

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS
ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO
PAULO

ANDREA CARUCCI

**CULTURES AT WORK:
THE CASE OF ITALIAN EXPATRIATES IN BRAZIL**

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Dissertação apresentada à Escola de
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obtenção do título de Mestre Profissional em
Gestão Internacional

Campo do conhecimento: Recursos Humanos

Orientador: Prof^a. Dr^a. Beatriz Maria Braga
Lacombe

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To my family, my roots.

In the end, all the distance was worth the hassle.

To Prof Bia, for her guidance and continuous support.

Finally, we made it!

To Brazil, that won my heart with the great beauty of its people.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research project is to identify the most important perceived cultural differences for Italian expatriates working in Brazil and to understand practical implications on business operations. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 23 Italian expatriates with middle management to top executives profiles, with current or previous working experience in Brazil. The gathered interviews were processed implementing a content analysis. The results indicate that expatriates experience similar difficulties with differences in communication, working and social spheres boundaries, power distance and planning while other factors as foreignism, gender equality and masculinity, positive attitude of the working environment and the growing economy constitute positive differences. Eventually, suggestions regarding practical implications of the cultural difference and possible training required overcoming the main difficulties for Italian expatriates are provided.

Keywords: cultural differences; Brazilian culture; cross-cultural management; indigenous aspects of culture; expatriates in Brazil; Italian expatriates.

RESUMO

Esta tese de mestrado tem por intenção entender quais são as mais importantes diferenças culturais para os expatriados Italianos que trabalham no Brasil e aprender as implicações práticas para o ambiente de trabalho. O método utilizado foi qualitativo, com 23 entrevistas em profundidade com expatriados italianos de nível médio ate top management, com experiência de trabalho no Brasil.

Os resultados indicam que os expatriados Italianos experimentam dificuldades com as diferenças em termos de comunicação, distinção entre as esfera profissional e privada, distancia do poder e planejamento. Em contrapartida, outros fatores como a discriminação positiva para os estrangeiros, diferenças em gender equality e masculinidade, assim como com a atitude positiva dos workplaces e uma economia em crescimento, todos influenciam de maneira positiva a experiência do expatriado.

Enfim, algumas sugestões práticas sobre os efeitos das diferenças culturais e sobre a estruturação de um possível cross-cultural training são expostas.

Palavras chaves : diferencias culturais; cultura brasileira; cross-cultural management; indigenous aspects da cultura brasileira; expatriados no Brasil; expatriados italianos.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India, China
CCM	Cross-Cultural Management
HC	High Context Communication
HQ	Headquarter
HR	Human Resources
IDV	Individualism
IVR	Indulgence versus Restraint
LC	Low Context Communication
LTO	Long Term Orientation
MAS	Masculinity
PDI	Power Distance
UAI	Uncertainty Avoidance

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1. Introduction

“The reasonable person adapts himself to the world, while the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself”

George Bernard Shaw

“No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive”

Mahatma Gandhi

The 2008 financial turmoil produced a totally new economic scenario where developed countries have been losing their attractiveness in term of business opportunities replaced by new developing countries, such as the renowned BRICs - Brazil, Russia, India and China (Kunc & Bhandari 2011). These countries have experienced an increasing role in all the economic and political facets. As result, they become the new expansion market for those multinationals willing to develop operations abroad.

Among these countries, Brazil stays ahead in term of investment attraction and political rise. As the economy has been growing, multinational companies started to open up branches and sending their global executives to coordinate operations abroad (Costa, Funchal & Barbosa, 2011). On the other side, the expanding market allowed Brazilian companies to achieve high levels of growth attracting new professional foreigner workforce (Tanure, Barcellos & Cyrino 2006). However, due to certain limitations of the Brazilian educational system (CNIg, 2011), both international and national companies have continued to face the challenging task of retaining and attracting skilled employees.

Both factors, increasing of multinational presence on the territory and growing of the national companies, coupled with the talent shortage explain the increasing

migration of talented and skilled professionals into the Brazilian labour market (Zaia & Freire, 2012).

As statistics showcase, several of these skilled professionals are moving in from developed countries that now are facing an economic slowdown (Zaia & Freire, 2012). Among these countries, Italy has been facing a heavy economic contraction in the last decade. Also for this reason, the number of Italian expatriates in the Brazilian territory is constantly growing.

However, the adaptation to the new culture and to the new working environment is not always an easy task. Large divergences persist in human personal and social values - and consequently in behaviours - among countries especially in working related contexts (Hofstede, 1980). Hence, cultural differences are still pivotal with practical consequences that can be observed in the every aspects of the organizational life. Therefore, corporate management can act to improve organizational performance by linking cross-cultural knowledge to HR practices (Kwasi, 2013).

The aim of this study is to understand how these differences impact on working environments in a cross-cultural perspective. Cross-cultural studies and expatriates management researches are analysed in this research to grasp difficulties and facilitating characteristics for Italian expatriates working in Brazil. Results will provide a clear comprehension of the most important cultural differences in terms of working related features from the point of view of Italian expatriates in Brazil; actionable knowledge to actors involved in expatriation processes based on the thesis' empirical findings and a further cross-cultural comparison with other cultural clusters already explored in literature.

1.1. Research Objectives

Even though the main purpose is to solely analyse how Italian expatriates perceive the Brazilian working culture, this study offers several other intuitions. First, the practical implications of previous literature on the topic will be discussed. Afterwards, some consideration will be presented on the topics to be covered when preparing Italian expatriates for international assignments in Brazil. Eventually, I compare the Italian expats' experiences with those described in other studies based on different cultural groups, Japanese and French.

More specifically, this study will address the following research question (RQ):

RQ: Which are the main cultural differences at work for Italian expatriates working in Brazil?

1.2. Project Design and Chapter Outline

After this introduction, the second chapter provides an extensive overview on the literature review concerning the relevant concepts, namely culture in organizations, national vs. organizational culture, multicultural teams, cross-cultural management (CCM) studies, Brazilian indigenous aspects, expatriates management in Brazil and Italian expatriates in Brazil.

The third chapter describes in depth the methodological approach implemented in this research with a narrow focus on the objectives of the research, procedures and participants' description.

The fourth chapter illustrates the complete overview of the research findings. First, results are explained and exposed in a discursive approach. Afterwards, the

discussion of the results is presented with the aim of answering to the research question and the other subtopics.

Finally, the fifth chapter investigates the final conclusions about the project, the research limitations and possible future research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will outline the main findings in previous literature about cultures, cultural comparisons and managerial practices, and expatriates management. First, the main definition of cultures and the importance of this concept in organizational terms are explained (2.1). Secondly, the consistency of ‘national vs. organizational’ culture definition is presented (2.2) coupled with the potential benefits from multicultural teams (2.3). Afterwards, section 2.4 discusses about the most relevant CCM studies, namely the Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980) and GLOBE (House, Javidan & Dorfman, 2001). Then, the most discussed indigenous aspects of the Brazilian culture will be examined, in order to grasp a specific knowledge about the local culture as described in previous researches on the topic (2.5). Subsequently, literature overview will be focused more on the expatriates management theme, with the section on expatriates management in Brazil (2.6) and, more specifically, Italian expatriates in Brazil (2.7).

2.1. Definition of Culture

There is no agreed definition among social scientists on the term culture (House, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). What most recent scholars agree on is that, somehow, culture affects and governs all facets of life by influencing values, attitudes and behaviours within a given society (Kwasi, 2013). For the same reason the debate over cultural differences needs to address two fundamental questions: first, in what way are human communities different or similar and, second, why (House *et al.*, 2001).

Therefore, understanding what culture means and how it works is essential when dealing with people in any organizational context. This section explores the main definitions related to the concept of culture, in order to understand how the collective “programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 1994) can influence individual behaviour and, by extension, management practices and business operations in the

work environment. In other words, culture represents solutions that different social groups have devised in order to deal with the finite number of problems with which all people must live (Thomas, 2008).

The word ‘culture’ is often used in everyday language to describe a number of various aspects. What all these concepts have in common is that, by definition, culture represents some sort of abstract entity involving several “man-made, collective and shared artefacts, behavioural patterns, values or other concepts which, taken together, form the culture as a whole” (Dahl, 2004). Etymologically, the origins of the word culture are rooted in the Latin word *colere*, which could be translated as ‘to build’, ‘to care for’, ‘to plant’ or ‘to cultivate’ (Dahl, 2004). Hence, ‘culture’ can be understood to be a socially constructed concept, since it refers to the act of ‘cultivating’ something that cannot be found in nature.

In order to define the concept of culture, Hall (1983) sheds a different light on a peculiar characteristic of cultures worldwide. The author views culture as often subconscious. He describes culture as invisible control mechanisms operating in our way of thinking. He believes that members of a given society often internalize the cultural components of their surrounding environment unconsciously, and act within the limits set out by what is considered culturally acceptable:

“Culture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another. These lines are arbitrary, but once learned and internalized they are treated as real.” (Hall, 1983, p. 230)

Since these schemes are deeply rooted in our perceptions, we become aware of such control mechanisms only when they are severely challenged - for example, through exposure to a different culture where different individuals address same problems in a different way. The concept of challenging one’s culture when comparing it to that of others is the basis of this research as it often turns out to be an issue rather than an advantage (See Section 2.2).

Hofstede, eminent scholar in the field of CCM studies, insists on the idea of a shared, yet cultivated and socially correlated set of values that affect behaviour and artifacts (Hofstede, 1994). He defines culture as:

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another.”
(Hofstede, 2001, p.9)

Furthermore, he expands on the concept of ‘collective programming’ as the main indicator of individual behaviour since it represents the main roadmap when it comes to actions influencing individual thoughts and feelings (Milliken & Martins, 1996). For this reason, understanding the culture we have to deal with can improve the predictability of other people’s actions and allow different individuals to manage their expectations of the “other” (Elkington & Haritgan, 2008).

Regarding the structure of culture as a complex phenomenon, Schein (1985, 1992) describes a multi-layered concept of culture, where tangible cultural aspects are often manifestation of more implicit and unspoken cultural norms and values, so called ‘artefact’. Schein utilizes the mainstream basic assumption in social studies that culture always implies stability (as stable behaviours and beliefs are repeated over time), sharing (since no culture can be described if it is not shared among a group of individuals), patterning (as stereotyping is necessary in order to define main clusters), dynamics (as culture has to be observed over different time frames in order to capture its evolution) and finally, impact on many aspects of group life. As a result, Schein defines culture as:

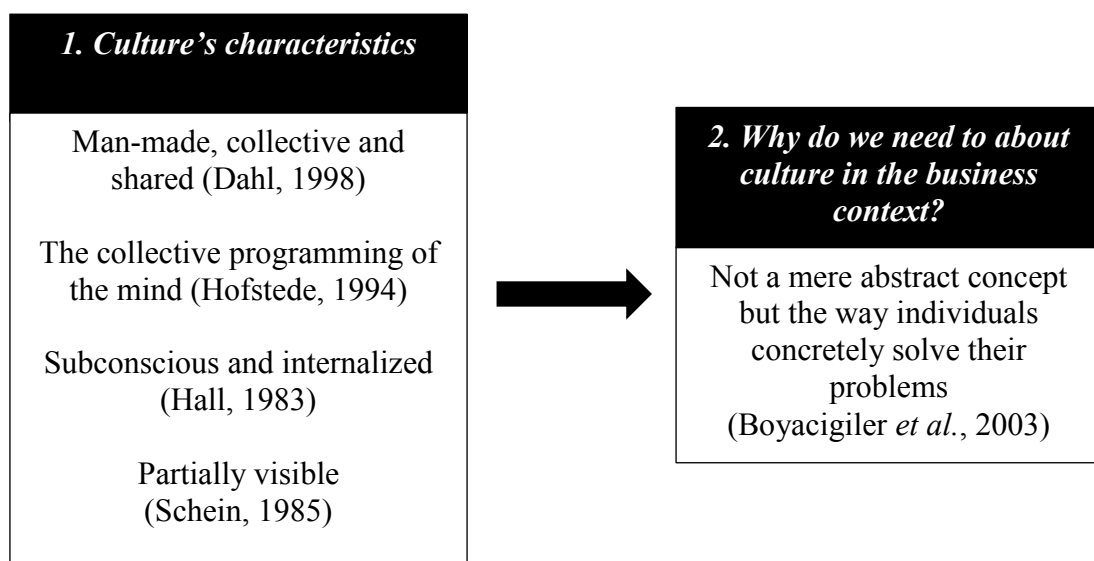
“A pattern of shared basic assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relations of those problems.”
(Schein, 1992, p.9)

The author describes three interrelated layers that can be observed in mainstream culture: artefacts, as the material expression of cultural values; *values and behavioural norms*, as something underlying the most evident manifestations of culture since they require a greater level of consciousness to be valued; and the beliefs and assumptions as the innermost part of the culture, including all those unconscious beliefs that individuals inherit from their social environment and often take for granted, without much question (Schein, 1985).

Therefore culture does not represent a merely abstract concept for theoretical discussion only. The concept is related directly to the concrete ways by which individuals solve their problems on a daily basis. Understanding how culture works benefits those in charge of managing social and working relationships in environments where different values coexist (Boyacigiler, Kleinberg, Philips & Sackmann, 2003).

As can be gathered from the above definitions, culture is a complex concept with several implications on individual behaviour. To sum up, Fig.1 provides an overview of all the authors in this first section:

Figure 1. Characteristics and the role of culture in organizations



2.2. National and Organizational Cultures

As previously discussed, many human activities are influenced by cultural norms and values; invented, discovered or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Shein, 1985). Therefore, from an organizational perspective, culture becomes a concern only when action is required, particularly for multicultural and international companies that need to manage different cultural approaches and mindsets (Sonjae & Philips, 2004). In addition, the growing pace of globalization and the consequent increase in international mergers and acquisitions further strengthen the incentive to understand the role of culture from a business prospective (House *et al.*, 2004).

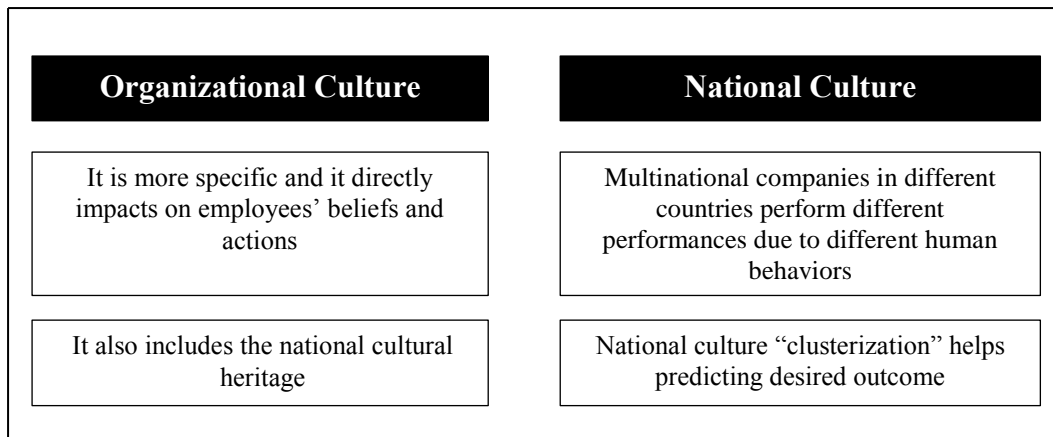
Even though the topic can be evaluated as crucial as implementing a good business plan or other “typical” business related operation, the resolution of these ideological conflicts is far to be found. As explained by Sonjae and Philips (2004), even after more than thirty years of cross-cultural research, most managers of multinational companies still find cultural differences one of the most difficult aspects to understand for the purpose of reaching their desired performance.

Some scholars assign different weights to the role of corporate - or organizational - versus national cultures in the business world. Those that view the corporate culture to be more relevant sometimes discard the operational relevance of national cultures all together. For example, Cameron and Quinn (1999) argue that organizational culture is inherently in line with the national culture since it represents the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions - unwritten and unspoken guidelines - expectations, and collective memories but also prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads as aspect of an organizational culture (Cameron & Queen, 1999). Other authors emphasizing the importance of corporate culture argue that what is most essential for a multinational company is having a consolidated

universal corporate culture that extends beyond the values of individual employees. In the opinion of these authors, a strong universal corporate culture is the one where all members of the organization, regardless of their cultural background, share similar views and beliefs that guide them in their business activities (Ralston *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, McSweeney (2002) explicates that the complexity and intricacies of national culture make it difficult to understand, or classify, in the same way as corporate culture. In his criticism of Hofstede's model of cultural research, McSweeney points out a number of methodological flaws and biases in the Hofstede model, including the lack of a relevant definition of 'national-culture' and the fact that Hofstede's research is based on a homogenous sample - IBM employees - from which no normative conclusions could be generated.

However, evidence of the impact of national culture in multinational business is also widely available in literature. Despite the cultural convergences that have resulted from globalization, national cultures are still different enough to affect business activities, since they remain at the root of human behaviour (Hofstede 1980; House *et al.*, 2004 and Laurent, 1983). For example, Hofstede (1980) shows that the same survey on business behaviour conducted at IBM - a multinational company with a strong corporate culture - leads to heterogeneous results from which cultural differences can be gathered. The survey results imply that even if a corporate culture is homogenous, the national culture still matters, according to different cultural values. In addition, multicultural teams tend to have a more unpredictable cultural matrix, since individuals are often unaware of the certain cultural details that can often lead to miscommunication and inefficiencies within the working environment (Sonjae & Philips, 2004). Hence, understanding the typologies of different cultural behaviours, including what is considered appropriate or not by different members within the same organization is essential to productivity and harmony within the organizational life (Mead & Andrews, 2009).

Figure 2. Organizational vs. National Culture



Therefore, organizational culture is encoded in corporate DNA and evidence attests that it accounts for a large part of individual behaviour and productivity within a business context (Dahl, 2004). However, in order to maintain a competitive advantage in any multicultural or international domain, multinational companies must understand the importance of national culture and adopt an organizational culture that adequately addresses culture-related behavioural patterns and leadership styles (Kuada, 2010). In that sense, by linking national cultures and HR practices, corporate management can act to improve organizational performances (Kwasi, 2013).

2.3. Multicultural Teams

Since cultural differences can lead to conflicts and operational difficulties, we should support their elimination as a mean of avoiding conflicts. This section presents evidence to the opposite argument, in support of the view that mono-cultural teams lead to poorer performances than well-managed multicultural teams.

Despite the dynamics of culture-driven conflict outlined in the literature review, multicultural teams are difficult to avoid in a globalized economy, especially in the case of multinational companies. In addition, multicultural teams, and the concrete realization of a multicultural environment, can have both strategic and performance-related benefits when properly managed (Quacquarelli & Prandstraller, 2011).

