



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

# **An ill-fitting dress**

**A study of cultural change in organizations facing globalization in Chihuahua, Mexico.**

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## ABSTRACT

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People are natural storytellers. From the stories shared around a fire, to the ones spread through mass media, stories have been a way for organizing our experience and making sense of our environment. Stories become increasingly important in a global community where cultures are not easily defined, and the borders between nations become blurred. This study aimed to find evidence of change in the business culture of the state of Chihuahua after Mexico entered globalization, and how business-related practices, assumptions, and identity building processes were affected. Narrative analysis was used to achieve this purpose. Stories were collected through interviews and analyzed according to the use of rhetorical and poetic tropes. The results show that 1) cultural change is evident in the shift from a preference for a tragic plot to a preference for an epic and romantic plot; 2) this change was not linear: Complex narratives are overlapping and interacting with each other; and 3) there is a feeling of dragging behind a pre-globalization business culture and identity, which is not compatible with the global community and prevents the exploitation of the business potential in Chihuahua. Globalization provides standardization, norms and regulations that have the potential to take the organizations in Chihuahua from outdated practices to the present-day global community. However, the resistance of the organizations and members of the community to the fully adopt these management practices, rules, regulations and standardizations, causes incompatible processes that fit the business culture like an uncomfortable dress.

*Keywords:* Culture, globalization, storytelling, organizations, Chihuahua.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1. BACKGROUND

In “After Virtue”, Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) argues that “man is in his actions and practice, as well as his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” (p. 250). Stories, from those shared around a fire to the ones spread through mass media, do not only have the purpose to entertain, but also to teach and help us interpret the world around us (cf. Czarniawska, 2004). Stories are, moreover, tools for sensemaking, a process that emphasizes the importance of the interpretation of stories, as much as the way in which they are constructed and why (Weick, 1995). Walter Fisher (1984) uses the metaphor of human beings as “homo narrans” to explain that stories give order to human experience and establish ways of living in common. One can only answer the question “What am I to do?” by first answering the question “What stories am I a part of?” (MacIntyre, 2007).

Stories are changed and adapted according to the storytellers’ purpose and audience. I will use the fairytale of Cinderella as an example. Many of us may be familiar with the animated film version produced in 1950 by Walt Disney, where Cinderella wears a blue dress and glass slippers to the ball where she meets Prince Charming (Disney, 1950). The film uses elements from both the version published by Charles Perrault in 1697, and the one published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm (cf. Dundes, 1982), although the first recorded version of the story is attributed to the Italian Giambattista Basile, whose collection of stories was published posthumously during the years 1634-1636 (Dundes, 1982). Besides these, there are countless other adaptations of the story to literature, film, television, theatre, opera and ballet.

In fact, the 1950 version of the character of Cinderella is not the only one in Disney’s inventory. There is also a short film from 1922 set in an art deco style (Disney, 1922), another portrayal closer to the Brothers Grimm’s version in the film adaptation of the Broadway musical “Into the Woods” (Marshall, 2014), and another live action film in 2015 which revisits the one from 1950 (Kinberg, 2015). By looking at the differences between these portrayals, one can learn about the films’ context and different target audiences. The 1922 version was shown in the height of the Progressive Era and the American Dream. There, Cinderella was portrayed as dependent, sweet, innocent, and submissive, matching the American ideal of women at the time (Higashi, 1979). The audience for the 1950 version was still recovering from the Second World War, and the film highlights the contrast between the upper-class New England accent of the Evil Stepmother, and the Americanized voice of Cinderella, which strengthens the authenticity and directness of the latter (Wood, 1996). Lastly, the 2014 and 2015 productions were immersed in a globalized context. The 2015 film, for example, involved an international production team, showed a variety of ethnicities in the main cast, the movie was filmed in England, and Cinderella’s glass slippers were designed at the headquarters of Swarovski in Austria (Kinberg, 2015; “If the shoe fits”, 2015).

Globalization, with its increasing advancements in telecommunications, travel and shipping, brings more than new social, economic and market systems. We live in a worldwide society

composed of complicated social networks and processes of interdependence (Beck, 2000). The easy access to information from almost every corner of the world brings an awareness of different ways of being, different stories, and different cultures. For Mexico, this awareness increased when the country joined the global community. Mexico officially entered globalization with the modernization and industrialization program of the northern border states, which meant the arrival of the manufacturing industry in the 1980's (Sandoval, 2005). The northern border states became the geographic zone that is most integrated to global society, although they also became the region that is most disconnected from the national economy (Schmidt, 1998).

Jorge Castañeda, secretary of foreign affairs of Mexico from 2000 to 2003, mentions in his book "*Mañana o pasado*" that few countries have dedicated so much time and effort to dissecting, analyzing and describing their "national character" as Mexico has (Castañeda, 2011). According to Castañeda, Mexicans are almost obsessed with being able to describe and defend who they are, and their reasons to be that way. Whether the stories they tell themselves and others regarding their national identity are true or false is irrelevant. These stories shape their behavior and display their prides and fears.

There is, according to Castañeda (2011), a consistent narrative of defeat in Mexican culture. Mexicans, he argues, see themselves as victims, not of historical accidents or natural causes, but because the country's history has been built around the recurrent theme of defeat as the direct consequence of conflict. He describes the plot of the national history as that of a nation that has been victimized from the Conquest, to the colonization, to the rebellion for independence, and the following invasions and bitter insurrections, all the way to the implicit sale of the country in the North American Free Trade Agreement. But Mexico is a vast country. With a land area of almost 2 million square kilometers, it is the 15th largest country in the world (The World Bank, 2015a). For comparison, 4.4 countries the size of Sweden would fit in it. Additionally, its population as of 2013 consisted of over 122 million people (The World Bank, 2015b). One can hardly imagine that a country with such an extensive land and large population would have a uniform culture and a homogeneous perspective of historical events.

Culture is difficult to capture and write about because of the inevitable diversity of any community (Ooi, 2007). Several attempts have been made by researchers in cross-cultural studies to describe Mexican culture in a way that can be understood quickly and easily. However, in order to achieve this bite-sized presentation of national cultures, it has been necessary to simplify its complexity and leave out the regional differences. This simplification is not limited to studies done by researchers outside of Mexico, as can be seen in Castañeda's argument for Mexico's tragic narrative. Mexican anthropologist Juan Luis Sariago argues that, because of the unequal investment of resources in anthropological research in the country, most studies, museums, institutes and faculties regarding Mexican anthropology and culture show a clear preference for studies of culture and society in the country's center and south, resulting in a blurry grouping of the rest as "the barbarian north" (Sariago, 2002). Due to a context of scarce labour, the "taming of the desert" achieved in some of Mexico's northern states entails a "multi-occupational" society that has little in common with the rural profile of the central and southern

regions (Lloyd, 1994; Sariego, 2002). Sariego further claims that the situation is slowly changing and more studies are being conducted, but the north remains an enigma.

What does this mean for the northern border state of Chihuahua? And how is this present in the sensemaking stories that people share? How do organizations in Chihuahua see themselves and how has it changed since Mexico entered a globalized environment?

## 1.2. RELEVANCE AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies about the impact of globalization in Mexico regard income distribution (Goldberg, 2007; Hanson, 2007), social mobility trends (Juárez et al., 2013), improvement of quality of life (Esparza et al., 2004), and immigrant entrepreneurship (Fairlie & Woodruff, 2007; Van Auken et. al., 2006; Klapper et. al, 2010), or have an anthropological and political approach (cf. Paredes, 1995; cf. Fox, 1999). Moreover, studies regarding the business culture in Mexico leave out regional differences by using a simplified view of Mexican culture (Nicholls et al., 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Howell et al., 2007; Stephens & Greer, 1995; de-la-Garza-Carranza et al., 2001). Most of the previously mentioned studies use a quantitative approach. I argue that taking a qualitative and narrative approach of the phenomenon is beneficial, since, as organizational scholar Barbara Czarniawska (2004) mentions, “long-lived narratives, especially stories, are sediments of norms and practices” (p. 45). Thus, one can say that narratives incorporate the experiences of people into the foundations of culture.

Despite Castañeda’s (2011) claim about Mexicans’ obsession with explaining its national character, little research has been done concerning cultural narratives and globalization in Mexico with consideration of its regional differences. An exception is a study by Isidro Morales (1997) on México’s national identity after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. His study is based on the analysis of texts written by the paramilitary group Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and texts by the poet-diplomat Octavio Paz and the novelist and essayist Carlos Fuentes. Morales analyzes the role of the official accounts of the Mexican Revolution as a tool for legitimizing the ruling elite’s power, and the close relationship between power and social representation in Mexico. Another exception is the study by Trinidad Chávez (2007) of the stories about the most outstanding individuals of the State of Sonora (neighboring state of Chihuahua to the west) and how such stories have reinforced the regional identity of its businessmen as the tammers of the desert.

The narrative act is not limited to social circles and political agendas, but is also taken to organizations. The theory of the storytelling organization by storytelling scholar David Boje (1991) considers the organization as a “collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense-making and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory” (p. 106). Sociologist Yiannis Gabriel (2000) mentions that organizational stories are currently studied in different ways, for example, as expressions of unconscious wishes and fantasies, organizational symbolism, culture and learning, expressions of power and political domination, among others. Gabriel states that in a

time saturated by information, stories “come to the rescue of meaning” (p.18), and carry cultural, social and personal significance. For example, studies concerning organizational stories show that different accounts of the same event by different levels of the organization’s hierarchy carry deep assumptions about power structures, and are used as coping mechanisms in oppressive environments, and to keep group unity and give hope to its members (Gabriel, 1991; Boje, 1995).

Organizations possess a living folklore that, although not equally dense and vibrant in all of them, offer valuable insights into their nature and the experience of their members (Gabriel, 2000). Moreover, the study of the organization as text should be complemented with the analysis of the experience of the people involved in the studied process (Musacchio, 2008). By identifying the effect of globalization in the narratives shared by members of companies in the state of Chihuahua, one may identify changes in the underlying assumptions of the business culture of the largest state in Mexico.

### 1.3. PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study is to find evidence of change in the business culture of the state of Chihuahua after Mexico entered the globalized community, and how these changes have affected business-related practices, assumptions, and the building of an identity in the region. The study takes a narrative approach so that sensemaking processes can be seen, and it takes into consideration the social and historical context of the collected data to contribute to the thoroughness of the analysis. The research question that this study aims to answer is:

*What effect has globalization had on the cultural narratives of companies in Chihuahua, Mexico?*

### 1.4. VALUE AND NOVELTY OF THE STUDY

This thesis contributes to the field of intercultural communication and organizational studies, by providing a close look into the business culture of the state of Chihuahua. The study considers the regional differences of Mexican culture, and compares the results to previous cultural studies, adding to its currency. Furthermore, the narrative approach of this thesis contributes the rich experience of the participants and the importance of their context (as mentioned in section 1.3 and further explained in chapters 2 and 3) regarding issues that are more commonly studied through quantitative methods.

The results of this study can be useful to organizations in Mexico, for understanding the implications of adopting the standardized management and production practices that are required to join the globalized community, as the study shows some of the positive and negative effects on culture and identity building that it has had in companies in Chihuahua. It can be of further use to companies outside of Mexico, by providing a more detailed look into business culture in Mexico, since popular cross-cultural management theories and literature tends to use a simplified version of culture (Fang, 2005).



