Cultural Factors that Facilitate the Institutionalization of Corruption in Mexico

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to find which factors, including cultural values facilitate the institutionalization of corruption in Mexico, adhering to institutional theory. A profile of Mexican culture is outlined with the use of three different datasets: Schwartz’s Seven Cultural Value Orientations, Hofstede’s Six Dimensions of National Culture, and the GLOBE Project’s Nine Cultural Practices and Values, as well as Nonaka’s four forms of knowledge creation. The paper makes a qualitative illustration of the hypothesized profile, and links it to the institutionalization of corruption. Nine structured interviews were conducted with Mexican respondents from distinct sectors, and answers to a ten-question survey were gathered. The findings of this study are that out of the four forms, socialization is the main avenue of knowledge creation in Mexico, and that the prevalent values of Mexican culture are in-group collectivism, indulgence, hierarchy and particularism. All of these are factors that facilitate the institutionalization of corruption, magnified by the weakness of normative structures in Mexico.
1. Introduction

Social order, as Durkheim saw it, is achieved through normative social structures which provide, aside from norms, a set of values and beliefs, instituting solidarity in the collective conscience (Cole, 2017). Practices that violate and undermine the set of norms, values and beliefs, and by that disturb the social order, are said to corrupt the social structures. The lack of normative order caused by corruption has its costs, including economic, legal, cultural and social costs, which are especially high for developing societies. Illicit financial flows actually cost developing countries an approximate of $1.26 trillion US dollars per year. This same amount could lift the threshold of $1.25 US dollars per day that 1.4 billion people live on, for 6 years! (Kar & Freitas, 2011) The outflow of funds concurrently decreases the resources of the State, which causes a weakening of law enforcement. Thus, crime and violence become uncontrollable, resources continue to leak, and people lose trust in the social structures that are supposed to protect the social order, which can no longer even be observed in their reality.

The main motivation behind this study came first and foremost from my frustration towards the chaotic and seemingly lawless reality of Mexico, my home country, which is not eased by reading papers on anti-corruption strategies constantly reporting more failures than successes. Researchers dedicated to the study of corruption have urged their peers to contribute to the academic literature on various aspects of corruption, including a more detailed diagnosis of the problem in country-specific studies. This paper is a minor contribution to the vast and complex analysis that an epidemic like corruption in Mexico requires.

This thesis contends that corruption can be as deeply embedded in society as any norm or cultural tradition. Corruption is defined by Transparency International as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”, the subsequent classifications of which depend on the costs, context and sector in which it occurs (TI, 2018). This paper adheres to Institutional Theory by assuming that institutions, which are comprised of “cultural-cognitive normative and regulative elements, provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2001). “Corruption is said to be institutionalized when it is stable, endures over time, resists change and is transmitted across generations.” (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) To this description, this paper proposes to add that corruption is institutionalized when it can be easily found across all social institutions.
In 1995 the Corruption Perception Index of Mexico (0 being very corrupt, 100 being very clean) was 32/100, in 2017 it scored 29/100; throughout those years the score never fluctuated any more than five points on either direction (see figure 1). These scores provide evidence that corruption has remained ubiquitous and stable over the past twenty-two years, although scholars have traced the widespread corruption patterns all the way back to the conquest years (Riding, 1985). Currently 92% of Mexican people consider corruption a serious issue in the country; but what is even more telling is that in 2015 the word “corruption” was one of the three first words that came to a Mexican person’s mind when hearing the word “Mexico” (UNAM, 2015). The assumption that is accepted in this study is that corruption in Mexico is in fact institutionalized.

It is evident that rule of law in Mexico is weak, which means that there is no general respect for, or expectation to abide by the law and law enforcement authorities. In fact, Mexico scored 0.45/1.00 in the World Justice Project Rule of Law index, ranking low at 92 out of the 113 countries studied. Furthermore, when measuring the lack of legal punishment alone, i.e. Impunity, results show that in Mexico 93% of crimes are not even reported, while only 4% of the crimes that are reported are seen through to their conclusion (GII 2017). There are structural deficiencies that can partially explain these appalling numbers, such as the insufficient number of judges, which in Mexico is 4.2 per 100,000 inhabitants, well below the worldwide average of 16.23 judges per 100,000 inhabitants (GII 2017). Interestingly, in Mexico there are 359 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants, which is well beyond the worldwide average of 319 police officers (GII 2017). However, this number does not necessarily reflect a functional and well-trained police force. What the figures of impunity indicate is a cycle of deficient social order and normative structures, which results in people not being willing to resort to legal authorities when faced with crimes; hence the judiciary system is not trusted. Thus, the normative order that legislation is intended to provide for the society, is not only weak and dysfunctional, but clearly it is widely regarded as illegitimate by its people.

The main inspiration for this study came from the writings of Octavio Paz, a notorious Mexican poet and diplomat who argued that legislation in Mexico is viewed as illegitimate because it was imposed in an undemocratic way and sought to transform the country by radically transforming the form of the social structures into what resembles a Western liberal model, while the values and norms responsible for the emergence of this model in Europe and USA were not present among the people in Mexico. The social structures that existed at the
time had their own momentum, which ensured their continuity, and by implication the general indifference of the people toward the newly liberalized legislature. Mexican culture is described by Paz as a result of the ethnic and historical clash between Spanish and indigenous people, shaped by the use of religion and legislature as means of control and dominance (Paz, 1950). Paz’s views will be addressed in the literature review.

This paper applies Michael Polanyi’s distinction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge to demonstrate that although there have been at least four avenues for the transmission of the knowledge, only one has been dominant: Socialization, which has, since the colonization of Mexico, come to shape the social institutions that characterize Mexican culture today (Polanyi, 1962). This thesis poses the view that the evolution of institutions has been partly defined by a conflict between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge; the explicit knowledge being the reformed constitution of Mexico, and all which it encompasses, and tacit knowledge being the set of beliefs and values that were gradually created with the purpose of making sense of the changing reality and identity of the Mexican people. When there is a conflict between cultural values and legal values, legal values will lose. That is, it is unlikely that they will gain legitimacy, while it is far more likely that violations of such rules will appear socially justifiable (Schwartz, 2006).

A conflict between culture and legislation, which may cause lack of stability and a sense of purposelessness among the society, can be mitigated by a strong and efficient set of normative structures, such as judicial power and education. These continue to provide purpose and order, and may foster an organic solidarity, even in the wake of major social, economic and political transitions (Cole, 2017). In the absence of strong normative structures, adherence to cultural norms and values imparted through socialization mechanisms will be strengthened. Thus, only when normative organizations are weak does the tacit knowledge muffle the explicit knowledge. The question that interests me at this point is: what is being communicated through tacit knowledge and how does this strengthen the cycle of corruption?

If tacit knowledge imparted through socialization has been the driving force of Mexican culture, then one of the purposes of this study is to outline the most prevalent values of Mexican culture today. These will be evident through the use of three different quantitative datasets which have already calculated the worldwide values and practices, cross-culturally and comparatively. The datasets chosen, based on their reliability, are Schwartz’s Seven Cultural Value Orientations, Hofstede’s Six Dimensions of National Culture, and the GLOBE
Project’s Nine Cultural Practices and Values. The specific cultural values that characterize Mexican culture, according to these studies are: Indulgence, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, In-Group Collectivism and Harmony.

The second aim of this study is to find how cultural values are related to corruption. Previous studies have been conducted using the same datasets that are resorted to in this paper. Results of two cross-country studies that will be further explored in the literature review concluded that the values correlated with corruption are: Embeddedness, Hierarchy, In-Group Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance. It is already clear that some of these overlap with the cultural values of Mexico; still they are analyzed separately in order to show if and how these values are empirically manifested in the context of Mexico, and how these manifestations explain the cultural value’s relation to corruption.

The third aim of this study is to make a broad comparison between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge in Mexico, in order to find if a conflict between the two is institutionalized. Interviews were conducted with the purpose of finding discrepancies between important codified norms and the enactment of these. Discrepancies were sought in various areas of life: legal, religious, educational, economic, social, etc. A predominant conflict between what is said and what is done would help explain how corruption has come to be institutionalized in spite of strong, and potentially homogeneous, cultural values.

The process of institutionalization of corruption requires a series of rationalizing ideologies to give validity and justification to the use of corruption; otherwise they would not be seen as legitimate by the social group and would therefore remain as scattered deviant acts. In order for an individual to successfully create and believe in rationalizing ideologies, he must be able to compartmentalize his identity into completely separate social roles. The prevalence of this compartmentalization occurs mainly in particularist cultures, meaning those that generally prioritize relationships over rules. Therefore, the fourth aim of this study is to determine whether Mexican culture celebrates particularism over universalism, how this gets manifested, and how it relates to corruption.

As a whole, the purpose of this study is to outline a cultural profile for Mexico and to determine how that profile facilitates the institutionalization of corruption. It is not assumed in this paper that cultural values have a direct casual force on corruption; the specific structural determinants which play a much stronger role in causality will be discussed in the literature review. However, it is hypothesized that culture does provide the inertia and the
mechanisms of socialization which perpetuate corruption. More specifically, it is hypothesized that (1) there is a prevalent conflict between explicit and tacit knowledge; (2) the prevalent values of Mexican culture facilitate the institutionalization of corruption; and (3) Mexico has a culture of particularism.
2. Literature Review

Anti-corruption efforts of any kind have a long way to go in improving their effectiveness; one of the most often discussed issues is that neither the diagnosis nor the cure are designed especially for each individual society; often strategies rely on an assumption of homogeneity in corruption patterns, as well as on diagnoses made from outside-in, often Western, perspectives. Measurement of corruption has huge inherent difficulties, but what adds to the challenges in fighting corruption is the fact that the institutional framework and culture of the societies being dealt with are not mainstream interests of anti-corruption bodies (Torsello & Venard, 2015). Corruption tends to be addressed as a static phenomenon; however, there is a continuous institutional evolution shaped by mutually reinforcing forces which vary from one culture to another. Understanding the legal, cultural, historical and sociopolitical frameworks of the society in which anti-corruption efforts will be made is necessary in order to design realistic strategies, and attack that which truly undermines the social order of that particular society, as opposed to what is merely illicit, yet functional, or that which appears as undermining to outsiders. The following studies discuss the limitations of anti-corruption strategies and the sociopolitical and economic determinants of corruption, followed by analyses on the mechanisms which perpetuate corruption, through the paradigm of institutional theory.