From the strategic point of view, Schneider and Barsoux (2003) argue that multicultural teams allow multinationals to create a real competitive advantage on a global scale. Multicultural teams, defined as culturally heterogeneous, dynamically structured and geographically dislocated (Gibbs, 2006), offer innumerable benefits (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Chang, Gong & Peng, 2012) as they could:

- Work to build cohesion among headquarters and subsidiaries
- Create global networks to facilitate information flow among units
- Create opportunities for management to understand global issues at a deeper and more complex level
- Provide the cultural experience necessary for understanding multicultural needs in the marketplace
- Train the workforce in dealing with the supply chain actors involved in multinational transactions
- Increase knowledge-sharing with bidirectional flows form HQ- subsidiary and vice versa

On the other hand, from the performance-oriented point of view, multicultural teams are not always as resourceful as some literature may indicate. According to Shapiro, Frust, Sprreitzer and Von Glinow (2002), multicultural teams usually score either extremely high or extremely low in performance, whereas homogenous ones generally stick to an average outcome. The authors explain that good management of multicultural teams depends on the modality used to deal with the diversity from within. When cultural differences are underestimated, their value is often taken for granted, and therefore not exploited to its full potential. On the other hand, those same differences represent the source of over performance in teams where multiculturalism is adequately managed (Shapiro *et al.*, 2002).

For the reasons presented above, understanding cultural differences and their impacts on business operations becomes pivotal when dealing with multicultural teams. Therefore, being aware of the potential benefits and drawbacks from multicultural environments at work can legitimate even further the need for cross-cultural comprehension in order to achieve higher performances.

2.4. Cross Cultural Management: Brazil and Italy in CCM Literature

Several studies in the last thirty years have tried to address the definitive correlation between national values and predictable individual behaviour. In order to pursue this objective, several scholars have tried to classify cultures through a finite numbers of variables that would be used to compare group of individuals across the globe (e.g. Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992; Trompenaars, 1993; House *et al.*, 2001; Adler, 2001).

In this subsection, three of the aforementioned studies will be discussed, namely the Hall's classification on communication patterns and the cross-cultural studies elaborated by Hofstede (1980) and the Globe Project (House *et al.*, 2001). Hall's model is presented because of the consistency with the empirical findings of the research where communication resulted to be pivotal in terms of cultural difference between the Italian and the Brazilian working culture. On the other hand, the Cultural Dimensions model (Hofstede, 1980) and the GLOBE Project (House *et al.*, 2001) have been chosen for two main reasons. First, they represent the most extensive and renowned study in the field. Secondly, because they both provide a great deal of information on both target cultures, Italy and Brazil.

Finally, a general consideration on cross-cultural studies needs to be detailed. Although culture is defined according to the predominant aspect highlighted in the model - communication patterns for Hall (1976) and cultural variables for both Hofstede (1980) and House *et al.* (2001) – one should not assume that every individual in the observed culture respects totally the mainstream characteristic described in the CCM framework. Sub cultures, regional clusters and individuals account individually and they also shift according to other factors as educational level, international exposure, urbanization and economic development. The deviation from the standard is defined in Hofstede “ Ecological fallacy” and further analysis will be presented in (2.4.2). Therefore, the aim of CCM models and studies is to

describe mainstream cultural characteristics in a certain culture that have to be weighted with all the conceivable individual factors.

2.4.1 Intercultural Communication

According to Hall (1976) human interactions can be classified in two main categories when analyse them under a communicational standpoint.

Hall (1976) identifies cultures shaped by low-context (LC) communication when interactions occur through explicit manifestations of the messages, mainly through words. Therefore, these cultures present direct communication where no implicit messages are hidden behind the ‘official’ statements. As a consequence, those receiving messages in social interactions are not required to add any further meaning to the explicit message as background information, socially accepted rules of conduct or societal expectations. On the other hand, high-context (HC) cultures are characterized by indirect communication where the explicit message delivered represents only a partial part of the communication. Hence, in these cultural contexts the content of the message has to be processed taking into account all the implicit variables of the actual cultural context. Therefore, the receiver of the message has to decode the original explicit message by understanding the cultural features and the nonverbal messages that surround the interaction.

Hall’s framework considers several aspects of the human interaction that can be defined as communication patterns. Among the studied communication patterns we find authority, interpersonal relationships and insiders/outside status in social groups as they all affect the way communication takes place (Hall, 1976). As a result, LC communication cultures are shaped by individualistic values, self-face concern, linear logic, task-orientation and explicit verbal-based interactions. In this conceptual framework, messages are direct with no concern of the background social environment or beliefs. The author indicates countries as Germany, United States,

Canada and Australia as the most LC oriented. Conversely, HC cultures have collectivistic values, strong group ties, relationship-orientation and mutual-face concerns, nonlinear logic and coded messages that have to be contextualized. According to Hall (1976), cultures that fall into this category are for example Japan, Saudi Arabia and Latin America as well as China, that represents the most discussed case in literature (Zhao, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

The author explains that “the level of context determines everything about the nature of the communication and is the foundation on which all subsequent behaviour rests” (Hall, 1976, p.92). In a business-oriented fashion, this classification allows to comprehend the contextual environment where organizations operate. Coherently, this cultural framework is a resourceful tool to grasp cultural differences in multicultural environments. According to Hall (1976), Brazil is one of the countries included in the HC group while Italy presents mixed features from both categories. Implementing Hall’s communication framework in this research will help to understand if communication-related differences still impact on the current Brazilian organizational scenario where Italian expatriates operate.

2.4.2. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede’s research on working values represents the most renowned study in cross-cultural field (Hofstede, 1980). The author elaborated his first framework based on an attitude survey of more than 100,000 employees from a large US corporation – later identified as IBM. For the first version of his work, Hofstede identified four “dimensions” that described cultures across the globe. In the following years, the model was tested in several research projects and updated with new dimensions that were deemed significant over the last three decades.

Same as most of the cross-cultural models and schemes, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are based on the average score of interviewees from a specific country. Therefore it cannot be stated that only because two nations differ on a particular dimension in term of average score then any two individuals from those countries will score as same as different as shown in the national average score. As explained by Thomas (2008), it is perfectly possible to find a person in New Zealand (considered extremely individualistic) that is more collectivist than one in Malaysia (considered way more collectivist than New Zealand) as explained in Fig. 3. The apparent bias of making the mistake of *erga omnes* application of the average score was defined by the author himself as “Ecological Fallacy” perfectly coherent with the scope and the findings of the research. As recently declared by the author himself, the Hofstede model “describes gardens, not flowers” (HOFSTEDEinSight, 2010).

Figure 3. The Ecological Fallacy in the Hofstede’s Model

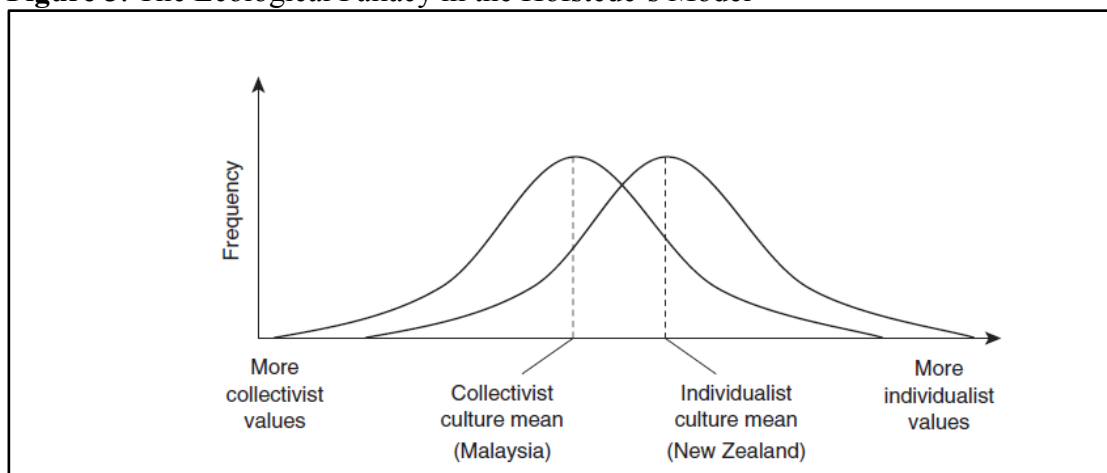


Figure 3. Retrived from Thomas, 2008, p.53.

As aforesaid, four dimensions were identified in the original study in 1980, namely Individualism (IDV), Power Distance (PDI), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), (Hofstede, 1980). Along the years, other two dimensions have been added, as it will be explained in this section - Long Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence (IVR).

Individualism/Collectivism (IDV) is the extent to which one's self-identity is defined according to individual characteristics or the characteristics of the social group they belong to. Thus this dimension explains the level of interdependence of individuals in a group versus the degree of independence and individualistic attitude performed by each cultural cluster. As described by Hofstede, Individualism is the "preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only" (Hofstede, 2001). Conversely, Collectivism represents a society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to care about them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2001).

Power distance (PDI) is the degree to which power distances and differences are considered acceptable or to sanctioned in social contexts. As described by the author, "power distance is a measure of the interpersonal power or influence between boss and subordinate as perceived by the least powerful of the two" (Hofstede, 2001). Cultures ranked high in this category perform greater "social distance between the high and low ends of the society" (Lawler, Walumbwa & Bai, 2008) that generates greater income, status and influence inequalities. On the other hand, in lower power distance cultures individuals are expected to race for the power and be willing to challenge the status quo. Hence lower power distance entails higher social mobility and greater aptitude for innovation (Lawler *et al.*, 2008).

Masculinity/Femininity (MAS) is the extent to which traditional orientations of ambition and achievement are emphasized over traditional female orientations. According to Hofstede, high scores in this dimension - masculinity - describe a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success where large competitiveness takes place (Hofstede, 2001). Its opposite, femininity described by low scores in this dimension, labels a preference for cooperation, modesty and valorisation of life quality (Hofstede, 2001).

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) represents the degree of society in focusing on ways to reduce risks and create stability (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore the uncertainty avoidance in the model expresses how individuals in a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity (Thomas, 2008). The focus of this dimension is on the concept of future, where high uncertainty avoidance predict behaviours that are conservative and try to limit the possible risk of future breakthrough through rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas (Hofstede, 2001). On the other hand, where countries score low UAI, societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles. In addition Hofstede advises, however, that UAI rates might change according to individuals' occupations and ages (Hofstede, 1984).

Long-term orientation (LTO) represents the fifth dimension, added lately in 1991 after a further study on Eastern countries. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth (Hofstede, 2001).

The origin of the supplementary study was investigating the possibility that the original research might contain strong cultural bias because it was developed mainly in Western countries. In further applications of the model similarities were founded in three dimensions out of four (IDV, PDI, MAS) while the uncertainty avoidance did not correspond with another "dimension" defined Confucian work dynamism- later changed in LTO. Therefore Hofstede decided to include this last dimension in the model (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). However, literature is still discussing on both UAI and LTO since these two dimensions did not correlate as with the other, suggesting that probably these two dimensions might be less applicable on a global scale (Thomas, 2008).

More recently, Hofstede added a sixth dimension as a result of the research with Michael Minkov, Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR) (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Indulgence stands for a society that allows free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, restraint describes societies that suppress gratification of needs and life pleasures while regulating it by means of strict social norms and control. Nevertheless, this dimension is still discussed in literature because of its recent introduction and the lack of additional tests in empirical studies.

Practical implications at work of this model are several. If we take into consideration the most applied and empirically tested dimensions, IDV explains how a society handles inequalities among people (Hofstede, 2001). People in societies with high score in power distance accept hierarchically ordered environments where everybody has a place and which needs no further justification: the boss is the one in charge for decision making and nobody questions what is decided at higher hierarchical level. On the contrary, in low power distance context discussion is welcome regardless hierarchical positions and status. PDI can indicate individual feelings towards hierarchies and status within organizations. Afterwards MAS predicts which characteristics are predominant at work where assertiveness can prevail over cooperation. Furthermore, even if there is no correlation between MAS of a society's culture and the distribution of employment over men and women, there is "a positive correlation between a country's femininity score and the participation of women at higher-level technical and professional jobs, as a percentage of all working women in a country" (Hofstede, 1980, pp. 292, 306; 1984, p. 203).

Accordingly, applying the model to the two target countries can provide some insights in term of possible cultural clashes in multicultural workplaces (Fig. 4). Brazil is described as less masculine, more oriented to power distance and higher in femininity. In the section about the thesis results (Chapter 4) the aforesaid variables will be adopted to explain the most discussed cultural differences perceived by the expatriates in the sample.

Figure 4. Hofstede’s Model Applied to the Two Target Cultures

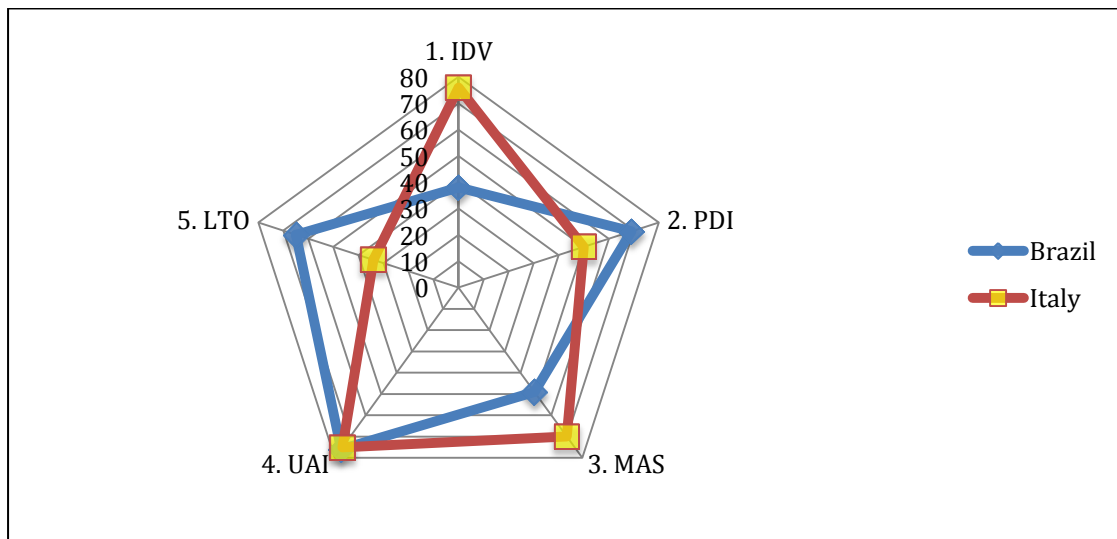


Figure 4. Adapted from Hofstede, 2001.

For all the aforementioned reasons, Hofstede’s model represents a thorough instrument of analysis when observing different culture in a comparative approach. However, some scholars heavily criticized the whole research. Even though the model has been widely tested and verified over years with differentiated samples – as the recent study on airlines company pilots attitudes related to the cultural roots by Merritt (2000) – several criticism challenge the reliability of the model. The debate over the reliability of the Hofstede model comes with the first original version of the model in the 80’s. Those criticizing cultural dimensions point out four capital sins in the construction and implementation of the overall models (McSweneey, 2002). First, the concept of “nation state culture” is described as oversimplified when trying to define cultural phenomena (e.g. regional e local realities remain marginalized). Secondly, McSweneey affirms that the original sample is biased because IBM employees constitute a specific cultural cluster of mostly highly educated people, from a middle-upper class social status and belonging to the urban population. Third, some scholars doubt about the adequacy of the questions adopted in the questionnaire in a way that the interview could not depict a clear idea on the categorization required (Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). Finally, Hofstede’s model has been criticized for

being too superficial when identifying each dimension. The logic that stands behind this statement is that the category identified can have a different meaning in different countries. For example, the same concept of ‘individualism’ has a different value from country to country so no unique measured scale can be identified on this.

2.4.3. The Globe Project

Further research projects explored and expanded the original Hofstede’s concepts over the last three decades. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) is among them and it represents the most recent large-scale study of cultural differences in value orientations, with a research on culture and leadership conducted in 61 nations (House *et al.*, 2001). The project has been designed as “a multi-phase, multi-method process in which investigators spanning the world are examining the inter-relationships between societal culture, organizational culture, and organizational leadership” (House *et al.*, 2001). More than 150 social scientists and management scholars were engaged in this long-term programmatic series of cross-cultural leadership studies in order to design the most advanced model in terms of culture analysis. As results, the authors elaborated a group of variables in order to classify cultures across the globe. Some of these variables (once again called “dimensions”) can be linked to those elaborated in previous literature (such as Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992; Trompenaars, 1993 and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961) while others were crafted in order to better define this cross cultural analysis framework (Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, & de Luque, 2006 a).

A core difference between the Hofstede’s model and GLOBE relies in the cluster identifications. Where Hofstede focused more on national based description – defining cultural references for each of the national culture analysed – GLOBE researchers started from the same methodological approach to originate clusters that

were homogenous among nations included and heterogeneous among them selves.

These clusters are listed below and will be used as reference when describing the GLOBE dimensions (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque & House, 2006 b):

Table 1	
<i>Cultural clusters in GLOBE study</i>	
<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Countries</i>
Latin America	Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela
Latin Europe	Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Switzerland (French and Italian speaking)
Anglo Cultures	US, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa
Nordic Europe	Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway
Germanic Europe	German-speaking Europe (Austria, German speaking Switzerland, Germany, South Tyrol, Liechtenstein) and Dutch speaking Countries (Netherlands, Belgium and Dutch speaking France)
Eastern Europe	Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Serbia, Greece, Slovenia, Albania and Russia.
Arab Cultures	Algeria, Qatar, Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, UAE, Jordan, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman
Southern Asia	India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Iran, the Philippines and Turkey
Confucian Asia	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam
Note: Cultural clusters as identified in GLOBE. Adapted from Javidan <i>et al.</i> , 2006 b, p.86	

Since most of the results are presented using these ‘clusterization’ as frame, results of the research will be illustrated accordingly. Considering Italy and Brazil as the two target cultures, GLOBE results are grouped as Latin America (in which Brazil was grouped) and Latin Europe (with Italy among the listed countries). As a consequence, this section will try to be focused on these two categories since they are related to the cultures examined in this thesis project.

As aforesaid for Hofstede (1980), also GLOBE presents different dimensions that can be utilized for describing and comparing cultures. Some of the identified dimensions recall previously discussed in Hofstede while others represent

innovations. The dimensions described in GLOBE are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism I and II, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Performance Orientation, Future Orientation and Human Orientation.

Power Distance is defined as the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared. It represents the same concept explained in Hofstede (1980). Society ranked high in this dimension presents a clear differentiation between those with power – social, economical or political – and those without it. In the GLOBE findings none of the country in the sample scored extremely high values, whereas some statistically relevant differences exists between some regions low in power distance (e.g. Nordic Europeans) and mid scores (for example Latin America).

