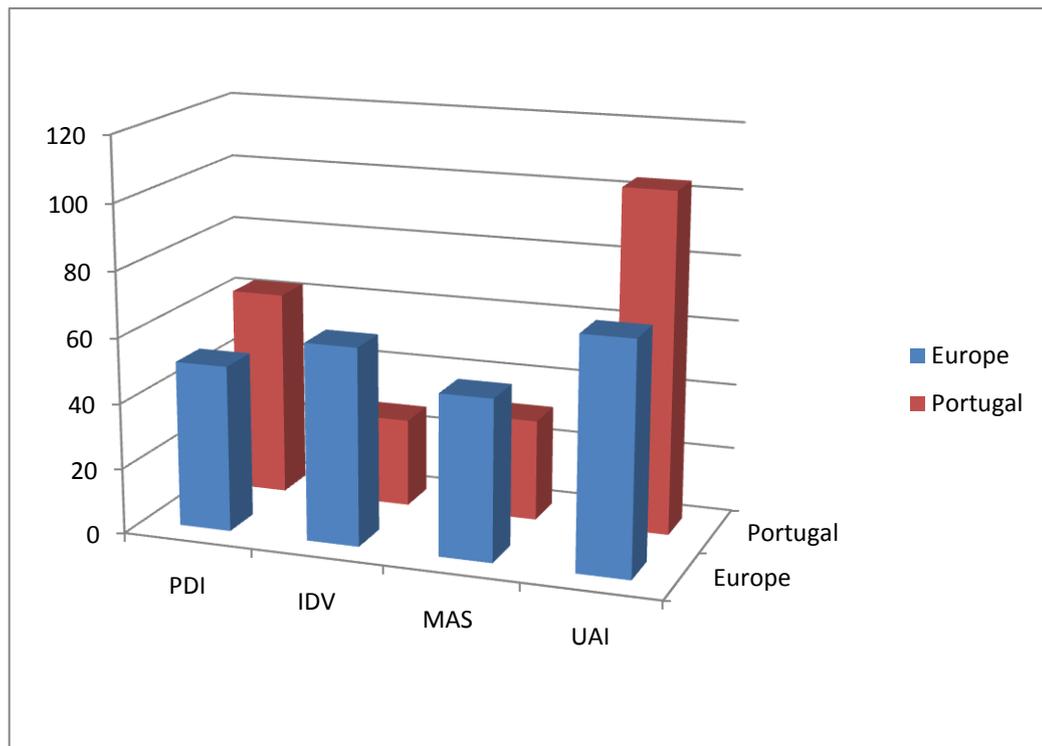
**Figure 3:** Hofstede Cultural Dimensions score comparison between Portugal and Europe (Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com)

This evident difference increases the gap between Portugal and Europe and sits Portugal closer to Latin America and hence to Colombia's results (See on the figure 4). Nonetheless, there is a marked difference between the individualism and masculinity scores. Those associated with the social change that came implicitly at the end of a dictatorship and the further integration into the European community. That brought more liberal values and access to an economic model that encourages consumption.
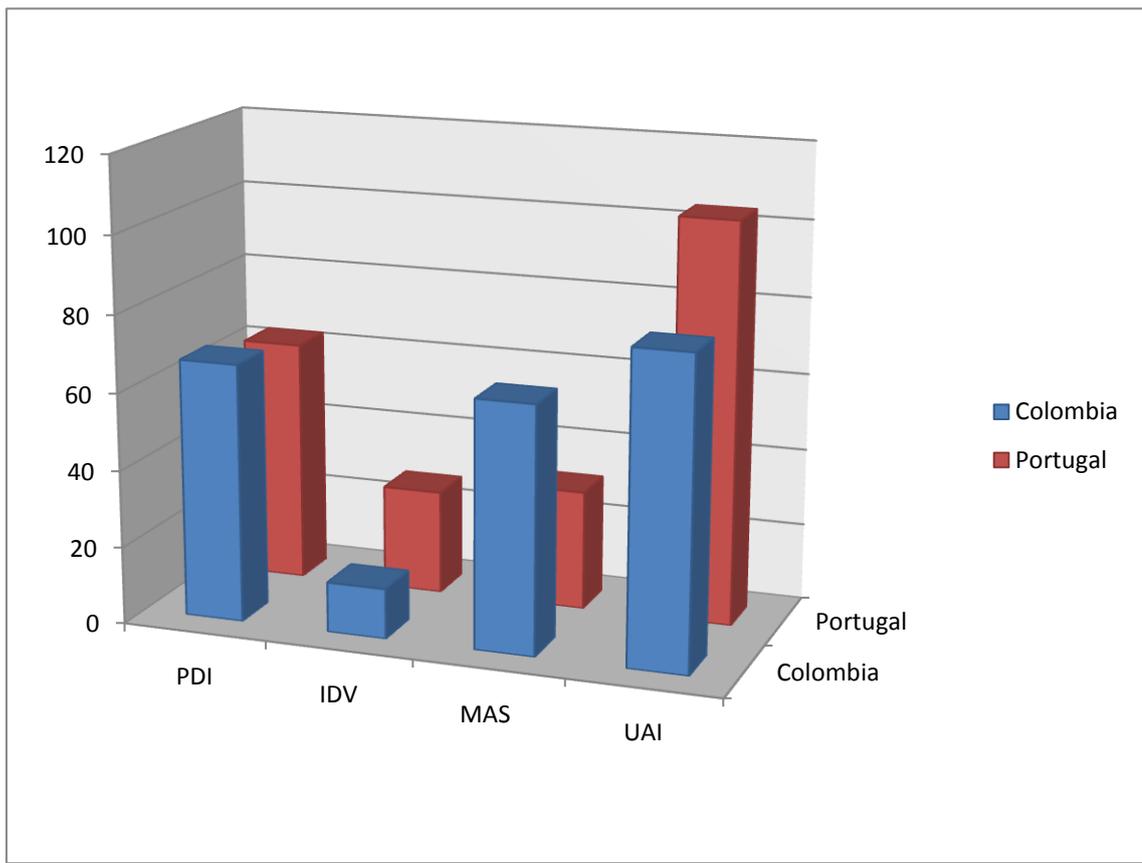
**Figure 4:** Hofstede Cultural Dimensions score comparison between Colombia and (Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com)