## 1.5. OUTLINE

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 includes a description of the concepts of culture, globalization and narratives, and how they are used in this study. In Chapter 3, I describe the way in which I collected and analyzed the data. Afterwards, I present an organized summary of the results and examples from the data in Chapter 4. The findings about the effects of globalization in the collected stories, as well as its implications for the cultural identity of the storytellers and the characters in stories, are discussed in Chapter 5. Lastly, concluding remarks, the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter 6.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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This study stands on three legs: Culture, globalization and narratives. These concepts are broad and complex in themselves, which is why the focus of this chapter is only on the elements of these concepts that are relevant to the study. Subsection 2.1 Culture concerns how a group of people behaves in a certain environment and collectively learns. Subsection 2.2 Globalization presents the main historical series of events which contextualize the data. The last subsection, 2.3 Narratives, covers narratives as the specific units of analysis considered in this study, and how stories and language are used to interpret the environment and build an identity.

### 2.1. CULTURE

Defining culture has never been an easy task. Extensive critical reviews of the definition of culture were already being done in 1952 by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952). The focus of this thesis is on the business culture of the state of Chihuahua<sup>1</sup>, and since the more salient descriptions of the the business culture in Mexico tend to use studies of national culture as a starting point, I start by addressing the concept of national culture, and then move on to organizational culture.

Arguably the most recognized researcher of national cultures is Geert Hofstede, due to the cultural studies he carried out at IBM plants worldwide. Cross-cultural researcher Tony Fang (2005) calls these studies and others of the kind (e.g. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; e.g. House et al., 2004) the “bipolar paradigm”, because they suggest that culture can be defined as a set of value-influenced behaviors that can be measured to determine whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic, feminine or masculine, normative or pragmatic, and so on. In this paradigm, nations-states are treated as the basic unit of analysis, the focus lies on cultural differences, it is assumed that values are stable over time, and national cultures are difficult to change (Fang, 2005). Fang mentions that the strength of this paradigm lies in its clarity and consistency, and it is useful to some extent for first best guessing and testing hypotheses. On the other hand, the *either/or* mentality of these dimensions is artificial and problematic, especially when one realizes that national cultures embrace both orientations and have a *both/and* mentality (Fang, 2005).

I point out the limitations of the bipolar paradigm in order to explain why this vision of culture is not used in this study. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2010), the national culture of Mexico can be categorized as collectivistic, having high power distance, masculine, avoidant of uncertainty, normative and indulgent. According to the definitions of these dimensions, the results would mean that people in this culture take care of each other in exchange for loyalty and that the unequal distribution of power is accepted and expected. Also, it would mean that society is driven by competition, achievement, and assertiveness, shows little tolerance towards unorthodox practices and behaviors, expresses and exhibits great respect for tradition, prefers

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<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid confusion, hereafter I use “Chihuahua” to refer to the state, “the City of Chihuahua” to refer to the capital city of the state, and the capitalized “State” to refer to the government.

quick results, has a small propensity to prepare for the future, and tends towards a positive attitude and optimism (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2010). Similarly, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) argue that the business culture in Mexico is relationship oriented, communitarian, emotional and diffuse. This would base the business culture on the logic of the heart and friendship, give it an orientation towards common goals and objectives, be affective and emotionally expressive, and let one area of a person's life permeate all other areas, for example, by expecting a company chief officer to keep his or her authority outside of the workplace (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

The bipolar nature of these descriptions imply that Mexican culture is *not* the alternative to what Hofstede and Hofstede (2010) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) concluded. They imply that the culture is not individualistic, does not have low power distance, it is not feminine nor pragmatic nor restrained, not universalist nor rule oriented nor emotionally neutral. Fang (2005) points out that an either/or mentality is not compatible with the globalized world. To study the identity of national cultures in a globalized environment demands accepting that nations are not as easily separated as before. They are not "black boxes" that do not know what other cultures are thinking and doing (Fang, 2005). Furthermore, the work of Hofstede and Hofstede (2010) reinforces the stereotypical idea of a dominant culture that denies validity to alternative ways of being within the same country, and it also ignores the context in which any culture is embedded (Søderberg & Holden, 2002). National cultures are becoming increasingly transparent, elastic, virtual, fluid and mobile (Fang, 2005). Due to globalization, foreign investment and telecommunication technologies, experiences are created and shared across national borders. This exchange also legitimizes the necessity and urgency to find a new national identity and culture (Fang, 2005).

With this in mind, it becomes clear that Mexico should not be seen as having a single, homogeneous culture from border to border. That would mean ignoring the rich and complex regional diversity of the country. Also, it cannot be said that there is a single business culture for companies in Mexico. It is possible that historical events are experienced more strongly in some places than in others, and that their effects differ from region to region. To adjust to this cultural diversity, I use the definition of culture proposed by Edgar Schein, as it includes both perspectives in that culture is relatively stable but also relatively flexible, and a never-ending learning process:

Culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration. Such learning is simultaneously a behavioral, cognitive and an emotional process. [...] the perceptions, language, and thought processes that a group comes to share will be the ultimate causal determinant of feelings, attitudes, espoused values, and overt behavior. (Schein, 1990, p. 111)

Schein (1990) applies this definition to both countries and organizations. He argues that "any definable group with a shared history can have a culture and [...] if the organization as a whole has had shared experiences, there will also be a total organizational culture (p. 111)". Enough shared history and experiences will lead to a shared set of assumptions of how the world works. Once a set of shared assumptions is taken for granted, it will determine much of the behavior of

the group, as well as the reflections of their culture, such as the rules and norms that are taught to new members of the organization (Schein, 2004). Schein avoids being specific about a size of a social unit to which apply his definition of culture, and warns against believing that any assumption holds the same value for all organizations. This is due to the fact that what is considered a core element of one organization's culture, may not be as relevant to another.

One key element of Schein's (1990) definition of culture is survival or adaptation to an external environment. In order to achieve this, he proposes that organizations state a mission and a strategy, develop goals, and reach consensus about means, measurement and correction (Schein, 2004). The other key element of his definition is how to deal with internal integration.

Regarding this, he mentions the need to create a common language and concepts, defining boundaries and criteria for inclusion and exclusion, rules for distribution of power, intimacy, friendship, love, rewards and punishments, and how to explain the unexplainable and respond to the anxiety caused by it. He further argues that leadership plays a major role in the establishment of culture, becoming two sides of the same coin: Leaders create cultures by creating groups and organizations; and once there is a culture, there will be criteria to determine who will or will not be a leader (Schein, 2004).

The elements of organizational culture mentioned above are relevant to this study because the focus is set on the business culture of Chihuahua. That is, how organizations in this particular region learn over a period of time to adapt to their external environment and manage internal integration. Although individual companies may in turn handle these issues with some degree of variation, they share the environment and the region's history. More specifically, they share the challenges of being in a global community. But why is globalization so significant in Chihuahua? What makes the experience of these businesses different from others?

## 2.2. GLOBALIZATION AND THE MAQUILADORA INDUSTRY

George Ritzer and Paul Dean (2015) define globalization as “a transplanetary *process* or set of *processes* involving increasing *liquidity* and the growing multidirectional *flows* of people, objects, places and information as well as the *structures* they encounter and create that are *barriers* to, or *expedite*, those flows” (p. 2, italics in original). They explain that the processes that constitute globalization traverse the planet with an increasing ease of movement of people, things, information and places in every conceivable direction. The term has been commonly used since the 1980's, as technological advances have facilitated and accelerated international transactions (International Monetary Fund, 2000). However, the crises that occurred in the emerging markets in the 1990's (such as happened in Mexico, South Korea, and Indonesia), show that the opportunities of globalization come with risks, such as volatile capital movements, as well as social, economic and environmental degradation (International Monetary Fund, 2000; Mathieson et al., 1998). Saskia Sassen (2006) further states that an important part of globalization is “the enormous variety of micro-processes that begin to denationalize what has been constructed as national” (p. 1), which includes capital, policies, and urban spaces, among other dynamics and domains. In order to explain the significance of

globalization in Chihuahua and the use of the term in this thesis, I provide a brief historical background.

In 1965, Mexico implemented the Border Industrialization Program with the intention of generating employment and as response to the period's global trend toward offshore manufacturing (Taylor, 2003). The program brought to Mexico a particular kind of assembly plants called *maquiladoras*. *Maquiladoras* are labor-intensive assembly plants that import supplies, materials and machinery from a foreign country, without payment of import fees, in order to process such materials and ship them back to the country of origin usually for more processing before they are ready to enter the market (Gruben & Kiser, 2001). From the early 1970's on, the maquiladora industry began to show a considerable impact in the northern border region of Mexico. The development of this industry occurred roughly at the same time as other development programs and initiatives were joined or implemented in the country, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. From here on in this thesis, the term globalization is used to refer to the worldwide integration system in which Mexico has participated since the arrival of the maquiladora industry to the country.

In order to understand the significance of the maquiladora phenomenon, its imperialistic implications must be recognized, in that the social, economical and political adjustments that come with it work against the countries where it is implemented more than they improve their quality of life (Wilson, 1997). The year before the passing of the bill that allowed the implementation of NAFTA, Castañeda (1993), in his essay "Can NAFTA change Mexico?" warned that the plan of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (Mexico's president 1988-1994) would take Mexico into a transition that was too fast to be held successfully. He pointed out that the short term results would be positive, but that it would create more issues for Mexico in the long term. Either way, the country did not have a choice: NAFTA needed to happen, even with all its risks, if Mexico was to become the country "its people have always deserved, but never possessed" (Castañeda, 1993, p. 80).

The hope of the Mexican government was that, over time, the maquiladoras would help foster domestically owned and managed industry and manufacturing enterprises in the north (Taylor, 2003). However, it is perceived that Mexico has been a sort of neoliberal laboratory experiment since the country's debt crisis in 1982 (Wilson, 1997). Some of the consequences of the maquiladora industry have been the increased general economic presence of the United States (US) in Mexico, the transformation of attitudes and roles in the family, female participation in the economy, new assumptions about quality and self-actualization in work, an increasing lack of urban services, the growth of youth subcultures, among others (Taylor, 2003; Sariago, 2002). But what has the arrival of the maquiladora industry meant for the business culture of Chihuahua? How can we really tell if and how this culture has been affected? How can we access the underlying assumptions of these groups through ways other than surveys? That is where narrative comes into play.

## 2.3. NARRATIVES

In this thesis, I use the definition of story proposed by Czarniawska (1997) in her work “Narrating the Organization”, in which she states that “a story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem” (p. 78). Narration is a mode of communication, told with the purpose to entertain, teach, learn, and interpret; it is also a mode of knowing, because it uses a plot to organize experience and the intentionality of human actions (Czarniawska, 2004). The retrospective and “petrified” nature of narratives serves as a basis of strong corporate cultures, where retrospection can become a guide for the future (Boje, 2011; Czarniawska, 2004). Furthermore, narratives present explicit information that can be questioned or denied, but implicit information can also be communicated or strongly suggested by hinting and using context and rhetorical means (Prince, 1982).

Stories have implications for those who create and share them, as well as for those who listen to them. The way in which they are constructed reveals important information about the storytellers and the actors or “characters” in them (Gabriel, 1991). A story’s power is determined by its plot, rather than the truth or falsity of the story’s elements (Bruner, 1991). Plot is the way the elements of a story are arranged and brought into a meaningful whole (Czarniawska, 1998). According to Tzvetan Todorov (2006), the minimal plot consists of the change from one equilibrium to another, going through a stage of disequilibrium. That is, there is an initial situation (the first equilibrium), then a conflict (disequilibrium) arises which disrupts the initial situation, and finally the conflict is resolved (the second equilibrium). If one thinks of the stories we hear everyday, these elements are always present. The disequilibrium can be an accident, a decision to merge a company, or even spilt coffee right before an important meeting. Ultimately, it is a meaningful account of change from the first equilibrium to the second equilibrium which gives a plot to a series of events.