Uncertainty Avoidance represents the same Hofstede's concept of orientation towards radical changes vs. status quo maintenance (House *et al.*, 2001). As beforehand stated, this concept can have a decisive impact on individual behaviour as it affects the attitude for risk taking and concept of the future. Both Latin Europe and Latin America scored middle to high values in this dimension.

Collectivism I (or Societal Collectivism) examines the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices that encourage collective distribution of resources and collective action (House *et al.*, 2001). Once again, this dimensions reflects the Hofstede's IDV. However this dimension stresses on the institutionalized collectivism in a way that represents the overall formal concept of collectivism spread among countries. For this reason, regions as Latin America (and then Brazil), Latin Europe (Italy) and Germanic Europe score similar low in collectivism I.

Collectivism II (or In-Group Collectivism) describes the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families (House *et al.*, 2001). The focus is then on the in-group shared values and how this can

impact on the leadership concept and the organizational behaviour. Results obtained in the collectivism I dramatically change when considering this aspect. Latin America and Southern Asia scored high whereas Germanic Europe and Anglo group score low values. Latin Europe is placed at intermediate position.

Gender Egalitarianism is the extent to which an organization or a society minimizes/maximizes gender role differences and gender discrimination in organizations and society (Javidan *et al.*, 2006 b). Examples of regions high in this value – thus egalitarian – are Nordic Europe and the Anglo group. On the other side, Latin America and Latin Europe scored mid values.

Assertiveness is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships. Latin America and Latin Europe scored mid-high values, along with most of the other clusters identified, whereas Nordic Europe scored low-handed values.

Performance Orientation refers to the extent to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence (Javidan *et al.*, 2006 b). Brazil, as in the Latin America cluster, scores low in this section where Latin Europe was slightly higher. Extreme high values were founded in Germanic Europe and the Anglo cluster. For the purpose of this research this difference predicts more difficulties in the working environment for those expatriates coming from high values clusters working in Brazil

Future Orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification (House *et al.*, 2001). Thus this explains the degree in which society postpones rewards against current sacrifices in the present term. Both Brazil and Italy score low values accordingly with their groups.

Humane Orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or

societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others as opposed to more materialistic compensations. Both Latin America and Latin Europe scored mid values in this dimension.

As can be gathered from the above literature review, most of these culture dimensions had their origins in the dimensions of culture identified by Hofstede in 1980. Therefore the first three scales are defined in accordance with Hofstede's dimensions labelled Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, and Individualism (House *et al.*, 2001). Instead, the Collectivism I dimension measures societal emphasis on collectivism, with low scores for individualistic emphasis and high scores indicating collectivistic emphasis by means of laws, social programs or institutional practices (House *et al.*, 2001). On the other hand, Collectivism II is a measure of the in-group collectivistic attitude performed by the interviewees when talking about organization and family and/or organizational cohesiveness. In addition, in lieu of Hofstede's Masculinity dimension, House and colleagues developed two different dimensions named Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness (representing the two extreme in Hofstede scale). Furthermore, Past, Present, Future Orientation dimension, which focuses on the temporal mode of a society, is instead related to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck framework (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Eventually Performance Orientation is derived from McClelland's work on need for achievement (McClelland, 1961) and Humane Orientation has its roots in Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). As a consequence, the GLOBE study constitutes the most extensive work in the CCM field currently available.

Yet, despite the extensiveness of the GLOBE project, several critics were raised after the publication of the book. As cited in Minkov and Blagoev (2012):

“The publication of GLOBE’s book triggered an animated exchange of opinions, defined by Ronald Fischer - associate editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* - as ‘one of the most heated and controversial debates in contemporary cross-cultural management research (Fischer, 2009, p. 26).”

The relevance of the debate witnesses how the issue is important for both management researchers and practitioners (Minkov & Blagoev, 2012). First, GLOBE project was elaborated also taking some of the Hofstede work that however was highly criticized by GLOBE scholars. These critics are frequent in GLOBE’s book (e.g. Ashkanasy *et al.*, 2004) where GLOBE researchers described how Hofstede failed to measure properly what he was intended to describe and how GLOBE had provided the necessary corrective actions. As consequence, Hofstede himself replies arguing that the GLOBE’s work was inaccurate in both methodology and definitions, as well as redundant in the final conclusions arguing that five dimensions were a great deal more accurate for cross cultural comparisons than the eighteen prescribed in GLOBE - since the nine dimensions were explicated in both current “as is” and potential “should be” outcomes (Hofstede, 2006). Second, GLOBE was criticized for vague clustering bias when labelling cultural clusters. For example South African cluster presented two different sources with significantly divergent outcomes from black and white. However, the listed cluster was just one, with no specific reference on the methodological approach applied (McCrae, 2007).

As the debate is still alive among researchers, GLOBE provides undisputable contributions to the CCM understanding (Minkov & Blagoev, 2012). For this reason it will be implemented in this research taking into account all the model’s limitations.

2.5 Brazilian Culture: Indigenous Aspects

From the above-mentioned CCM literature, a cross-cultural framework to be used for intercultural comparison can be drafted. However, literature findings in CCM on the topic are still generally defined and only general deductions can be made. In addition, Adler (2001) explains that all the CCM frameworks are approximations and, in order to be useful, they should be modified based on additional information gained through observation or experience. As a consequence, in order to better explore cultural differences between the target countries, other culturally specific studies should be introduced to the discussion. Even though Brazil was included in major multicultural studies such as GLOBE and Hofstede, in-depth studies on Brazilian managerial culture are hard to find (Gutterman, 2011). Moreover, Brazil presents a unique and complex societal culture that rarely was explored under a managerial point of view (Gutterman, 2011). For these reasons, generalization in CCM models and superficial exploration of the Brazilian cultural traits in managerial terms, this section will expand the main cultural peculiarities of the Brazilian culture in both national and organizational perspective with a narrow focus on business consequences and organizational behaviour.

As noted by Von Borell de Araujo, Teixeira, Cruz and Malini (2013) in their study on expatriates adaptation of organizational expatriates (OEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) in Brazil, Brazilian culture has been addressed extensively in the academic literature with specific reference to “indigenous aspect” as part of the distinctive Brazilian cultural traits (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). The influence that these traits exert on expatriates adaptation, through the managerial routine and social absorption, it is explained as crucial. For this reason it will be relevant for the purpose of this research, first, to discuss the main characteristics of the Brazilian culture beyond the most discussed CCM framework and, secondly, to test if these characteristics are considered to be more relevant when facing the challenge of

expatriate in Brazil. For the authors all these ‘indigenous aspects’ are related with the cultural roots in the historical ties to colonialism in Brazil (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). In the article, and in this research project, we examine the four central Brazilian cultural traits discussed in Von Borell de Araujo *et al.* (2013) - Foreignism, Formalism, *Jeitinho* and Personalism - plus one - Cordiality - usually related to Personalism and the “Cordial Man” concept (Hollanda, 1995). and discussed in a specific section

Foreignism can be described as the fixation on foreigners (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). As noted in a study of Calligaris (1992), Brazilians lack paternal reference and this explains this fixation for foreigners with shaped and distinctive cultural roots. Holanda (1995) states that when Brazil was discovered, the Portuguese were already a mestizo people, viewed by the natives of East Africa as a culture/nation that was different from the mainstream idea of Europe. Afterwards the Portuguese colonists mixed with Indians, Blacks and immigrants from other areas of Europe to form a nation that developed a plural identity lacking a homogeneous cultural reference (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). All the above stated circumstances make Brazilians look at foreigner in a positive fashion, valuing more what is from abroad than what is considered national as explained by the title of the article of Caldas (1997) “*Santo de casa não faz milagre*” that can be translated as “The national Saint does not make miracles”. The title itself explains this peculiarity in the Brazilian positive attitude to foreigners.

Formalism consists in the attitude of reducing risks through the creation of rules, regulations and procedures (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). However, formalism in the Brazilian culture cannot be intended simply as a preference for written rules but it has to be analysed under a deeper social point of view as it also describes the gap that exists in Brazil between prescriptive written norms and effective behaviours in reality (Ramos, 1983). Nevertheless, this violation does not

lead to the punishment of the offenders (Riggs, 1964) since the aforementioned behaviour is shaped for being not directly against the rule itself. As explained by Von Borell de Araujo *et al.* (2013) “the excessive quantity of apparently rigid regulations, and the gap between technical rules and the day-to-day implementation of regulations in various situations, has its roots in colonialism in Brazil. During the colonial period, Brazil was torn between the enforcement of laws established by the Portuguese crown and life in the country itself” (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013, p.4).

Jeitinho (‘little way out’ or ‘adroitness’) is the best-known trait of Brazilian culture (Villard, Ferraz & Dubeux 2011; Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). It is extensively debated in both Brazilian and international business literature (e.g. Smith, Peterson & Thomas 2008; Smith, Torres, Leon, Budhwar, Achoui & Lebedeva, 2012). *Jeitinho* describes the creativity in elaborating short-term oriented solutions in order to deal with everyday life difficulties, which include the overemphasis on formal regulation or solving hierarchical problems (Smith *et al.* 2012). Both parties involved simply justify this behaviour as the more logic, the more effective or simply declaring the lack of knowledge of the official procedures (Rodrigues, Milfont, Ferreira, Porto & Fischer 2011). The adoption of *jeitinho* instead of more orthodox and formal structured solutions lays in the rapidity and directedness that could be difficult otherwise. The concept in practice consists of a creative solution involving two parties: the person who needs a problem solved and the person who will solve it (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). It is important to notice that this practice does not involve corruption or bribery, in theory, since no explicit or direct payment occurs among parties).

Personalism is a cultural trait that explains how Brazilians use their social networks to resolve problems. This aspect of national culture has been related to high context culture (Hall, 1976) and reaches its apex in the notion of Guanxi in China (Arduino, Bombelli & Gonzales, 2007) where no business relationships take place if not previously based on strong personal ties. In the Brazilian society most of the

business relationships are based on personal basis, and the strict application of the formal law is reserved for individuals whose social networks consist of personal contacts that have low levels of influence (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). Thus emphasis is placed on the personal networks and influence more than objective achievements when evaluating business relationships and reputation. This emphasis is explained by the high degree of trust in the ability of an individual's network of personal contacts, friends and family members to solve problems or gain privileges rather than the only individual capabilities (Pedroso, Nakatani & Mussi 2009). All the beforehand stated characteristics are interrelated (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013) and design a specific cultural setting that impact on every aspect of life and work.

In addition, since status is widely recognized and takes the connotation of paternal authority (Candido, 2004) Brazilian society is often described as 'big family'. A family where cordiality does not indicate sincerity but an apparent affective behaviour that is important to get things done and represents the basis for social survival (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). The fifth indigenous characteristic - Cordiality - is then the heritage of the Brazilian 'big family' way of life and it is opposed to objectivity in interpersonal communication (Candido, 2004) and facilitates conflict avoidance in order to preserve the quality of the relationship (Da Matta, 1984). Hence cordiality represents a social rule when it comes to manage any kind of relationship. Holanda (1995) explains this cultural trait as the way to encompass feelings, both positive and negative ones. Therefore, the author argues that "cordialism", and the related concept *homem cordial* (cordial man), describes the socially accepted behaviour in a reality that does not appreciate direct confrontation and debates (Holanda, 1995). Accordingly, the Brazilian cordiality is not a genuine characteristic but rather an inherited way of being that is considered to be the mainstream social behaviour.

Observing all these cultural characteristics in a business prospective, we are able to identify which are the main culture bounded challenges in the business environment for expatriates in Brazil. Foreignism represents a huge opportunity since potential customers would likely to appreciate non-national products usually just for the prestige that such etiquette generates (Leite, Winck & Zonin, 2012). Therefore, different aspects of business relationships may be positively affected by the admiration for foreigners. However, indirectness and formalism may complicate the effective feelings perception: these studies explain how interpreting the nature of the everyday business routine can be complicated for those that are not used (Candido 2004; Da Matta, 1984). For all the aforementioned reasons foreignism, formalism and superficial cordiality increase the degree of uncertainty and directedness in business environment.

Accordingly to the abovementioned statement, also *jeitinho* and formalism work in both easing problem solutions yet increasing environmental complexity. As explained by Von Borell de Araujo *et al.* (2013) these two forces help expatriates in solving bureaucratic procedures related to the accommodation or the working visa: when expatriates face long and intricate procedures the best solution is to rely on influential people or agency that make things work in a tailored made solutions (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). As the article explains companies arrange specific and ‘unofficial’ solutions for their organizational expatriates in cooperation with influential individuals/agencies that operates in that particular sector. In the described scenario the degree of good relationships cultivated by the firm turn the ‘official complexity’ into ‘unofficial simplicity’.

Finally, an overview on the impact of Brazilian indigenous aspects on the business environment are listed in the following table (Tab. 2):

Table 2		
<i>Indigenous aspects of the Brazilian culture and their influence on the expatriate's experience in Brazil</i>		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
<i>Foreignism</i>	Positive attitude, status for imported goods, admiration	Difficult integration since perceived always as "gringo"
<i>Formalism</i>	No evident pros if complex rules are applied	Increasing complexity when obey to the official statements, when following the rules procedures take time
<i>Jeitinho</i>	Easing the problem solving process	Making the environment confuse for those that are not used
<i>Personalism</i>	Having good relationships can make the difference also in objective procedures and processes	It becomes more difficult to understand what is objectively better and what is more "sponsored"
<i>Cordiality</i>	Relationships are relaxed and few conflicts arise	Difficult to understand what is the real thought, lack of direct feedback

Note: Indigenous aspects discussed in literature. Adapted from Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013; Hollanda, 1995.

2.6 Expatriates Management in Brazil

This section will explore in depth the previous literature on expatriates in Brazil. The objective is to identify the most important findings and the consequent practical implications in business organizations as explained in previous studies on the field.

Despite the Brazil's increasing appeal as a destination for multinationals, still very few studies have analysed the specific characteristics of the country with respect to the cultural experience for foreign executives and professionals (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). Several studies on international assignments were instead targeted to North American and Japanese expatriates all over the world due the higher degree of the internationalization stage of the respective industrial structure. All of them (e.g. Tung, 1982,1998; Black & Gregersen, 1999) attempt to explain how the expatriate faces the challenge of working abroad as well as describe the main reasons behind the expatriate's failure – when the expatriate does not complete the assigned task abroad. As a consequence, literature on international assignment in Brazil is still not as explored (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). Most of the published articles are based on small sample sizes hence no definitive generalization can be made; however some few studies have recently explored the topic through a more rigorous methodological approach. Among them all, those used as reference in this thesis will provide a good vitrine of the ongoing debate on the Brazilian receptivity for foreigners under a social and working related point of view. In addition, the selected researches will be explaining the expatriate adaptation, with a specific emphasis on adaptation at work rather than general adaptation or interactional adaptation (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991).

Among the chosen literature, three studies analyse the cultural determinants that impact on the expatriate's adaptation (Von Borell de Araujo & Teixeira, 2011; Von Borell de Araujo, Balassiano & Teixeira, 2012; Irigaray & Vergara, 2010). All of them are focused on the positive/negative discrimination connected to the foreign status, with a clear connection to the indigenous feature classified as foreignism. Von Borell de Araujo and Teixeira (2011) explain how volunteer expatriates (also called self initiating expats, SIEs) perceive locals in terms of acceptance and welcoming of

the foreigners. The study is based on a sample size of thirty-three (33) expatriates, of which seventeen (17) from developed countries. Authors showcase how the foreignism is a cultural feature, yet a dual one. Therefore, Brazilians seem to be receptive and welcoming towards those from developed countries, while arrogant with those coming from the neighbourhoods Latin countries or other developing ones. In their following studies in 2012, authors showed how cultural distance is a counterintuitive parameter to predict expatriates' adaptation (Von Borell de Araujo, Balassiano & Teixeira, 2012), Accordingly, even though cultural distance should be a consistent proxy of the 'easiness' in the adaptation process, reality tends to be different. Therefore, even if expatriates' literature suggests that a lower cultural distance would be beneficial for the adaptation, this study on Brazilians seems to suggest the opposite. Expatriates from Latin American countries, hence, from countries that always have been clustered with Brazil in term of cultural homogeneousness, face higher difficulties than those expatriates from more different cultural cluster (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2012). Again, the study indicates the dual nature of the Brazilian foreignism.

Similar conclusions can be drafted from the study on expats in Brazil carried out by Irigaray and Vergara (2010). The authors finds similar conclusion regarding the dual nature of the Brazilian foreignism. However, the study is based on a restricted sample size of three (3) expatriates therefore few general considerations can be made in terms of statistical relevance.

Richarte Martnez and Limongi França (2013) authored another study on cultures and expatriation. The authors discuss cultural variables that influence the expatriate's adaptation in Brazil. They identify two categories of characteristics that shape the Brazilian executives' behaviour: factors that impact on relationships and working related features. The study was designed and conducted on European expatriates in Brazil in order to understand e catalogue most recurrent issues for those Europeans working temporarily in the country. The research highlights thoughtful insights despite the methodological bias related to the narrow sample size of only three (3) expatriates.

Among the factors that impact on relationships between foreigner and local executives, the authors enlist four elements that have to be taken into consideration when facing the intercultural challenge in Brazil. First, language barriers in both “conventional” shade – hence the lack of appropriate knowledge of the local language coupled with the low number of locals speaking English – and “functional” way – difficulty to communicate directly and to be understood when explaining something. This last aspect relates to the lack of direct communication already explored in the Brazilian culture section (2.4). Secondly, authors describe a constant attitude to stereotyping where foreigners are perceived as more competent and qualified - positive discrimination. Third, the role of behavioural attitude in the sense that Brazilians tend to be less assertive than the European counterpart and willing for compromising with short-term unofficial solution - once again *jeitinho*. Finally all the interviewees detect a strong difference in personality with Brazilians often mixing professional and private aspects at work (see Tab. 3).

Table 3	
<i>Cultural characteristics with impact on relationships between foreigner and local executives</i>	
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>
Language	Lack of fluency in English among executives Different interpretation for same instructions
Stereotyping	Positive Discrimination Foreigners as more qualified
Behavioural Attitude	Lower degree of assertiveness <i>Jeitinho</i>
Work and personality	Mixture between professional and private life

Note: Adapted from Richarte Martinez & Limongi França, 2013

On working related values, the interviewees perceived systematic differences between the Brazilian office and the one in the home country. They felt meetings and group session to be more problematic because the consensus seems to be more difficult to achieve. However, they described a lack of frontal confrontation on working issues replaced by more passivity from the lowers in hierarchy. Finally they

quoted again the attitude to implement non-structured solutions to unexpected problem that should be analysed and processed instead.