In terms of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, similarities arise and can be explained by the existence of the Latin element mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It could be argued that the dictatorship in the case of the Portuguese and the violence for the Colombians, makes people maintain certain distances in many aspects of life. The repression caused by these factors has a strong influence on people's perspective about reality. It's important to bear in mind that Hofstede's study was carried out during the 60's and 70's when Portugal was under a dictatorship and Colombia was facing the violence of the Communist guerrilla subversion and the recently born drug cartels.

What is also curious is the high difference of Portugal's Uncertainty Avoidance score comparing to Colombia. Even with the latter having a score that can be considered high, is still very far from the Portuguese score, again, the dictatorship and its indelible mark over Portuguese culture could be the reason behind this fact. Whereby the imposition of a particularly rigid way of living and thinking puts people into an unscapable monotony where is difficult to get out because of the uncertainty of what structures or patterns can be followed out of that monotony.

# 4. THE CULTURAL STANDARDS METHOD: REVIEW AND APPLICATION

## 4.1 Origin and particularities

One of the more known issues for cross-cultural research methodology based on categorizing cultures within a certain criteria is the cultural relativism. Hofstede points out this problem at the beginning of his work, presenting how this phenomenon affects his methodology and identifies a method of addressing this problem.

*"The impossibility of escaping values judgments applies to the student of values as much as to anyone else. First, we have to distinguish between a phenomenological study of values (which is the area of social science) and a deontological approach (which belongs to ethics, ideology or theology). But even in purely phenomenological research the values of the researcher determines to a large extent the way he or she observes, describes, classifies and understands and predicts reality.*

*There is no way out of this dilemma but to expose oneself and one's work to the work of others with different value systems and try to be as explicit as possible about one's own value system."* [17]

Another proposal in avoiding this problem in cross cultural research is the cultural standards method which tries to study a given culture from the perspective of another one, providing an alternative to the objectivity problem given by the cultural relativism. As the concept of culture by itself has a subjective nature and the perspective of the researcher is to a certain extent naturally influenced by their own cultural values, it is therefore impossible for him or her to study another culture with acultural eyes. For this reason the cultural standards method incorporates the influence of the researcher's values into the study. Not only making the research a characterization of the object of study but an accurate perspective of the object that is being observed.

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[17] Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*; Sage Publications, 2nd ed (1st ed 1980), 596 p.

The origin of this method comes from the unconscious nature of cultural standards; Frank Bruek and Astrid Kainzbauer comment on this fact in their work.

*"An interesting aspect of cultural standards is that they can only be identified in a cross cultural context. We are not aware of how much they determine our actions in our familiar cultural environment, but as soon as we come into contact with people from a different culture area, whose behavior is based on a different set of cultural standards, we are able to experience their existence……. Since we are not consciously aware of the basic cultural standards. We cannot examine them directly"*[18]

Alexander Thomas, also mentioned on Bruek and Kainzbauer's work, gives the main reason of this idea presented by the authors.

*"Identifying cultural standards is extremely difficult, because they seem to automatically determine our perception, judgment and behavior"*[19]

## 4.2 Description

This methodology is explained and described by Bruek and Kainzbauer below:

*"There is a tendency in the behavior of the members of a group or culture, to act according to a prototyped cultural standard (although different behavior is tolerated in the culture as well). As a consequence of socialization, these cultural standards are not apparent to the people sharing a common cultural background. Cross-cultural contacts, however, exposing differing cultural standards and incidents perceived as problematic or awkward, lead to the standards being consciously experienced. Such critical incidents in which cultural standards materialize serve as a raw material for cross*

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[18] Brueck, F., A. Kaizenbauer, (2002), *The Cultural Standards Method. A Qualitative Approach in Cross-cultural Management Research.*

[19] Thomas, A (2001), Research into the influence of Culture Standards, Universität Regensburg.