2.1 Measuring Corruption

It is not uncommon today to find at least one organization designed to combat corruption in every country in the world. According to the OECD Specialized Anti-Corruption Institutions Review, following the well-known success of the Hong Kong’s Independent Commission against Corruption, established in 1974, many countries have gradually established their own specialized bodies which, supported by law enforcement authorities, are intended to fulfill functions that range from prevention of corrupt practices to prosecution of corrupt actors. It wasn’t until the late 1990s that the problem of corruption truly gained international relevance, as specialized bodies were implemented by the OECD (since 1997), the Council of Europe (since 2002) and the UN (since 2005). However, even today there is one inherent difficulty faced by all anti-corruption bodies: measurement of the effect.

Because of its hidden nature, corruption remains a phenomenon that is measured by perception indices and statistical data, which are not completely reliable since they provide no observable causality. The question of what specific knowledge the arguments against
corruption are drawn from is in fact the critical step in the design and implementation of anti-corruption strategies, yet although various methods have been carefully applied for the measurement and gathering of data, these are not universally agreed upon nor do they tell the full story (OECD, 2013).

Transparency International uses a Corruption Perception Index made up of 13 different data sources, including the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey, and the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index Expert Survey. These measurements may be innovative, but they are criticized for providing only a vague overview of corruption, serving Western economic interests, and neglecting cultural variance among measured countries (de Maria, 2008). However, there has yet to emerge a more accurate calculation for corruption indices, so this paper will continue to refer to the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International for references.

2.2 Structural Determinants of Corruption

To begin to wonder what causes corruption to be prevalent in some societies and not in others, it is imperative to first assess that which is more visible to us, such as a country’s economic and legal structures. Where there is no order, there is no deviance; so the ways in which a society is organized, and the extent to which its organizations are effective, must be at least partially telling of that society’s form and level of deviance. Ali and Isse (2003) raised the question of “why different political systems foster different levels of corruption?” They widened their focus by analyzing the relationship between corruption and education, ethnicity, judicial efficiency, political freedom, economic freedom, foreign aid, economic growth, and the size of government, in a cross-country comparison. In order to measure correlations, Ali and Isse used two sets of corruption indices: Political Risk Services of Syracuse, New York (from 1982 to 1990) and the CPI of Transparency International (from 1995 to 1999).

Interestingly, the correlations between corruption and the ‘ethnicity’ and ‘GDP growth’ variables were statistically insignificant, although the researchers still argue that corruption has a negative effect on economic growth because it fosters bureaucracies which incentivize rent-seeking through bribes, facilitating payments, extortion, and other acts that result in a type of “taxation” which gives no benefits to society (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993). Corruption also institutes a legal uncertainty, pushing entrepreneurs and other economic actors to undertake inefficient loss-averse behaviors, filtering money out of the tax-paying economy.
The correlations which were statistically significant indicate that low levels of education, of judicial efficiency and of economic freedom, as well as high levels of foreign aid and a large government increase levels of corruption. Therefore, countries with a high corruption index would benefit from a smaller, more efficient government, receiving less foreign aid, and increasing standards of education (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993).

Unsurprisingly the relationship between structural factors and corruption is mutually reinforcing; economists claim that high levels of corruption hinder economic development, international trade and investment, and destroy confidence in public and private organizations (Mauro, 1995). The result is a vicious cycle whereby the resources that could be applied to improve the flawed institutions are filtered out and wasted, making the institutions even more dysfunctional, and the possibilities to gather further resources even slimmer. This diagnosis is useful because it shows that there are structures external to any one person, which perpetuate corruption. Social structures do not run on political and economic mechanisms alone, there is an underlying set of social institutions which set the stage for organizations to emerge and to develop, so it is important to look beyond the organization when seeking a halt to the downward spiral of corruption.

2.3 Critical Views of Anti-Corruption Strategies

According to Klemencic and Stusek (2013) there is no strong evidence that the existence of anti-corruption bodies always helps reduce corruption, and the lack of empirical proof may even entice some anti-corruption organizations to alter their results in order to appease voters and donors, or to receive further funding, the true intentions of which can never accurately be known. In fact, the researchers claim that through their analysis of strategies, they have found more failures than successes.

Countries with an especially serious problem of corruption tend to lack the resources and expertise needed to successfully carry out a strategy, which adds to the problem of impunity. Klemencic and Stusek (2013) argue that when a country experiences major economic and political transitions, the rule of law and strength of governance are typically weakened, which leads to an increase in the emergence of corrupt practices. Transitions speed up the corruption cycle, but the authors urge anti-corruption bodies in developing countries to not use or accept the lack of transparency and resources as an excuse, but rather to design specific strategic models based on analyses of where the country is and where it wants to go, considering (1) the level of corruption, (2) levels of integrity, competence and capacities of existing
institutions, (3) legal framework and criminal justice system, (4) and available financial resources. What seems to be missing from the suggestions is a historical analysis seeking to determine why certain laws or authority figures are not seen as legitimate by the public, and if in fact the legal framework reflects the interests of the people, as it may be that legislation too was written before or during transition times, and is currently obsolete.

A separate analysis by Transparency International also argues that anti-corruption approaches used around the world are generally weak and formalistic, failing at causing institutional changes. Very often these strategies are holistic in their approach and are not actually based on a concrete analysis of corruption in the given country. These broad comprehensive approaches are attractive for policy makers and organizations looking to convince others of their effectiveness, as they seem to promote integrity and simultaneously address all issues at hand. In practice, however, most of these agencies lack personnel, resources and technical capacity, and their unrealistically high ambitions make it nearly impossible for the procedures to be successful (TI, 2013). Without a proper diagnosis of the corruption problem, and the cultural and legal frameworks of a country, there will be an imbalance between the perceived causes and the actual causes, which can lead to a waste of resources and, at worst, an intentional misplacing of funds and information, causing an increase in corrupt practices.

Aside from files and databases, anti-corruption agencies rely on knowledge embodied in the expertise of specialists, which is typically allocated among three different areas: (1) investigation – where patterns are sought, and explanations proposed and tested, mainly to convince judiciary and legislative audiences; (2) prevention – which focuses on processes, and on how a specific act could have been avoided, mainly used to convince managers to rethink certain procedures; and (3) education – which reframes information in order to transmit it to the general public, including schoolchildren and potential whistleblowers (Larmour, 2006). On top of the inherent difficulties in researching corruption, the above mentioned tasks are also complicated by the existing cultural paradigms through which information and truth-claims are expressed and understood; effective anti-corruption strategies must vary depending on cultural values (Seleim & Bontis, 2009).

2.4 The Institutionalization of Tacit Knowledge

Knowledge management research often draws from Michael Polanyi’s tacit-explicit knowledge differentiation; tacit knowledge being contextual, informal and often unspoken, and explicit knowledge being codified, formal and usually acquired through training
(Polanyi, 1962). Nonaka (1994) outlined four modes of the creation of knowledge: (1) Socialization – tacit knowledge creates more tacit knowledge by spreading it informally; (2) Externalization – tacit knowledge gains legitimacy and becomes codified; (3) Internalization – explicit codified knowledge is widely accepted and creates tacit institutionalized knowledge; and (4) Combination – codified knowledge is reorganized to draw new explicit conclusions. A myriad of factors determine which form of knowledge creation is predominant in a given setting, and therefore which type of knowledge is seen as more legitimate over the others. Larmour (2006) argues that explicit knowledge, the extreme of it being written law, holds an authority that is inherently resisted by the tacit “instinctive wisdom of the streets”.

This paper exemplifies the resistance put up by tacit knowledge to the authority of explicit knowledge, mentioned by Larmour, in the case of Mexican legislation. Acclaimed Mexican author, Octavio Paz, analyzed this relation in his collection of essays titled The Labyrinth of Solitude (Paz, 1950). Paz discusses the radical changes made to the Mexican constitution in 1857 by the liberal party, which were officially implemented in 1861 after the three-year ‘Reform War’, in which the liberals defeated the conservatives. The ‘Reform Laws’, as they came to be known, were designed to separate church and state. Among the new constitutional rights were: the freedom of speech and of print, the freedom of religion, and the freedom to get married outside the church (which in turn also legally delegitimized marriage solely by the church). Paz describes the emergent constitution as a project thoroughly inspired by European liberalism and designed by a minute minority against the active traditionalism of the majority.

Paz criticizes the lawmakers of the time for seeking to establish a new social order overnight, not by actively changing the reality of Mexico, but merely by transforming its legislation, since it was believed that the prosperity of the United States was due to the excellence of their legislature and republican institutions. The reform laws, Paz argued, resulted in a triple denial: of the Spanish inheritance, of the indigenous past, and of Catholicism. Under the new constitution, which limited the power of the church and ended the privileges of communal indigenous property, the narrative directed at the masses changed overnight to a message of equality, not before the eyes of God as it had been in the past, but before the law. The values of liberty, unity and egalitarianism became core concepts of Mexican rhetoric, but they lacked entirely a historical reality, and were therefore empty concepts with no social base to institute them (Paz, 1950). It is evidently observable now how Mexico, despite the striking
similarities in written law, did not experience the same path that the United States did; in fact, it causes no surprise that in 2017, Mexico scored 0.45 in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, while the United States scored 0.75, which is a highly significant difference.