Table 4	
<i>Working related differences between foreigner and local executives</i>	
<i>Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>
Meetings	Often later than scheduled Difficult in get to yes Average number of people involved is higher than back home
Speech	From general to particular
Problem Solving	Short term oriented
Communication among offices	Geographical dimension of the country makes it difficult
Note: Adapted from Richarte Martnez & Limongi França, 2013	

Finally, further researches investigate and discuss about the expatriate's experience in Brazil with a specific reference to the expatriates' cultural origin.

De Freitas (2000) conducts a qualitative research on French expatriates working and living in Sao Paulo. The aim of the paper is to investigate the adaptation process of French expats and their families in Sao Paulo with regards of two main aspects. First the cultural characteristics of the Brazilian culture that makes the adaptation either easier or more difficult. Secondly, the role of the companies and their Brazilian subsidiaries in the expatriation process in terms of possible actions to undertake to ease the process itself.

About the characteristics that facilitate the adaptation, interviewees cited the already explored informality, the creativity and friendliness of the people, the happiness in every aspect of life aspect as well as the vibrant energy that seems to surround the Brazilian environment in recent years. On the other hand, they referred to other aspects such as bureaucracy, different communication pattern (e.g. “ difficulty in giving orders or asking for something”), lack of punctuality, social

fragmentation and racism among those elements that complicate the expatriates' adaptation. All these aspects confirmed the previously discussed literature on the topic as well as the cultural characteristics described in the previous section on the Brazilian culture (2.4). Moreover we will find further coherency when examining the specific field of Italian expatriates (section 2.6): this consistency reveals that Italians, as well as other Europeans and especially French, face the same kind of issues when working abroad in Brazil.

Kubo (2010) provides an extensive study on the adaptation process of Japanese expatriates in Brazil. The research represents one of the most thorough study on a monoculture based sample in expatriation in Brazil and it illustrates the adaptation process of those Japanese in Brazil through the implementation of the Black *et al.* (1991) model.

The author finds out organizational factors that both facilitate and complicate the adaptation process for Japanese expatriates. Among those facilitating, Kubo showcases how three features help the Japanese expat in the adaptation process to the new cultural reality. First, the “social support” from the local ‘Nikkei’ community that ease the arrival phase and make the expat feel at home. Then the organizational culture of the subsidiary, that does not differ too much from the Japanese headquarter. Third the “assignment specification” in the sense that the expat knows exactly what he/she is expected to be performing when abroad. On the other hand, the author cites more main critical aspects in the process. First, the author describes the lack of appropriate cultural training and expat selection when the HQ decides and trains future expats for their assignments abroad. Secondly, another factor is the limitation of the autonomy due to the constant need for coordination with the HQ policies and strategies. Third, expatriates describe a generalized job enlargement phenomenon, since they face an actual increase in their original job contents. Fourth, the study highlights the “functional conflict” that happens when expats have to balance the pressure from the HQ and the local context that results to be less efficient and fast due

to the cultural differences in working cultures. Finally, expatriates explain that the complexity of the bureaucracy constitutes an effective negative factor in their experience in Brazil.

In addition, Kubo (2010) enlists the factors that are related to the Japanese expatriates' personality that do not ease the adaptation process. Among these, we find a low self efficacy in terms of willingness to understand the new cultural setting; the lack of social skills that do not help expats to integrate with the local community (e.g. difficulty with the local language) and, finally, a lack of objective perceptions and anchoring to the native culture, as Japanese tend to evaluate local values and cultural manifestations in the solely perspective of their original culture.

Hence, Japanese expat community presents a peculiar group of features that can be summarized as showed in the table below (see Tab. 5):

Table 5	
<i>Japanese expatriates and adaptation factors</i>	
Organizational Factors	
<i>Positive Impact</i>	<i>Negative Impact</i>
- Social support	- Training and selection
- Organizational culture	- Limitation of the autonomy
- Assignment specification	- Job enlargement
	- Functional conflicts
	- Red tape
Personal Factors	
<i>Mainly Negative Impact</i>	
- Lack of openness to new experiences and culture	
- Low social skills	
- Cultural anchoring	
Note: Adapted from Kubo (2010)	

The last study to be discussed in this section is the Bueno's research on expatriates working in the Brazilian branch of Renault in São José dos Pinhais (Bueno, 2004). She discusses about the gap between the optimal and the actual state of expatriates procedures and tools implemented. The aim of the research is to understand how the expatriate process takes place in the subsidiary, which are the

most difficult aspects concerning the cultural integration of the expats in the local structure as well as the role of the company's policies and tools to assist the expatriates in their assignment.

The research's findings confirmed again that expatriates feel uncomfortable on the "soft" aspect of the expatriation experience – thus the missing effective cultural integration – rather than the logistic aspects such as accommodation or bureaucracy – yet extremely challenging but often provided by the competent office in the company. Furthermore interviews showcase how headquarter (and the subsidiary too) did not provide any structured aid to the sociocultural integration because it is considered less relevant. However all interviewees keep complaining about this latter aspect since it constitutes a capstone in the full incorporation in the new reality.

Eventually, all the aforementioned researches show how expatriation in Brazil presents some recurrent peculiarities in terms of 'positive' and 'negative' cultural aspects in working contexts. In addition, all the previous literature on the topic demonstrates that expatriates' perceptions are strongly influenced by the expats' cultural heritage. For these reasons, the analysed academic background will be implemented when discussing this research's results with a specific reference to the potential cultural related issues for Italian expatriates in Brazil and what contradistinguishes this cultural cluster - specifically Italians - from others.

2.7 Previous Literature on Italian Expatriates in Brazil

In this subsection, an overview on the most recent literature on Italian expatriates in Brazil will be presented with a narrow focus on those researches that compared the Italian culture to the Brazilian one in business environment. This investigation choice relies on the attempt to provide a specific overview and academic references on the issue of Italian expatriates in Brazil rather than a wider review on the Italian expatriation phenomenon.

If very few studies have analysed the specific characteristics of the country with respect to the cultural experience for foreign executives and professionals (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013), even less are those analysing the Italian professional community in Brazil. With the purpose of this thesis, only three published papers will be analysed. All of them have been published in annual conferences of the Brazilian postgraduate and research association ANPAD (*Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração*).

Among these studies, De Paula and Staub (2005) offer a relevant - yet narrowly tested - explanation on the Brazilian management practices from the Italian expatriates in the region of Minas Gerais point of view. The research is based on a sample of fifteen (15) Italian executives operating in the region of Belo Horizonte in order to understand which factors contribute to the difficulty in adaptation and cultural shock. The sample is created by interviewing experienced executives with working experience in the state of Minas Gerais or Brazil from two to twelve years in order to avoid the bias of newcomers' cultural shock still in the initial stages of the cultural adaptation (Black *et al.*, 1991).

Research's findings showcase how the overall experience for the Italian expatriate can be positively judged. On average, interviewees state to be completely comfortable with the culture and willing to continue their experiences in Brazil.

However, several cultural differences and related difficulties are identified. Italian expatriates describe a peculiar managerial culture – in the research described as both *Mineira* (from the region of Minas Gerais) and Brazilian – that strongly impacts on the way business is run. The executives complained mostly about two major aspects such as the lack of punctuality and the communication barrier when it comes to give and receive feedback.

About the punctuality the interviewed executives state that the ‘implicit’ flexibility in the Brazilian attitude to time schedules constitutes a main problem since it provokes wider scale delays. Indeed, they complain mostly about the fact that the delay represents more a behavioural etiquette rather than an exception with the obvious consequences of delayed meeting, working schedule and planning operations. About the feedback, the interviewees describe this as an even more relevant impediment when in charge of giving feedback. As one of the executive declares, the problem relies on the personal connotation of working relationships: since social and working relationship are more interrelated - in comparison with the Italian working environment - giving direct feedback, as well as receiving them, becomes more difficult because every working critic or judgment moves to a personal layer with the consequence of worsening the relationship overall. For this reason communication among managers and subordinates is more unidirectional, with the boss giving directions and the subordinates following them in a passive and less constructive way (De Paula & Staub, 2005).

In addition, expatriates describe other factors that either differentiate or influence their experience as foreigner in the Brazilian culture. First among these, the language of course perceived as a clear barrier (also for the lack of knowledge of English from locals) as well as not critical since its proximity to the Italian and the other Latin rooted languages. Then informality in the working context is listed among the differences yet described as a positive aspect since it enhances the working

environment quality. Finally another aspect, the lack of long term planning in the business operation, is described as strongly linked to the culture. Even though it is not described as highly problematic, it still represents an aspect that interviewees criticized and that they would like to change in their working routine.

Hence, considering the findings of this research the following aspects can be identified when describing working related differences as described by the Italian executives in the sample (De Paula & Staub, 2005):

Table 6	
<i>Cultural related working differences between Italian and Minas Gerais business practices</i>	
<i>Critical</i>	<i>Relevant</i>
Punctuality Lack of feedback	Informality Language Lack of planning Communication
Note: Adapted from De Paula & Staub, 2005	

Similar findings can be drawn in the following year study from the same authors (De Paula & Staub, 2006). This research adopts the same parameters of the one previously explained. The main difference consists in the fact that here the National Brazilian culture is considered in lieu of the specific one from Minas Gerais. However the sample seems to be really similar to that in the previous research, hence some few different conclusions can be gathered in addition to those before hand exposed.

Again the lack of punctuality is the most important and criticized aspect coupled with the lack of direct communication. However another characteristic arises in this research: the Brazilian *jeitinho*. The short oriented solutions beyond the rules, as described in 2.4, shapes the Brazilian behaviour as results of the overregulation in the colonial period. As one of the interviewee explains, the Brazilian way of business

administration requires a great deal of understanding of the common and accepted business practices (De Paula & Staub, 2006). Among these, one of the key factors is the “flexibility” in terms of understanding stated and unstated rules and socially accepted behaviours (e.g. *jogo de cintura*).

Furthermore, other characteristics are described as different yet optimal from the Italian interviewees. Among these, once again, informality (as in the De Paula & Staub, 2005) and a stronger emotional attachment to the company. This last factor is explained to be peculiar of the Brazilian subordinates when compared to the Italians. The explanation is ambiguous: some of the interviewees state that this is because of the personal relationship at work can strongly influence the career advancement hence showing more commitment can improve it; others link this to the flexibility of the labour market where it is easy to be fired - when compared to Italy regulation; while some others described it as part of the real attachment felt by the employees as well as the Brazilian joyfulness and cordiality.

In short, De Paula and Staub, (2006) provide a redefined version of the previous study where they analysed the Brazilian culture as a whole and identifying some cultural differences that either contribute to strength or weaken the cultural shock of the Italian expatriate:

Table 7		
<i>Cultural related working differences between Italian and Brazilian business practices</i>		
<i>Critical</i>	<i>Peculiar</i>	<i>Facilitating</i>
Punctuality	Jeitinho (e.g.: “Jogo de Cintura”)	Informality
Lack of feedback		Commitment
		Enthusiasm

Note: Adapted from De Paula & Staub, 2006

Finally, Floriani (2002) investigates on differences in negotiation styles between Italian and Brazilian executives as results of the cultural traits. The aim of the

research is to test how the previous studies on cross-cultural comparison (Hofstede, 1997) can be related to the different behaviours in business. The research has been conducted with a 200 executives sample whom have been asked to answer to some questions related to their negotiation style, negotiation process and believes concerning the act of negotiating in the international context.

Basically, the author identifies some features of the negotiation process - such as the main aspects of the negotiation, which information are considered crucial, emphasis in the single negotiation phases and preferred outcomes and so on - and then he correlates them to the cultural dimensions as described in Hofstede. The findings of the study change slightly the classification elaborated by Hofstede in 1997. The results are briefly summarized in the table below:

Table 8					
<i>Italian and Brazilian Culture</i>					
Hofstede (1997)					
<i>Country</i>	<i>Masculinity</i>	<i>Individualism</i>	<i>Power Distance</i>	<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	<i>Long Term Orientation</i>
Italy	High	High	Moderate	High	NA
Brazil	Moderate to low	Low	High	High	High
Floriani (2002)					
Italy	Moderate to low	Moderate to high	Moderate	High	High
Brazil	High	Low	Moderate	High	High

Note: Adapted from Floriani (2002)

As can be observed in the data, Italian culture is described high in masculinity by Hofstede (1997) however the empirical evidence reflects a moderate value with a minor focus on themes such as the phase of “closing the deal” or “control the deal directions” – identified as more typical of masculine cultures. About the same item, Brazilians score way higher values than the expected if referencing the moderate value in Hofstede. In other words, Brazilians showcase a higher masculinity than

Italian and then higher than the 'moderate' score assigned in Hofstede (1997). In addition, the value of uncertainty avoidance - not showed for Italy in the Hofstede study (1997) - is considered to be similarly high for both cultures .

A further consideration can be drafted in the Floriani's research on the different importance attributed to the social relationship in the working environment. When interviewees have to answer to a question concerning the main information required for a negotiation to be successful, Brazilian value higher the role of personal information of the negotiator whereas Italian consider it less relevant. The answers confirm indeed the mixture between the working and the personal relationships in the Brazilian culture in accordance with the beforehand mentioned research on this topic (De Paula & Stub, 2005, 2006; Hall, 1983; Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013).

3. Research Methodology

The following section will present the methodological approach implemented in this research.

First the objectives of the research will be explained linking previously discussed theoretical models and studies to the research questions and empirical findings. Afterwards, research procedures will be explored with more insights on the research design, the data gathering and analysis. Finally, a detailed description of the analysed sample will be provided to better understand which types of professionals were interviewed and which conclusions can be gathered from their interviews.

3.1 Objectives of the Research

Cultural differences at work can constitute an enriching element only if properly understood and managed. For this reason, the second chapter of this thesis reviewed the main findings in previous literature on the topic. In this section a brief overview on the main literature is provided in order to explain the consistency of the showcased arguments with the aim of this research.

As previously discussed, culture represents a critical factor to consider when managing people since it impacts beliefs and behaviours (Hall, 1976, Hofstede, 1994 and Milliken & Matins, 1996). The complexity in understanding cultural mechanisms derives from the fact that culture is only partially visible, since most of the deepest beliefs are unconscious, socially learned, and often encrypted (Schein, 1985).

Furthermore, the meaning of culture becomes more complex when focusing on organizations, and more specifically business organizations. The main issue stands on the different approaches that scholars adopt when classifying culture within structured organizations. Some prefer to narrow the spectrum on the organizational culture, since

it is the main factor of influence for those operating in an organization (McSweeney, 2002 and Cameron & Queen, 1999). Others believe that organizational culture does not explain why certain behaviours happen to take place in the same organization operating in different countries (Hofstede, 2004; House *et al.*, 2004 and Laurent, 1983). These latter authors favour the idea that the real factor to be considered is the national culture – with the limitation of the “national” classification. This study will follow this second approach with the aim of understanding national culture-related differences at work using the target sample.

The increased complexity in multicultural environments pays off because organizations can benefit from this heterogeneous mix and build a real competitive advantage (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). However, the integration process is complex and does not always bring about positive outcomes (Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002). Qualitative studies on the topic prove that multicultural teams usually score either extremely high or extremely low, increasing the risk of successfully managing such types of groups (Shapiro *et al.*, 2002).

Expatriate management practices give practical managerial evidence of how different cultures interact and produce tangible results in business organizations. Several studies address the issues of how expatriates adapt to their host countries and how adaptation impacts on business performance. Black *et al.* (1991) explain that the expatriate adaptation is based on three aspects: general adaptation, interactional adaptation and adaptation at work. This thesis will emphasize this latter aspect, hence focusing on working related adaptation and managerial implications that come along. However, some general references to general and interactional adaptation will be discussed in the conclusion.

CCM studies and researches offer an analytical apparatus for punctual appraisals. In the decades of development of the field, the Hofstede model (1980) has

become the main reference for scholars. Later on, the GLOBE project began to integrate and change some of Hofstede's findings by implementing a modified research approach (House *et al.*, 2001). These models are adopted in this thesis for two main reasons. First, they represent a literature capstone in terms of relevance and extendedness of the research. Secondly, they both provide a consistent amount of data on the target countries, Brazil and Italy. In addition, the communication patterns framework by Hall (1976) has been analysed as it describes intercultural communication that resulted to be crucial for the purpose of this project.

Despite the importance of the CCM studies, they cannot provide a full understanding of the unstructured characteristics present only in some countries. For this reason, the most recent literature on the so-called 'indigenous aspects' of the Brazilian culture have been examined. Five main aspects were identified as peculiar of the Brazilian culture: foreignism, formalism, *jeitinho*, personalism, and cordiality. All have been described as recurrent in the Brazilian national culture (Candido, 2004; Da Matta, 1984; Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, some research on expatriates in Brazil was provided. First, a general reference to the most recent studies on expatriates' adaptation in the contemporary Brazilian environment was discussed. Afterwards, a deeper investigation on previous literature regarding Italian expatriates in Brazil was showcased and analysed. Both contributions proved some structural characteristics in working attitude and working related differences that have been described as "national cultural" based.

To better frame which topics were discussed along the dissertation literature, Tab. 9 in the following page provides some summative insights related to the main topic treated in each section:

Table 9			
<i>Literature overview findings discussed in this work</i>			
<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Highlights</i>
2.1	Culture	Cultural differences impact on daily basis	Are differences in culture an opportunity or a threat?
2.2	National vs. Organizational	The debate over the predominance of cultures	Is national culture relevant?
2.3	Multicultural teams	Pros and cons of multicultural teams	Which pros and cons from multiculturalism at work?
2.4.1	Hall intercultural communication	HC vs. LC societies	How does communication differ among cultures?
2.4.2	Hofstede's model	Cross cultural frameworks	Is there any perceived difference between the two cultures?
2.4.3	Globe's model		
2.5	Brazilian Indigenous Aspects	Specific characteristics of the national culture that are not included in the global frameworks	Foreignism
			Formalism
			<i>Jeitinho</i>
			Personalism
			Cordiality
2.6	Expatriates in Brazil	Previous literature on expatriates in Brazil	Positive discrimination
			Language related issues
			Lack of assertiveness
			<i>Jeitinho</i>
			Communication issues
2.7	Italian expatriates in Brazil	Previous literature on Italian expatriates in Brazil	No integration (Japanese)
			Informality
			Language related issues
			Communication issues
			Lack of planning
			Social difference perceived as normal
			More enthusiasm
			Punctuality
<i>Jeitinho</i>			

With the help of the examined previous literature, the objective of the research is to identify the main factors that impact the expatriates' experience in Brazil when

considering working related cultural differences between the host country and the native one for Italian expatriates. For this reason a sample of Italian professionals was interviewed to investigate their perceptions of the cultural differences in the local working environment and their difficulties in the adaptation process.