*cultural research. The analysis and categorization of critical incidents lead to the identification of cultural standards."[20]*

The main element of this methodology proposed by the authors is the narrative interview. Bruek and Kainzbauer describe this element as a technique that has an advantage of revealing more information than the traditional "question and answer" strategy. When retelling an event, the narrator needs to observe a number of chronological and structural factors, which can be seen as the principles arranging and classifying statements and accounts.[21]

The procedure for the narrative interview is composed of the following stages:

### The Explanatory Stage

The interviewer tries to create an atmosphere that encourages a detailed narration and helps the test person to feel less awkward about the interviewer and the entire situation.

### The Introductory Stage

At this stage it's recommended to give the interviewee the idea that the purpose of the interview is harmless – a vague line of the topic, in order to prevent influencing the narrator, which might hinder the development of a story-line.

### The Narrative Stage

It is the narrator turn to speak. The main part of the narration should be told without any interruption or intervention from the interviewer. The narrator should be allowed to determine the line of events to be told, to choose what he wishes to relate or not, and where he or she may need to elaborate. The more detailed the individual events are presented, the better the results.

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[20] Brueck, F., A. Kaizenbauer, (2002), *The Cultural Standards Method. A Qualitative Approach in Cross-cultural Management Research.*

[21] ibid

### *The Investigative Stage*

After having listened to the narration, the interviewer can now try to get additional information from the narrator. However, the narrative character of the interview should not be altered. The actual purpose here is to encourage the narrator to add to his story and go into even more detail.

### *The Assessment Stage*

The actual narration or story should now be finished, since at this point it is impossible to go back to the narrative stage, the narrator and the interviewer should asses and interpret the narrative sequences.

The second main element described by Bruek and Kainzbauer called the categorization process is a stage where categories are formed in an inductive way. The results are compared to similar situations and examples and interpreted to fit a certain category. Towards the end of the categorization process, some interviewees are asked to assess the critical incidents described in the interviews in a group discussion in order to further confirm the results. (See figure 5)

```
  ( Narrative Interview ) ────────────►  [ Critical Incidents ]
                                                │
                                                ▼
  [ Preliminary Cultural  ] ◄────────  (   Inductive
    Standards           ]                  Categorisation )
        │
        ▼
  ( Group Discussion ) ────────────►  (  Evaluation of the
                                           Results )
                                                │
                                                ▼
                                      [ Relative Cultural Standards ]
```
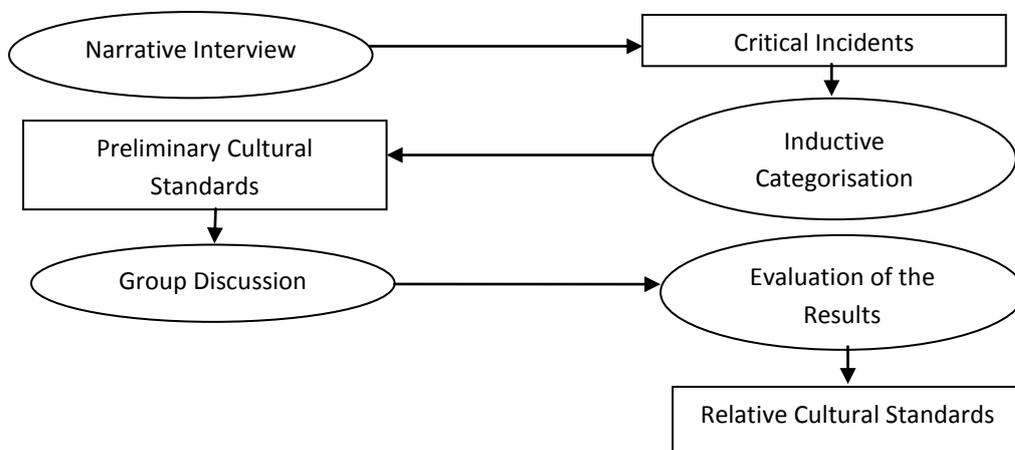
**Figure 5:** The identification Process of cultural standards. (Source: Brueck, F., A. Kaizenbauer, (2002), *The Cultural Standards Method. A Qualitative Approach in Cross-cultural Management Research.)*

## 4.3 Method Application

As mentioned in the introduction, the method applied to this investigation is the cultural standards method. The application used on this particular research is divided into the following stages:

- Election of the sample group
- Interviews
- Interviews analysis and categorization
- Identification of Cultural Standards
- Feedback of results.

### 4.3.1 Election of the sample group

Since the objective of this study is to identify Portuguese cultural standards from a Colombian perspective and the method applied to this work requires a sample with a non-Portuguese cultural background, the criteria to select the interviewees for this study pointed to interviewing Colombian people with adequate experience of working or studying in Portugal and with some managerial experience. Nevertheless, as the migration affluence of Colombian people to Portugal is not very high and the nature of their migration is contextualized within a search for opportunities, the absence of managerial experience was not an excluding factor. Whatever contact with Portuguese culture an interviewee had including their social and/or professional life was also taken into consideration.

The candidates were found with the help of personal contacts, direct contact with the Colombian embassy in Lisbon and also through the help of some of the interviewees who agreed to share their contacts. All candidates were primarily contacted via E-mail with a brief explanation of the study and the method of the interview. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to select the time and location of the interview, as some of them were located in different cities throughout Portugal. The interviewee's were also

given the possibility of having the interview via the internet, taking advantage of web conferencing resources available to both parties.