In his study of metahistory, Hayden White (1973) mentions that modern stories are often given a plot with the help of classical rhetorical tropes or figures of speech, namely, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. He further explains the connection of these figures of speech to the archetypal narrative forms of tragedy, comedy, satire, and romance. The definitions of these tropes and narrative forms provided by White (1973) are as follows.

Metonymy substitutes something close to the original object, or its attribute for the object itself. For example, by saying *suit* instead of *business people*, or *the office is busy* where *office* represents those who work in it. Tragedy is built around metonymy because it compares phenomena from a perspective of juxtaposition. Tragedy views mankind as subjected to the laws of fate, exposed through a central crisis that is the core of the narration.

Synecdoche builds on the part-whole relationship where the part symbolizes the whole, for example, by saying *wheels* to refer to *car*. Comedy uses synecdoche because human beings are represented, not as subjected to the laws of fate, but as parts that organically form a higher unity which works to resolve everything into harmony or a happy ending. Comedy moves between two societies: one deficient and one desirable.

Irony is the trope of skepticism, contradiction and paradox, it expresses something using a language that would normally signify the opposite. For example, saying “I love it when things break” when in reality it is a frustrating situation. Irony is the form of satire because it shows the absurdity of all that occurs, and therefore the absurdity of all the previously mentioned narrative conventions. Irony rejects the illusion of the rational laws of fate present in tragedy, the pursuit of harmony in comedy, and the self-fulfillment and disclosure of true meaning in romance.

Metaphor is used for explaining a less known term by connecting it to one that is better known. For example, a hero that symbolizes order, or the enemies that symbolize the forces of evil. It is the basic rhetorical figure of romance because of the symbolism of events, the characters and their actions. This narrative form is built on the assumption that everyone and everything has a true and deep meaning, which will be revealed after a process equivalent to a trial, a quest, or an ordeal.

Gabriel (2000) proposes epic as an additional plot and an important type of organizational story. In epic stories, the focus is on battles or contests that have been won, heroic achievements such as accomplished missions and challenges, and resolved crises. Despite looking very similar, epic and romance have different characteristics. Epic stories carry more weight and solidity, and its heroes voice the aspirations of large groups of people, races and nations, in a series of fairly restricted adventures (Ker, 1931). However, in romantic stories the heroes are in a more restricted setting that concerns a small group of people, emphasizing the adventure itself, as well as revolving around tokens of love, gratitude and appreciation (Ker, 1931; Gabriel, 2000). To give an example of these differences, an epic story would be one about an employee that defies adversities to accomplish his or her mission, while a romantic story would be one about a manager helping a subordinate in a difficult situation.

Rhetorical tropes permeate all linguistic discourses, but if the audience is to understand them, they must be familiar and easy to recognize, which is why classical plots are appreciated by modern societies (Czarniawska, 2004). Besides these, storytellers rely on other narrative and stylistic devices, such as intentional ambiguities, omissions, distortions, exaggerations, rearrangement of materials, and timing, to make their stories more lively and infuse them with meaning (Gabriel, 2000). These are called poetic tropes, and they convey the storytellers’ interpretation of events. For instance, tropes show how the storytellers find connections between two different episodes, determine who takes the blame or the credit in the story, describe what the characters are like and what emotions they express. In this thesis, I focus on the 8 following poetic tropes, as described by Gabriel (2000).

- Attribution of motive: This gives meaning to an apparently meaningless event, and determines whether or not a particular event was aimed at achieving an outcome. It is vital in marking the role of the characters in the story, for example, as heroes, victims, villains, and so on.

- Attribution of causal connections: This links two or more incidents as cause and effect, especially when events are close to each other in time. An extreme form of this attribution is superstition.
- Attribution of responsibility: Particularly, attribution of blame and credit, which determines whether a character is given the role of a villain (if they are to blame for a conflict or disaster) or as a hero (if they are to take credit for solving the conflict and saving the day).
- Attribution of unity: This refers mostly to the treating of characters as a “they” or an “us” and seeing them as a single entity. It relies on generalizations and stereotypes.
- Attribution of fixed qualities: Once a character is cast in a role, certain features are given to them, for example, courage and honor to a hero, malevolence to villains, and so on.
- Attribution of emotion: This refers to the emotions in which the characters in the story are invested, and it becomes a key to understanding the actions of characters, for example, if they acted out of ignorance, terror, greed, love, compassion, etc.
- Attribution of agency: The use of this trope turns something passive into something active, for example, an organization can be given human qualities and treated as an independent agent with its own range of cognitions and actions.
- Attribution of providential significance: This trope presents an event as crafted by a superior intelligence to achieve a specific purpose, and infuses it with magical and supernatural qualities. This trope, important to tragedy, can be benevolent (something unexpected happens and solves everything) or malevolent (there is a fate which the characters cannot escape no matter what they do).

Gabriel (2000) further mentions that different accounts of the same incident lead to different readings of it. For example, during one of his studies of organizational stories, he found a story of a cook who had committed suicide. When interpreted and narrated by his co-workers, the event was evidence of their victimhood at the hands of the managers. On the other hand, the managers’ interpretation was that of an unfortunate incident which was not caused by the organization at all. Plots and tropes are relevant to this study because they provide rich information about the storytellers and their environment. Rhetoric and poetic tropes reveal the deep meanings that the narrators give to the elements in the stories and their experience. Still, there is more to organizational stories than finding appealing plots and tropes to embellish them, as is discussed next.

### ***2.3.1. Stories, organizations and identity***

Musacchio (2009) states that “One of the major influences in narrative research has been the shift from the view of communication and language as simple tools to represent reality to a view of language as a constituent of reality” (p. 27). Stories are co-constructed by the storyteller and the audience; they are adapted depending on the social function that they fulfill, the context and their purpose. The social dimension of storytelling and the way stories are rooted in a community show the use of a common cognitive structure and collective memory (Musacchio,



2008). Collective storytelling is also a way for the members of organizations to supplement individual memories with institutional memories (Boje, 1991).

Gabriel (1991, 2000) argues that stories, myths, jokes, and gossip can be seen as a way for people to humanize the impersonal spaces of bureaucratic organizations and act as symbolic landmarks of their cultural life. Thus, the storytelling act is a privileged way to access the complex nature of life in organizations, which witnesses the constant movement between “the stabilizing forms of social determinacy and the destabilizing forms of experience” (Musacchio, 2008, p. 611). That is, the constant movement between “what should be”, and “what is”. Gabriel (2004) talks about stories as windows through which one can access deep organizational realities linked closely to the experiences of their members, which reveal the emotional, political and symbolic lives of their organizations. He mentions how official organizational stories that are reproduced in their official websites and other publications may include narratives of heroic leaders, rituals, great achievements, and overcome crises. These official stories coexist with other stories built outside of the organization’s control, which express a wide range of emotions that are used by the organization’s members for coping and making sense of their experiences (Gabriel, 2004). Besides this function of sensemaking and transmitting knowledge, stories and legends in organizations generate commitment and can serve as control mechanisms (Wilkins & Martin, 1980).

Through storytelling, moral anchors and pragmatic guidelines are provided, as well as languages or discourses which influence the way we talk about the world, interpret it, and act towards it (Watson, 2001). Stories also carry valuable information about the identity of the storytellers and their audience. For example, saying “Only *I* went to the meeting that day” carries implicit information about others who did not go somewhere, and may contain a hint of the storyteller’s responsible and even brave character. Individual and social identities are actively constructed through storytelling, as the narratives are retold, processed, challenged, influenced and modified (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Thus, individuals reveal through their stories what they think they can control about their lives, how they experience a connection to others, and how events have affected them positively or negatively (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

To summarize, stories give life to the characters in them, make experience meaningful, connect us with one another, provide an opportunity for a renewed sense of organizational community, give action models for times of crisis or change, and make the unexpected expectable and manageable (Boje, 1991; Boje & Dennehy, 1993; Robinson, 1981). In this study, narratives are the window through which we look at the business culture in Chihuahua and its rich experience. Through the choice of tropes and plots made by the storytellers, it can be seen whether they assume people are subject to the laws of fate, or if they assume that everyone and everything has a place and will eventually come to a happy ending, as well as if there is a deep meaning to what we do and who we are, or if all of the above is absurd. This, seen through the lens of culture, reveals the process through which organizations adapt to an environment (in this thesis this refers to the globalized community) and solve their problems of internal integration in order to build and sustain an identity.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The data for this study was collected through open-ended interviews. Open-ended interviews allow participants to use their unique way of defining the world, it assumes no fixed sequence of questions which makes it suitable to all participants, and allows them to raise important issues that were not considered in the schedule (Denzin, 1970). The data was verified and validated by accessing the official websites of companies in Chihuahua, specifically the history and corporate philosophy sections, as well as printed material regarding the social and business context of Chihuahua.

The companies considered in the study had at least three levels in their organizational structure (e.g. director, manager, operations employees), most of them had been founded in the City of Chihuahua, and had been active for 15 years or more. Only one company was a franchise, active for 7 years, but was however included for its salient performance in the business environment of the city, and for being owned by a local company. Six of the eight participating companies operated in at least one city other than the City of Chihuahua at the time of the study. In addition to members of organizations, other participants were included due to their privileged knowledge about the business culture over the 20 years prior to this study, their relevant interaction with companies (for example, as consultants), and their valuable experience working with organizations in Chihuahua and other states in Mexico, which allowed them to make comparisons.

In order to gain access to companies in Chihuahua, as well as permission to publish the study's results, it was important to have the right contacts within the organizations or with those who had them. This was also a crucial factor in acquiring the trust of the participants, since having the recommendation from third parties that the participants trusted and could verify reduced their resistance to provide information about their current or former organizations. This is the reason the recruitment of interviewees was done through contacting people whom I met during my academic and professional life in Chihuahua. These people either worked in companies of the previously mentioned characteristics, or could provide the necessary contact information and recommendation to give me access to them. I sought that the interviewees held as high a position in their companies as was possible, as that gave them authorization to provide more sensitive information and grant me the permission to publish it. This choice also minimized the risk of harming other employees at the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. When potential participants on managing and directing positions were not available, I interviewed those they referred me to, as well as former employees that had more freedom to express themselves since they were no longer a part of the organization. A total of 14 interviewees participated.

At the time of the study, the interviewees worked in the following industries: Agriculture and livestock farming, cement and construction industries, advertisement, organizational consultancy, real estate, hotel services, international trade consultancy, and security and

telecommunications technology. A guide to these companies can be found in Appendix B. The participants' positions included current or former chief executive officers (CEO), public relations managers, advisors and consultants, communication managers, sales managers, and accountants.

Silverman (2015) mentions that eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience through interviews is best achieved by providing an atmosphere that leads to open communication. For this, I kept the role of an active listener, which means giving the interviewees the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings, while keeping in mind the broader aims of the study (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). I asked them to select the place for the interview, which as Hennink et al. (2011) mention, helps reduce the anxiety of the participants and lets them choose an environment that feels more natural to them. The interviews were conducted in the City of Chihuahua, Mexico, between February 10th and March 2nd, 2015. A total of 12 interviews were conducted, out of which 7 were conducted at the participants' workplaces, 3 in cafeterias, 1 at the participant's home, and 1 through Skype due to geographical restrictions. Two of the interviews included two participants at a time.

In addition to using Skype, other instruments that were used in the data collection were an interview guide, a smartphone for audio recording, and a notebook for field notes. As has been mentioned, the interviews were open-ended and not bound to a structure. The guide, a translation of which can be found in Appendix A, was an important tool in gaining access to the companies and building trust, as in some cases the agreement to be interviewed was subject to the approval of the guide's content.