Even though the main purpose is to solely analyse how Italian expatriates perceive the Brazilian working culture, this study offers several other intuitions. First, the practical implications of previous literature on the topic will be discussed. Subsequently, some consideration will be presented on the topics to be covered when preparing Italian expatriates for international assignments in Brazil. Finally, I compare the Italian expats' experiences with those described in other studies based on different cultural groups, Japanese and French.

To sum up, the following research question (RQ) will be addressed:

RQ: Which are the main cultural differences at work for Italian expatriates working in Brazil?

In the discussion, others three main topics will be covered:

- Previous literature and managerial implications: How can we use the previous literature on expatriation and cross-cultural management in order to predict the cultural shock in the new working environment? What do we already know about expatriates in Brazil and how we can put this into practice?
- Cross cultural training: What needs to be taught in cultural training classes for Italian expatriates who are about to start their assignments in Brazil?
- Expatriates in Brazil: What do Italian expatriates perceive as difficult in the Brazilian environment? In which way do they differ from expatriates from different nationalities working in Brazil?

3. 2 Procedures: Design, Data Collection and Analysis

This subsection will clarify the methodological strategies adopted for this project. First, the research design will be described with a comprehensive description of the consistency of qualitative research through in-depth interviews. Second, the data collection process will be examined. Finally, the procedural features of the project analysis will be illustrated.

3.2.1 Research Design

The aim of the research is to seek a deeper understanding of cultural differences in working related contexts for the Italians expatriates working in Brazil. Hence, the main objective differs from predicting and controlling the variables that shape the local working reality accordingly with the purposes of an interpretative research (Denzin & Lincon, 2006). Accordingly, this project is based on a qualitative approach implemented through in-depth interviews.

In order to understand the cultural differences at work and to draft an objective cross cultural comparison, it was necessary to consider the social and working environment of the sample interviewees through their experiences as expatriates in Brazil. As a result, the qualitative research constitutes an accurate instrument for understanding social experiences and how these gain significance for those living in a certain context, as explained by Denzin and Lincon (2006). Qualitative research allows a deeper comprehension of facts, processes and meaning that cannot be described in terms of quantity, volume, intensity or frequency or by any other numerical representation (Denzin & Lincon, 2006). For the same reasons, a qualitative study through in-depth interviews represents a coherent tool for the aim of this project.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured plot. To begin the interview, the expatriate was asked about his/her perceptions about the working environment in Brazil. The questions attempted to gather the expatriate's perceptions about the working reality in Brazil in comparison to Italian working practices. Those who did not present relevant working experience in Italy or could not describe a particular aspect discussed in the interview, they were asked about their feelings about cultural related features of the Brazilian working setting.

The interview guide (Appendix A) was designed following the findings of the previous literature on the topic (Chapter 2). In addition, the interviewer always tried to recall the importance of sharing any anecdote or peculiar fact that could practically describe their perception about a certain aspect of the working setting in Brazil.

Finally, all the interviews were conducted in Italian and recorded as anonymous. Both language and the security of anonymous status allow a sincere exchange of ideas with no fears when criticizing the actual working context or organization.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Interviewees were contacted through four main channels: personal contacts, the Bocconi Alumni in Brazil network, the Institutional support of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paulo (ITALCAM, *Câmara Italiana de Comércio de São Paulo*) and through the LinkedIn group "Italians doing business in Brazil".

Personal contacts were made during my experience as Double Degree student at the Fundação Getúlio Vargas in São Paulo and my work as a consultant in São Paulo. Hence these contacts were related to my personal academic and working networks. The Bocconi Alumni in Brazil network allowed further contact with those Bocconi

alumni living in Brazil. Among these, only Italians with previous experience outside Brazil were selected in order to discuss Brazilian working peculiarities. The ITALCAM was contacted for a private meeting with its President. In this occasion, I explained the research's objectives and I received full support for contacts and networking. Finally, through the LinkedIn group it was possible to establish further contacts with additional Italian professionals working in Brazil outside the aforementioned networks.

At the first round of interviews eleven expatriates were contacted and interviewed. Afterwards, the "snowball" technique was implemented as initial interviewees were asked to recommend a colleague/friend/acquaintance that could contribute to the research project (Heckathorn, 1997). This approach was beneficial for two main reasons. First, it was possible to increase the sample size to the final twenty-three (23) interviewees. The achieved sample size is thorough enough according to the findings of Poirier, Clapier-Valladon and Raubaut (1983) who argued that 20-30 interviewees could allow data saturation that is consistent with the purpose of a qualitative research. However, due to the qualitative nature of the study, figures will help provide understanding of the mainstream phenomenon as experienced by interviewees with no predictive statistical implications. Second, the personal signalling enhances the engagement of the suggested interviewees since the interviewer was 'sponsored' by a colleague/ friend/acquaintance and because the suggested contact was indicated as 'cultural sensitive' to the objects of the research by the initial contact.

In this project expatriates have been studied as a heterogeneous group with no distinction between organizational expatriates (OEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). OEs are described in literature as professionals that are sent abroad by multinationals in order to complete a defined task or for a limited time frame (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). On the other hand, SIEs are those expatriates that

voluntarily decide to move to a different country than their home one. Members of this latter category do not require any kind of job before arrival and often arrive with no determined time frame for remaining (Jokinen, Brewster & Suutari 2008). In the analysed sample, we will consider both categories together because the research's focus is on the overall cultural characteristics rather than the differences among various organizational circumstances that can affect the adaptation process.

3.2.3 Analysis

The data were interpreted and assessed through content analysis. The final results have been categorized following the most recurrent topics discussed throughout the interviews and linked to the previous findings in literature. Finally, some general deductions and considerations have been drafted in accordance to the main aspects that impact the Italian expatriates' experiences in Brazil.

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique for analysing text data (Krippendorff, 2013, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Rather than being a single method, current applications of content analysis can be described through several approaches. As described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), three main approaches can be identified: conventional, directed or summative. In this research the directed approach will be implemented since the content analysis starts with a consistent and extended theory on the topic that provides guidance for the initial coding. Indeed, the directed approach allows a researcher to validate or extend conceptually pre-existing theoretical frameworks with the adoption of targeted questions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hence, this approach is sound with the aim of the research.

In order to elaborate the final conclusions on the gathered data, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Afterwards, all the interviews were processed through three phases: coding, data microanalysis, and identification and

validation of the final categories (Godoi, Bandeira De Mello & Silva, 2006). Theory on the topic has been used for the initial coding. The coded information describes the expatriates' perceptions on the themes listed in the Objectives of the Research (3.1). Afterwards, the data microanalysis was executed to understand which of the debated themes were considered more relevant and significant in the expatriates' experiences and organizational behaviours as perceived in the Brazilian working context. Finally, the most important categories were identified and validated in order to best present the research findings.

3.2.4 Research Technique's Biases And Implemented Solutions

When implementing such research technique, we need to be aware of the most common limitations connected to the directed content analysis. As explained by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), this method presents three main possible biases: supportive rather than non-supportive evidence, overemphasis of the theory, and participant bias.

Regarding the first two possible biases, preliminary interviews with two experts in the field of expatriates' management were conducted. These exploratory interviews helped explain the coherence between the analysed theory and practice.

First, I interviewed the President of the ITALCAM. The Chamber has operated in Brazil since 1902 and offers assistance to both Italian and Brazilian institutions in order to promote business operations and institutional relations between the countries. The second interview was made with a DMRH Executive Research Specialist. DMRH has operated in Brazil since 1988 and constitutes one of the most important organizations among top tier HR consultancy and executive research firms.

From both interviews, three main difficulties were described when referring to Italian expatriates in Brazil. In their experiences, Italian expatriates and local subordinates and colleagues found divergences in terms of organizational efficiency,

hierarchies, and, most importantly, communication. All three aspects supported the previous literature's finding. This further confirmation increases the confidence level around the main topic to be discussed in the sampled interviews.

Finally, in reference to the possibility that the sample could not be representative of the described population (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)), I reached a sample size that allowed a sample saturation (Poirier, Clapier-Valladon & Raubaut, 1983) and methodological limitations will be described in depth in the final chapter of this work (Section 5.1).

3.3 Participants

In total, twenty-three Italian (23) professionals with a working experience - current or already completed - in Brazil took part in the research project. They all agreed to be interviewed in different locations in the state of São Paulo. Most of them were interviewed in their offices around the financial districts - Paulista Region, Vila Olympia and Itaim Bibi - in the city of São Paulo, but others preferred to be interviewed in their private residences outside the aforementioned zones. Three (3) were interviewed on Skype or phone because of different geographical locations. All the interviews were conducted from July to December 2013.

As can be seen in Tab. 10 (Sample Overview), our sample is composed of well-educated professionals with international backgrounds. In order to reduce "noise" in the sample, only Italian expatriates with more than six months of experience in Brazil were included in the sample. The aim of this methodological choice is to diminish the bias of the "honey moon" phenomenon described in Black *et al.* (1991) in which the expatriate experiences a general amusement due to the contact with the new culture. Hence, considering those expatriates in their first six months would bring a perception bias due to the new arrival rather than to effective differences or similarities between

the two target cultures.

As can be gathered from the Tab. 10, the majority of the expatriates in the sample are males (70%) and well-instructed: all but one has at least a master degree or a postgrad education. The numerousness of males in the sample shows that international assignments are still more predominated by men, especially in Brazil. As it was explained by IE 18:

(IE 18): Being a woman and an expatriate in Brazil is rare... I only meet men when I am at meetings and business conventions... I guess companies prefer men for both family and security reasons... At least here (in Brazil)...

In addition, most of the interviewees are in Brazil without a previous family. This can be explained by the fact that most of the expats are single and those with family create it here with local partners. Among the sampled expats, only six (6) brought their family from Italy and two (2) of them had to repatriate the spouse because of adaptation issues.

Finally, 39% of the interviewees declare that they had no knowledge of the local language at their arrival. Notwithstanding, this aspect seems to be irrelevant in the expatriate's experience because none of the interviewees state that the language difference is a main issue in terms of working difference. We can assume that the fact that Portuguese and Italian share the same Latin roots, it facilitates mutual understanding and it does not represent an impediment to communication as in other expatriate groups in Brazil (e.g. Japanese).

Table 10					
<i>Sample overview</i>					
	<i>Value</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>Value</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Sector</i>		
Male	16	70%	Food and beverage	3	13%
Female	7	30%	Industrial	5	21%
<i>Tot</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>100%</i>	Business consulting and advisory	9	39%
<i>Age</i>			Fashion	2	9%
20-30	12	52%	Technology	2	9%
30-40	6	26%	Banking and finance	2	9%
40-50	4	17%			
>50	1	5%	<i>Previous experience as expatiate</i>		
			No experience	8	35%
<i>Education (Highest Degree)</i>			Less than a year	6	26%
Undergraduate	1	5%	From 1 to 2 years	1	4%
Master or Postgrad	15	65%	From 2 to 4 years	5	22%
MBA	7	30%	More than 4 years	3	13%
<i>Knowledge of the language (Portuguese)</i>			<i>Working experience in Brazil</i>		
No knowledge	9	39%	Less than 1 year but more than 6 months	5	22%
Basic	4	17%	From 1 to 2 years	7	30%
Intermediate	2	9%	From 2 to 4 years	8	35%
Advanced	8	35%	More than 4 years	3	13%
<i>Job Title</i>			<i>Did you bring your family in Brazil?</i>		
Middle management	6	26%	Yes	7	30%
Executive	8	35%	No	16	70%
Director/ Owner	9	39%			

Finally, Fig. 5 illustrates an overview on the research methodology and procedures applied in this thesis:

Figure 5. Research Methodology and Procedures

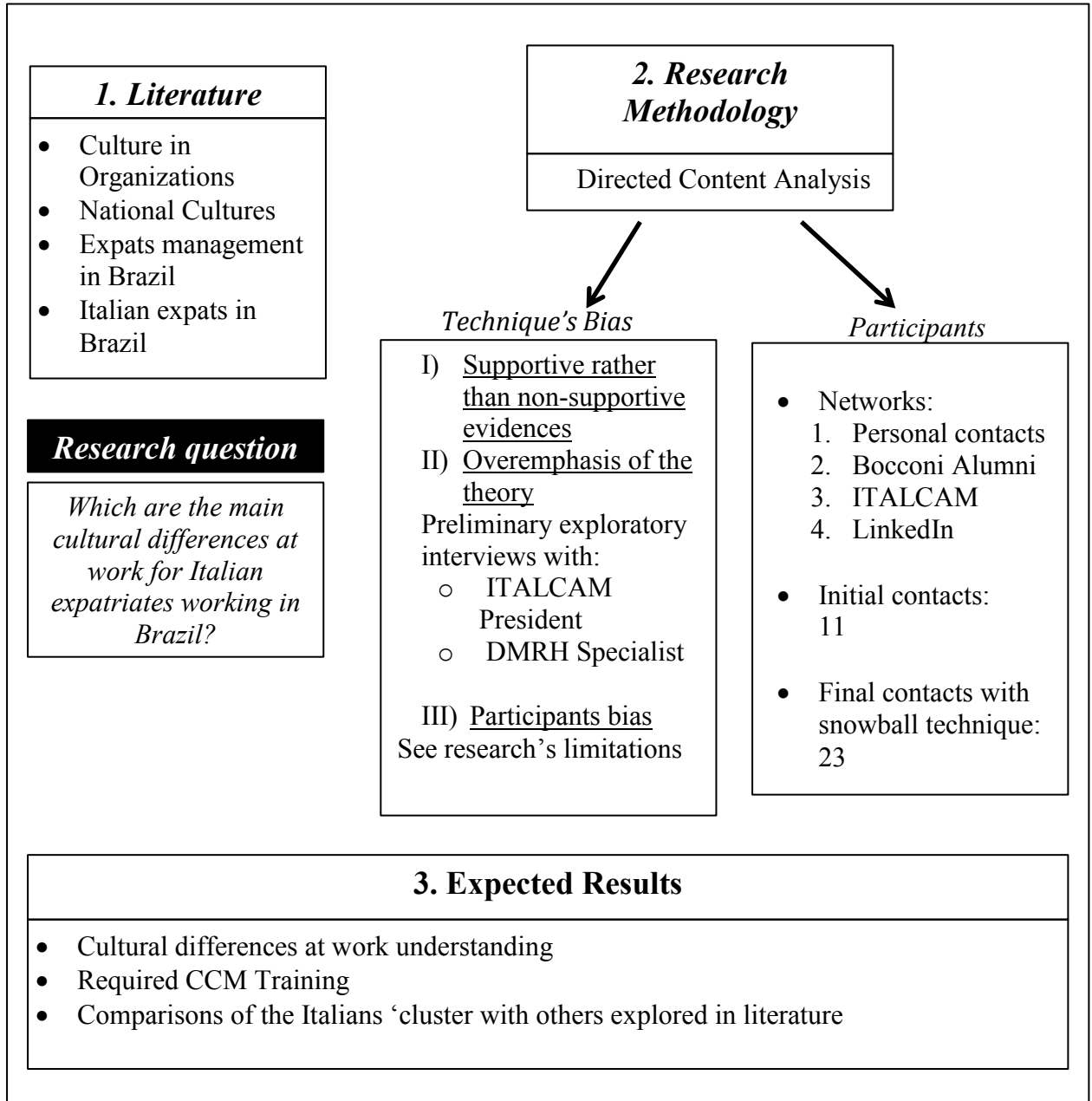


Figure 5. Research methodology overview and anti-bias solutions implemented

4. Results and Discussion

In this chapter the thesis' results will be illustrated. First, the conceptual categories for recurrent cultural differences at work will be listed and explained (4.1). Afterwards, the second section (4.2) will present the discussion of the thesis' results and the answer to the research question. In this latter section, the other sub questions presented in section 3.1 will be also addressed.

4.1 Results of the Research

In this subsection the results of the research project are explained. Among the twenty-three (23) interviewees several topics have been discussed. Furthermore, each expat brought to the table specific arguments that clarified his/her point of view on Brazilian culture and related effects on the working environment. However, after the coding, data microanalysis, identification and validation of the final categories (Godoi, Bandeira-De-Mello & Silva, 2006), some topics clearly surfaced more often than others and they have been grouped for the objective of the research. The coded groups that were identified refer to the following conceptual categories:

- a) Indirect Communication
- b) Working and Social Sphere
- c) Power Distance and Hierarchical Status
- d) Planning and Follow Up
- e) Foreignism
- f) Gender Gap and Masculinity
- g) Positive Attitude and Organizational Climate
- h) Market Opportunities

Within these categories, two considerations have been taken in order to present the results in a discursive approach. First, all the categories are conceptually linked to

the previous literature in order to use a common language that can be traced to other studies on the topic. This means that the category naming does not always refer to direct statement made by the interviewees, but rather to a general concept that can be applied to the interviewees' statements. Secondly, the last two categories - Positive Attitude and Organizational Climate and Market Opportunities - were derived by inference. Indeed, when expats were asked about the interview topics, they usually refer directly to the a) to f) categories. However, from their explicit statements it was possible to infer the other two remaining groups. This explains why an initial table with quantitative results is missing for these latter categories. This inference method coheres with the structure of the investigation structure because impressions and opinions can be gathered even if not explicitly stated (Godoi *et al.*, 2006).

Finally, data are presented in order of decreasing frequency and all the categories are shown with the most significant expatriates' statements. Expats are identified as Italian Expatriates (IE) with a progressive coding number that relates to them (from 1 to 23). Interviews transcriptions are showed in a discursive approach that means that records have been cited as they were, simply translated, with no grammatical or syntactical corrections in order to provide a more realistic report of the interviews that have been made for this project.

4.1.1 Indirect Communication

The most discussed aspect in all the interviews refers to the difference in terms of communication, in both working and non-working contexts. What is commonly stated is that the Brazilian way of communication in the workplace is always less direct than the Italian approach.

Overall, all twenty-three expats (23) cite this element as one of the most peculiar features in both work and social environment. In the following table (Tab. 11) the main considerations on the topic are listed:

Table 11		
<i>Indirect Communication</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, communication style...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... is more indirect than in the Italian context	23/23	100%
... constitutes a negative aspect of the culture	21/23	91%
... constitutes a relevant difference	15/23	65%
... is the most difficult difference to overcome	14/23	61%

As the table shows, the indirect communication style is perceived as consistently different when comparing the Italian and the Brazilian working environments. Expatriates complain about this lack of communication between colleagues and they explain how this cultural feature makes business processes more difficult. As explained by IE 15, the main disadvantage is related to the understanding of what is wrong and what is right because thoughts and opinions are rarely expressed straightforwardly:

(IE 15): The main difference between the Italian and the Brazilian working environment is related to the communication style. When I was in Italy I was used to direct and clear communication: if there is something wrong, I could speak out clearly and my boss would do the same. Nobody would be upset or hurt by what I have to say since everything is said for better overall results. In Brazil instead every message, criticism or idea has to be filtered. If there is something wrong or something you do not agree on, you have to try to “deliver” this disagreement in a fashionable way, politely, always calmly. In other words, you have to waste a huge amount of time thinking about how to dispense every message that can bring tension to the organization.