The group of interviewees was made up of 15 persons, 9 male and 6 female, with an average age of 31 years and an average time of stay in Portugal of 3.7 years. As previously explained, some came to Portugal looking for employment opportunities, yet the most common motives for their migration was to study and for personal reasons.

As most of the interviewees within this sample were students of a superior level, the context of Portuguese culture in which they are exposed is an academic work environment. This enabled them to have sufficient experience in working with Portuguese people. Figure 6 gives a more detailed description of each interviewee.

| Interviewees | Gender | Age | Tim in Portugal | Ocupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rodrigo | Male | 45 | 4 years | Diplomatic representative |
| Marcela | Female | 35 | 4 years | Diplomatic representative |
| Floralba | Female | 56 | 29 years | Administrative |
| Carol | Female | 26 | 6 months | Project Consultant |
| Jaime | Male | 24 | 8 months | PHD Student Engineer |
| Cristian | Male | 27 | 3 years | Musician |
| Edgar | Male | 27 | 1 year | PHD Student Engineer |
| Edison | Male | 27 | 1 year | Musician |
| Lina | Female | 25 | 8 months | Administrative |
| Catalina | Female | 27 | 7 months | Exchange student |
| Mario | Male | 27 | 1 year | Master student |
| Carolina | Female | 34 | 3 years | Specialist |
| Leonardo | Male | 26 | 1 year | PHD Student Engineer |
| Jorge | Male | 27 | 2 years | PHD Student |
| Felipe | Male | 34 | 5 years | PHD Student |

**Table 1:** Overview of the sample of interviewees

## 4.3.2 Interviews

The procedure for the interviews followed as strictly as possible the instructions laid out in the cultural standards method as strictly as possible. Nonetheless, efforts were made to maintain spontaneity throughout the conversations, in an attempt to retrieve broader material offering more elements and factors within each story. Enabling an incident categorization to be performed more accurately.

This attempt to conserve spontaneity implies an unprepared interviewee, hence some guidance to speak was requiredwhen the interviewee was unablet recall incidents from their experiences. Such guidance included assisting and feedback loop questions which enabled them to feel comfortable as they could.

Shorthand notes were taken during the interview for a better transcription of the main ideas when listening to the recordings. After the categorization and analysis of the interviews 5 main cultural standardswere identified which were then contrasted with the analysis based on Hosftede's main variables as well as being presented to the interviewees for their feedback.

After the analysis and categorization of the notes as mentioned above, the following ideas were gathered on each of the interviews. These were the starting point in identifying the cultural standards that are presented in the following chapter.

**Rodrigo Interview Main Ideas**

- His first impression actually surprised him as he was expecting a Spanish like behaviour and personality, nevertheless he found the Portuguese people as having a more Latin America mentality. He pointed out the slow and kind manner in which they speak, their discreteness and the way they think, taking their time when forming their opinions.

- Highlighted the concern of the Portuguese for making others feel comfortable, and that the city has the same advantages of any big city, making for easy living conditions.

- Noticed one big difference in that Portuguese people are very honest and know how to say no. They also take their time in doing their job.

- Sometimes in Portugal when you ask for things to get done you have to wait for the Portuguese to refuse first and then explain the situation to them in order for them to perform your request.

- Characterized Portuguese people as persons who set limits and know when to defend their rights in front of their bosses, as they know how to separate personal life from work and don't let the latter affect the first.

- Pointed out the comparison, that while we believe in a better future; they say that the past was always better.

- Categorized Portuguese people as individualist as they tend to stick to their opinions on their personal life and decisions. In contrast, he pointed out the existence of the "ordens" and the corporate spirit they have.

- Mentioned the great percentage of people in Portugal fall into the middle class, hence their basic needs are covered, and as they have been closed to consumption for a long time they are now finding an equilibrium point which is decreasing their need for consumption thanks to their sense of austerity.

**Marcela Interview Main Ideas**

- Characterized Portuguese people as being closed but open once they have got to know you.

- Still believing in the given word, when making a promise

- Pointed out that Portuguese culture is more similar to Colombian, than Spanish culture, regarding kindness, hospitality and gentleness as a common point.

- Highlighted pessimism and constant complaining, (why is it raining or why is it sunny, either one or the other its bad and deserves a complaint)

- The past was always better even when under the dictatorship.

- Culture and dictatorship has left a mark of respect to authority, nevertheless she recognized a margin of reachability with not such a high distance in new generations.

- The Dictatorship for her explains the bias of materialism and the ambition of Portuguese people, the entrance into a high consumption system was an escape from the imposed austerity given by the dictatorship.

- She has also noticed that many people who had the possibility to go to university didn't go, by contrast with what happens in Colombia, where no one can be anybody if they don't study, all jobs are valued because there are not marked differences.

- Characterized people as collectivist as they identify themselves with their national values due to their history.

**Floralba Interview Main Ideas**

- Characterized Portuguese people as having a closed culture, nevertheless she pointed out that they open themselves up with a kind spirit as soon as you integrate with them and earn their confidence.

- Always willing to help.

- Traditionalism.

- They don't know how to receive even though they like to give, because of the feeling of the obligation.