The interviews were directed towards the organizations' history, mission, vision and values (key elements of adaptation and survival of the organization, as proposed by Schein, 1990). The interviews also included questions about the participants' personal history in such companies, their everyday activities, their career, their experiences in the business environment of Chihuahua, and the changes they had seen or heard of in such environment during the last three decades (in other words, since entering globalization). Questions about bosses, subordinates, or both, were asked depending on the position that the participants held in the companies they worked for, which yielded information about how organizations deal with internal integration, one of Schein's (1990) key elements in his definition of culture. Although not all the questions were directly related to the study (for example, questions about everyday activities and routines), they nevertheless provided information that allowed making further, more informed questions, contextualize stories, and give a good, general understanding of the companies and their situations.

Depending on the availability of the participants, the interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours. A total of 11 hours and 11 minutes were recorded. As many interviews were conducted as was possible during the time of this thesis work. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish. The excerpts presented in this thesis are my own translations.

### 3.2. DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Narrative analysis was used for this study, as it was considered the most suitable given my research question. Narrative analysis keeps the focus on the ways in which stories are used by people to make sense of their surroundings and interpret the world, keeping in mind that narratives are social products created in a specific social, historical and cultural context (cf. Czarniawska, 2004). As Gabriel (2000) mentions, stories can be used as windows into organizational life only when it is understood that they claim special privileges and are subjected to special constraints. He adds that “Only then can we study the challenge that they represent for teller and listener alike, the meanings they carry or fail to carry, the pleasure or pain they afford, and the power they accord or deny” (p. 29). Some of the collected factual and descriptive accounts were not considered stories because they pursued objectivity rather than emotional effect, which sets them apart from stories (Gabriel, 2000). On the other hand, fragments from other accounts and the use of language as tools for reinforcing stories were taken into consideration.

Because it is the purpose of this study to find sensemaking mechanisms, the stories sorted for analysis were retrospective and situated in the past. In some cases, the stories *happened* in the past, but were told using different tenses. They were nevertheless considered narratives since, as Prince (1982) mentions, different tenses can be used to relate past events more vividly, although these tenses used to tell the story may not necessarily correspond to the time of the events. It was also taken into consideration that they had at least a minimal plot: Going from one equilibrium to another through a state of disequilibrium (Todorov, 2006). The interviewee’s conclusions or insights were also considered a second equilibrium or outcome of the story.

Not all the stories were told in a linear fashion. Some of the stories were put together from pieces that were offered by different participants if they concerned one single event, regardless of the plot it was used. For example, if one story was told with a romantic plot by one interviewee, and with a tragic plot by another, but they were nevertheless referring to the same event or disequilibrium, they were counted as a single story. The stories were sorted according to the plot that was more salient: If a romantic comedy showed a stronger focus on the characters as parts of a harmonic whole, it was sorted under comedy, and if a tragic romance showed a larger content of metaphors and tokens of love and appreciation, than it showed references to the forces of fate, it was sorted under romance.

The use of rhetorical tropes in the stories was analyzed to find the type of plot: epic, romance, tragedy, satire and comedy, with their corresponding sets of characters, such as heroes, villains, victims, forces of fate, and so on. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on the mentioned archetypal characters and identify them according to the features I describe hereunder. The hero is the central character in the story, and usually represents positive values (cf. Propp, 1928/2006; Prince, 2003). The villain is the character which struggles against the hero and frustrates his or her efforts (Propp, 1928/2006). Antagonists are the characters that show moral ambiguity and oppose the heroes, but do not necessarily struggle with them (Prince, 2003). The forces of fate are supernatural forces that determine the destiny of the characters in the story and see to their fulfillment (cf. Bal, 2009). Lastly, the victims are the characters which are

subject to malevolent forces of fate, or the recipients of aggression, and are usually represented as helpless (cf. Bremond, 2014).

The choice of plots and poetic tropes, described in the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2, were analyzed to find the underlying assumptions about “how things were before and after globalization”, “how we behave as a group and learn from our experiences” and “who I am/who we are”. The focus of my analysis bears upon the experiences of the interviewees and the way they interpret their environment, and not the historical accuracy of their stories. The analysis was done in a way that contributes the complexity of human experience and perceptions to the quantitative studies that have been conducted before.

### 3.3. SUBJECTIVITY

In the approach of this study, subjectivity is acknowledged. When studying stories, the researcher is not a neutral medium but part of the research itself (Musacchio, 2009). The researcher further contributes to the co-construction of reality during the interview process (Finlay & Gough, 2008). My own background and emotions were an integral part of this process.

Subjectivity worked as an advantage because, by belonging to the same cultural group as the interviewees and sharing a native language, local expressions were easily used and understood, as well as the use of euphemisms, sarcasm, and unfinished expressions. On the other hand, being already a part of the interviewees’ cultural group meant that keeping an objective distance from the interviewees and their stories required a considerable effort. Thus, two risks needed to be managed: Imposing my own assumptions on the participants’ voices, and the over-interpretation of data. This was achieved in the data collection stage by keeping the role of an active listener (described in subsection 3.1), by making questions that concerned only the participants’ experiences without implying my own interpretation of events, and by doing a literal transcription of the interviews. In the data analysis stage, the risks were managed through systematic and thorough analysis of the collected data.

### 3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the participants in this study agreed to be interviewed and recorded, and all were informed verbally and/or by email of the way the gathered data would be used and stored. They were given the choice to remain anonymous, in which case their names and the names of their companies were changed at the time of transcription, and references to personal information were removed.

A form of consent to participation with information about confidentiality and the handling and storage of the collected data was offered to the participants when I considered it helpful in the establishment of trust. Additionally, an agreement was made with the interviewees that the original recordings and transcriptions of the interviews would not be publicly shared, even after making them anonymous, which is why the transcriptions are not included in this thesis.

Some of the interviewees requested that their names, the names of their companies, and some additional names they mentioned remained anonymous. In those cases, the names of people were changed using an online random name generator ([www.nombra.me](http://www.nombra.me)), respecting their gender. They were given proper names rather than changing them to *Respondent A*, *Respondent B*, and so on, in order to keep them personal and make them more memorable, as they appear intermittently in Chapters 4 and 5. The anonymized names are presented in italics. The profession of the interviewees is mentioned when it is considered necessary for context.

The names of the companies that were changed for anonymity were replaced by *Company A*, *Company B*, and so on, in the order in which they were mentioned in the interviews. A list of all the mentioned companies with their corresponding industry can be found in Appendix B. In the case of the anonymous versions of the names of companies or conglomerates with the word *Grupo* (group) in them, the following word, usually a family name, was also generated randomly with the previously mentioned online tool. The word *Grupo* was kept for its connotation. The *Grupo* type of companies in Mexico are usually conglomerates owned by powerful and wealthy families, which is relevant for additional context in this study. Information about regional terms, government institutions, historical figures and other characters that appear in the stories is offered in the foot notes for a richer context. I present in the next chapter the stories and fragments that I considered to be the most representative of the collected data. They were translated as faithfully as possible.

Both the data collection and the presentation of results in this thesis were done in a way that minimizes the risk of harming the participants, their companies, or the characters and companies in their stories.

## 4. RESULTS

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In subsection 2.3 Narratives it was mentioned that a crucial element of narratives is the change from one equilibrium to another through a period of disequilibrium. In this case, globalization provided such change. Companies in Chihuahua went from a first equilibrium before globalization, through the disequilibrium of adapting to globalization, and towards a second equilibrium. In the collected stories, I found that the interviewees talk about globalization as if it were a period of enlightenment. First, they talk about a starting context where poor administration, corruption, abuse of power, and limited business opportunities hindered growth and encouraged social stratification. Then, they add the great disequilibrium that was the arrival of the maquiladora industry and the implementation of the NAFTA agreement. In this chaotic atmosphere, roles are reevaluated and organizations reinvent themselves, lastly arriving to a new equilibrium and a reconstructed identity. I elaborate on these stages in the following subsections, where I also show stories, fragments, and other examples from the data.

### 4.1. THE FIRST EQUILIBRIUM: BEFORE GLOBALIZATION

In the collected stories, the work environment before the arrival of maquiladoras and NAFTA is described as a discouraging one. The abuse of power in privately owned companies and governmental institutions was considered normal, as were the concentration of power in a small elite, corruption, and a wide gap between social classes. Let us look at an excerpt from a story shared by *Mario*, a livestock farmer of European descent born in Chihuahua:

[...] We were manipulated a lot in the previous period, through permits. But the NAFTA ended that political manipulation. [Before], you arrived and wrote your name down, and said “I have 1000 heads of cattle, I want to export them”, but then the Union came and said “No! But why? Here your permit says you can only export 200” “But what will I do with the other 800?”. So they forced us to sell to them, the one in the position, so they could make money out of it by increasing the price by two or three times, not through hard work or taking care of the animal. They had us kidnapped with that.

In this account we can see that the authority, the Union, is given the part of the villain and blamed with the intention of taking advantage of the hard-working farmers. The interviewee uses elements of an epic plot by talking about the ordeal of a people, and expressing on behalf of all the livestock farmers in the region (“They forced us”, “They had us kidnapped”). The story talks of professional enmity, and it attributes unity to a “them” (the Union, the authorities) who try to take advantage of an “us” (the farmers, the country people). By using the terms manipulation and kidnapping, the farmers are given the role of the victims, from which they were saved by the NAFTA agreement. This portrayal is reinforced in further stories and the use of language, as in the following fragments from the same interview:

[... My father’s] main enemy was always the government, because of the Land Reform<sup>2</sup>, because they wanted [...] for him not to progress and that is why they attacked him.

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<sup>2</sup> The Land Reform was a process of nationalization of land in Mexico between 1915 and 1928, in which the State expropriated large ranches and plantations in order to distribute the land among smaller farmers, with the intention of counteracting the land concentration that prevailed throughout the XIX century and intensified under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) (Lewis, 2002).

and

[...] Banrural<sup>3</sup> was a bank... “The bank of the countryside and this and that”, it was a nest of cunning devils!

I also found in the collected stories that a protectionist<sup>4</sup> scheme and having a well-known family name separated people in the work environment. That is, companies that were built from scratch by people who did *not* belong to a family in the business and political elite, set themselves clearly apart from the companies that were built by well-known individuals or families in Chihuahua or in Mexico. This can be seen in the following example from the interview with international trade consultants, Luis and Marisela, in which they share stories of successful businessmen:

Luis: [...] There are businessmen like Carlos Slim<sup>5</sup>. He said he didn't need [to learn] English. And he is the ROLE model. But we forget why he didn't need it. Things worked out for him because of the protectionism, he grew big because of it. Yet he set the example. [...] So why are we so behind [developed countries]? Should I tell you? Simply because we don't plan. Because our role models are the businessmen that grew under the protectionism. [...] There isn't really a conviction that clear processes and planning will help you grow. Why? Because you know that this person grew [without them]. And here in Chihuahua, if you see the way *Licenciado*<sup>6</sup> Pérez grew... right? He is building another hotel now. Or look at the growth in Chihuahua right now. If you see the kind of businessmen that are in it, it's the businessmen of the old guard. [...] And now, those same hotel owners, of course they have the capital, and now are bringing international franchises.

Pamela: Is *Licenciado Pérez* related to the owners of *Company A*?

Luis and Marisela [simultaneously]: No!

Luis: He belongs to other *Pérez*.

Marisela: He is actually earthly [laughs], he says so himself!