This kind of politeness and indirect communication can be traced in several previous studies on Brazilian culture. As described by Candido (2004), Brazilian society is often described as a ‘big family’ where cordiality does not indicate sincerity but rather an apparent behaviour that is important in order to get things done. It represents a basic assumption for successful relationships at work and in the private context (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). As explained by IE 10:

(IE 10): In every context, you need to use a kind of politeness... I would say indirect communication! If you speak to someone directly and straight to the point people get upset. Every word you use has to be weighted because otherwise you will never get what you want, even if it is right. You have to keep in mind that the etiquette here is different and it makes every task more difficult...

This kind of cordiality is opposed to objectivity in interpersonal communication and facilitates conflict avoidance in order to preserve the quality of relationships (De Matta, 1984). In addition, similar conclusions can be gathered from the cross-cultural frameworks elaborated in Hofstede (1980) and House *et al.* (2001). Brazil is obviously more collectivist than Italy when observing both Hofstede's Collectivism and House's Collectivism I and II values. As a consequence, in such collectivist culture interpersonal relationships become more important and this relational attitude impacts the workplace setting too (Ianni, 2002).

Hence, all of the expatriates in the sample describe a working scenario that is coherent with the literature findings. All of them experience a different communication style that in their Brazilian offices is more indirect and reduce conflicts. This cultural characteristic is perceived as the main constraint by the 65% of the interviewees as it affects the information flows at work. Only two of the interviewees found this characteristic as neutral and not merely negative, while all the others (21 out of 23) gave a negative connotation to it.

Interestingly, two of the interviewees provide valuable contributions in the practical explanation of the phenomenon, especially for those coming from an Italian working background. Both IE 22 and IE 1 explain how indirect communication at work is consistently different when comparing it with the Italian context:

(IE 22): Maybe I am generalizing and what I am about to say depends on the team you work with. However, to me, the main problem in the Brazilian working environment is this lack of directness in way of

communicating... Every time I receive an opinion or a feedback I am not 100% sure if what it is said is true or just courtesy. But here harmony seems to be more important, so everything is always “good” and “perfect” even if it is not the true.

(IE 1): The biggest difference at work is related to the relationships among colleagues: here relationships are more superficial and people act as they have to wear a mask. If there is something wrong at work, no one – not even your boss – will come to you and say it out loud. Often you will never even notice the mistake because “everything is fine”. If I think about Italians, and the way Italians are perceived here, we are more direct...straight to the point! This aptitude of being always polite and smoothed could be a great advantage sometimes but in the long run you realize that your colleagues behave in some way not because they actually are as such, but just because being kind and calm is the way to be! A practical example: when my boss comes to me and he says something I do not agree with I simply say it... If the same thing happens to my peers, they talk to each other but never make their disagreement clear to those that caused it. Briefly, if Italians are considered loud and direct – sometimes too much, they say – Brazilians are quite the opposite. You just need to know it because otherwise you would think that everything is going well while reality is not as perfect as it could seem.

In addition, fourteen (14) interviewees state that this formal politeness and cordiality is the most difficult difference to overcome. They explain that this communication method is counterproductive because it moves the focus of management’s actions from results to relationships. Colleagues tend to focus more on the maintenance of this harmony rather than initiate conflicts in order to solve business issues. For this reason, the main disadvantage is the lost efficiency in communication in order to preserve harmony at work.

(IE 15): To me the worst aspect of the working culture here is the lack of directness when dealing with people. Every time you waste a huge amount of time in being kind and smiling even if circumstances would suggest the opposite. You lose efficiency every time... Because you are too focused on being nice!

Several interviewees relate this cultural feature to a specific operational issue as the lack of negative feedbacks. As IE 22 and IE 3 explain, the constant focus on harmony and relationships balance is the cause of indirect messages. This communication structure brings two main practical disadvantages. First, the amount

of wasted time increases. Secondly, receiving negative feedback becomes more difficult with the negative consequences of final worse results. Both aspects are considered as important disadvantages of the Brazilian working environment.

(IE 22): Sometimes you have the impression that things are said just because it is fair and nice. Hence when you are working nobody comes to you saying, “You are doing wrong, please make it right.” And this behavior usually is deleterious because if you do not speak clearly at work you will probably achieve a lower result in the end.

(IE 3): When you are working on a project with your team, it is difficult... I would say impossible to have negative feedback... Because Brazil is different... For this reason managers should care a lot about it and always try to be proactive in searching for feedbacks, either good or bad. Brazil is the perfect example of management by walking around and this thing is strictly connected to this focus on relationships.

Finally, several interviewees cited another really important manifestation of this indirectness at work. In their opinion, since communication is not direct, owners and manager cannot understand the effective organizational climate. This, coupled with a fervent economic scenario and a labour laws that facilitate hiring and dismissals, it all dramatically increases the turnover ratio. Local workers seem to be more than fine with everything at work, but often manager found themselves with no employees overnight. As IE 16 and IE 19 explains:

(IE 16): This thing of the turnover is unbelievable... It seems all good and then you weak up in the morning with nobody attending your clients. In these few years I had a turnover that is more than 100%... And I refer to people that need training every time... You can imagine what this means.

(IE 19): This thing of the turnover shocked me! I arrived here and I did not know about it... For example, in the last 5 months I have changed 4 people in my team of 5 people. Can you believe this? And the funny thing is that they come here, smiling... simply say: “*Tudo bem?* I quit the job...”

4.1.2 Working and Social Sphere

According to previous studies on expatriates in Brazil, both Italians and non-Italians, Brazilian culture presents lower boundaries between working and private life spheres. The interviewees in this sample confirm this characteristic and describe it as

crucial when at work. In addition, several expatriates state that this aspect has a large impact on career progression and personal feedback. Furthermore, they report the need for being more social in order to be successful in the Brazilian working environment.

Briefly, Tab. 12 reviews some figures on the ‘working and social sphere’ category are listed:

Table 12		
<i>Working and Social Sphere</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, the link between working and social sphere is...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... stronger, with more interactions	22/23	95%
... stronger and this feature impacts on the reliability of feedback	7/23	30%
... stronger and you need to be more social in order to be successful	7/23	30%

As Richarte Martnez and Limongi França (2013) showcase in their study on expatriates’ adaptation in Brazil, expats perceive a working environment where professional and private aspects are often mixed.

Most of the Italian professionals in the sample confirm this perception and describe it as one of the main differences to understand in the host culture. Good relationships while at work and afterward are perceived by the expats as more valued than in other cultures. Even though this aspect is common in many cultures, they perceive the local culture as more focused on relationships. Almost one third of the interviewees (7) think that good personal relationships are the only way to be considered successful and to obtain concrete results at work.

As described by IE 8:

(IE 8): Every discussion or *querelle* at work has to be considered in a different fashion. When I was working in Italy I had a colleague that I could not stand under a personal point of view. However, we objectively were a 'perfect match' under a professional standpoint. We did not like each other, but we were aware that at work we were a good duo. He recognized that for a project... He needed me, we worked together with tremendous results even if we did not get along in the private sphere. In Brazil, a situation as the one I told you now cannot exist because the two things (professional and private sphere) are mixed as well as the perceptions related to both aspects.

The focus on relationship management mixed with the indirect communication attitude (as explained in 4.1) makes the working environment more ambiguous and blurry. Some expatriates find difficulties knowing how to deliver a work-related opinion without compromising the personal relationship with those receiving it.

This concept is clearly explained by IE 4, IE 5 and IE 21:

(IE 4): Here (in Brazil) you cannot be straightforward... Because here harmony in working relationships is essential. If you give a negative feedback concerning a specific task performed, the personal relationship is definitely deteriorated... It is more difficult to divide the two things (working and social life). You cannot say "What you have done is wrong" otherwise you lose your connection with your employees forever. I mean, if you say something like this to your employee, you better fire him because you will never rescue the relationship again... Simply, you cannot be objective and direct when judging someone's work.

(IE 5): In the Brazilian culture the boundary between what is work and what is not does not exist. Full stop. For example, I used to have a Japanese colleague and he was an excellent hard worker. However I would never go out with him for a beer because he was not the kind of person I could get along with. But at work, we were fine. Here this mechanism, it could not work. Here you have to be friends with everybody... You need to have a personal affinity with your co-workers even if this is not strictly related to your job. This is a negative aspect, because this parameter is less objective. At work I do not care if you are funny or friendly, but how much you work and how well you perform your tasks. I do not care about what you do outside the office. But here (in Brazil) it is different...

(IE 21): About this point, I had some trouble here. I did not know this. Here private and professional spheres are the same thing. At work, you have to know everything about your colleagues' private life. Even about the maid's family. And what you do in your private life influences how you are perceived at work too.

Moreover, seven expatriates (7) correlate this relational behaviour to a lack of objectivity in feedbacks. De Paula and Staub (2005) already identified this issue in their study on Italian expatriates in Minas Gerais. It was found that since social and working relationships are more interrelated, giving direct feedback – as well as receiving it – becomes more difficult because every work-related criticism or judgment moves to a personal layer with the consequence of worsening the whole relationship (De Paula & Staub, 2005). Italians in the sample confirm this difficulty: since giving/ receiving feedback is based on more subjective parameters, career progression and achievement measurements become more difficult to understand. On this topic, IE 2 and IE 21 explain how results evaluation and formal feedback are biased by the personal connotation of the working relations:

(IE 2): Here business comes afterwards, while relationships are the basis: if you want to do some business you have to create a relationship, no matter how good is what you are going to sell. But the interesting thing is that this “selling” attitude is found within organizations too. When I read for the first time the 360 degrees evaluations report, I understood that often feedback were given more on personal basis rather than on objective results achieved. Being nice and social has been considered part of the professional evaluation with no or few connections to concrete achievements. Only afterwards I understood that here the working context is more based on affiliation, like a big family. You cannot separate social and professional aspect. And for the same reason you cannot be too harsh or direct when judging because it feels like you are judging the person and not the professional. I saw some expats who were giving feedbacks as they used to do when abroad, but this is a totally different reality and it is really hard to get along with.

(IE 21): For example, the feedback that you receive from you boss... Here things get more “political”... You are evaluated on more subjective basis as your ability of being friendly and nice rather than focusing on your outcomes... Of course, this happens in every office in the world but in Brazil, I can tell you, this aspect is stronger...

Finally, some expatriates point out that social interaction is perceived as essential for career and social inclusion, both institutionalized interaction – as firm’s social

gatherings and social events – and non-institutionalized – as spontaneous event or private celebrations.

(IE 11): These things made me think a lot. If you do not go out with your colleagues for a beer, it is perceived as a lack of courtesy and respect. I mean... In Italy if you are focused on results and introvert, you will not have any kind of career drawbacks: if you produce enough, you are valued too. Instead here things are different, the two things cannot be segregated. You receive feedback also on how you are political and friendly at work...

(IE 12): I can say that here it is all together...Private life and professional one are all the same. I was shocked by this thing of celebrating birthdays at work: us, as directors, we had to memorize them since it is almost a social institution! Or the *churrasco* (barbeque) paid by the company... We did not have choice, because it is something that you have to do. Private and working life seem to be the same here.

(IE 15): Here in Brazil, private life corresponds to the working one. I guess it is for historical and logistic reasons, but you need to be funny and friendly even for mere analytical job. Being really good at what you do is not enough to keep team together. But the disadvantage of this attitude is that you do not evaluate objective skills and everything become more difficult to improve in the long run.

4.1.3 Power Distance and Hierarchical Status

This category includes all the references to the differences related to the concept of power distance and hierarchical status in the organizational context.

The interviewees were asked to describe the Brazilian organizational environment with a narrow focus on how relationships among different hierarchical ladders take place. Most of them label the Brazilian working environment as more hierarchical and with a higher power distance among different organizational layers when comparing it to the Italian reality. Tab. 13 illustrates the main highlights on this category:

Table 13		
<i>Power Distance and Hierarchical Status</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, power distance...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... is higher than in the Italian context	20/23	87%
... is lower than in the Italian context	3/23	13%
... constitutes a main issue	17/23	74%
... is higher, even it could appear lower at the beginning	10/23	43%
... does not change consistently in the consulting field	6/23	26%

As can be gathered from the table above, the majority of the interviewees' statements support the previous literature findings on power distance (Hofstede, 1980 and House *et al.*, 2001) and the Brazilian organizational culture (Motta & Caldas, 1997). Cross cultural studies depict this feature as the degree of social acceptance of differences in power (Hofstede, 1980 and House *et al.*, 2001) and both studies confirm that Brazil ranks higher in this value when compared to Italy. Accordingly, organizational studies describe the Brazilian organizational culture as more paternalistic and oriented in status recognition (Motta & Caldas, 1997).

Sampled interviewees describe a working environment where organizational status counts more and where hierarchies matter.

(IE 14): Here, the formal status really matters! The boss is the boss and he/she is the one that has to decide on and define every single aspect. The problem is that when you lead here, you are expected to control everything and everyone. For example: the boss is always the one that takes the final decision. Those in higher hierarchical level have to respond for every detail to lower ones. An this is exactly the opposite of the Italian context where I grew...there my boss gave me challenging general tasks expecting from me to achieve the final result. Here you have to detail everything instead. When I delegate, I have to describe every single little task that has to be made since nobody would do this by his own...On top of this, this concept that you cannot question openly those at higher level complicates it all. For me as a project leader, it is very difficult to receive bottom up feed back from my team members...

(IE 2): What I got from my experience is that here the boss is up out there, while followers have to follow. Full stop. The distance is higher...Of

course I refer to the executives and top managers I used to work with, but you can perceive this sort of segregation between those that lead and those that have to be led. The main disadvantage is that followers do not communicate directly. It is not common to hear them questioning those at higher hierarchical levels... it is perceived as not right. At the beginning I felt uncomfortable because I thought that this attitude was dictatorial. Only afterwards I understood that this represents an optimal leadership style in this context. I feel that subordinates are quite happy with this top-down approach...

As the aforementioned excerpts show, most of the Italian expatriates describe the Brazilian working reality as more hierarchical and formally structured. Organizational status related to the hierarchical position is considered more relevant than elsewhere in terms of relationship management and decision making power. 74% of the sample considers this feature a main issue since it modifies and slows the decision-making process. In their experience, higher distance in term of status brings less direct communication and impedes autonomy in tasks execution when delegating. Several interviewees could not understand the benefits of such hierarchical and top-down decision-making structure.

In addition, some expats describe a peculiar characteristic when defining the formal structure within the working team. They recall that they perceived a lower distance in terms of relationships at work than in Italy but only at the beginning of their experience. Only afterwards, they understand that cordiality in working relationships does not mean a more “flat” decision-making or less hierarchical status recognition but rather the opposite. The contribution of IE 16 sheds a light on this controversial aspect:

IE 16: If you just consider the organizational climate, you would say that the relationship between the boss and his subordinates is more relaxed. Everyone greetings and hugging to each other, no problem too big to be solved and so on... Reality is that subordinates do not discuss with their bosses as it was at the colonial age. The boss decides and the follower execute. For me that I have to manage poorly educated people, this aspect is even more relevant. When I arrived I thought: “ Everyone laughing and hugging means no difficulty in communications”. Suddenly I realized that it is quite the opposite: this means no debate and no feedback. And for me

this thing of the lack of negative feedback is frustrating because I cannot understand what is wrong and what can be improved...

Several expatriates portray similar scenarios with the same difficulties. This description of the reality also matches the previous findings in literature (Candido, 2004, Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, the cultural cordiality and the concept of big family ties (Candido, 2004, Motta & Caldas, 1997) do not facilitate the culture understanding of the work place for foreigners. As 43% of the interviewees explain, this apparent proximity in relationships among colleagues, both at higher or lower hierarchical status, does not mean lower distance in practice. This misperception has been found especially at the expatriate initial phase in the Brazilian branch. Here the expatriates perceived the organizational culture as less hierarchical due to the cordiality “bias”. Only in the following period at work the expatriate perceives that reality is different.

Finally, some insights on the consulting sector can be listed. We have six interviewees in the sample that have started their career in Brazil or they are currently employed for a multinational consulting firm. All of them highlight a structural difference in terms of power distance and relationship between boss and subordinate when referring to the consulting experience in Brazil.

Briefly, in the consulting sector differences under this point of view are smoothed because of the international mindset inherited from the implementation of the strategic consulting firms’ approach. As explained by the IE 6:

(IE 6): Since I am working in the consulting sector I cannot tell the difference... I mean, the way projects are analysed and structured is the same in Milan, in New York or in Sao Paulo. The teamwork-based approach does not change that much across the word. Things are slightly different outside instead. I saw in the industrial sector, since it is the one I work for mostly. It is way more structured than in other countries. Hierarchy is strict and roles are more defined on the assigned status. For the same reason I observed a lower propensity to direct debate with

bosses. In Brazil there is this kind of ‘etiquette’ where you have to preserve the equilibrium at work, even more when you are talking to your boss.

4.1.4 Planning and Follow Up

This section is about the differences perceived in the planning and execution phase in business projects. All of the interviewees complain about how business planning and long run execution were implemented in the local context. Being a common factor, it was asked to explore the topic with practical examples that could clarify how different is the Brazilian business setting in comparison with the others they have been working in, and specifically with Italy.

Most of the interviewees agree on the increased difficulty in the planning activities among all industries. In addition, most of them describe a working environment where the delay constitutes a common practice with no real consequences in working relationships. Finally, a great deal of them complaint about the need for continuous follow up in order to get things done.

In brief, Tab. 14 shows the main figures concerning this category:

Table 14		
<i>Planning</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, planning...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... is more/ a lot more difficult than in Italy	22/23	95%
... is more difficult and delay is a constant in execution	17/23	74%
... is more difficult and requires continuous follow up	10/23	43%

Almost all the expats agree on the difficulty in business planning and execution. Below, three excerpts describe examples of what has been said in the interviews about this theme.

(IE 1): I think that this aspect (business planning) is the main problem: if you have a deadline, you better say a lie... For example when we have a deadline in December, we disclose officially a deadline set in September. And sometimes it happens that the project goes even beyond. The concept itself of deadline is culturally different. It is not a big deal if you do not meet the deadline. And even if Italy is not that virtuous on this aspect, Brazil is worse.

(IE 12): This thing of deadlines is a huge problem... Here the planning phase is probably misunderstood. When I meet my team to plan something in Italy I assume that everyone follows it. Here, instead, you have to call everyday you colleague asking if he/she is doing what she is suppose to! Planning then is not useful because here things get done only if there is someone that personally check that things are made as they should... There is a verb too to describe it (the verb is *cobrar*, to check if things are done) and you just spend time with follow up!