When codified knowledge becomes a part of tacit knowledge, it is reflected in automatic behavior within the institutional boundaries of the explicit knowledge, thus it is successfully internalized, and it becomes part of the culture’s desirable values to abide by such codified knowledge, be it laws, written religious principles, business negotiation rules, or any other form it may take. In the case of Mexico, however, tacit knowledge appears to have prevailed regardless of the legal liberalization of the institutions, built on knowledge that was never properly internalized by the population.

Mexico’s low Rule of Law index shows that, aside from structural deficiencies and inequalities, there is a conflict between legislation and cultural values and practices. This means that: out of the four modes of knowledge creation described by Nonaka, neither Externalization of constitutional values into Mexican culture, nor Internalization of Mexican cultural values into legislation, are processes which explain the reality of Mexico today. The Combination of knowledge of previously implemented laws and principles in the United States and Europe by 1857 indisputably explains how the Reform Laws of Mexico were designed, but it explains little beyond that. It is this paper’s assumption that the prevalent knowledge in Mexico can be most accurately traced and explained through the processes of Socialization, and that the knowledge that has been carried through Mexican history by the mechanisms of socialization shapes the institutions we see today; institutions which are tainted with normalized habits of corruption.

Ashforth and Anand (2003) brilliantly outline the process of socialization, as one of the three mutually-reinforcing processes which result in the normalization of corruption in organizations or in a society; the three pillars necessary for normalization are institutionalization, rationalization and socialization. For a corrupt practice to become institutionalized it must, first of all, be somewhat rational for an individual to commit such action, which can be the case when formal sanctioning by law enforcement authorities is lenient; when leadership, which symbolizes permissiveness, authorizes the act explicitly or implicitly; and when an individual’s peers encourage the act. In these cases, economic rationality, as well as the habits of obedience and conformity will likely result in the individual behaving corruptly. If these actions are routinely repeated they will become part of
the organizational memory, and under the assumption of continuous institutional evolution, they will eventually either disappear or come to be a part of the institutional memory (North, 1990). In the setting of organizations, it is common for corrupt practices to be repeated, regardless of the turnover of the initial practitioners, because past decisions are thought to have been made on a rational basis, and the existence of a precedent helps legitimize the present act. Thus, “emergent practices become tacit understandings and idiosyncratic acts become shared procedures” (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

As corrupt practices become prevalent, a culture or subculture of deviance tends to emerge in order to neutralize the stigma of corruption within the group. In fact, an average individual is able to remain conflict-free in spite of committing corrupt acts; this can be explained by distinguishing universalism from particularism. Universalism is the approach by which norms and values are thought to be applicable in all situations, whereas particularism emphasizes relationships through a flexible rationality applicable to unique circumstances (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). Actors in particularistic cultures are more easily able to cognitively compartmentalize their distinct roles in social life and thus remain abstractly “virtuous”. It is common to criticize such actors for having “double standards”; condemning certain behaviors on others, while condoning them on themselves.

Particularism does not mean lack of ethical principles, but it does provide a stable ground for the emergence of rationalizing ideologies which help actors distance themselves from the deviant moral stance of their actions. Actors instinctively seek to resolve internal conflicts, and achieve so by creating a narrative in which their corrupt actions are justified, or one in which their actions are excluded from the concept of corruption. Rationalizations serve to reconcile problematic actions with societal norms, so in fact they are constrained by and adapted to universalistic values. Thus, the observable differences across cultures are not the types of rationalizations, but the circumstances and the ways in which they are applied. In this way the corrupt group or subculture remains respectful of universalistic values and norms, while they exonerate themselves from their own “justified” wrongdoings. As rationalization ideologies are socially constructed and continually enacted by subcultures, they shift from mere self-serving fictions, to instituted social facts. Once a corrupt practice is institutionalized, not only does it become harder to discontinue it than to continue it, but members of the deviant culture or subculture also come to regard the process as a whole, as legitimate.
Social facts become institutionalized at the macro level, while they become internalized at the micro level through the mechanisms of socialization. As individuals adopt social roles that entail corrupt behaviors, they come to identify with the role by means of either (1) cognition – rationally believing in the benefits that the role brings, or (2) behavior – by performing a role which pushes them to think and feel the role, thereby finding positive qualities and identify with them. Cognition fosters behavior, which in turn reinforces rationalizations through cognition, and vice versa. When a group identifies with such roles, they come to reinforce them in one another, so as to protect their own identities, and they come to discourage doubt, hesitance and questioning of their practices. Discouragement may come in the form of punishment in an inclusionary manner, whereby individuals are pushed to conform and comply with the existing norms; or in an exclusionary manner, signaling rejection to nonconformist individuals and thereby protecting the echo of the group. Socialization into institutionalized corruption occurs in a localized, self-referential world where skewed practices and ideologies are seen as acceptable, normal and even in some cases, desirable. Institutionalization supports rationalization by turning belief systems into seemingly objective accounts of reality and “the big lie turns into the big truth” (Ashforth & Anand, 2003 p.36).

2.5 Cultural Values in Relation to Corruption

The decision to behave in a corrupt manner results from a cognitive process which, as described above, is thoroughly influenced by the individual’s position in the social structure. The social institutions in which individuals are embedded will define the range of goals, norms, incentives and opportunities which will be available to them. In other words, the individual’s group of reference, or subculture, will provide him with a culturally-desirable set of goals and acceptable means to achieve them, which he will come to regard as legitimate (Cohen, 1965).

Culture is a latent variable that can only be measured through its manifestations in meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values. Therefore culture refers to a set of stimuli that individuals encounter every day, but which is external to them (Schwartz, 2006). Cultural values express conceptions of what is ideal and desirable. According to Schwartz (2006) there exists a reciprocal causal influence between cultural values and social institutions. Cultural values underlie the shaping of institutions since they provide guidance and justification; while simultaneously, the functioning of institutions feeds information back into
cultural values. When an institution is successful, the values that are consistent with its structure get strengthened; whereas when an institution fails, the values expressed in its structure are weakened, they lose legitimacy, and alternative values gain strength. Therefore policies and legal practices that are incompatible with the prevailing culture are experienced as inappropriate or illegitimate, and will be met with resistance (Schwartz, 2006). This argument can also be exemplified by the case of the Reform Laws in Mexico.

In order to measure the empirical manifestations of cultural values, Schwartz identified seven cultural value orientations: (1 & 2) Autonomy (Intellectual / Affective) – Encourages people to cultivate, express and pursue their own ideas, feelings, goals and skills; versus (3) Embeddedness – It is encouraged to maintain a status quo, a strong group solidarity and traditions. (4) Egalitarianism – Encourages regarding one another as moral equals, to be concerned for each other’s wellbeing, and to offer help voluntarily; versus (5) Hierarchy – Encourages strong social roles, an unequal distributions of power and resources, humility and respect. (6) Harmony – Emphasizes fitting into the natural and social world without the need to exploit or change it; versus (7) Mastery – which encourages changing and directing the social and natural environment to achieve goals. By employing data gathered from 1988 to 2005 with 55,022 respondents in 72 countries, he was able to recognize stable patterns across the countries’ cultural elements; even though most countries change with time, there is little change in their relative positions. So he was able to conclude that countries can in fact be seen as cultural units.

Furthermore, in his analysis, Schwartz measured the correlations between corruption (measured with the index from the World Bank’s Governance Indicators) and cultural values. He found corruption to be strongly positively correlated with embeddedness and hierarchy, even after controlling for national wealth and human development indices. This indicates that the more encouraged it is in a society to identify with the in-group and fulfill one’s role obligations within a hierarchy, the more corrupt the country is. The values of embeddedness and hierarchy foster loyalty to people, as opposed to norms and bureaucratic processes; even more so when legal boundaries are imposed, the need to preserve the in-group strengthens the value of embeddedness and weakens allegiance to the legal system.

For the sake of this thesis, it is unfortunate that Mexico, as well as all of Latin America, scored quite near to the worldwide average in all cultural value orientations; however it was found to be higher on embeddedness and hierarchy than Western countries. Latin America is
commonly regarded as culturally collectivistic, which judging by this analysis would be true, since embeddedness and hierarchy are considered to be the main components of collectivism. On the other hand, compared to African, Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures, Latin America appears more individualistic, which shows how significant cross-culture comparisons are when assessing cultural profiles (Schwartz, 2006). Because of the ambiguity in Mexico’s average position, this paper will later on seek to answer whether Mexican culture is significantly gravitating toward embeddedness and hierarchy, not in comparison to other cultures, but rather relative to the assumptions made by Schwartz that these two values are predictive of corruption indices.

A similar study was conducted in 2009 employing the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) Project’s National Cultural Dimensions of Values and Practices. The GLOBE Project study was concluded in 2004 after a ten year quantitative survey-based analysis in 62 societies around the world, using data from 17,300 middle managers. The nine cultural dimensions are: Performance Orientation, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Humane Orientation, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. Researchers Seleim and Bontis (2009) found two further variables which were positively significantly correlated with corruption. The first one is Uncertainty Avoidance, which measures the extent to which individuals feel threatened by ambiguous situations and therefore construct beliefs and institutions to avoid such situations. The researchers argue that cultures high in uncertainty avoidance establish highly bureaucratic structures which encourage leaders to behave unethically. The second variable is In-Group Collectivism; the authors renamed this concept “Individual Collectivism”, it is not specified why, so this paper will continue referring to this concept as In-Group Collectivism. This variable refers to the extent to which an individual is embedded in small groups, such as family and close friends, and the likelihood of members putting group expectations above rationality and norms (Seleim & Bontis, 2009).