In the previous example, *Licenciado Pérez* is given the advantages of the protected businessmen, but is not of the “godly” characteristics of the elite. He is said to reinforce the idea that he is “earthly”, setting himself apart from the elite and closer to “the normal people”. This type of social separation and attribution of qualities is also visible in the following fragment from the interview with *Mario*:

It doesn't mean that [all] the businessmen are cunning devils or anything. There are excellent businessmen, because they come, like my father, from livestock farming, or like Don Eloy Vallina<sup>7</sup> from the industry in this and that. I don't mean the sir that is [the head of the companies] right now, but his father. But, how did he do it? He knew how to entertain a politician that also wanted to look after the community. They used the shadow of the government and power in order to flourish. And that's why they flourished, isn't it? [... The government] created the world's biggest businessman, didn't they? Which was Carlos Slim, but it wasn't for his own merits. He had some merit, yes, he must. But his biggest merit was Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who sold *Teléfonos de México*<sup>8</sup> to him.

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<sup>3</sup> Banrural (Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural) was a government-owned bank in Mexico created in 1975 with the purpose of financing agriculture and agroforestry in the country. The bank declared bankruptcy in 2002, but was restructured and reopened in 2003 under the name *Financiera Rural* (cf. Soto et al, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> “The theory or practice of shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition by taxing imports” (“Protectionism”, n. d.).

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Slim Helú is a Mexican business magnate, owner of the conglomerate Grupo Carso, and ranked by *Forbes* magazine as the richest man in the world 2010-2013, and the second richest at the time of this study (“#2 Carlos Slim Helu & Family”, n. d.).

<sup>6</sup> “Licenciado” literally means to hold a bachelor degree. The title is used as a sign of respect.

<sup>7</sup> Eloy S. Vallina (1903-1960) was a businessman and banker in Chihuahua. Some of his businesses included the participation of members of the *Pérez* family, and other members of the business elite in the region (Silva, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Former name of Telmex, a telecommunications company which is a subsidiary of Grupo Carso.



Carlos Slim, *Licenciado Pérez*, and Eloy Vallina, are all said to have grown because of the protective shadow of the government. In the stories, the protectionist scheme carries unfair distribution of wealth, manipulation of the market, and restricted competition, which affects the businessmen that do not have such connections. This separation is also present in the way other interviewees express themselves about these type of companies, their owners or founders:

*César* [owner of an advertising agency, talking about a new project]: This project was born when we revamped the image of a company that is called *Company L*. *Company L* is a company that is sister to *Company M* in Juárez City, going back to that thing about families, it's the *Hernández* family, who are COUSINS of the owners of [one of the biggest dairy companies in the region], so... it is an *Hernández* MAFIA.

By calling these groups a mafia, *César* attributes them with a closed and tightly-knit structure. And, by listing their achievements and wealth, the family is given power in the story and set apart from the “common people”. Similarly, in the following excerpt, the merit of such businessmen is reduced by stressing their lack of hard work and attributing their wealth to fate.

*Raúl* [former CEO of a real estate company, *Grupo Fernández*]: [...] The fortunes, [...], or the people with the means here, have historically been obtained through inheritance and not through... the hard work and effort of starting businesses.

And in the following fragment, *César* gives an example of the godly power of Carlos Slim, and ridicules the type of motives that can he thinks can be behind the large-scale decisions of men with such power:

If that dude wakes up one day in a bad mood, he CLOSES Telmex<sup>9</sup> [...] So even when he has a world of people as an entourage to do things, this is my perception, if one day he wakes up and his underpants are too tight, he will say “NO” and you will not be able to change his mind.

These stories that give an almost absolute and inescapable power to the villains and antagonists, convey the frustration of the heroes and their surrender. This situation, however, changes in the stories about the implementation of NAFTA and the arrival of the maquiladora industry, although the change is neither smooth, nor easy, nor completely beneficial for the organizations and the community.

## 4.2. GLOBALIZATION AS THE GREAT DISEQUILIBRIUM

The term globalization is used in the stories to refer to NAFTA, the arrival of maquiladoras to Chihuahua, or to the arrival of the controls and procedures applied by the government and private organizations for standardizing trade and administration. All of these have in common that they started to happen in the same period, roughly between the late 1980's and early 1990's. The pattern that repeats the most in the stories I collected is the attribution of providential significance to such events. As can be seen in the following example, globalization puts an end, or at least heavily restricts, the abuse of power from governmental institutions, corrupt authorities and abusive bosses.

*Mario*: But then NAFTA arrived and I was happy, they told me “But how are you going to compete!” “Me? I'm not afraid of competition”. I don't know if it's because of my upbringing, because the Mexican does not like competition, he wants a monopoly, right? But the NAFTA arrived and it took a huge

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<sup>9</sup> Telecommunications company. Subsidiary of Grupo Carso.

pressure off in our own field, the Union was there not to help the industry but to help themselves. [...] It brought a period where... The government lost control because those permits or the fees were over. We felt liberated, although later they took control back with the flag of health policies.

The portrayal as divine intervention that was shown in the previous example is reinforced by the one shown below, in which globalization is attributed with the great social, political, and organizational changes of the time. This includes an increase in job opportunities for vulnerable groups, the change in power structures, and the change in gender and family roles, many of which are still ongoing. As can be further seen in the following example from the interview with *Héctor* and *Gonzalo*, two organizational consultants, these changes bring a sense of liberation to the environment:

*Héctor*: [The maquiladoras] gave a job to many that didn't have a chance: the woman, the mrs., the single mother, the young man, they got a job.

*Gonzalo*: Many taboos were broken, because it used to be like that... I remember, in the unwritten policies it said "Don't hire single mothers", what is more, not even women! [...] They employed many people [...] implemented quality controls [...] they made universities improve their programs and the universities benefitted from the maquiladora employees studying there [...]. Those have been very good things.

Another advantage of globalization mentioned in the stories is opportunity for growth on legal grounds. This opportunity benefits groups which were previously under a number of restrictions, and fosters the generation of wealth, not only for the people who had the means prior to globalization, but also for the rest of the community. Let us look at the following story, about *Mario* and his brother, who found a way to castrate their female calves in order to improve their worth:

I asked here [in Chihuahua] and they said "No, that cannot be done, besides, we cannot allow it". Quick to the power. I made a call to Mexico City, and they gave me a good person, I don't remember his name but... "Yes, it CAN be done, why not? And if you HAVE a problem, just call me". The boss of bosses. "And don't you go saying, because otherwise you'll have problems and they will get in your way". [...] We castrated all of them. And the gossip started. I went and filled the form "Sir, but you made a mistake, it says females here" "They ARE females" "But the females are not for exporting" "They weren't, but from now on they are" I said. They didn't want to sign the papers "You can't do this, I am the AUTHORITY and you can't do this" "Look" I told him "don't make disturb your boss, he said to call him if I found any problems. You have to be on good terms with God even if the Devil gets angry". He was shaking with rage, he couldn't even sign!

After they succeeded in exporting the cattle they wanted, *Mario* talks about the dilemma that he and his brother encountered to either keep the secret to their success and become very rich, or share the information and benefitting the entire community of livestock farmers. They decided to share it:

So now we've taken a lot of strength from the government. That was thanks to NAFTA. Now, you cannot go against the small farmer, because how are you going to take their income? At the moment it looked like I was naïve, but by sharing it with many, it made us stronger... I alone would not have made it against the government. But someone at the Secretariat of Agriculture, would NOT go against who knows how many members of the cooperative.

However, as providential and magical as the arrival of globalization appears in some of these stories, they also show that a considerable effort is required in order to become a part of the global community. To guarantee membership, the organizations are required to change their administrative practices and adopt a set of new, standardized processes, along with rules and

regulations that prove the organization is able to do business as a “serious company”, as seen in the example below:

*Gonzalo:* [...] There is always a technology transfer. Somehow, you arrive [to the organization] and you say “Well, it is clean here”, “Hey, they have safety policies, and hygiene policies and everything else”, unlike before. [...] And something else is that, if you wanted to sell chewing gum [to the maquiladoras], you HAD to be the certified supplier. So [...] you had to be registered at the tax office, go through a filter, fulfill certain quality norms, and quality processes norms that force you to... well, to develop. [...]

*Héctor:* The thing is, if you want to be a serious company you must have a defined vision and your values. If not, you're not a company. In the current administrative world, if you don't use that language, you're out. Even if they're just lies! [...] It's part of this globalized culture, where there is a way to manage.

In the collected stories, I found that globalization was not embraced by all companies with the same enthusiasm or to the same degree. Some companies in the stories step aside and either refuse to join, or minimize the impact of globalization in their organizational stories, as can be seen in the following example with *Brenda*, a communication officer:

*Brenda:* [Globalization] hasn't had that big an impact in *Company A* [...], like it did for Grupo Modelo. You know that it opened an IMPRESSIVE market for them. Thanks to the free trade agreement, they opened breweries in many parts of the world and now you see their ads, right? Corona [beer] is all over the world! [...] For us... the advantages have been to have more access to materials and technology and, why not? Also talent. We had offices, some labs in Switzerland, in [Yverdon-les-Baines]. We had them there in 2005. We had many colleagues with a PhD, Italians, Russians, everything. And it was a very interesting experience, but, as I told you, because of the [2008] crisis, it had to go, right?

and in this story shared by *Raúl*:

*Raúl:* They had had an experience that I wasn't there for, they [wrote the mission, vision and values] and it wasn't followed. Like... they didn't pay attention to it anymore. [... Back then], one of the board members was substituting a sibling [of the owning family] that had passed away. And he asked “So what is our Mission? What about the Vision?” And another board member said “Look, if you want to go that way, go ahead. We already tried it and achieved nothing so... good luck”. And he was left like that, without really feeling like insisting on it.

In these, stories the companies show their solidity by describing the impact of globalization as a weak one. In *Brenda's* story, globalization was the main cause for the sudden and strong growth of Grupo Modelo, whilst the impact for *Company A* was modest, conveying that the latter was strong and solid already before globalization. This is reinforced by adding the loss of the labs in Switzerland as an unfortunate event that *Company A* could nevertheless overcome.

Despite the positive outcomes and changes of the arrival of globalization to Chihuahua, the stories also mention its negative side and blame it for the current social problems of the region. The negative, social consequences of the new work environment and new gender and family roles are described as threatening to the traditional family cell (mother, father, and children), and the cause of an inevitable lack of parental supervision and nurturing, as we can see in the following fragments:

*Raúl:* Well, in the social environment it was very notorious that the housewives left their houses, they abandoned the children at the daycare, the children came home from school and there were no mothers at home. And that had negative consequences in the security and upbringing of people. The family was respected before, the authority of the father and the mother was respected, and that is lost. I feel that a lot. The family cell was dismembered.

and

*Gonzalo:* [... If] the mother leaves for work and leaves the son in the hands of... I wish it had been the hands of somebody. But they just locked them up, which is sad. But on the other hand, yeah, she left the kid alone, but if she doesn't go to work on THAT [the maquiladora], what work will she do?

Both *Raúl* and *Gonzalo* point out that society was not prepared for the changes in the work environment, as there was no structure to support the families and the children of working mothers, except for daycare centers which by law only accept very young children<sup>10</sup>. In *Raúl's* version, the mothers are directly responsible for this “abandonment”, while in *Gonzalo's* account, the mothers did not have a choice.

It can be seen in these stories, the great disequilibrium brought by globalization affected the environment to which companies in Chihuahua are trying to adapt. In the following story collected from two different interviews, *Company K*, a safety equipment retailer, tries to adapt to the new environment and encounters the unpreparedness of other industries as well.