- More polite and gentle than other countries in Europe, as they are always saying "desculpe" or "obrigado"

- Mentality change towards authority, new generations do not show the same respect and formality that older generations show.

- Highlights a pessimist attitude towards life, constantly complaining about life.

- Noticed the need of Portuguese people to maintain an appearance.

**Carol Interview Main Ideas**

- Described the integration with them as being very difficult from the beginning, however she highlights their sense of collaboration, humbleness and formality, something that according to Carol's experience cannot be found easily in other parts of Europe that she has lived.

- Always trying to understand others.

- Curious about dicovering other cultures and like to be surrounded by other cultures, although some kind of reluctance to Brazilian culture

**Jaime Interview Main Ideas**

- Described Portuguese people as open and kind people, curious about Latin-American culture.

- Characterized women specifically as being very closed and difficult to be approached, this has even been confirmed to him by Portuguese men.

- Highlighted formality between Portuguese and their figures of authority, despite always maintaining joviality and openness in the relationship.

- Noticed that Portuguese people like to work in groups, however they work on their own ideas which in his opinion gives rise to a lack of cohesion.

- Pointed out the treatment of Brazilian people and the negative opinions that they have of them.

**Christian Interview Main Ideas**

- Categorized Portuguese people as being somewhere between having a closed and open personality, nevertheless the first impression he had of them was very open and kind.

- Noticed that Portuguese people are hard defenders of their own point of view and it can give the impression that they are arguing when they face a different idea but they are just very passionate when discussing, yet when the discussion draws to an end, they act as if nothing has happened and return back to normal.

- Highlighted as a positive point, the high level of formality in the treatment of figures of authority. "O senhor"

- Considered Portuguese people as being very concerned with the conservation of family values and traditions, eating and talking during dinner and lunch instead of watching TV, they are also concerned with their quality of life.

## Edgar Interview Main Ideas

- Didn't need any adaptation as he felt included from the very first moment he arrived, his Portuguese host made the effort to understand him overcoming the idiom obstacle.

- They take their time to do everything, even in more urgent situations.
- Fatalist, constantly complaining. They make others believe that their life is very hard. Tend to exaggerate.

- Even after complaining Portuguese people live a happy life with what they consider a good quality of life.

- He unconsciously describes Portuguese people when talking about a friend which in his opinion is the anti-thesis of what Portuguese people is for him. (pessimist, unproactive, complaining, simple, uncomplicated)

- They like formality.

- Portuguese people open their arms but they don't close them, they receive you but mark the distance when its time to talk about themselves

**Edison Interview Main Ideas**

- Described Portuguese people as passive and very calm.

- As they are used to tourism they are kind and cordial but after they have had the opportunity to get to know you.

- Extreme formality and aware of dealing with hierarchy.

- Sense or rhythm gathered from the culture of the former colonies.

- Give a transcendent meaning to discussions because of being obstinate and want to impose their opinions.

- Curiosity about experiencing other cultures.

**Lina Interview Main Ideas**

- Strong family environment.

- Closed personality and not particularly open for integration.

- Very clear separation between personal and professional life.

- Very formal treatment, everything in 3$^{rd}$ person.

- Very conformist people, don't worry about going to college.

**Catalina Interview Main Ideas**

- Considered Portuguese people as kind and gentle when she was received by them, she pointed out that even the language was not an obstacle because they made an effort to overcome this and integrate her.

- Difficulty to say no because of politeness.

- Traditional, importance of family.

- Hide feelings.

- Easier to make friends in comparison to Colombians who have lived in another countries.

- Always complaining about everything without doing anything about it.

- Difficult to be convinced.

**Mario Interview Main Ideas.**

- Very perseverant defending their ideas, sometimes aggressive.

- Kind and open always concerned in serving you well.

- Not very concerned with time.

- Need of something to complain about.

**Carolina Interview Main Ideas**

- Very formal treatment at the beginning.

- Hostile attitude from clients but after getting to know her they started to take her opinions as being valid.

- High level of responsibility with their clients.

- No team work, "I am responsible until here"

- Very conflictive over little and insignificant things. Very attached to pain and suffering.

- Individualist always thinking about the prevalence of their ideas.

- They always want to serve people well.

**Leonardo Interview Main Ideas**

- Noticed that even if the person does not know you, they are always able to help.

- An Incident that he personally remembers, a person who helped him on his arrival in Portugal called him out of the blue and without any apparent reason to ask him if everything was ok. He considered this as an act of true kindness, as he noted it was a phone call of just 1 minute and from his own experience in other countries, he had only experienced this in Portugal.

- In his work life he gave positive feedback on his teachers and colleagues, nevertheless he stated that the environment where he works could turn a little hostile, due to the exigency and the educational level compared to other experiences he had before and by consequence he felt an environment of high competitiveness where individualism is a common natural element.

- He characterizes the people, specifically from the northern region of Portugal as being highly committed to work, as well as being very traditional.

**Jorge Interview Main Ideas.**

- Give importance to formality.

- Kind and open to other cultures.

- Pessimist people because of being very concerned about things that in our culture could be considered as irrelevant.

- Tradition is very important which makes them very conservative.