2.6 Cultural Values of Mexico

Three quantitative studies were observed with the purpose of selecting the cultural values which are the most characteristic of Mexican culture. A fundamental point to make clear is that these three studies warn researchers to not confuse cultural values with individual values or motivations. Culture is viewed as an external press, meaning a set of stimuli and demands, to which each individual is exposed to in different ways; therefore no one can fully feel or be
aware of the full press of culture. “Cultures and individuals are distinct entities; different principles organize the normative cultural systems of societies and the motivational value systems of individuals” (Schwartz, 2006 p.13).

The first study applied is Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory which he initially developed using survey answers of 117,000 IBM employees around the world, from 1967 to 1973, and proposed a four-dimension model. In 2010 he added the sixth dimension. Further studied have confirmed the validity of Hofstede’s research. The six dimensions are: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence (Hofstede, 2011). According to the most recent scores, three of these values are characteristic of Mexican culture: (1) Indulgence – “The extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were socialized. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun” (Hofstede, 2011 p.15). (2) Uncertainty Avoidance – “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict behavioral codes, laws and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions, and a belief in absolute Truth” (Hofstede, 2011 p. 10). (3) Power Distance – “The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders” (Hofstede, 2011 p.9) (see figure 2).

The second study applied in this paper is the GLOBE Project’s dataset, which was described in the previous section. According to the scores in the most recent update of the study, published in 2007, the only value which is highly characteristic of Mexican culture is In-Group Collectivism – “The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families” (GLOBE, 2007). The implications of this value are not to be confused with those of Institutional Collectivism which is defined as “the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action” (GLOBE, 2007) (see figure 3).

The third study that is being used is Schwartz’s Cultural Value Orientations; these were also described in the previous section. Out of the seven values, the only that is strongly
characteristic of Mexican culture is Harmony – Emphasizes fitting into the natural and social world as it is, trying to understand and appreciate rather than to change, direct, or to exploit the current stability. Important values in harmony cultures include world at peace, unity with nature, and protecting the environment (Schwartz, 2006). This value is accepted as a hypothesis not without hesitation, for it is commonly known that Mexico, like other developing countries, lags far behind developed countries in environmental awareness, but the score that Mexico obtained for this value made it a necessary part of this study (see figure 4).

In summary, there are countless forces which foster corruption in environments that are vulnerable to the emergence of deviant subcultures and ambiguous legal practices. Vulnerability is often due to economic and sociopolitical weaknesses caused by transitions in development. Underlying these structural transitions are social institutions which convey values, norms and beliefs necessary for the society to cope with changes or structural deficiencies. When the institutional framework is internalized by the society and thereby taught to new generations, these values, norms and beliefs are used to socialize new members of society, providing continuity to the same institutional framework. As the instituted set of values is internalized, it is also rationalized, so as to spare the individual from cognitive dissonance. The result of this mutually reinforcing process is a set of normalized values and practices, in other words, cultural values. Conflicting cultural values and codified norms result in a type of collective dissonance, which must be alleviated in some way, often by rejecting the legitimacy of one of the two. Some of the values that emerge in contexts of transition or collective dissonance foster patterns of corruption; which is not to say that they cause such patterns, simply that they facilitate the rationalizing of illicit or immoral behavior. Studies have managed to outline some of these values, and according to the same data that was applied for those studies, Mexican culture exhibits most of the values said to correlate with corruption. It is the task of this study to determine how this relationship is empirically manifested.
3. Methodology

This study is applying a mixed research method. Aside from employing the results of the quantitative data from studies conducted by Schwartz (2006), GLOBAL Project (2007) and Hofstede (2010), qualitative interviews were conducted, and answers from a short survey were gathered. 9 Mexican people were interviewed in a structured form, with the occasional use of examples and definitions in order to make sure that the question was logical in their specific context.

The values that are theorized to represent Mexican culture were chosen based on the scores assigned to Mexico from three different datasets. These assumptions have been constructed on the basis of quantitative data analysis gathered over a long period of time. The validity of these studies at a macro level is accepted. In order to maintain a homogeneous standard, the scores from the Hofstede study, which range from 0 to 100, were calculated to be measured in a range of 1 to 7, since that is the range of the GLOBAL Project scores. The GLOBAL Project categorizes the score of 5 to mean ‘relatively high’, so any value which scores a 5 or above has been incorporated into this study. Because Schwartz scores are designed to be analyzed comparatively, the 80 country/cultural units were also converted to a range from 1 to 7 (not every unit is a whole country, some were split due to cultural differences, e.g. French Canada and English Canada). The values in which Mexico ranks at 57/80 or above, were also be incorporated into the study.

Out of the six values measured by Hofstede Insights the ones that passed the threshold were: **Indulgence** with a score of 6.79, **Uncertainty Avoidance** with 5.74, and **Power Distance** with 5.67. The GLOBAL Project scores are separated between Country Values and Country Practices; only those variables which passed the threshold on both accounts were incorporated into this study, since the intent is to observe the cultural values that are in fact enacted in Mexico; therefore **In-Group Collectivism** is added with 5.71 in Practice and 5.95 in Value. Finally, from Schwartz’s dataset, the only value that passed the threshold was **Harmony**, in which Mexico ranked at 78/80.

The literature on the relation between cultural values and corruption suggests that the cultural values of **Embeddedness**, **Hierarchy**, **In-Group Collectivism** and **Uncertainty Avoidance** are correlated with corrupt practices. The two studies which concluded on these results used the same data that is being employed here. For the purpose of understanding the empirical reality of these indicators at the micro level, and how these values are related to corruption, in
the context of Mexico, qualitative interviews were made with only Mexican respondents, from nine different sectors of social life. The interviewees’ backgrounds were:

1. Religious – “Rosa” A high ranking Catholic nun with a PhD in Theology. She understands the ways in which Mexican people apply the explicit religious knowledge into everyday life, and the discrepancies between the two.

2. Business – “Samuel” An owner of a business, who deals only with Mexican employees and mostly with national clients, therefore has experience with the cultural business practices of Mexico, as well as work ethic.

3. Social Club – “Maria” The former president of a Rotary International club, who has been participating in altruistic organizations for nearly ten years, therefore she understands the social needs of her community and the challenges in implementing solutions.

4. Artistic – “Ana” A successful local painter who interacts routinely with the Mexican artistic community, but who has had business experience with foreigners. She also understands the importance of informal networking for business and opportunities.

5. Educational – “Omar” A multidisciplinary, high school and university professor, who has worked in both private and public schools. He has experience with the bargaining mechanisms of work unions, and with the challenges related to education policies.

6. Political – “Giovanna” A politician from an independent party who has been active in politics for over five years. She has experience as a journalist as well, so she understands the political environment well.

7. Illicit – “Ricardo” A member of an underground office which practiced illegal activities, such as scamming people over the phone. He understands the processual aspect of corruption, and has first-hand experience with deep rationalizing ideologies.

8. Environmental – “Laura” An environmental engineer who works for the government and has experience with the design and implementation of policies. She understands government corruption as well as the social challenges of implementing environmental initiatives.

9. Athletic – “Diana” A professional athlete, cross-fit trainer and international competitor, who has experience with Mexican competition-related values, practices and cheating.

The questions for the interviews have been designed in a way that they can be asked to all respondents in their own context, without altering the essence of the question. For instance, when seeking an answer to whether Mexican people derive their rationality either from
codified knowledge or from tacit knowledge, I ask the religious leader what is more common for Mexican Catholics (which is 82% of the population, so the question remains essentially about Mexican people in general (INEGI 2010)), to base their Catholic beliefs on religious writings and readings at mass, or on tradition and Catholic norms learned outside the church; furthermore I ask how the avenue of knowledge creation mentioned by her affects people’s adherence to Catholicism. However, when asking the business leader about the same topic, I ask him to what extent he observes workers derive their assumptions about business from their training and work-related policies, and to what extent from informal learning among their peers, or other social spheres outside the work place, followed by how the given avenue is observable in the Mexican worker’s business practices.

The intention of having chosen nine very distinct social actors is to obtain a well-rounded view of the Mexican cultural values in order to understand which of the hypothesized Mexican values are observed by the respondents, and what connotations those values have to them. The respondents were asked a series of 15 questions, not including warm up questions about their personal careers; these addressed their observations about what ‘the Mexican’ would find more desirable, be more prompt to do, etc. The words “the Mexican” were meant to remind the respondent that we are talking about an archetype of the culture, as opposed to the culture embodied in individual actors. It is fitting to mention that “el Mexicano” would be a commonly used form when discussing social, psychological and behavioral sciences in Spanish.

**Indulgence** was directly referred to in a question on what the Mexican lives for more, the future or the present; living for the present can of course be related to poverty, but if the respondents observe that it prevails among economically stable cohorts, then it signals a cultural acceptance of indulgence. Indulgence as a cultural value is related by scholars to materialist and consumer values, which are encompassed by ‘values of modernity’, so the respondents will also be asked whether they observe a conflict between modern and traditional values in Mexico (Damon, 1995).

**Uncertainty Avoidance** refers to the attitudes and behaviors that a society takes on when addressing the future, therefore the responses on how the Mexican lives his life, whether for the future or the present, provide answers to this question as well. In order to measure the extent to which the uncertainty avoidance gets manifested into religious beliefs of safety, the
respondents were asked whether they perceive the Mexican to be free from a God written path, or not.

**Power Distance** is according to the literature reviewed, a synonym of the value ‘hierarchy’, which according to Schwartz (2006) is one of the two components of collectivism, so respondents were asked to address how collectivistic, in contrast to individualistic, they observe the Mexican to be. Respondents were also asked about the prevalence of informal hierarchies in Mexico, meaning hierarchies that are self-assigned based on non-contractual factors. The question of modern versus traditional values was also applied to this concept, since it is commonly accepted that traditional values emphasize strong roles albeit hierarchical, whereas modern values promote individuality and fluidity of roles.