*Héctor:* *Company K*, traditionally, ALWAYS sold equipment to everybody. The maquiladora arrived and [treated it like an inexperienced child] because it made him enter a contest, and online. They forced him. The mining industry arrived and told him “I want 100 thousand pairs of gloves, ok? I don't want the thick glove, the heavy one. I want thin gloves, and you deliver them for me at the mines. But I will pay you monthly”. So then he was forced to import the glove from India, in containers.

*Gonzalo:* Something he had never done in his life.

*Héctor:* Never in his life. He is the LARGEST distributor of Berrendo shoes [a brand of industrial footwear] in the country. And for 11 years has had the award for the largest distribution, because of the mining industry. But “sell gloves, and also TAKE the truck with gloves and leave it there, and trust...”. For him it's good business. But to get there you drive for 10 hours...

*Gonzalo:* And not only that, to drive through where you have to drive...

Although in the story it was the international mining industry that made the demands, the new processes are attributed to the maquiladora industry. There is in the story a promise of good business, which was fulfilled (“for 11 years he has had the award for the largest distribution, because of the mining industry”), but taking the first steps is a process that involves challenging previous business strategies (“Something he had never done in his life”), and taking higher risks than before (“... TAKE the truck [...] and leave it there, and trust...”). It is also implied by *Gonzalo* that the road itself comes with its perils (“...to drive through where you have to drive...”), adding to the difficulties of accepting the mine's demands. The story is complemented by Luis and Marisela, whose company (SCI) was in charge of the logistics to take the gloves from India to Mexico:

*Marisela:* When the trade openness arrived, no one was ready. Not even the banks! Because I remember that if I wanted to make a payment, the first one I would go to was the bank. And the bank didn't know, they didn't know HOW to send money from one country to another. I don't know if we had told you the case of *Company K*, they bought their merchandise, it was gloves, in India. And they were going to pay the supplier through the bank [...] with a letter of credit, which said that [the payment] would be released when the merchandise was at the port of shipment. Well, they could never do it. It was so bad that the merchandise was left in the port, the monsoon arrived and spoiled the glove. It arrived here...

*Luis:* With mold.

*Marisela:* They couldn't get it; actually the government did not allow it because it was damaged [...]. [The trade openness] caught us off guard. Because nobody was ready for it.

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<sup>10</sup> The government daycare service only accepts infants from 43 days old to 4 years old (Capítulo VII- Del seguro de guarderías y de las prestaciones sociales, 2009).

In this story, both *Company K* and the banks see their professional capacity as insufficient to face the environment's demands. *Company K* is taken out of a familiar environment when it is "forced" to compete online for a contract, and the banks see their lack in knowledge and infrastructure to support safe international transactions. In this way, we can see that the environment was not the only thing affected by globalization. It also affected the organizations' processes of internal integration and their identity.

### 4.3. AN IDENTITY CHALLENGED BY GLOBALIZATION

In the collected stories, I found that professional and group identities are questioned in the disequilibrium that followed the arrival of globalization. Companies with a traditional family structure as well as the previously uncontested authority of bosses, are challenged by the new environment. This is due to the different distribution and delegation of power, control systems that involve decentralization of power, and the change of ideal leaders and leadership styles. Additionally, previous role models are perceived as obsolete, as we can see in the following fragment:

Luis: It's many factors [that have hindered the business potential of the region]. I'm talking about us, the mortal people. As I told you before, we think we are Pancho Villa<sup>11</sup>. Our idols, in a way, are revolutionaries. He [Villa] had the wits of a bandit. [...] He was a leader. He was uneducated, but he was very intelligent. Somehow it worked out for him.

Marisela: Because he surrounded himself with experts. [...] But it was a very curious thing, he went to the extremes. His right arms were one that was a crook, and one that was a strategist<sup>12</sup>. The combination worked.

This story shows Pancho Villa, a military and political leader at the time of the Revolution, sitting on one extreme of the role model spectrum, the opposite of which would be Carlos Slim. Born in a poor family, Villa went from being an outlaw, to a revolutionary leader and later to a national leader. Some legends and versions of his life accuse him of abusing power much like the elite he attempted to overthrow, as is mentioned in the extensive research around him done by Friedrich Katz and published in 1998 (Katz, 1998). However, the collected stories grant him a certain tolerance in abusing a power he has acquired himself, compared to those who abuse the power they were born with or given by the government. In the fragment above, the role models are given the qualities of bandits: Cunning, fast, with good advisors, acting after their own decisions and not standard procedures. The fragment mentions that no formal education is needed for these leaders, although being intelligent is a requirement. It also shows a theme of power by force, which repeats throughout the collected stories. Additionally, the role models of the Pancho Villa type are the idols of "us, the mortal people", reinforcing the idea that there is an "other" that is "immortal" or "godly". However, these idols and leaders are no longer the best suited to deal with the globalized world, as is shown in the comparison below:

Gonzalo: In the previous culture, the *patrón* [translates literally to boss] was the *patrón*. You could not say anything to the *patrón* because he would get mad and kick you out.

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<sup>11</sup> Pancho Villa (born Doroteo Arango, 1878-1923) was one of the most prominent generals of the Mexican Revolution, a political-military leader in the state of Chihuahua, and also its provisional governor in 1912 and 1914.

<sup>12</sup> Two of his close advisors were General Felipe Ángeles in strategy, and Rodolfo Fierro as executioner.

*Héctor*: But the maquiladora arrives and it turns out that you have three bosses: One in Dallas, one in Mexico City and one here [in Chihuahua]. The one in Dallas starts at 7:30am, which is 4:30am here. Then you have to be at the office to call him. The morning call. The scheme changes.

*Gonzalo*: And you answer to all three of them, and you have to air out the problems. It's not ok to hide them. And every time there is a mistake, it is published. And [before] it was the other way around, it was "Damn! I made a mistake, no one must know!" [laughs].

The general meaning of *patrón* and boss is the same: An employer. However, *patrón* has the connotation of a master, someone with absolute power over the employee. This is reinforced by the habit of hiding mistakes from them, as well as keeping quiet about disagreements. Bosses, on the other hand, are not almighty. Their power is split ("you have 3 bosses", "and you respond to all three of them"), and the employee is not only in a safer position to admit to mistakes, but is expected to. Although this particular story is about the structure of a maquiladora, other stories show that a similar structure is adopted by local organizations. *Raúl*, who was the CEO of *Grupo Fernández* in two different periods, talks about this contrast when *Grupo Fernández* started to adopt this structure:

The first [stage, roughly late 1980's to early 1990's] was much more... familial, decisions were more impulsive. It was more about shouting and yelling, the law of the strongest. And since the figure of the eldest brother was stronger, so to speak, in decision making, it was like a small group got together and the rest broke apart. That was very clear in the first stage. In the second stage [2002-2013] it was much more professional. There was a structured process for decision making, there were committees, there were managers for different areas, they used a budget, there were plans for the next 15 years and with yearly goals. Yes. Big difference.

And in the following story, Luis and Marisela use a parable to explain the slow pace with which the changes are made in the local businesses. They also explain their experience of stating their corporate philosophy and writing strategic and quality plans:

Luis: [You may ask] "But then, is the Mexican lazy?" No, no! It's like the story of the lumberjack, let me tell you: Once there was a lumberjack that said "Today I will start to work on my own", and started to cut down trees. The first week he cut 20 with his axe.

Marisela: And he was very effective, very hardworking.

Luis: The second and the third week, the same thing. That is the Mexican. Then the fourth week, another 20. Then the fifth week, 18 trees. The sixth week, 15. And so the weeks went by. Until one week he was working and would only manage 2 or 3 trees.

Marisela: And it's not that he didn't work hard. ALL day he would be hitting and hitting the tree with the same determination. Or even more than that, because he was worried, what was happening? Why wasn't he as efficient as in the beginning?

Luis: Why do you think? Because of the axe. What did the axe have?

Pamela: It wasn't sharp anymore.

Luis: Exactly. When did he sit down, because it was a waste of time, to file his axe? We don't file our axes. We don't have that culture.

Marisela: After a certain number of trees, you sit down and file the axe, and then continue cutting. But not here. Here we want to cut and cut and cut. After all, "How nice, this is producing, it's giving. What would I file the axe for? I'll do it later".

Luis: But no. We don't have it [in us]. [The other businesses] complain and complain. But we have to start with each of us. We can't keep blaming the government because we will waste our whole lives in that. But it's very difficult [to accept responsibility]. Culturally it is.

Luis and Marisela attribute the business culture of Chihuahua with the feature of short-term thinking, and stress the resistance to making necessary changes and adjustments to improve

productivity. But despite talking about this cultural feature in a tragic tone, that is, as something that one is born with and cannot modify (“We don’t have it”), they give the people the free will to continue on that path or change it, making them creators of their own fate (“We have to start with each of us, we can’t keep blaming the government”). Their story concludes with them finding their own place and the place of their company in the new environment.

Luis: [When we sat down] to define our mission and vision, we had to give it time, change... I mean, not change, but UNDERSTAND that you have to evolve. And remember how hard it is when you have a comfort zone. We go back to the lumberjack, man! You needed to BREAK because, how much time did we dedicate to that? [...] Instead of producing! And may I tell you the truth? It felt like a waste of time. “Why? What am I doing here instead of visiting a client?”.

Marisela: And we didn’t see any results!

Luis: [...] The truth is, during the first year, if we are honest, there were no results. If you see it from the perspective of the Mexican, it was a waste of time. That’s why nobody wants to assume this responsibility. But nevertheless we go back to passion and faith. I knew this was good. To know what my company really is, where I’m going, why I’m here. [...] If you don’t know this, you are lost.

In the conclusion of this story, the management tools brought by globalization (strategic and quality planning, stating a mission and a vision) act as catalysts not only of organizational change but identity change. Some of the stories talk about challenging the claim of uncontested power not only from bosses but also from clients who would rely on the name of their owners, or the company’s name and size, to impose their demands. This is visible in the language of the interviewees when, for example, they talk about the “old guard”, or “the Knights of the Round Table” as in the following fragment from the interview with *Vicky*, the Public Relations manager for *Company B*:

They are people that say “Ha! What are YOU going to teach ME about my business if I have 50 years [with it]?” [...] There were some [people in the board of a company that was *Company B*’s client] that were like the Knights of the Round Table.

In this example, the board members are compared to the Knights of the Round Table from Arthurian legends, not because of their chivalric actions but because of their closely-knit structure and the way they set themselves apart from *Company B*. The expression “What are YOU going to teach ME”, implies that the “knights” minimize the value of *Company B*’s professional knowledge, which in their opinion cannot be compared to their life experience. The stories do not limit the theme of the challenged identity to boss-employee relations, but they also extend it to gender roles, as can be seen in the next example:

*Gonzalo*: [...] Those traditional [companies] that I’m telling you, yeah, there are companies where you don’t have women in the board, and there never will be [laughs] as long as they stay in the same scheme. But those are the minority. I think that every time it’s more, I’ve seen more and more women on a high management level. Every time I have more female customers [laughs]. But before, they were men. [...] And it’s the WHOLE organization, not just the women. It’s the WHOLE organization that now has a different discourse from the traditional one.

The description of the traditional organizations in many of the collected stories shows them as dominated by men, having no room for open discussion, centralizing power, and having a decision making process based on an individual. This contrasts with how they describe the new type of organization, which is attributed with “a different discourse” of open communication, gender equality, promotion based on merit rather than on contacts and favors, and the increased value of skills.