**Felipe Interview Main Ideas Transcription**

- Hierarchy being very difficult for him to handle and the use of titles when talking to somebody.

- He mentioned the expression translated to him by his colleagues about saying things and present their ideas repeatedly until they get their superior attention "as choradinhas".

- Curious people towards foreigners, very kind but they put limits on friendship.

- Lisbon reminds me of Colombia more than Spain itself.

- Respect to pedestrians, form queues for the bus, respect for the elderly and noticed the role of them in society.

- Not so perfectionist at work, more concerned on the form than on the content.

- Tend to exaggerate and be fatalist by nature

# 5. CULTURAL STANDARDS.

Although separated by a long distance and being located on totally different continents and with obviously different cultural contexts, there is a historical link that ties both countries and gives rise to most of the similarities between them. The reader of this research should consider that a cultural comparison cannot be done to make value judgments due to the neutral significance of culture and as it would go against the main principle of cultural relativism which consider that there is no such thing as a superior culture.

Most of the interviewees pointed out the good quality of life that they have found in Portugal in comparison to the one they had encountered in Spain, one of the natural migration destinies of Colombian people. Many of them used the expression "Feeling at home" when describing their life in Portugal. Nevertheless when talking about daily life, cultural differences appear and arguments, misunderstandings and incidents happen.

As a result of this empirical research and the categorization of all the experiences gathered from the interviews performed, the following 4 cultural standards of Portuguese culture within a work environment have been identified.

1. Importance of Hierarchy and Formality
2. Time Relativity
3. Obstination
4. Pessimist attitude
5.

## 5.1 Importance of Hierarchy and Formality

In 66% of the interviews formality was mentioned by the interviewees in different ways. Factors such as extreme hierarchy respect, protocols and formal treatment came to light when characterizing the Portuguese culture. Floralba one of the interviewees

highlighted the frequent use of words such as "Desculpe" or "Obrigado" to excuse or thank even in the most simple and irrelevant situations, which was something she considered as very surprising since this kind of behaviour is not common in other European countries.

Other interviewees made their own comments in reflection to this use of daily language used. Christian, one of the interviewees noticed the same when first encountering his Portuguese music director; he noticed the discomfort of using the expression "você" when talking in a formal manner. Moreover, they figured that he may not have noticed this difference as a Spanish speaker and explained to him that in Portugal it is better to use "O senhor" because "você" is more Brazilian.

This formality has an implicit sense of hierarchy as well, mostly because hierarchy as a form provides the Portuguese people with a guideline to define their behaviour, especially in confrontational situations. Felipe one of the interviewees who works within an academic environment with defined roles and levels of authority, noticed this in an incident. He noticed an unfair situation within the project that he was working on and reported it to the person in charge, who didn't pay any attention or do anything to resolve the issue reported. Feeling totally ignored, he went to the person in charge of the main project and above the manager he first reported the issue and explained the situation, this manager agreed with Felipe telling him that he was right and that it was indeed an unfair situation but even being in a superior position he couldn't take any further action to correct this as he didn't want to compromise the authority of the first manager. The reaction of Felipe to this was of total indignation, afterwards he commented that he had to apologize to the person he reported the issue to originally.

This case is a sample of the extreme respect to forms, in this case hierarchy as even following proper channels the fact that the second manager respected the implicit authority of the one that ignored the issue in first place, instead of doing what it was correct as he agreed with Felipe about the situation reported, following the idea of the prevalence of forms in an implicit way.

However the positive side of this constant use of forms is translated into a very kind and polite attitude that allows them to give a very good first impression to persons from other countries. All interviewees with no exception highlighted the commitment of Portuguese people in welcoming people as a main differentiator from the rest of Europe, one of the interviewees pointed out that sometimes this politeness and formality reach the extreme of making it difficult for them to say no, with the only objective of treating you well.

By making a comparison with Hofstede findings about Portugal, this standard can be an explanation of the high power distance index given to this country, each particular formality has to be used depending on the place, the person or the circumstance a Portuguese person can face, therefore the extreme respect to the forms found in Portuguese culture is a consequence of acceptance to difference and hence to inequality.

This formality aspect can be explained by the historical context of Portugal and the presence of an arduous dictatorship. It is evident that the legacy of a rigid system of rules is translated into modern times as forms and specific patterns of behaviour. Compared to Hosftede's results this formality aspect can be included within the high uncertainty avoidance that the author gave to Portugal in his study. The need of form can be translated into a need of system which is basically how the author defines this variable.

Nevertheless, even with a totally different historical context Colombia has a high and similar power distance index. This can be explained as a long term consequence of colonialism and nowadays to the large socioeconomic differences in Latin America in general. One of the interviewees pointed out that he felt very surprised with the tone of voice the Portuguese people use, because he thought that it would be similar or equal to that of the Spanish people, who are commonly known by Latin American people as having bad manners. When he first heard the calm and passive manner Portuguese speak, he was left totally surprised.

## 5.2 Time Relativity

In Business, time is a precious resource. In Portuguese culture time is often managed with relativity, Carol one of the interviewees gave an example of two Portuguese girls who joined her team for a pilot project being implemented in Portugal and on which Carol is currently working.