**In-Group Collectivism** was also addressed in the individualism versus collectivism question, which at times required elaborations, as they spoke of institutional collectivism instead. The respondents were also asked if they perceive the Mexican to think that it is ever justifiable to violate norms or even laws, for the sake of upholding a cultural value, such as the family. They were asked to apply the latter question to themselves.

**Harmony** is a more complicated variable to address since the way that Schwartz (2006) describes its significance is mainly in relation to the natural environment. Mexico’s score on the Environmental Performance Index is of 55.03 /100 (EPI 2014), which is quite low, incomparable to its Harmony ranking of 78/80. The first three questions of the interviews will address the predominant values in Mexican culture and the harmony or conflicts between (1) values and behavior, and (2) codified knowledge and tacit knowledge. The questions of hierarchies, modern versus traditional values, and living for the future versus the present, definitely provided some responses that illustrated the cultural tendency to preserve harmony in the social environment.

The responses obtained from the interviews also illustrate how close Mexican culture is to the values that relate to corruption, which are embeddedness, hierarchy, in-group collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Since they are strongly correlated with the hypothesized Mexican cultural values the analysis was almost parallel. The distinction that must be made between embeddedness and in-group collectivism is that while embeddedness is broader concept, encompassing institutional and in-group collectivism, the latter specifies between the two. During the interviews questions were asked regarding this matter in order to determine which of the two is more applicable for Mexico.
In order to find out if there is a conflict between explicit and tacit knowledge or not, the respondents were each asked in their own context how the given knowledge gained through training is (if at all) expressed in action. The question of how universal values are empirically represented also provided some insight into this potential conflict (again these were formulated depending on the respondents’ context). They were also asked about third party and personal experiences with corruption, which illustrate to what extent they regard the law as legitimate.

Finally, this study also seeks to find if Mexican culture celebrates Particularism or Universalism, and how this plays a role in relation to corruption. This question was delved into during the interviews when the respondents were asked if they observe people to commonly reinterpret rules in order to serve their personal interests, if there are justifications to rule or law violations, and if they consider that it is common to uphold a cultural value in different spheres of life.

Furthermore, a survey was conducted, targeting Mexican people only, which presented the respondents 10 scenarios. The scenarios describe ordinary people committing acts of corruption ranging from small to medium damage; among the 10 scenarios, 2 are cases of someone upholding the rules by whistle-blowing and as a result causing some type of damage to their friend or family member. The scenarios that are described are the following:

1. Petty Theft – Definition: Theft of a small quantity of cash or low-value goods or services (Akhbari, 2018). Representation: An intern stealing office supplies from her workplace.

2. Extortion/Bribery – Definition: (1) Wrongful use of force or intimidation to gain money or property. (2) An illegal payment in return for a legal or financial favor (Investopedia). Representation: A traffic police officer pulls over a man for speeding; he lets him go quickly after receiving a bribe.

3. Nepotism – Definition: Favoritism (as in appointment to a job) based on kinship (Merriam-Webster). Representation: A woman gives a job to her brother over more qualified applicants.

4. Clientelism – Definition: Relation in which the ‘client’ gives political support in exchange for some privilege or benefit (Merriam-Webster). Representation: A new politician offers donations (funded by her family) to NGOs to gain their support.
5. Facilitating Payment – Definition: Payment that may constitute a bribe and is made with the intention of expediting an administrative process (Investopedia). Representation: A man’s daughter has to spend two days in prison so he makes a payment to get her out.

6. Political Corruption – Definition: Manipulation of rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision makers (Transparency International). Representation: A mayor spends more money than he has to on paving a road in order to obtain a commission from it.

7. Lobbying – Definition: Any activity carried out to influence a government or institution’s policies and decisions in favor of a specific cause or outcome. Even when allowed by law, these acts can become distortive if disproportionate levels of influence exist (Transparency International). Representation: A well-known woman offers political support to a party, as long as they ban the hunt of some animals.

8. Patronage – Definition: Form of favoritism in which a person is selected for a benefit because of affiliations or connections (Transparency International). Representation: A student receives a scholarship because his grandfather is friends with the director of the school.

9. (+ 2) Whistle-Blowing – Definition: One who reveals something covert or who informs against another (Merriam-Webster). Representations: (1) A guy reports his friend for having received facilitating payments; and (2) A woman confesses to the police that her daughter committed theft.

Respondents were asked how much they agree with what the person in the situation did, on a scale from 1 to 5. The aim was to gather 100 responses, which would either support or reject the hypothesis that Mexico is a culture of Particularism. Hypothesis 0 in this case is that the pattern observable in the 8 questions where the subject committed a corrupt act is observable in reverse in the 2 questions where the universal rules were protected. In other words, if most people disagree with the corrupt decisions, and agree with the ‘whistle-blowing’ decisions, or the other way around, then results reject the hypothesis that Mexico is a culture of Particularism. Results obtained from the survey were also used to support or reject other of the hypotheses.
3.1 Code of Ethics

Due to the scientific purpose of sociological research, resources of many types are applied in the process with the objective of evaluating and establishing theories. In order to keep the quality and content of my research up to the ethical standards of the wider scientific community, I will abide by the Code of Ethics approved by the International Sociological Association in the following ways: First, I commit to keep an unbiased attitude and to stay away from *indisputable truth* claims; if necessary, I will disclaim my subjective ideologies.

Second, I hereby disclaim that I will not be receiving nor accepting sponsorships or rewards of any kind. Third, I will protect the anonymity of all of my interviewees, who will be participants of this study entirely voluntarily, receiving no monetary incentives; they will be given all the information about the process and the purpose of this research prior to conducting the interviews. Fourth, the final text will be submitted to Corvinus University for grading.

The nature of my qualitative research is quite sensitive, therefore the participants will be given and requested signed written consent forms where their anonymity will be guaranteed. Online interviews will be conducted through a video call. The audio of the interviews will be recorded, unless it is crucial for the interviewee that we do not.
4. Findings

4.1 National Values

**Indulgence:** Every single interviewee stated that Mexican people tend to live for the present, although their argumentation for this varied; some respondents attributed this trend to the lack of economic resources, which implies that living for the present is not a cultural value, but a mere characteristic of life in poverty. However, only Rosa considered that poverty was the only reason for this manifestation of indulgence, saying that “middle class people do in fact think about and plan for the future, because they actually can”. Every other response went on to include additional reasons apart from poverty. For instance Samuel who said “people are accustomed to being promised so much from politicians every 3 or 6 years, thinking that their lives will finally be bettered, but then elections come and go and nothing changes, and when campaigns come around again, people put their trust on them again, not everyone of course, but there seems to be a culture of short-term hopes and goals.”

The Short-Term Orientation that Samuel spoke of was also mentioned by other respondents who said that the Mexican is not inclined to worry about the future, and therefore not inclined to save up, invest or protect the natural environment. Ana attributed it to “things being cheap and abundant; we have most of what we need and think that it will always be that way, so Mexicans live for today and don’t think about the consequences”. Giovanna even said “if it were not mandatory for employers to pay into their employees’ pensions, very few would actually retire with one; there is just no culture of prevention”. However, most respondents added, with some nostalgia, that it is in fact desirable to live for the future, but the tools are missing.

Three of the respondents attributed the tendency of indulgence to a religious value; all three of them mentioned the common saying “God will provide” as a philosophy that they observe people to have. Ricardo stated how “many think of the future, and they even make plans, but they don’t do much to make them come true, they simply hope God will provide, but no, you have to work hard”. Some of the other respondents said that it is desirable to live for the future, but it doesn’t seem to materialize. Laura’s comment on this was “ideally people want to live for the future, but poverty doesn’t allow that. The minimum wage is so low that most people don’t even think it’s worth it to work, and instead they choose a less stable but more

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1: The word Ricardo used was not actually to “work”, but to “chingarle”, derived from the verb “chingar”; this analysis will address interesting findings related to this verb in the next pages.
profitable path, like washing cars for tips, or any number of crimes.” The high rate of impunity makes it more rational for people to resort to illicit activities in order to make money, even if this means disregarding possible negative consequences in the future, and living for the present instead.

Some interviewees also mentioned a growing tendency to care for one’s self as a first priority, in contrast to the traditional value of prioritizing the family. Omar stated that “hedonism, individualism and consumerism are growing, but these values are in conflict with the austerity people face in reality”. All interviewees stated, however, that this is a newly accepted behavior; for the most part, it is still expected to indulge only when the family has been provided for.

Indulgence as a cultural value is also related to a societal tendency towards optimism, regardless of economic or social setbacks, this statement is supported by data gathered in Mexico in which the reported happiness index was 8.3/10. 88.8% of respondents from 15 to 24 years old claimed to be ‘very happy’ (UNAM 2015). So it is evident that the value of Indulgence is prevalent in Mexican culture, although it appears to be circumstantial as opposed to pursued, furthermore it is adhered to religiosity and thus less celebrated among secular people.