(IE 17): Business plans and planning overall take place, of course... But the problem is that even if something is planned you have to check every time that those in charge are working following the schedule...And this thing of *ficar em cima* (that can be translated as 'keeping controlling') makes the whole planning process less significant...

Research findings on this category are coherent with previous literature on expatriates in Brazil. De Paula and Staub, (2005) state that one of the problem that Italian expatriates experience in the Brazilian branches is related to the difficulty in planning effectively.

In addition, some concerns about the concept of delay are highlighted. The issue was already identified in the previous literature on the argument as relevant matter in Brazilian business practices (De Paula & Staub, 2005) and remains a trend topic in most of the interviews. A great deal of interviewees state that since the delay is not considered as a relevant matter, it brings no effective drawbacks. They say that being late or having a deadline that is not met become ordinary. From the following excerpt, IE 21 describes the concept of delay as a social accepted behaviour with no effective drawbacks or punishment:

(IE 21): Well... Planning exists but does not really matter. Here the delay in every phase or project is socially accepted. When a client give us a 4 weeks project, they already know that probably it twill take 5 weeks. The problem is not even about a single case... With all our clients we set a notice that we can guarantee the deadline only if everything we

need is sent to us on time... Also the client usually interacts with us with delayed schedules. The delay is then considered normal...

Eventually, another point that was discussed throughout the interviews was related to the need of continuous follow up. Interviewees complain about the need for actions of follow up and control in order to get things done. They explain that in the Brazilian reality a constant monitoring on operative actions in order to execute plans and project is always required. IE 3 and IE 15 explain the whole process of planning and execution, as it should be in the Brazilian context. Same scenarios were described by other eight (8) expats in the sample, with a 43% of the sampled interviewees agreeing on this attribute.

(IE 3): Well... The main advantage of working with Europeans is the ability of planning and executing on time. Hence the matter is how to deliver the same result in the Brazilian way. You cannot just pretend that everything you have planned can be executed, but you need to understand some logics behind the way of thinking in Brazil. Me, I have changed the project management approach. At the beginning follow up has to be continuous, on daily basis: in Brazil it means that your boss care about you and the project. It is weird... Because when I was in London this way of thinking would be judged crazy because it is a huge waste of time. But in order to be successful here, you have to work in this way.

(IE 15): The main issue is related to the need for recurring follow up. You can plan everything, but the action plan does not orient behaviours, as it should. For example: I am the project leader and I set the schedule with my team. In Italy I used to sleep tight because you are sure that everything will be made, with of course all the problems you usually have in the execution phase... things you could not consider *ex ante*. Hence the possible inconvenient is related to the task execution. In Brazil instead, you have to make sure that everyone is doing what is suppose to, so the first problem is related to the basic assumption that a plan has to be executed as it is. Then of course there are the execution issues. And you just waste time checking that everyone is doing what is already written on paper and formal plans. It is way more difficult!

4.1.5 Foreignism

This section will explore all those outcomes related to the acceptance of foreigners at work - and also in the social context. Since all interviewees were all Italians, this segment will be specifically targeted to this population.

Overall, all expatriates feel comfortable and welcome in the new working environment. Moreover, most of them think that the cultural setting favours the expatriates' integration in the social and working context. These results are coherent with previous literature on the topic. However some insights are innovative and they will be explained in details along the presentation of the results.

Briefly, the Tab. 15 summarizes the most recurrent concepts in the interviews concerning this topic:

Table 15		
<i>Foreignism</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, foreigners are...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... accepted and not discriminated	23/23	100%
... accepted and positively discriminated	19/23	83%
... accepted and admired for their academic background	6/23	26%
... perceived as intrusive in the local branch of an Italian firm	5/23	22%

As beforehand stated, all of the expatriates felt comfortable at their arrive in Brazil and they did not experience any form of discrimination due to their foreigner status. On the contrary, 83% of the interviewees believe that there is a positive discrimination that can be described as a general admiration for those coming from abroad. In addition, the Italian culture is depicted as one of the most admired among locals and this aspect facilitates the integration process.

(IE 1): To me, being Italian in Brazil, it represents only an advantage. I cannot tell you I felt discriminated but rather the opposite. Here at the office, everybody knows who I am and they are all interested in my background, my history, my experience... My name is easy to recall... But even if this could be normal in every reality where there is a foreigner in an office, here this characteristic is positively considered. Even at the board level, when they receive a presentation with my name, they know exactly who made it...

(IE 3): Here the foreigner is undoubtedly overvalued. And I can tell it also in objective terms: for example a business analyst in Europe here is comparable with a consultant in terms of job description and skills... I guess this is because of the education system that is different. On the social acceptance of the foreigner in Brazil, this phenomenon is particularly common at the beginning while it becomes less relevant in the long run. Then, the foreigner has to understand that Brazilians have a huge pride of their own nation. For example, I use the “mirror technique”: when someone tells me something good about Italy I answer with something good about Brazil. First because this country is really great and secondly because I cannot just say Europe/Italy is better...

(IE 6): I did not perceive any kind of discrimination... Instead I can tell you that I observed something an opposite behaviour... Like a “positive discrimination”! I mean... you do not receive any special favour in career advancement or evaluation, but here the concept of being not Brazilian at work is not a big deal. If in the US working reality you need to be speaking as a local if you want to deal with the client, here you can simply go as you are. In other word the fact that you cannot speak as a local is not considered as a big issue in term of business relationship.

What expatriates identify as a “positive discrimination” is sound with the previous studies on the subject. As explained in Araujo *et al.* (2013) Brazilian culture presents a peculiar characteristic that can be defined as “Foreignism”. Foreignism designates the aforementioned fixation for foreigners. The historical and cultural explanations of this feature have been explained as a concrete lack of paternal references rooted in the colonialism era (Calligaris, 1992). In other words, all the historical circumstances that stand behind the Brazilian history make Brazilians look at foreigners in a positive fashion, valuing even more what comes from abroad (Caldas, 1997).

Organizational and business studies confirmed this behaviour. As explained by Richarte Martnez and Limongi França (2013) foreigners are target of a positive discrimination due to stereotyping and idealization of the foreigner culture.

In addition some expatriates explore in details some of the reasons behind this positive discrimination. For example, 26% of the interviewees link the positive discrimination to the general admiration for the foreigner educational institutions and the low consideration of the Brazilian educational system. This specific contribution is new in literature and adds some value in order to understand which factors contribute to this positive image of foreigners. As explained by IE 10 e IE 11:

(IE 10): Here the concept of the foreigner is still new. In the private and the working context the foreigner is perceived as better educated, better as hard worker. And you can feel this in every aspect in the every day routine. What I noticed is that the only fact that I have been studied abroad is for them (Brazilians) something to be proud of... I guess because here they think that the education system is lacking or not as good as abroad... and they are right.

(IE 11): Me, as Italian, I receive a treatment that is the opposite of discrimination. Like a positive discrimination, I would say. Brazilians love foreigners and those who have been studied abroad because they think that foreign education systems are better. And they appreciate that someone from abroad comes here to change things for good.

Finally, 22% of the expatriates interviewed depict a specific phenomenon related to some Brazilian branches of Italian global firms. They explain how these local branches - and their employees - are more used to the presence of Italians and consequently the beforehand mentioned interest for the foreign culture is lower. In addition, some of them perceive a sense of diffidence due to the strict connection between the expats and the HQ. This attitude complicates the adaptation process at work. However, all those declaring such negative attitude agree on the overall positive general discrimination outside their specific office and working context.

(IE 7): The fact that I come from the HQ and I have a direct report with the top management did not help me. I mean, locals know that they have to filter their messages even more because I can directly report to the top management and this did not help my integration in the office. Moreover, the Italian is not perceived as unique or new since they are all used to work with Italian expatriates.

(IE 15): At the beginning I thought I was welcome because I experience this thing of the “cordiality” in the Brazilian way, as they say. After a bit I perceived that it was different, but maybe my experience is not the mainstream. For example, in my company and its Brazilian offices, they are used to the Italian expatriate. This year we are just two of us and we are perceived as those coming from the HQ for giving orders or referring to the big bosses in Italy. For this reason I did not receive a very welcoming treatment. Of course, if I have to think about what happens outside the working context, Italians are considered superstar with everybody asking about my life and my country. But at work things are different.

(IE 18): Italians are considered as super humans here (in Brazil). Most of the people I have met asked me about Europe and how life is outside Brazil. I love it because it facilitates the icebreaking phase at the beginning and you can feel a bit special. However, in my company is different. I think because they are used to Italians in the top management so probably they do not feel any special feeling anymore...but a bit of interest remains.

4.1.6 Gender Gap and Masculinity

Both Hofstede (1980) and House *et al.* (2001) assign higher value in terms of masculinity to Italy. Therefore Brazil is considered lower in masculinity and more oriented to gender equality. Since interviewees have been made about personal impressions of the host culture rather than personal beliefs as in the Hofstede and Hall studies, expatriates find more easily to connect this cultural feature to more practical consequences of this dimensions in working contexts as gender equality perceptions or representativeness of women in organizational hierarchies.

The majority of the interviewees confirm these predictions, with a significant majority of the expats endorsing that the Brazilian working environment gender gap is minor when comparing it to the Italian’s one. However, the role of women in the society seems to be more controversial according to the statements of five (5) expats.

In brief, the Tab. 16 shows the overall outcomes from the sample in relation to the gender gap and masculinity theme:

Table 16		
<i>Gender Status</i>		
<i>In the Brazilian working environment, women are...</i>	Outcomes	
	Value	%
... less discriminated than in the Italian context	18/23	78%
... less discriminated even if they are more discriminated in the social setting	5/23	22%
... discriminated same as in the Italian context	3/23	13%
... more discriminated than in the Italian context	2/23	9%

According to Hofstede high score in the masculinity dimension describes a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success where large competitiveness takes place (Hofstede, 2001). Its opposite, femininity described by low scores in this dimension, labels a preference for cooperation, modesty and valorisation of life quality (Hofstede, 2001).

As previously discussed, practical implications at workplace could be numerous. For example, the working environment can be influenced qualitative - more or less ambitious and competitive - and quantitative - e.g. number of female workers in boards or managerial roles - terms (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, working culture may either emphasize assertiveness, professional aspirations, material accomplishments and/or nurturing behaviour (Lawler *et al.*, 2008).

For the aforementioned reasons interviewees have been asked to express their perception about this category and most of them agree with the Hofstede (1980) and House *et al.* (2001) predictions. They affirm that, on average, women are less

discriminated and quantitatively more present at higher hierarchies within organizations.

(IE 12): Generally speaking I can say gender discrimination is less than Italy... Here I have had several meetings with C-class executives that were women, more than when I was in Italy... yes, I would say that discrimination is less, at least in the professional sphere.

(IE 4): Women here (in Brazil) are less discriminated...In the working context women are considered same as men...I would say that in Italy the gap is bigger and the women's condition is definitely worse.

However, expats describe a social environment that objectifies women more than in then other realities. This attitude is experienced more in non-working context and usually is not perceived as a discriminatory factor at work. Instead, expats accept it as part of the culture and they appreciate that this remains relegated merely outside the working contexts.

(IE 8): Well... theoretically here discrimination between sexes is huge, more than in Italy and Europe. In social settings, make sexual jokes about women is a constant in Brazil. And it goes even worse with the diversity issue, with continuous jokes on *viados* (a slang for gays). Under this point of view, the all discrimination issue is worsening here. However, in quantitative terms I can witness the opposite attitude. I had the chance to work a lot with women at the top of the organizations. So probably at work it is different... Even because the educational system prepare few talented students that discrimination is not even sustainable...

(IE 22): Even if women are always target of sexual jokes in every non-working context I think that thinks are different at work... In the firm I am working at women were scouted even more in order to create a more heterogeneous working environment. Generally speaking I work with several women at top level, more than it used to be in Italy...

4.1.7 Positive Attitude and Organizational Climate

Positive attitude refers to the general climate at work that is perceived more relaxed and with less stress. Most of the interviewees affirm that the general atmosphere at work is free of anxiety. This characteristic can be linked also to the

indirect communication and the conflicts avoidance attitude, as explained by Candido (2004). Hence, even if this behaviour presents several disadvantages in terms of communication efficiency (4.1.1) as it brings friendly workplaces where conflicts are less. As explained by IE 8 and IE 12:

(IE 8): I think that the most interesting aspect in the Brazilian working environment is the other side of this extreme politeness and cordiality. Here the atmosphere is more relaxed.. There is not the typical “stressing” air I was used to in Italy. I cannot deny that in terms of tranquillity and anxiety Brazil is way better than other working reality abroad.

(IE 12): Overall, colleagues are more nice and happy... and these aspects make the office friendlier. I know, it is the other side of the coin... The same superficiality and indirect communication I mean... But in the everyday life, it helps...

4.1.8 Market Opportunities

Finally, most of the expatriates explained that the positive outlook of the Brazilian economy today has strong consequences at work, in term of quality of the working environment. Hence, even if the economic scenario usually refers to statistical and macroeconomic data, it can be a significant determinant in defining workplaces characteristics. For this reason, this last category can be included in the peculiar features of the Brazilian working environment, as it is today.

The “market opportunities” category is linked to the economic and career opportunities related to the current macroeconomic positive outlook in Brazil. In other words, market opportunities, and consequently career ones, constitute a huge difference when comparing the Brazilian working environment to the Italian or European one, as they are today. This economic growth and developing environment increases motivation because organizations are getting bigger and there is possibility of expanding activities in all sectors and functions, also within the same organization. As explained by IE 3:

(IE 3): The best thing of the current scenario is that you have chances of developing yourself as professional... You can grow and you can leave a footprint in the organization... Do something that really matters...

This favourable economic environment represents a strong attractiveness factor for most of the expatriates as well as a motivational factor at work. For this reason, twenty (20) expatriates state that they would like to continue their assignment/job in Brazil in the future. IE 11 adds a specific reason that motivates him to stay that is related to the lack of organizational predetermined paths due to the new economic challenges in the business setting. Accordingly, IE 8 confirms that the energetic macroeconomic trends are a source of motivation.

(IE 11): The best aspect here is related to the economic scenario.. At work, in the streets... you can feel that everything is growing... We are in a context where new ideas are welcome and where young people can make it for real! And to be honest, also this difficulty that I felt for planning... Also this aspect is interesting because you never know what is going to happen tomorrow!

(IE 8): My plan is to stay here because in this historical moment everything is interesting. You can perceive that the business environment is vibrant! I know, a lot has to be done but I can tell you that if I compare the Brazil that I found when I arrived and what Brazil is now I can tell you that huge improvements have been done. Instead, if I look at Italy or Europe I have the opposite sensation...

4.2 Discussion of the Results

The thesis' empirical results provide several important facets of the host working culture that have to be taken into account when studying the differences between the Italian and the Brazilian cultural features and their implications in the business environment.

In order to illustrate them all, this subsection will present a structured analysis of the differences between this thesis' findings and the previous literature on the topic in order to understand the confirmatory and innovative aspects examined in this project. Afterwards, potential implications for future cross cultural training for expatriates in Brazil will be proposed concerning the identified cultural differences with "negative impact" that contradistinguish the Brazilian working culture. Finally, a cross cultural comparisons with other national clusters will be presented in each of the identified category in order to have a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the Italian expatriates in terms of perceived differences.

As aforesaid, this study intended to explore which are the main cultural differences at work for Italian expatriates in Brazil. These differences can be recapped in eight (8) categories: indirect communication, working and social sphere, power distance and hierarchical status, planning and follow up, foreignism, gender gap and masculinity, positive attitude and organizational climate and market opportunities.

Indirect communication describes the differences related to the communication's characteristics in the host culture: communication in Brazil is always more indirect than in Italy. The analysis is focused on working related messages but all the expatriates confirmed that this difference is perceived even in social context. This cultural feature has been extensively discussed in CCM theory (Hall, 1983, Hofstede, 1980 and House *et al.*, 2001) and organizational studies on

Italian expatriates in Brazil (De Paula & Staub, 2005). However none of the expatriates in the sample was aware of this aspect before.

In addition this feature has been described as the most negative in terms of practical impact on business operations as it affects the efficiency and the quality of the communication at work. In particular, for those expatriates in leadership position, this communication's characteristics worsen the team management practices as feedbacks are rarer and often undeclared. In other words, since communication is always indirect, expatriates cannot easily understand working reality and dynamics. Besides, Italian expatriates seem to be particularly sensitive to the topic because of their cultural background where emotions are mostly shown and sometimes exaggerated:

(IE 1): When it comes to relationships (in Brazil) being Italian does not help. Here you will never hear anyone scream or getting nervous for something while this could be perfectly normal in Italy...

For this reason, all the sampled interviewees demonstrate to care about this aspect even more than in other studies with Japanese and European expatriates. Instead, Japanese expatriates in Brazil explain that communication is indirect too but they did not describe this aspect as one of the most deleterious in terms of organizational efficiency (Kubo, 2010). This can be explained by the fact that Japanese communication style is also indirect where often the real message is not said explicitly (Kimura, 2000). European expatriates instead show similar concerns about the different communication style that lead to a different interpretation of the same explicit messages (Richarte Martinez & Limongi França, 2013). Finally, several interviewees describe this feature as one of the causes - together with the economic growth and legal labour regulations - of the impressive high turnover that impacts in an extremely negative way on all the aspects of the working life.

The working and social sphere category indicates the lack of strong boundaries between working sphere and private life. Again, this cultural feature has been already treated in other studies on European expatriates (Richarte Martnez & Limongi França, 2013, De Paula & Staub, 2006). Yet, none of the interviewees was trained or taught about this specific aspect of the host culture.

Moreover, this cultural trait shapes relationships in general as well as the working ones. The main drawback connected to this aspect is that since working environment and private life are mixed expatriates perceive that individuals lack of objectivity on business matters. Consequently, also formal feedbacks and opinion are perceived as biased. This brings to a lack of trust in the formal evaluations of working performances and career progression systems.

Even though this aspect has been already explored in literature, this research explain in detail the practical consequence of this feature: since personal ties are stronger with no difference between private and working life, expats feel that all the judgments become biased by the political influence of those involved. In addition, as the expat is not integrated in the organizational context as other locals could be, he/she thinks that will be discriminated in future or at least will have more difficulty in obtaining career results if he/she does not understand power dynamics. Hence, even if power and politics are an organizational matter in every culture, the proximity between social and working spheres make them feel that this theme is more relevant in Brazil than elsewhere.

Power distance and hierarchical status recognition category refers to the observed differences in terms of the distance between different hierarchical ladders and the social recognition of institutional status within organizations. These two aspects have been already explored by both CCM literature (Hofstede, 1980 and House *et al.*, 2001) and researches on Brazilian organizational culture (Motta and Caldas, 1997).