According to the perception of our interviewee the two Portuguese girls that joined the project were isolated from the rest of the group but, she thinks that it could have been because of already having their life in Lisbon and because they hadn't started from the beginning of the project with the team. The team had previously been working together since the project had started in Torino. One of the girls, who is 26 years old and is in her first job and who doesn't have any previous experience of professional life. This girl was designated a task of finishing a letter and delivering it on that same day. At the end of the day she told her coordinator that she hadn't finished the letter and that she would have to leave as it was the end of her shift, nevertheless her coordinator who is Italian drew her attention to this and pointed out her lack of commitment, not only on this situation, but also on her general performance. Bearing in mind Carol`s testimony, it`s obvious that the girl didn't approach the situation in a direct way with her coordinator and instead hid her reaction from him. However she went straight to Carol and told her what had happened and unburdened herself, totally upset with her coordinator and the situation. Carol listened to her reaction passively, nevertheless this lack of commitment was something noticed, not only by the coordinator but also by the team, as Carol noted. Carol found the situation hard to understand, as the girl had always had a normal and friendly relationship with her coordinator at work, although she was not able to clarify the situation in the first instance with the person she was reporting to. As Carol commented, the girl had also informed her manager earlier in the morning that same day, however the interviewee noted her impression about the relativity on how the girl managed the time to perform the task assigned to her and made a comparison with Colombian culture, specifically on the north coast where people are often taken as being extremely relaxed, who are not concerned with deadlines and who are sometimes considered lazy.

In this case the lack of professional experience may explain the inability of Carol's colleague to clarify the incident in first the instance with her boss. Nevertheless her urgency to leave early shows the disregard she had for the priority of the task assigned. It didn't appear to be an isolated incident as everybody had noted her general performance.

This kind of relativity can be seen in other situations, another interviewee revealed that when arriving in Portugal he was collected at the airport by a girl who was supossed to rent him a room and one friend of her who speaks Spanish. Having left the airport, they made a number of stops, to drink and meet up with some friends. Although the interviewee arrived in Lisbon in the afternoon, he didn't get home until late at night due to all the stops on the way.

Another interviewee gave an additional perspective of this standard; though he has a more positive interpretation as he understands this as a sign of concern about doing things in the proper way. This interviewee explains his opinion by linking this perspective with the respect to forms mentioned in the first standard, whereby completing a task in the correct manner is more important than the deadline.

## 5.3 Obstinate

Regarding this standard, 40% percent of the interviewees point out the obstinate character of Portuguese people, one of the interviewees also highlighted that it can give the impression that they are actually arguing when they face a different idea than the one they are proposing. However, they are just very passionate when arguing, as generally at the end of an argument they return to normal and act as if nothing had happened.

Within this 40% the interviewees that work within an academic environment highlighted this point. Jaime, who is a PhD student in civil engineering points out that even when working in groups, Portuguese people try to impose their ideas on the group.

Moreover, the moment they disagree on an issue with the rest of the group they tend to set themselves some distance from the team and start focusing their efforts on their own ideas, disregarding the cohesion and coherence of what the rest of the team are doing.

One of the consequences of this standard is a negative impact in terms of teamwork, because this obstination can be understood as a reflection on how a disagreement would be dealt with in Portuguese culture. Two of the interviewees mentioned that when working in teams with Portuguese people, the fact of being right prevails over reaching a conclusion or working as a team. Often a disagreement led to all members of a team working individually without giving a thought to the common task that is to be achieved.

## 5.4 Pessimist attitude

When comparing the reality and historical backgrounds of both countries, we can find difficult periods in both. Each country has had faced their difficulties in their own way. 46% of the interviewees found Portuguese people to be pessimist and fatalist. One of the interviewees talked about one of her colleagues who was always complaining of not having a job, yet after getting a new job she remained unhappy and continued to complain about the job she had just found.

The majority of the interviewees have noticed this pessimist attitude in common Portuguese expressions. Examples such as "Ri-te, ri-te, que amanhã choras" or "Nunca mais (Nunca mais é sexta, Nunca mais chega a hora de ir embora do trabalho)" or the common answer "Vai-se andando" when somebody asks you how the things are going. Regarding this specific expression one of the interviewees made a comparison with the common answer given in Colombia to the same question, which is "Aqui, en la lucha" which means "Here, on the struggle", the force of both answers speak for themselves. While the Portuguese expression suggests a passive attitude towards there being nothing good or bad thing in life, the Colombian one shows the recognition of a bad situation but with an effort to fight back. In this comparison the interviewee recognizes the

difficulties both Portugal and Colombia have faced, however, and what the interviewee found interesting, in the case of the Portuguese expression, is the absence of optimism.

One interviewee points out this same standard had only started to notice the optimism of Colombian people once he had arrived in Portugal, noticing the over relevance given by Portuguese people to things that would appear insignificant in Colombia. This interviewee gives an account of an episode that happened to him with his Portuguese roommate on a road trip when crossing a river on a car ferry. This car ferry encountered some malfunction and they were stuck for some time in the middle of the river, the Portuguese friend was very worried and the interviewee said that he didn't have a particular phobia that could explain his nervousness. What's more, when he noticed the calmness of the interviewee, he was very surprised and asked him how could he remain so calm, to what the interviewee responded: " if there is nothing we can do to resolve the problem at least we can enjoy the views of Lisbon from the middle of the river while they are resolving the issue".