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** The empirical indicators of this value, according to Hofstede, include an emotional need for rules, social tendencies of hard work and an inner urge to be busy, prevailing norms of precision and punctuality, and resistance to innovation. None of these implications are supported by the qualitative analysis. As mentioned above, the observed tendency is to live for the present, which implies that a future-related anxiety is not prevalent among the society. Most respondents mentioned how absent the tendency to prevent or prepare for the future is in Mexico. Regarding the need for rules, some respondents, such as Diana, said that “the rule of thumb is that if something is not explicitly prohibited, then it is permitted”; Laura’s comment was that “first the rules are broken, and only after people bother reinterpreting them or even reading them, as a way to find loopholes”. Ricardo mentioned a common Mexican proverb “it’s better to ask for forgiveness, than for permission.” Omar mentioned another common saying, which he expressed his disdain for: “rules were made to be broken”. These responses indicate that the emotional need for order and rules is not prevalent in Mexican culture.
A tendency of hard work and an urge to be busy can also not be observed in any of the responses. Although it was mentioned a few times that hard work is a desirable value for the Mexican, it is evidently not enacted as, in the eyes of most respondents, people will work as little as acceptable and will at any given point try to cheat (“chingar”) their way through. It is remarkable that most of the respondents mentioned this word to describe their views of the Mexican rationality towards work; this requires a parenthesis of its own. Chingar is perhaps the most often used slang term of all, and it has countless meanings in Mexico, among which are to harm, cheat, ruin, frustrate, destroy, have sex (offensive) and others, but the plurality of meanings, according to Octavio Paz (1950), does not stop the idea of aggression from being communicated in every use of the word. To chingar is to exert violence over another, it is a masculine, active, cruel verb. The chingada is the recipient of the action, a female, defenseless, pure passivity. Their relationship is based on the cynical power of one and the impotence of the other. “For the Mexican, life is a possibility of chingar or of being chingado.” (Paz, 1950 p. 224) Tellingly, the word chignon (when used as an adjective) has a strong connotation of something utterly great; used to describe books, movies, events, etc. Similarly, when the word is used as a noun it refers to a person who is above average in wit, in skill and, more often than not, in achieving success through corrupt means. As Giovanna put it “hard work is considered one of our main values, but at the same time Mexicans will celebrate people who ‘make it’ without having worked hard at all, they celebrate corruption, they see them as chingones”.

Another interpretation of this value could be that the short-term orientation discussed in the previous section is the cultural belief that has emerged as a coping mechanism of uncertainty avoidance; in other words, people cope with the anxiety that the future brings by avoiding any focus on it. “God will provide” and similar sayings may be the institutionalized forms of dealing with the anxiety that the future poses. However, the religious aspect of this argument is not strongly supported by the interviews, as all but one of the respondents said that they do not believe in a God written destiny, nor do they think this belief is prevalent, which could reflect a sample bias, but as far as this study goes, the hypothesis that uncertainty avoidance is one of the prevalent cultural values of Mexico, is not supported.

Power Distance: When asked whether informal hierarchies are prevalent in Mexican culture or not, the responses led to consensus that yes, they are observable, they are internalized, and according to a couple of respondents, they are discriminatory. The cultural value of Hierarchy is described in this study as the cultural desirability to adhere to social roles, and respect
others’ social roles. This implies that subordination to superiors, even informally, is expected. According to the Schwartz’s Cultural Value Orientations analysis, Mexico scored relatively high on hierarchy. In Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, however, Mexico scored significantly high (81/100) on Power Distance, which measures the extent to which the less powerful members accept power differences and status privileges.

The specific forms that hierarchies take in Mexico were not entirely agreed upon. Rosa, the religious leader, said “patriarchal hierarchy has prevailed, and even though roles are changing, we’re still able to observe strong roles and stereotypes, for example women who are still widely expected to fulfill very traditional roles”; whereas Samuel and Giovanna argued that they are rather discriminatory, “light-skin Mexicans are more highly regarded than dark-skin ones, and people definitely treat you better depending on the socioeconomic status that you portray” said Giovanna. Omar disagreed on this point as he said “people treat you as they see you, it is not so much about where you go and how you look; it is more about how informed you are and how well you demand fairness, in a knowledgeable manner”. Both responses reflect in a way the education inequalities in Mexico, but whether there is an informal hierarchy based on knowledge, race, socioeconomic status, or gender, all responses support the quantitative results.

**In-Group Collectivism:** Nearly all interviewees, when asked about the predominant values in Mexican culture, responded that the respect and protection of the family is a core value. As previous studies have shown, the cultural value of familism can strengthen and maintain the social order in a community, but it can also venture into amoral familism, where the family ties are regarded so highly, that it becomes justifiable for the individual to disregard any rationality or sense of morality (Ashforth & Anand 2003). Omar, the professor, said “Mexicans tend to put their family above all else, above what is right, even above their own self-love” and Maria, the social club leader, said “families are so loving that sometimes it is too much, we get to a point where we forgive and justify just about anything.” These responses reflect the nature of In-Group Collectivism, as well as the average score for Mexico in the GLOBE Project’s scale (5.95/7).

A few more responses help validate this argument; when asked to consider the strength of collectivism versus individualism in Mexican cultural values, there was in every response the mention of “family collectivism”, however, this claim was in every case followed by
arguments for a widespread individualism outside of the in-group: “outside of the family, everyone is individualistic” said Samuel, the business owner; “collectivism seems to only emerge in hard times, like it did recently after the massive earthquake in Mexico City” said Giovanna, the politician; this event was also mentioned by Maria “in discourse we’re collectivistic, in reality it’s so individualistic, although circumstances like the recent earthquake prove that we can unite for something positive”. Adding to these views the fact that the survey responses were clearly more divided when touching on circumstances where the family values are at stake, it is evident that in-group collectivism is a prevalent value in Mexican culture.

**Harmony:** As it was expected, most of the interviewees criticized Mexican culture for completely disregarding the human responsibility towards the natural environment. According to Laura, who by profession works on designing effective environmental policies, there is a noticeable lack of care and value for nature. In her experience “politicians don’t care about the sustainability, technical or economic, of policies, even when these are supposed to be designed to protect the environment; and people don’t care unless they’re incentivized to care”. She attributes the lack of consciousness to poverty, since some of the most harmful groups to the environment are the most disadvantaged ones. Therefore, the implications that harmony, as a prevalent value in Mexico, is reflected in “unity with nature” and “protection of the environment” are not supported by this study.

Another interpretation is that harmony is related to maintaining the status quo in the social environment. This implication can be supported by the qualitative analysis since in many occasions the interviewees characterized the Mexican as being conformist. Widespread conformity maintains a stable harmony, especially when it is paired with strong social roles. Samuel said, for instance that “Mexicans are submissive; they do not fight for what they think is right, instead they conform or wait for divine support”, supported by Omar’s argument that “hard work is thought of as a value, but in reality there’s mostly conformity and fear…. The Mexican doesn’t like to be alone, so he will conform with any type of [social] company, doing any activities, just because he doesn’t know how to be alone.” This interpretation of the value Harmony would not only explain the high score of Mexico in the cross-country ranking, but would also explain the strength of rationalizing ideologies in regards to corruption, since only when there is strong social pressure to conform are these ideologies properly passed on through socialization, and internalized through the individual actor’s
rationalization processes. Seen in this way, the hypothesis that harmony is a prevalent value in Mexican culture could be supported. But the way that Schwartz designed this concept in which Mexico ranked so high is not supported by this study.

4.2 Correlation between National Values and Corruption

**Embeddedness / In-Group Collectivism:** As previously mentioned, most respondents made a distinction between institutional and in-group collectivism. Rosa was the only one to say that “Mexicans are 90% collectivistic, especially in comparison to cultures like in the United States, where people would abandon their elderly relatives in a home, instead of caring for them themselves, that would never happen in Mexico.” So even though she was the only one to not mention individualism at any level, her example illustrates that she observes strong in-group collectivism. The rest of the interviewees mentioned that, even when collectivism is routinely expressed in discourse, in reality people behave in an autonomous way towards the society at large, while maintaining a strong embeddedness to their nuclear in-group. A common metaphor that was used by three of the respondents to explain this point was that “Mexicans are like a bucket of crabs; it may seem that we are rooting for each other, but when one gets to the top, everyone tries hard to pull him down” commented Samuel, which aligns with Omar’s response that “people are envious, it seems that Mexicans are only collectivistic for negative things, they all incentivize each other en masse to commit illicit or immoral acts”. Results show that while embeddedness, as a whole concept, is not a prevalent value in Mexico, in-group collectivism is, and it has been made clear how this facilitates the institutionalization of corruption.

Based on the interviews, two avenues in which in-group collectivism relates to corruption were illustrated. The first is through amoral familism. To consider the family as a first priority in all situations was mentioned by Laura to “feel almost like a social obligation, like people will look down at you if you don’t hold your family as the most important thing”. She is clearly able to feel the external press of culture. It is likely that, having internalized this value, people would readily forsake universalistic norms in favor of particularistic behaviors at the expense of outsiders. The tendency to always uphold the in-group above all others paves the way for collective corruption (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

The second avenue is through adherence to corrupt subcultures. Given that individuals are able to compartmentalize their identity; their distinct roles must be quite diverse so as to
maintain an illusion of balance. This, of course, leads to a prevalence of double standards, where people are able to justify the corrupt actions of anyone in their in-group, while condemn the same actions committed by anyone on the outside. The existence of double standards in Mexico was mentioned a few times, ranging from the corrupt President and his political party, who are known to have committed numerous acts of grand corruption, yet continue to demand honesty and order; to school teachers who protest the low quality of education, yet offer undeserved grades so as not to jeopardize their own scores as ranked educators. In-group collectivism is significantly positively correlated with corruption in cross-country analyses, and this relationship is observed by the respondents to be a reality in Mexico, therefore this paper affirms the notion that in-group collectivism facilitates the institutionalization of corruption. The prevalence of double standards is the main characteristic of particularistic cultures; therefore the existence of in-group collectivism, in relation to a high corruption index, contributes support to the hypothesis that Mexican culture celebrates Particularism.