Not all the challenged identities belong to characters that the storytellers identify as enemies or antagonists. In some stories, the identity Chihuahua as a whole is threatened in a way that it contributes to the resistance to change and industrial growth. Several fragments across the collected stories refer to the industry of Chihuahua as having one main identity: That of the agricultural state only concerns itself with livestock farming and crop farming. In the example below, it is seen how this main identity is comforting to some, but a hindering element to others:

*Alberto:* When we compare ourselves with Monterrey [in the state of Nuevo León]. In Monterrey they [the businessmen] have no limits. But here we are very limited because we either were livestock farmers or are farmers, or we are the same businessmen that have done things like this our whole lives, and so on. I WISH that this would go faster, because [the City of] Chihuahua and the rest of the region have a lot of potential. But we need to be more bold. We are too traditional. I mean... it's very much "I build my companies with a controlled risk". And you can see it, the companies are practically the same [as always]. There are smaller businesses that are opening, but... there are no big companies that we could say "Wow, another company from Chihuahua". They are very few.

Much as having a threatened main identity hinders growth, it was expressed in the stories that the pre-globalization business culture is now more of a legacy that is dragged behind and slows the organizations down. In two interviews, part of this legacy is referred to as "a culture of non-payment". Although it is given different characteristics, both accounts describe it as part of the reason why the full potential of businesses in Chihuahua has not been exploited. The first fragment is from an interview with *Jorge*, a consultant for an association of cotton farmers:

[The regional farmers, excluding the mennonite community in Chihuahua] are a little bit entrenched in the culture of non-payment. Because they have the background of Banrural, and there, well... they didn't pay their loans and the institution disappeared eventually. That is why they have that culture. And also because of paternalism<sup>13</sup>. "At the end it is the government's money, well... if we can't pay back, what are you going to do about it?"

The second mention of this culture is made by *Vicky*:

For example *Company N* struggles with its cash flow, [...] because some suppliers [in the US] tell them "I won't send the shipment if you don't pay in a single payment" [...] And besides you bump with the trend in Mexico of making very small payments, right? And everybody wants to pay you with vouchers. [...] So, this particular client feels that from one end to the other of their operation there is no congruence. I feel that in Mexico... the culture of non-payment is strong.

In *Jorge's* account, the culture of non-payment is an impediment for progress that the heroes (the Mexican farmers) carry with them, while in *Vicky's* account it is a feature of the environment that the heroes (*Company N*) struggle with, even if the organization itself does not carry it.

The stories show that globalization made the bandits and the figure of the *patrón* obsolete by bringing the rule of technocracy. The identity of the powerful and uncontested leaders is challenged, but this further means that once there is no one to determine and legitimize the identities of others, the Chihuahua's old identity (livestock farmers and crop farmers) is also challenged. This drives the companies of Chihuahua to reconstruct their identity to one that is

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<sup>13</sup> "The policy or practice on the part of people in authority of restricting the freedom and responsibilities of those subordinate to or otherwise dependent on them in their supposed interest" ("Paternalism", n. d.).



more adequate for the globalized environment. In the process, their perception of other actors in such environment also changes.

#### 4.4. RECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

In the collected stories, I found that the organizations' identities are reconstructed after their realization of being inadequate for the current environment, and rediscovering the organization's potential. Realization of being inadequate happens in the stories once the technocrats arrive and it becomes clear that the previous culture is no longer the best suited for the global environment. This can be seen in the following example of *Raúl* comparing his experience as CEO of *Grupo Fernández* and working for a General Motors maquiladora:

*Raúl*: In my job at General Motors it was established what each of the departments needed in order to get results. [...] The operation was much more structured. [...] The bosses would win their authority based on their knowledge and showing their abilities, and that there was value in what they were doing and proposing and deciding. This last was I think the most important difference with *Grupo Fernández*, where just because they were the boss it was more than enough to demand that something was done in a certain way, right? There was nothing to prove that theirs was the best way. Respect, in General Motors, was either won or not. Then, if there was a boss that wasn't very capable, the subordinates would not respect him very much [...] And here, members of the family that were not very capably were even feared, right? Because they could kick them out with a simple "Get out" and fire anyone.

*Raúl* points out two contrasting work environments: One that relies on rationale and technique (structure of operations, knowledge and ability), and one that relies on fear and emotions. The rational environment is more open to the merits of its members, which makes it better suited for professional growth than the organizations that rely on emotions. Moreover, there is a clash in the stories between an emotional environment and the new preferences of employees who look for work and not just employment. These trends also set new group rules, as we can see in the following excerpt:

*Héctor*: Before, we all looked for a company where we would have an indefinite contract. Nowadays you look for a company where there is work [...].

*Gonzalo*: [...] Before, it was a lot like Héctor says, before it was a loyalty job. The owner also wanted loyalty. Then you pretty much married the owner or the company. And it was for life.

*Héctor*: Like in the XVIII or XVII century.

*Gonzalo*: Then, you went and stayed there for your whole life. Not anymore.

Besides work preference, the language changes in this example from "we looked" to "you look". This suggests that the new environment encourages the independence of professionals in it. It is no longer about belonging to a safe group ("you stayed there for life") but finding personal fulfillment ("you look for a company where there is work"). This also shows that people look for mobility, and not for long-term attachments as much as it was done before. By comparing the previous trend of loyalty employment to the scheme of the XVII and XVIII centuries, it is shown how antiquated the trend is. It also suggests that this type of employment included employer-employee relations that were more of the master-servant kind, similar to the mentions of the *patrón* figure.

The rational work environment introduced by the maquiladora industry are not a benefit limited to maquiladoras. Indeed, stories and fragments like the following example talk about organizations adopting them as a sign of health:

*Daniel:* Look, I can tell you about my experience. I have been the director of [this hotel] for a few years now. This company also has other businesses, we're even finishing another hotel, we have restaurants, etc. I report directly to the Administrative Board, who are the owners of this company. What I have seen is that they are VERY formal people. Very serious and very proper regarding the processes that they follow. [...] I don't know if that is how it is everywhere, but it has been MY experience, and the truth is that it has been a very good experience. It is a very healthy company in that sense.

This can also be seen in the following fragment, where professionals that refuse to follow regulations are destined to fail, and are compared to low quality, pirated products:

*Ana:* They have told me about former employees of this company that have left and started their generic version [laughs]. Their 'Little Duck'<sup>14</sup> brand, but they always fail in the end. [...] The work is all coming here, because we do things the way they *should* be done.

And it is also visible in *César's* story about how he came to appreciate the value of tools after having a conversation with a construction worker:

*César:* What really took this business off was the TOOL. The BETTER tools we have, the more efficient we are. A construction worker told me this "With the [right] tool, I can do anything". And it is true.

In the stories, tools are attributed with an almost magic quality that has the power to change organizations and leads to the rediscovery of the organization's potential. Businesses have the opportunity to go from small shops to world-class establishments and companies, such as *Company K*, the safety equipment retailer that started doing business with international mining companies after the implementation of NAFTA. In the story, the promise of the industry and trusting in the new possibilities leads them to achieve a new status in the business world. The story concluded with the company becoming the largest distributor of Berrendo industrial shoes in the country, and receiving an award for such achievement for 11 consecutive years. *Company K* becomes the market's first choice, not anymore because of tradition, but because of their efficiency and knowledge. Let us look at one more example of this transformation:

*Vicky:* *Restaurant E* was the traditional, most famous *fondita*<sup>15</sup> that sold montados<sup>16</sup> and burritos here in the city. It was also a cheese factory. Last year we renovated their establishment, they gave us the place while still under construction and we took care of everything else. Eh... [laughs] once it was finished, we got a comment from an acquaintance that said "I can't believe I go to *Restaurant E* and feel I'm in Applebee's! Why... I just came here for a montado!" [laughs].

Here, *Vicky* and the advertisement agency put their knowledge and their technique to the service of the small and medium sized businesses<sup>17</sup>. The result is that the previously small restaurant turns into an establishment that conveys a feeling of sophistication, which is expressed by comparing it to a US chain of diners (Applebee's). In this rediscovery of the companies' potential, the tools that were a privilege of the big corporations become more accessible. The decision to undergo such a change is described as the decision of the organization more than it

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<sup>14</sup> A Mexican expression for something that is generic, cheap and of very bad quality.

<sup>15</sup> A small, cheap restaurant that usually serves "home cooking".

<sup>16</sup> A traditional dish of the region.

<sup>17</sup> According to the Secretariat of Economy of Mexico, small and medium enterprises are those that with small variation according to industry, have maximum of 250 employees (Moreno, 2009).

is a requirement of the environment. Let us bring one more example from the data that shows how it is a matter of conviction:

Luis: They do not see [the benefits of regulations and standardization]. They keep seeing their business like a small shop. [...] They don't believe [in their potential].

Another feature of the reconstruction of identity that is mentioned in the stories is the arrival to a happy ending after every hardship. Not all the overcome crises are fixed heroically or are ordeals and struggles. This can be seen in the following example where *César* and *Vicky* tell the story of the departure of one of their biggest clients, and how the organization found its harmonic place in the environment again.

*César*: Not long ago, we stopped working with Telcel. We were their marketing agency for more than... 12 years. It's a WORLD, a world of time. Hmm... you charge \$10 and have an infrastructure to hold this service. And suddenly there comes someone new who charges \$1. So I told them "I can't charge you \$1, it goes against my principles. I can't. If HE [the new agency] does it, go ahead, right? I will help you with the transition. I have no problem, none at all". And it was a VERY big blow because that was 60% of our income. But then *Elenita* [the administrative assistant] said in a meeting -I have VERY brave women, and I learn so much from them... That's why I have them with me. So *Elenita* told me in this meeting, it was just the two of us, "The best thing that could have happened to us was the departure of Telcel". Ah! It was like a bucket of cold water.

And it was true. It FORCED me to go and find a new market, it made move and bring more clients. It forced me to WAKE from my comfort zone. Because "They are the best in Chihuahua" yeah, right! It's not true! But you believe it, that's the saddest thing. [...] What *Elenita* said about losing Telcel, that was powder GOLD for me because... it's very difficult to be a boss. People don't know.

And from the interview with *Vicky*:

*Vicky*: When I started working here, the company was much smaller regarding the work load. Five years ago we had what you can call an anchor account, which was Telcel [...] This account brought, more or less 70% of the company's income. Really, Telcel was the ENGINE of the company back then. But then we had a critical moment last year, where Telcel chose to change to an agency that offered the same service but at a much lower price. This is because these decisions were previously made by the marketing department, and now there were made by the purchase department. So, this was a STRONG change for us, we lost 70% of the income, we had to let people go, unfortunately. But luckily this change coincided with the trust that people started having in marketing [...]. It was incredible, as Telcel left, many small and medium accounts started to arrive, [...] they came to substitute what Telcel was for us.

This story is embedded in the globalized context despite its focus on a local conflict experienced by *Company B*. The "world of time" that should have meant loyalty and permanence is no longer a strong enough motive to maintain business relations. The arrival of competition (in this case, the other agency) provides a point of reference for the organization to establish its identity, as well as its members' professional identities. The characters show professional confidence by declaring that the services will continue to be charged at the same price as before. Similarly, they display professional maturity by acknowledging the strengths of the competition and offering to help their client in the transition. Furthermore, *César* chooses to say "it goes against my principles" instead of "it goes against the policies" which not only confirms his power in the decision making, but keeps the company "virtuous". Work, then, is perceived as closely related to the person's identity as a human being, and not as a commodity. There is a sense of group identity as that of "virtuous people", as it can be deduced that only "brave" people are allowed in it ("I have very brave women [...] that's why I have them with me"). Although it can be argued that the use of language suggests an objectifying attitude

towards the employees, the relationship is compensated by showing the value of their approval of the employer's decisions. That is, *César* has to *earn* their employees' respect through good decision making, as in the story about General Motors shared by *Raúl*.