The origin of this standard can explain this attitude with the myth of Sebastianism which is part of Portuguese and Brazilian mythology and culture. This myth describes the eternal waiting for a hero that will save Portugal and lead it to the Fifth Empire, and known as *Eu nacional* (national Self).

The name 'Sebastianism' derives from King Sebastian of Portugal (January 20, 1554 - August 4, 1578), grandson of John III, who became heir to the throne due to the death of his father, João, Crown Prince of Portugal in 1554 two weeks before his birth, and who succeeded to the throne three years later. This period saw continued Portuguese colonial expansion in Africa, Asia and Brazil. Luís de Camões wrote *the Lusiads* in his honour. The young King grew up under the guidance of the Jesuits. He also convinced himself that he was to be Christ's captain in a crusade against Muslims in Africa.

Almost immediately upon coming of age, Sebastian began plans for a great crusade against the Moroccans of Fez. The Portuguese crusaders crossed into Morocco in 1578 and, against the advice of his commanders, Sebastian marched deep inland. At Ksar El

Kebir (Field of the Three Kings) the Portuguese were routed by Ahmed Mohammed of Fez, and Sebastian was almost certainly killed in battle or subsequently executed. But for the Portuguese people, he had just disappeared and would return home one day, to such an extent that, in 1640, King John IV of Portugal had to swear to yield his throne to Sebastian, in case Sebastian (who would have been 86 years old) were to return.

After his death (or disappearance), Portuguese nobility saw its independence gone (1580). In the time of Habsburg rule (1580-1640), impostors claimed to be King Sebastian in 1584, 1585, 1595 and 1598. Because of these events, Sebastian passed into legend as a great Portuguese patriot and hero - the "sleeping King" who would return to help Portugal in her darkest hour, on a misty day.

This myth has been adapted to the reality of the times throughout all Portuguese history until it became part of the culture, thus turning the eternal waiting of the hero into a pessimist attitude towards the present and the future as the so called "sleeping King" has not arrived yet.

## 5.5 Interviewees Feedback

After analyzing the interviews and identifying some cultural standards of Portuguese people based on the information collected, as instructed by the Cultural Standards method the results identified were sent to the interviewees, asking for their feedback.

From the fifteen interviewees only four gave their impressions about the results, generally they considered that the standards reflected their opinion given in the interview. One of the interviewees considered the results as revealing and pointed out that the incidents accounted in the conclusions helped him to ratify the results on a daily basis.

After reading the results, one interviewee realized that he too had noticed the similarity between both cultures in respect to the Latin elements but had failed to mention it in his own interview.

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this thesis , as mentioned in the introduction is to search for cultural differences using a qualitative approach and identify cultural standards of Portuguese people from the perspective of Colombian people working in Portugal. The output of this work has identified four main cultural standards of Portuguese people, from the perspective based on experience of daily interaction of Colombian people with them.

The choice of subject was motivated by the actual importance that globalization has had in the world and the lack of information and research about the cultural interaction between Colombia and Portugal. From a Latin-American perspective, European cultures may appear to be similar and vice versa, nevertheless the particularities of the cultures of each country becomes an aspect of great importance at any kind of bicultural or multicultural encounter and even more so in a business related interaction.

The methodology implemented in this cross-cultural management research project is based on the Cultural standards method which is formed by three main stages: the narrative interviews, interview analyses and cultural standard identification.

After the implementation of this method the cultural standards identified for the research were:

1. *Importance of Hierarchy and Formality:* The extreme respect for forms and hierarchies is a strong characteristic of Portuguese culture, reflected in the behaviour of Portuguese people. On a positive side, this enables them to give a strong first impression to foreigners but on the other hand, this aspect can generate a negative impact, often acting as a development blocker.

2. *Time Relativity:* Portuguese culture is not very concerned with time, although this does not mean they are not concerned on performing their tasks properly,

Portuguese culture is more concerned in having things done well over having them done by a certain time.

3.  *Obstinate:* When working in a team Portuguese people tend to be inflexible in defending their ideas they tend to set themselves some distance from the team they are working with and when facing a disagreement.

4.  *Pessimist attitude:* Portuguese people tend to over-prioritize issues with low relevance and tend to complain about several aspects of their own current situation, regardless whether it is favorable or not.

The size of the sample group in this research has to be marked as a limitation, due to the availability of persons for interviews was limited. Not only in terms of time but in terms of location, as most of them live in remote locations. For some cases, it was possible to overcome this obstacle with internet communication, but for some others the lack of I.T. skills hindered this possibility. For this reason and that of time constraints, the sample group remained small, thus the results of this research cannot be considered strongly conclusive, nevertheless, they can be taken into account for its exploratory value.

With regards to practical application, this research can be used as reference for both cultural training of Colombian people interested in doing business in Portugal and also for Portuguese people who are interested in how their culture is perceived by others. Moreover for Portuguese interested in taking advantage of their strong characteristics when meeting Colombian people but more importantly to adapt a more accurate manner of communication and a better understanding beyond any obstacle that cultural differences may produce.

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