**Hierarchy:** Cultures that value hierarchy may foster corrupt practices, since members are more likely to conform to the norm, without questioning or rationalizing the norm itself, given that their loyalty is more strongly placed on leaders/superiors and their hierarchical relationship to them, than on the rules. Omar explicitly described this by saying that “your permanence in your job often depends on your level of adherence to your superior, because when someone criticizes or questions decisions in order to improve the organization, the leaders don’t want him, they don’t tolerate him.” He also mentioned that during mass at the Catholic school he worked, a priest said to the students “you must navigate with a flag of foolishness”, so no one feels threatened by your rationality and excludes you.”

Leadership is a huge determinant in the institutionalization of corrupt practices, since the leader symbolizes permissiveness and desirability of behavior within an organization or in society at large. All of the interviewees criticized the Mexican government at some point for degrading the moral standards which are applied to the population, by blatantly violating the law and the cultural values in order to benefit themselves. If corrupt practices are already institutionalized in an organization, then only leaders who will behave in this way are sought and accepted. Diana, for instance, spoke of how she was offered to run as a candidate for the presidency of the student society, which encompasses universities in the whole state. She said that “they offered me lots of money, even a car, because it’s a very powerful position to have, and there’s big money to be handled, but I knew what the position involved, that position is
not supposed to have any of those benefits, so I turned it down…The guy who took it has kept the administration corrupt.”

An important aspect of informal hierarchies in Mexico, which was mentioned many times, was how closely hierarchies are linked to the concept of “chingar”. People seem to accept their position but always with the possibility of taking advantage of someone else, above or below them, in order to move up in the hierarchy. So while it is taken for granted that there are socioeconomic hierarchies, these are not actually respected. As Samuel said it, “there is a prevailing lack of integrity; the employee will go as far as the employer lets him, but they will always try to cheat (chingar) the other”. The cultural value of Hierarchy is positively significantly correlated with corruption in Schwartz’s cross-country analysis, seeing as responses explain and support such mechanisms; this paper affirms the notion that hierarchy facilitates the institutionalization of corruption.

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** The value of uncertainty avoidance was not observed to be prevalent in Mexico under the characteristics stipulated by Hofstede. The empirical indicators of this value being a need for rules, tendencies to be busy and work hard, norms of precision and punctuality, and resistance to innovation, all indicate that uncertainty avoidance is assumed to be empirically manifested in risk-averse behaviors. This study has concluded that the values of Indulgence and Presentism are prevalent in Mexican culture, and the implications of these contradict the implications of uncertainty avoidance.

Although the arguments made by Seleim and Bontis (2009) explain how cultures high in uncertainty avoidance establish highly bureaucratic structures which encourage leaders to behave unethically. The results gathered through this study indicate that Indulgence, the polar of Uncertainty Avoidance, may be more closely linked to corruption in the context of Mexico, as indulgence makes risky decisions appear rational, so long as they provide some benefit in the short-term, even if they jeopardize future growth and stability. Therefore, the hypothesis that Uncertainty Avoidance is related to corruption is not supported in the context of Mexico.

**4.3 Conflict between Explicit and Tacit Knowledge**

It is assumed in this study that socialization is the predominant form of knowledge creation when there is a conflict between tacit and explicit knowledge, since tacit knowledge has the inherent advantage of not having to be explained or educated into, but rather gets
communicated through social interactions and eventually becomes encrypted in the cultural traditions and social norms. The hypothesis that there is a conflict between explicit and tacit knowledge in Mexico, and that this prevents codified norms from being internalized, is strongly supported by this study.

In every single context in which it was asked what role the training plays in the actual execution of the given activity, the interviewees expressed that the codified information is rarely a strong influence in people’s behavior. Rosa described the Mexican belief in Catholicism as an “innate, naïve faith, based on tradition, as opposed to the bible or any other actual writings”, which she attributed to a dysfunctional education system. Ana compared Mexican artists to Italian ones saying “Italians tend to be very well-trained and they show it in their art, but in Mexico we learn more from our peers, and just from things in the streets, even those of us who have training, we don’t really use it”. Maria felt strongly about this conflict, saying that “Mexicans learn 90% of what they know through tradition”, as did Diana who said “even though rules in the sport are strict people have learned that cheating is pretty much okay anywhere, so they always try to cheat anyway”. Laura attributed the fact that “knowledge alone does nothing” to people’s lack of resources, which obviously puts survival, by whatever means possible, as the number one priority. Whereas Giovanna directly attributed it to the strength of socialization, as she said “morality comes only from the family and from traditions…there’s no love for the law here; people have learned in life that violating it is okay, so they do.” In every case the conflict that Paz (1950) described between discourse and reality was observed by all of the respondents.

4.4 Particularism versus Universalism

The question that determines the answer to this hypothesis is what are more important, rules or relationships? (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) The findings of this study so far reveal that relationships are far more important in Mexico than rules, which supports the hypothesis that Mexican culture is high on particularism. Answers from the interviews illustrate this reality from different points. Ana, for instance, sees the Mexican particularism in relation to crime to be a mere justification; she said that “we [Mexicans] tend to adapt the rules to how we think they should be applied; usually we justify crimes by claiming that we deserve what we get out of it, because we victimize ourselves. For example, I get paid too little, so I’ll steal a few things and make up for it.” Whereas others, like Diana, saw particularism as a necessary way of coping with a flawed legal system: “In my city it has now
been made illegal to defend yourself. So if someone attacks you and you hurt them, you’ll be charged as if you assaulted them. I don’t care about this. If someone, anyone tries to hurt my family I would do anything to defend them.” Ricardo had a similarly strong feeling saying “I’ve done things that are not cool, and I know it, but so what? Is it better to see my family struggle, to see them unable to pay for this or that, even for rent and food? No. They come before anything.” Given that the in-group is held as such a high cultural value and that there are serious socioeconomic inequalities and legal deficiencies in Mexico, it is unsurprising that Mexican culture would celebrate particularism, and with it a loyalty to people as opposed to abstract rules.

The results obtained from the survey show that although on average there was a significant majority of 62% of responses in disagreement and strong disagreement with the corrupt decisions described in the 8 ‘corruption’ questions, 10% of responses were indecisive, and 28% were in agreement and in strong agreement.

People felt most strongly in disagreement with the decision to pay a bribe to a traffic police officer. 92% of survey respondents said to be in disagreement and strong disagreement with the illicit transaction enacted. The strong feeling towards this situation is likely to be emergent from real-life experiences of the respondents with the police; this claim is supported by responses of the interviewees who mentioned this situation as being one of the most common types of corruption in Mexico, which corroborates the argument made by the Global Impunity Index (2017) that a large police force does not imply that it is a functional and effective force.

Nepotism and Political Corruption were the other two decisions which people felt most strongly in disagreement with. 80% of responses were in disagreement and strong disagreement with Nepotism, whereas 79% with Political Corruption. The results regarding Nepotism reject the assumption previously made that In-Group Collectivism is so culturally prevalent in Mexico, that benefitting one’s family through immoral means is justified, since respondents clearly do not see this action as legitimate. The results regarding Political Corruption illustrate the disdain that people generally feel towards those high up in the hierarchy benefitting from those lower in the hierarchy; however, the interviewee’s responses support the conflict between explicit and tacit knowledge, which usually results in this form of rejection of corruption in discourse, while maintaining some openness to corrupt activities that may benefit them or their in-group.
The action which people were most in agreement with was Lobbying, which may be due to the fact that this is not illicit. 66% of people were in agreement or strong agreement with the decision to lobby the government, although the scenario was written in a way that this could also be seen as clientelism, since the actor is ensuring support for the political party in exchange for the policy desired by the actor. Interestingly, Clientelism was the second action most agreed with, 40% of responses were in agreement and strong agreement. Clientelism is highly detrimental to the democratic election processes, which appears to be a serious issue in Mexico as shown by a 2008 study in which 62% of people did not believe elections in their country to be clean (ENCUP 2008). Interviewees of this study also expressed their frustration against this advantage. What the survey results indicate, however, is that resistance to clientelism is not strong, which could point towards said practice being institutionalized and in fact normalized.

The answers to the two questions which positioned the subject as a whistle-blower resulted in the majority agreeing with the actor. The first scenario is a man reporting his friend for receiving facilitating payments; 66% of responses were in agreement and strong agreement with his decision. The second scenario is a woman confessing to the police that her daughter committed theft (employee theft); 83% of responses were in agreement and strong agreement with her decision. Facilitating payments is not immediately associated to victimhood, as the effects are more harmful for the legal and administrative systems than for any one individual, this is most likely the reason why more people disagreed with the whistle blower than in the case of the theft. Nevertheless, the results are not as expected since in the second scenario it is the family that is on the line, and still the vast majority of respondents were not swayed to disagree with the whistle-blower.

The survey results do not strongly support the hypothesis that particularism is prevalent in Mexican culture. But surveys do not necessarily reflect how people behave in real life, and in fact may be more telling of what the universal values are, not how people would apply them empirically. So what it is telling of is that there are universal values which are widely agreed upon, though clearly not unanimously. As mentioned earlier, rationalizing ideologies, which are more easily institutionalized in particularist cultures, are built upon universal values and norms, and are in fact shaped by these, otherwise they never gain legitimacy.
5. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that certain cultural values have emerged in Mexico as a result of a conflict between explicit and tacit knowledge. In other words, the times of radical transitions that Mexico has experienced in the past, such as the Reform War of 1857, have created a gap between what is said and what is done, which is still felt today. Assuming that institutions evolve in a continuous manner, the social stability of Mexico has been preserved by the emergence of values, norms and beliefs taught almost exclusively through socialization mechanisms; codified knowledge is not primarily relied upon in any area of life, therefore the internalization of codified knowledge is weak; instead, it is expected and desirable to rely on tacit knowledge taught by the family and the community, and observable in traditions, language and rituals. Although adhering to knowledge imparted through socialization ensures social stability, it gives very little power to any agents of change seeking to normalize new practices, even if these are more socially and economically rational than the prevalent ones. Only those forces that persist through the resistance put up by tacit knowledge will exert any change.