The majority of the interviewees agree on the fact that the beforehand stated distance is bigger even if the “cordialism” that shapes relationships at work would suggest the opposite. Furthermore, expats state that status and power within organizations follow the institutional job role more than it happens in other working contexts. As a consequence, status recognition is strictly related to the position covered and the gap between those in different hierarchical position become higher. Practical implications connected to this feature are several: expats in leadership position have to deal with followers that rarely contradict the boss or bring to discussion controversial solutions. This aspect seems to be highly counterproductive from the expat point of view because constructive debates on business matters are infrequent and decision-making becomes prerogative of the top management. As explained by IE 13:

(IE 13): They always expect you to take the final decision. There is not autonomy in the decision making because they always seek the approval from the boss of the boss...As a consequence, there is this decision clog where everyone is waiting for someone's approval... And for the same reason middle and top management are paid is more than in Europe: when you become the boss, you have to know that you are going to decide on everything since nobody will say anything decisive also on the more basic operational issues...

In a cross-cultural comparison, also this aspect has been found in previous literature. Indeed, studies on Japanese (Kubo, 2010) and Europeans (Richarte Martnez & Limongi França, 2013) expatriates describe this higher distance in terms of power and status. However, Japanese expatriates perceive it as a peculiarity with no high impact on operations. Again, this divergence of opinions can be traced in the fact that Japanese culture is usually described even higher in power distance (Hofstede, 1980 and House *et al.*, 2001). For this reason, Japanese expatriates did not show any particular discomfort about this distance and its impact on managerial practices.

Planning and follow up is the fourth category and it comprehends all the perceived differences in business activities' planning and execution. Brazilian organizational culture has been analysed thoroughly under this point of view as confirmed by the most recent studies on different expatriates groups in Brazil (Kubo, 2010, Richarte Martnez & Limongi França, 2013 and De Paula & Staub, 2006).

Coherently, also Italian expatriates in this study confirmed the beforehand mentioned literature finding. A lack of effective planning and the constant need for following up denote the Brazilian working culture. Furthermore, Italians complaint about the need of continuous control over all the operational details because local workers seem to be less proactive and attentive regarding the quality of the execution phase. Therefore, managers have to care more about operational aspects rather than focusing on strategic issues.

In addition, operational feedbacks are difficult to be received especially when negative. This fourth category is linked to all the above-mentioned characteristics - the indirectness of communication, mixture between working and private life and the power distance – and all together create distortions in communication processes within the organization and make organizational interactions unclear.

Consequently, these first four categories - indirectness of communication, mixture between working and private life, the power distance and lack of planning - can be grouped as the differences with “negative” impact on business environment according to the sample. Coherently, all these four aspects were the most discussed in all the interviews. As IE 21 explains:

(IE 21): Of course there are several advantages in the Brazilian working environment but in my opinion drawbacks are more!

In other words, most of the difficulties met by those interviewees are related to a complete unknown business environment and a lack of cross-cultural preparation. The novelty of the business context paired with a lack of knowledge on the most

essential cultural aspects of the host country did not facilitate the new reality's comprehension. For the same reasons several scholars argue that the role of CCM training is to facilitate the cross-cultural experience of the future expatriates in by illustrating the most salient aspects that contradistinguish the new cultural setting (Littrell & Salas, 2005). However, even if theories explain in details potential benefits from specific CCM training courses, business practices tend to be different. Among the twenty-three (23) expatriates in the sample, we have eleven (11) organizational expatriates, hence eleven potential targets of CCM training. This latter subcategory was composed of professional who were relocated in the Brazilian office of their original employer. Among them, only two (2) received a formal training on CCM issues while other two (2) have been "trained" with constant business relationships with the Brazilian branch. In addition, also those receiving the formal training admit that the training was not adequate as it was based on general cultural issues that were not targeted to the Brazilian reality. As IE 7 explains:

(IE 7): We had a CCM training but it was only for one day and it was the same for all those who were about to expatriates with no differences among those going to Brazil or in China...

As a result, we can assume that empirical evidences prove that the CCM training does not represent a common practice among the sampled companies. For this reason, a practical implication from the thesis' results is that a specific CCM training would be pivotal in enhancing the cross cultural understanding of those about to start an assignment abroad. About the topics that could be listed for those Italians about to expatriate in Brazil, this first four categories could represent a good starting point: some specific insights on indirect communication, mixture among private and working life, power distance and hierarchies and the lack of planning coupled with the possible risks related to the evaluations of feedbacks would increase cultural awareness of those that will be facing the Brazilian reality for an international assignment.

Afterwards, other four categories of cultural differences have been identified with “neutral to positive” impact. The foreignism category evokes the Brazilian positive attitude for foreigners, as it was previously described in literature (Calligaris, 1992; Caldas, 1997 and Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013). Also Italians confirm this positive attitude towards foreigners. This cultural feature eases the icebreaking phase at work and facilitates sociality in all contexts – working and nonworking ones. On the other hand, some expatriates in the Brazilian subsidiary of Italian firms describe an opposite phenomenon. They state that in those offices where the Italian presence is common, no positive attitude is perceived. Locals seem to be uncomfortable with the Italian management because of their direct ties with the HQ. However, the positive foreignism attitude remains a prevalent characteristic in the organizational and social Brazilian culture.

This positive discrimination was found in the study on European expatriates (Richarte Martnez & Limongi França, 2013; De Paula & Staub, 2006) while it was not present in the Japanese expatriates study (Kubo, 2011). This result confirms that what has been found by Von Borell de Araujo and Texeira (2011) who state that usually Brazilians feel this sense of admiration towards those culture that they appreciate the most as Europeans and North American, while this aspect become less relevant with other foreigner cluster (Von Borell de Araujo & Texeira, 2011).

Gender gap and masculinity category intends to describe practical implications of the predicted values in Hofstede (1980), House *et al.* (2001) and the other CCM studies on masculinity in national cultures. Since interviewees were asked about their perception on this topic, they usually refer to their general idea of masculinity and femininity in business context with specific focus on quantitative consequences of the predominance of masculinity or femininity (e.g. the number of women in high ranks of organizations). As result, they say that Brazilian society is pervaded by less discrimination at work concerning the gender issue. They state that usually they have met more women in leadership position and higher ranks in the business reality.

However, they affirm that discrimination is higher on the private life side. Finally, also women in the sample (7) confirm this attitude to less discrimination at work, describing their experience in Brazil as positive or non-negative under this point of view. No previous literature on expatriates analyses this aspect so no comparison can be made with other cultural clusters.

Positive attitude and organizational climate category shows a peculiar positive attitude that was found in the Brazilian culture. The sampled interviewees have indicated this aspect as one of the main positive differences as it enhances the organizational climate quality in the everyday working context. Also this cultural feature has been already explored in literature. For example, De Paula and Staub (2006) with their study on Italian expats in Brazil describe the enthusiasm and cordiality among those facilitating aspects that ease the adaptation of the expatriates at work. This cultural characteristic has been found also in previous literature on European expatriates (Richarte Martinez & Limongi França, 2013) while Japanese seem not mentioning it as one of the main advantage of the working culture in Brazil (Kubo, 2010).

Also the final category, market opportunities, it represents a positive difference of the local working environment especially for Italians in this historical moment, in the sense that it shapes behaviours and attitudes in a positive fashion. Italians in the sample describe this vibrancy of the working contexts as something extremely helpful because it stimulates enthusiasm and positivism. This feature, that was not found in literature before, it is something that impresses Italian expats that usually are facing a recession environment - with direct consequences on the working morale and career opportunities - back in Europe and especially in Italy. This obvious contrast explains how most of the expatriates are willing to continue their assignment even after the scheduled deadline.

After the discussion of the results, we can state that most of the literature predictions found confirmation in this empirical study, with some specific aspects that have never been explored before. However, none of the expatriates has been trained or taught in order to decrease the cultural shock at their arrival in Brazil.

In addition, evidences from this study show that Italian expatriates perceive several differences in the Brazilian working context and this partially disagrees with the general statements in CCM studies that describes Latin cultures - both Latin European and Latin American – similar under several points of view (House *et al.*, 2001). However, organizational and HR oriented studies on expatriates predict most of the general cultural differences found in this study.

As cultural differences represent an abstract concept applied to social sciences, the nature of this study is qualitative and so they are the final results. For this reason, Fig. 6 illustrates all the aforementioned categories on a continuum where the cultural differences are listed in a scale that indicates the “negative-to-positive” impact on business operation. The presented framework explains the thesis’ findings with a specific reference to the importance of feedback as it represents a *trait de union* among all the identified differences with “negative” impact.

Figure 6. Cultural differences at work

Figure 6. Most discussed cultural differences at work as gathered from the sampled interviews

Eventually, some final remarks can be drafted about some Brazilian cultural aspect that did not find further confirmation in this study.

First of all, *jeitinho* has been extensively discussed in several studies on the Brazilian culture (e.g. Villardi *et al.* 2011; Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013) as one of the most distinctive aspect in the Brazilian working and non-working culture. However, Italian expatriates did not mention it as one of the main difference in working related context. In details, even if most agree on the fact that such aspect pervades all the relationships facets, they did not describe it as one of the main difference when comparing working cultures. As explained by IE 19:

(IE 19): they have this thing of the *jeitinho*... But I can say that every country has this 'unofficial' way of getting things done...

Afterwards, also the so-called formalism (Ramos 1983; Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013), and the consequent bureaucracy and redtape, seem to be less relevant for Italians than in other comparative studies. As several expatriates explain, bureaucracy and formalism in Italy did not differ too much in terms of complexity. For this reason this indigenous aspect (Von Borell de Araujo *et al.*, 2013) was not cited as one of the most controversial in terms of impact on business practices.

Furthermore, both punctuality and bureaucracy are aspects cited in the majority of the interviews. However, both features appear to be not as crucial as the others. Hence, this finding does not match with the previous study on clusters (French and Japanese)

where both aspects were cited among the most differential in terms of practical implications at work.

5. Conclusions

This research project aimed to explain cultural differences and their impact at work, according to Italian expatriates working in Brazil. It sought to identify a definite number of cultural determinants that can describe the Brazilian working environment in terms of divergences from the Italian one.

The focus was on working relationships and cultural features, rather than other external aspects as bureaucracy, expatriate family's adaptation or other factors that influence the whole experience of expatriation in Brazil. Therefore, the thesis provides a holistic frame of the most important cultural aspects that shape behaviours in working related contexts.

As previously discussed, culture impacts on individual behaviours. Multicultural teams represent a potential source of competitive advantage as they can perform better than monoculture ones, only if properly managed. For all this reason, understanding the practical implications of cultural features is an imperative priority for managers, leaders and HR professionals, as their role requires interpersonal interactions and team leading skills.

Expatriates represent a germane example of how multicultural working environments function and which difficulties they face. As extensively explored in the literature review, the phenomenon of expatriation in Brazil has not yet been studied extensively. This explains the role of this research, that tries to add some actionable knowledge to the discussion over cultural understanding, expatriation and human resources practices in multicultural settings.

Research question and sub - questions are answered below, in order to provide a concise overview of the most important research findings.

RQ: Which are the main cultural differences at work for Italian expatriates working in Brazil?

The identified cultural differences are eight (8). Four (4) of them are described with a predominant negative impact on working environment because expatriates feel that they all constitute cultural aspects that worsen efficiency, communication and organizational final outcomes.

Indirect communication results to be the most controversial aspect in the local culture. The lack of direct communication and indirect way of expressing ideas complicate all aspects of the working life. Indirect communication can be traced back into historically identified cultural characteristic of the country. Practical drawbacks are both infrequent spontaneous feedback and high turnover rates. This latter aspect is also due to other contextual characteristics, as a fervent growing economy and a legal framework that facilitates working mobility.

The mixture between the working and private life seems to be another main issue for Italian expatriates operating in Brazil. Fewer boundaries between these two aspects increase working environmental ambiguity. Expatriates highlight how professional judgments and feedback have to be always filtered in order to deliver socially acceptable messages. The main drawback is related to the time wasted in being 'social' rather than be an objectively good professional. Again, this aspect impact on the feedback system, as expatriates find difficult to understand the content of explicit messages.

Another negative aspect is linked to the higher power distance. Despite several studies describe this aspect in theory, only few of them explore the practical implication in working environment in Brazil. This study provides concrete examples of how this trait increases communication barriers and creates delay in decision-making processes.

Planning and follow up are described as another negative difference in the Brazilian working setting. Expatriates refer to a more relaxed environment where deadlines are naturally delayed and where late deliveries are considered normal. This feature is a common factor in all the previous organizational studies on expatriates in Brazil and this further confirmation suggest that this aspect is one of the most prominent in business literature. However, the way this aspect was explained in the interviews suggests that this is also the most stereotyped cultural facet about the Brazilian working culture.

In addition, other four (4) factors are described as neutral or positive in terms of impact on business operations. However, expatriates tend to describe the Brazilian working environment in a negative fashion while only few times they extensively describe the positive features of the local context. Among these factors, gender status and equality and foreignism constitute two aspects that can be potentially positive as they contradistinguish the local approach to gender discrimination and cultural diversity.

In addition, working environment climate and positive economic outlook are listed as the main advantage of the Brazilian working reality nowadays. Both aspects facilitate the expatriate adaptation and make them feel gratified about their geographical localization. Indeed, both feature contribute to increase organizational morale and confidence in future career developments.

Finally, despite the fact that most of the expatriates find easy to emphasize negative aspects of their working experience in Brazil, most of them state that they are willing to continue their assignment in Brazil even after the scheduled term. Reasons that could explain this contradistinction in terms are two. First, they cannot find similar career opportunities somewhere else, especially in their original HQ where they would be facing economic slow downs and hierarchical lower positioning. Secondly, most of the expatriates enjoy their Brazilian life and experience as well as the overall Brazilian social environment. They all agreed on the welcoming atmosphere and the 'positiveness' of the Brazilian way of life.

Previous literature and managerial implications: How can we use the previous literature on expatriation and cross-cultural management in order to predict the cultural shock in the new working environment? What do we already know about expatriates in Brazil and how we can put this into practice?

As extensively explained in the discussion of the results, most of the cultural differences have been already mapped in previous literature. However, only few studies analyse them in a more practical and business oriented fashion. For this reason, this research significantly contributes in understanding the multiple impacts that cultural differences have on HR management and operations in general when dealing with multicultural environments.

Therefore, even if aspects as masculinity, power distance and indirect communication in Brazil have been already illustrated in theory, few authors tested them with expatriates living the current Brazilian scenario. Furthermore, even less companies, and more specifically HR professionals, use these studies to train future expatriates, as it will be explained in the following topic. Hence, this study will be twofold beneficial. First, it explains all the most important concerns

about the diversity of culture and its impact in everyday operations. Second, it provides some practical examples of how this diversity shapes behaviours within organizations.

Eventually, another cultural aspect often cited in the Brazilian literature – *jeitinho* – was not found as a significant factor in terms of cultural difference.

Cross cultural training: What needs to be taught in cultural training classes for Italian expatriates who are about to start their assignments in Brazil?

As explained in Chapter 4, cross-cultural training can be beneficial for the expatriate understanding of the new cultural setting. However, this research's empirical findings suggest that this practice is rarely implemented in organizations. Hence, even if no empirical evidences on CCM training benefits for expatriates in Brazil are available in literature or in this study; the main intuition that can be gathered is creating specific CCM training in order to increase cultural awareness and facilitate the expatriate's adaptation process.

Eventually, this study would provide some topics for discussion for future training of Italian – and all the other similar cultural clusters, as it explicates which are the most debateable aspects of the Brazilian culture at work.

Expatriates in Brazil: What do Italian expatriates perceive as difficult in the Brazilian environment? In which way do they differ from expatriates from different nationalities working in Brazil?

Finally, this study offers an actual cross-cultural comparison with the other two cultural groups cited in the literature overview, Japanese and French. Some cultural characteristics as difficulty in planning, delays and bureaucracy are commonly traced in all the cultural groups. However, several differences have been found.

First, the expatriates groups perceive power distance differently. Japanese, described as event higher in PDI, they did not consider it a main issue while French

do. Second, the socialization process, that for Japanese seems to be missing while French expatriates suggest getting to know as much locals as possible. Accordingly, this topic constitutes a recurrent issue in the Italian group as they feel themselves integrated with locals.

Hence, from the cultural distance perspective, Italians and French share the same attitude to sociability and willingness to experiment the new culture as well as other communalities found in the projects.

Finally, as predicted in several CCM studies, French and Italians appear to be sharing similar cultural values and adaptation difficulties. For this reason, this study would suggest that the results found with Italian cluster can be applicable to those countries that have been identified as similar or close in cultural distance with the Italian culture, as for example the aforesaid European Latin cluster (House *et al.*, 2001).

5.1 Research's bias and limitations

Limitations of this study are related to the sample size, the geographical localization of the interviewees and the interviewer bias.

First, the sample size can be increased in order to increase soundness of the research structure and results. Secondly, all interviewees but two (2) refer to their experience as expatriates in Sao Paulo, the financial capital of the country. It is possible to predict different results if the interviews would have been made with expatriates with working experience in other regions and cities in Brazil. Finally, the interviewer bias is linked to the fact that all the interviews were carried on by myself, with the conceivable implications of such methodological strategy.

5.2 Future research

The study offers several insights for future researches. First, an increased sample size could be used in order to test the variables initially identified. Hence,

future studies can try to identify further empirical evidences connected to the research question and the subtopics discussed along the project. In addition, researchers could try to identify other cultural differences that impact on the working environment in Brazil. Furthermore, some empirical studies on the impact of specific CCM training can also be implemented, in order to understand how this practice can be beneficial in terms of expatriate's adaptation and desirable outcomes. Finally, other cultural groups – e.g. other countries in the European Latin cluster– can be studied in order to understand common aspects and differences in the cross-cultural experience in Brazil.

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7. Appendixes

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Do you perceive any cultural related difference in the way of working in Brazil?
(Explore and ask about main differences, peculiar aspects and so on...)
2. If yes, do these differences complicate or ease your work in Brazil?
3. What is your perception about relationships between boss and subordinates?
4. What is your perception of the gender status/differences in the organization?
5. Is working environment more cooperative or individualistic oriented? Any examples?
6. How are foreigners perceived at work?
7. What do you think about the private and social sphere in relations to Brazilians employees? How does this differ from back home?
8. What are the main challenges that you have faced with your subordinates? Any examples?
9. What is the main challenge that you have faced in the execution of a plan?
10. What is the worst aspect of working in Brazil?
11. What is the best aspect of working in Brazil?
12. Would you like to remain in Brazil in the long run? Why?

(Snow ball method: can you introduce me to other Italians working in Brazil?)