From the values which were analyzed in this paper, the ones that have persisted and come to define Mexican culture are in-group collectivism, indulgence, and hierarchy. These three can and should be specified in the context of Mexico. In-group collectivism takes form in a cultural ideal of prioritizing the family above all else; findings from this study indicate that the family, not peer groups or organizations, exerts the strongest cultural press, i.e. stimuli and demands. Therefore, in-group collectivism in Mexico could be more accurately expressed as ‘Familism’, which is regarded more highly than rational and moral goals, and is far more culturally desirable than adherence to rules; which demonstrates how ‘familism’ can turn into ‘amoral familism’ under conflicting circumstances. The fact that in Mexico social security and law enforcement are weak, grand corruption is high, and socioeconomic inequalities are highly divided, illustrates why familism is reinforced. Yet simultaneously, familism may perpetuate the normalization of corruption.

Mexico’s high score on Indulgence can be most likely linked to the prevailing poverty rate combined with the abundance of Mexico’s natural environment. This interaction makes it appear economically rational to live for the present, thus making precautions and preventions appear economically irrational. Indulgence implies that it is culturally expected and desirable to pursue fun and the enjoyment of life above other goals, however the findings of this study
indicate that this motivation is not reflected in the context of Mexico, even if in practice it is expected and acceptable to indulge. For the purpose of specifying the cultural value to the reality of Mexico, indulgence could be more accurately expressed as cultural ‘Presentism’. This concept is borrowed from Dan Lortie’s study on subjective reward systems; presentism, meaning a set of stimuli and demands rooted in the present or short-term future implies that among the motivations for this cultural ideal are not only positive incentives, but negative ones as well (Lortie, 1975). The findings support the conclusion that indulgence may have come to be a tacit understanding because of the poor economic circumstances of the majority. If, however, people with the economic capacity for planning ahead still feel the cultural press of living in the present, which this study found to be true, then the concept of ‘presentism’ can successfully be attributed to Mexican culture. When present in a society with high rates of impunity, as in Mexico, presentism can facilitate the institutionalization because the costs or risks of committing an illicit act are considered very low. This value also adheres the individual to the group and social role that he is in at the present moment, reducing the press that universal values have over his behavior, and enhancing the press of the particularities that role demands of him.

The third cultural value which this study corroborated as being characteristic of Mexican culture is the value of Hierarchy. Large divisions of power, wealth and status are taken for granted in Mexico, they are accepted and the social roles that come with each position in the hierarchy are internalized and enacted. However, according to the findings of this study, the internalization of hierarchical roles has, in combination with the structural deficiencies of Mexico, come to imply a predatory type of hierarchy; where the hierarchy is accepted, but not respected. This lack of integral subordination results in rent-seeking behavior, where it is widely expected that people will attempt cheating or taking advantage of someone who is in any way permissive to it. This creates the self-fulfilling prophesy of believing that every individual with wealth or power has acquired it through illicit or immoral means, and that therefore it is okay to cheat him or her; generating an expectation of inherent corruption in leadership. However, this behavior may also contradict the prevalence of conformity, which was found to be much more detrimental for the rule of law, according to the interviews conducted in this study. The latter point cannot be strongly supported by this study, so it is concluded that hierarchy is a prevalent value in Mexican culture, and that it may facilitate the institutionalization of corruption.
Cultural particularism is also concluded to be prevalent in Mexican culture, although this is not as strongly affirmed by this study given that the survey results proved contrary to the hypothesis made. In any way, cultural values which prioritize relationships over rules and short-term goals over long-term ones are characteristic of particularist cultures. Particularism in the context of Mexico encourages the compartmentalization of identities into particular social roles, which may come with a set of norms and values that are distinct from universal norms and values. Fully enacting a role, even one that completely contradicts a different role of the same individual, can lead him to do things that even he would consider immoral, without suffering from internal conflicts. Particularism facilitates the institutionalization of corruption, but the extent to which Mexico can be considered a culture that celebrates particularism, was not confirmed by this study.

To understand the social embeddedness of corruption is to understand a side of humanity that exists potentially in all individuals of all societies; thereby understanding the mechanisms by which irrational and immoral patterns of corruption become instituted at a macro level is of value to researchers who, by influencing the mechanisms of socialization, aim to contribute to a harmonious social order.
6. Bibliography


Kar, D. and Freitas S. Global Financial Integrity ‘Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries over the Decade Ending 2009’ (2011) pg. 1


7. Appendix

Figure 1

![Mexico - Corruption Perceptions Index](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017)

Source: Transparency International

Figure 2

![Mexico](https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/)

Source: Hofstede Insights
https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/
Figure 3

Cultural Practices and Values in Mexico

Source: GLOBE Project
http://globeproject.com/results/countries/MEX?menu=list

Figure 4

Total number of societies: 80

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Value</th>
<th>Lowest Score</th>
<th>Highest Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aff. Autonomy</td>
<td>Cameroon − 2.13</td>
<td>France − 4.39</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel. Autonomy</td>
<td>Cameroon − 3.58</td>
<td>Switzerland (Fr)– 5.32</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td>Germany (west) − 3.03</td>
<td>Yemen − 4.63</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Bulgaria − 4.13</td>
<td>Italy − 5.27</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
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<td>China − 3.49</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>Israel (Jewish) − 3.28</td>
<td>Italy − 4.62</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Cameroon − 3.6</td>
<td>China − 4.41</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Schwartz’s Cultural Value Orientations
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304715744_The_7_Schwartz_cultural_value_orientation_scores_for_80_countries
Information Letter and Consent Form for Invitation to be interviewed

Dear:

This letter is an invitation for you to take part in a study that I am conducting as part of my BA degree in the Institute of Sociology at Corvinus University of Budapest. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail, if you decide to participate.

This dissertation focuses on corruption as a normalized aspect of Mexican institutions. I aim to find out whether this is true, which factors have encouraged the institutionalization of corruption, and what this implies for anti-corruption strategies.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions, if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded but if you are unhappy with this I can make written notes. Only I and my examiners will have access to the recording. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by e-mail at reyesalexm@hotmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Andrew Ryder who works in the Faculty of Sociology at Corvinus University of Budapest, his email is andrew.ryder@unicorvinus.hu

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Alejandra Reyes Moreno
**Consent Form**

I have read the above information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Alejandra Reyes Moreno of the Department of Sociology at Corvinus University of Budapest.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be recorded to ensure an accurate use of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty, by letting the researcher know.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

**YES**

**NO**

I agree to have my interview recorded.

**YES**

**NO**

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

**YES**

**NO**

Signature:
Interview Guide – Religious Leader (example)

1. Which values would you consider to be predominant in Mexican culture?
2. 82% of Mexicans identify as Catholics, do you see Catholic values empirically reflected on the behavior and attitudes of the Mexican people?
3. To what extent do you think Catholic Mexicans derive their faith from the Bible and other religious writings, and to what extent from informally-learned traditional norms?
4. Do you perceive a conflict between traditional values and modernity values in Mexico?
5. Do you think that the respect for hierarchies, observable in the Catholic Church is just as present in Mexican culture?
6. In your opinion, what is generally more desirable by Mexican people, to live for the future or to live for the present?
7. Do you think Mexican people are individualistic or collectivistic?
8. Do you think that Mexican people reinterpret religious norms to fit their personal interests?
9. Are there instances, in your opinion, in which it is justified to violate religious norms in order to uphold a cultural value?
10. What about violating legal rules in order to uphold a cultural value?
11. Do you believe that individuals have a free will?
12. In your opinion, what is at the essence of humans? (Born good and learn to sin throughout their lives; born selfish and have to be taught values throughout their lives; or they come as a blank page and are vulnerable to all stimuli.)
13. Have you ever witnessed or experienced someone (in or out of the Church) who abused their position of power?
14. Have you ever acted upon or been tempted by an opportunity to abuse your position of power?
15. Which corrupt (legal or illegal) actions do you believe are most harmful for Mexico?
Survey

1. Maria works as an intern in a very successful firm, but she earns very little, so in order to practice at home what she’s learning, she tends to take office supplies (notebooks, pens, etc.) from the office, without asking.

2. Rodrigo is driving fast because it’s late and he has to pick up his kids; he runs a red light and when a police officer stops him, he decides not to argue and just pay 300 pesos (15 €) so he could leave quickly.

3. Carla has been promoted in her job; she is given the opportunity to choose who will take her old position. Regardless of there being more qualified applicants, she knows that her family needs support, so she gives the job to her younger brother.

4. Luis finds out that his friend and colleague has gotten cash from clients for speeding up their files, even though it’s not allowed. Luis decides to report his friend to their boss.

5. Laura is new in the local politics; she is very determined in being able to make a change in her city, but seeing that all of the local politicians already have guaranteed votes, she decides to offer donations to local NGOs that she likes, and gain their public support.

6. Javier will go to the preventive jail to pick up his 18-year-old daughter who was arrested for drinking in public; thinking that his daughter committed a simple mistake, he decides to pay the supervisor so that she wouldn’t have to complete the 24 hours she had left.

7. Miguel, the mayor of the town, has to pave the main road. The project could be done for a low cost, but Miguel earns little, so he decides to hire a more expensive one since they guarantee an excellent job and offer a good commission.

8. Daniela is the president of a very well-known environmental organization, she decides to use her popularity to offer public support to the mayor’s party, in exchange for him banning the hunt of certain local species.

9. Andres hopes to get a scholarship from a very renowned art school; competition is tough, but his grandfather is friend of the principal, so Andres asks him to interfere, and he receives the scholarship.

10. Sofia has a daughter who has been accused of theft at the company she works; Sofia knew that her daughter stole and she didn’t think it was correct, so when questioned, she confessed it to the authorities.