Both *Vicky* and *César* comment on the hardships that meant losing the organization's biggest source of income. But while *César* perceives it as a personal battle where he, the romantic hero, is expected to bring new accounts for the survival of the company, *Vicky* interprets it as a readjustment of larger pieces of the puzzle. First, she attributes the event to logical decisions made by the client. And second, when small and medium sized businesses start approaching the agency, she attributes it to a change in culture. This change motivates small and medium sized businesses to see specialized knowledge (in this case, marketing expertise) no longer as a privilege of the big companies, but as something useful and affordable. Thus, *Company B* finds its new, harmonic place in the environment, giving the story a happy ending and a rightful place to all the characters.

Similarly, the stories show that finding the company's place involves accepting that other people interacting with the organization are subject to this re-evaluation. This is visible in the following excerpt from the story of Luis and Marisela adapting to the international trade regulations:

Marisela: Now, for example, we have a structure to do the whole purchase process, regarding customs, audits, according to all the laws, we have it really clearly stated. The client that doesn't want to adapt to that process, well no. We have to reject him.

I found that an important element in the reconstruction of the organizations' identities in Chihuahua is the pride they take in being self-made. Most of the interviewees stressed the fact that their companies had started from what they considered a small operation that succeeded to grow into what they are now. These accounts of the modest beginning appear in the official websites of most of the participating companies. *Company D* did not include this account at the time of the study. However, it was mentioned as an important ritual of indoctrination, as can be seen below:

*Fernanda*: [The company] started in Chihuahua... approximately 30, 35 years ago. It started with *Benjamin's*<sup>18</sup> dad, selling and installing radios. It grew little by little, but everything was done in Chihuahua. He started alone. Now there are like 13 offices in Mexico and 3 in the US. [...] I remember that *Benjamin's* dad told us once that when someone new goes to the office in Chihuahua, he gives them a tour around all the offices, right? And he takes you to the part where he started. It was sort of a small house, and in the same house, there were two floors. He and his wife, they worked in the bottom floor. And little by little they grew and you can see how through work you can achieve a lot, right? The offices in Chihuahua are really big, and then he comes and tells you how he started and where, and it's really impressive.

Pamela: Do they still [give that tour]? [The owner had moved from Chihuahua at the time of the study].

*Fernanda*: Yes, they do.

The story above, along with other collected stories about companies that started with a modest operation, challenges the pre-globalization belief that in order to grow it was necessary to have a well-known family name, special allowances from the authorities, or a significant initial

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<sup>18</sup> *Benjamin* was originally scheduled for the interview but he delegated it to *Fernanda*. His father is the founder of the company.

investment. Rather, “through work you can achieve a lot”, which is a similar expression to the ones used by other interviewees in their own examples. This expression makes them the main creators of their own story, and allows them to take all the credit for their success. This pride is also considered the cause of other regional features of the business culture, such as the ones seen in the following excerpt:

*Héctor*: The thing is, there are some that tell you that the people from Chihuahua are less welcoming than the ones from Torreón or Monterrey. The Chihuahuense does not invite you to their house, as it is done in Mexico City. In Mexico City, your employees, your bosses, EVERYONE goes to your house. And you go to their house. Here... you don't go anywhere. Why? Because the Chihuahuense is of those with an old tradition of being self-made.

The self-made identity mentioned in the stories does not exclude the participation of others. Team work is mentioned to be highly valued as a key element of the organization's success. It was stressed in several of the stories that a functioning team is crucial even for the minimum survival of the organization, and it was supported by fragments and references to these stories, as we can see in the following example:

*César*: This business is NOT me. It was given to me, the idiot, the task of being the head. But the business is this people. I mean, I alone don't do anything.

*César* stresses that the company's value does not lie exclusively in the owner but on the results of a team. He reinforces this by calling himself an idiot with the task of leading, and admits to the difficulties of keeping up with the organization's workload by himself (“I alone don't do anything”).

But besides the positive consequences in the work environment that come from letting technocracy dictate the rules, the stories also show the dehumanization of the organization. Power and authority are said to be acquired through a display of knowledge and skills, which implies that people are interchangeable as long as their knowledge and skills are similar. I found that this side of globalization is not acceptable for many of the companies, who try to humanize them using the same administrative technology that they adopted to become more standardized and formal. For example, they use their mission, vision and value statements to add a human side to the organization. This attempt at re-humanizing was also visible in the language used by the interviewees in their stories, as can be seen in the following fragments from three different interviews:

*Brenda* [Interview 1]: We say that we are the *Company A* FAMILY. That is how we call our community. Because that is how it is. We are a like a big family. [...] You know that technology equals coldness, right? Not *Company A*. I can tell you that *Company A* is a very paternalistic organization. Very familial.

*César* [Interview 2] [...] Now, more than anything I want [employees] that have a heart. Because that is VISIBLE in design [...] I can take care of the rest [developing their skills].

*Fernanda* [Interview 4, about how the corporate philosophy was stated in *Company D*]: [...] I think that... *Benjamin's* dad sees [the company] like his family as well. Then it becomes a way for the company to, well, have a healthy environment. [...] They try to instill many values [in the employees].

In the stories and fragments such as the ones shown above, organizations compare themselves to a family even though the scheme of the family-owned businesses becomes less common in the environment. This attributes the organizations and their members with qualities such as loyalty, being caring, showing dedication (“I want employees that have a heart”), and being

virtuous (having values). It is also found in the official websites of many of them that their value statements include honesty, responsibility, and teamwork, along with quality and innovation. This last shows that in their reconstruction of identity, organizations try to have the best of both worlds: A business culture driven by merit and efficiency, but where there is still room for emotions and treating employees as human beings and not just resources.

#### 4.5. THE SECOND EQUILIBRIUM

In the collected stories, I found that many accounts converge in a new equilibrium which has not yet settled, and to which the business culture of Chihuahua is still adapting. Because of this, there is a growing acceptance of change and uncertainty, and the making of long-term commitments from the organization and individuals towards their professions and following better work practices. However, several stories and fragments emphasize that 21 years after the implementation of NAFTA, there continues to be a resistance to change:

Luis: Don't think that we were the nicest thing, [changing] has cost us a lot. Remember that we are members of the old guard, he who doesn't cheat, doesn't progress.

The members of the old guard, similar to the previously mentioned Knights of the Round Table, are the businessmen that started their companies or learned their business behavior from the pre-maquiladora times. With the saying "He who doesn't cheat, doesn't progress", Luis uses "common knowledge" to further emphasize the main features of the old guard. However, the stories show that despite the difficulties of changing those habits, they can be modified. In the stories, there is hope in learning, and a prize at the end of the ordeal. The decision to change is done individually and not by the community as a whole. An example of this individual commitment is seen in the following story, in which *Mario* is invited to a dinner with César Duarte (governor of Chihuahua at the time of the study) who hosted a series of meetings with local businessmen to discuss his new plans to improve different industries.

*Mario*: Livestock farmers have always been very independent, and very frontal. My wife here is a witness, I told the governor that everything sounded very well but I hoped that by opening one door to livestock farming, he wasn't closing another. I told him "This and that". Later he sent me a message, that he didn't need my advice, he had other people to listen to. I shut up, right? It was very sad and frustrating.

Sometime after that a friend told me "What do you think? What is the governor doing wrong now?" "No" I told him "Don't even speak badly of my governor. I learned one thing: I dance to the music that's played". [...] And they tell me "No, you're not Mexican nor do you want the common good". I do want it, but I'm not David to fight this Goliath. I also have to know my limits.

*Mario* confronted the governor backed by the qualities that he attributes his profession, which are to be frontal and independent. The reaction of the governor confirms the expectations that he has learned to have of all politicians: That they only want to surround themselves with people who will agree with them, and that they restrain discussion and disagreement. Moreover, *Mario* believes the governor is capable of doing more damage with the intention of "helping", which may threaten what the farmers take credit for having achieved through hard work. Then, when he decides not to criticize the governor after having received his message, he is accused of not wanting common good and is even cast as an outsider ("you're not Mexican"). *Mario* expresses how others attribute his independence and sense of self-preservation to his European

descent, implying that if he were Mexican, he would fight even if it meant his ruin, instead of choosing his battles.

Indeed, among the collected stories, the ones shared by *Mario* stand out as are the ones with the most examples of resistance to change within the government. Even if the stories change from a tragic tone to an epic one (before and after NAFTA respectively), the main enemies in the accounts have the same fixed qualities, except for unlimited power, which the government no longer has. *Mario* attributes the government with the agency to perpetually frustrate the work of the livestock farmers, as we can see in the following story:

*Mario*: Politics came again, a doctor, *Dr. Abbot*, may God have him in his holy glory and make him graze in green fields... but well tied up [laughs]. The poor man, he was a veterinary and he had the idea of telling the Americans “Let’s start on a bovine tuberculosis campaign” [to eradicate it]. They started the campaign, if I remember correctly, around 1973. Up to this day we haven’t been able to eradicate it. It’s our Coco<sup>19</sup>. It’s the guillotine they put on us to stop us.

[...] Three years ago or something like that, the Americans closed the border on us. They don’t say it officially, but everyone knows it, that a couple of [bovine tuberculosis] cases came up, and the Secretariat of Agriculture told the US Department of Agriculture that they did not trust the way things were being done in Chihuahua. Just so that they would close on us. It made me... become a diabetic. Because it suddenly stopped our market and it made us lose a lot of money. The government is always the parasite... There are interests that I don’t know about, I can’t tell for sure. But they DID make them close the border on us.

In this story *Dr. Abbot* is used as a pawn of the constant struggle between the livestock farmers and the government. *Dr. Abbot* is not given full responsibility and blame (“may God have him in his holy glory”, “the poor man”), but he is symbolically punished for the consequences of his actions (“well tied up”). The full blame for the damage, even on a personal level (“it made me become a diabetic”) is given to the government as a body with one identity (“The government is always the parasite”), and their ways to keep an industry under control (“it’s our Coco. It’s the guillotine”).

Although the stories mention that the new environment may be full of risks, it is nevertheless more desirable than the first equilibrium. Organizations are given the choice to adapt or disappear, as can be seen in this fragment where *César* talks about the impact of globalization in *Company B*:

*César*: If you are PART of a community, you are a PART of society, and something alters that society, it immediately alters your way of working and your way of being. If you don’t move, you will end up like the dinosaurs.

And in the following example, an only partial adoption of globalization leads to a deficient second equilibrium:

*Raúl*: [...] I have been like... disappointed in the maquiladora. The experience of South Korea, they absorbed the experience, and boom! They woke up in a spectacular way. [...] Sadly a lot of the opportunity that was generated by this environment of more professional people has been wasted. In other countries we see that has been a huge success. And here we were only left with many of the social problems that it generated, which were very evident. Especially 2 years ago when the crime rate was very high.

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<sup>19</sup> A mythical ghost-monster, equivalent to the boogeyman.

*Raúl* mentions that by not exploiting all the opportunities, the cost that society paid for entering the global community was too high compared to the benefits (“we were only left with many of the social problems”). The period of high crime rate that he mentions (“2 years ago”) is a complex phenomenon in itself, which many factors, such as the intensifying war against drug cartels which started in 2006, the 2012 presidential elections, the deployment of soldiers and federal agents to border cities, and the geographical position of Chihuahua (OECD, 2012; Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, 2015). Nevertheless, *Raúl* points out the partial exploitation of the maquiladora industry as the main cause of this wave of violence.

Lastly, a feature of the new equilibrium included in many of the collected stories is the environment’s potential to change. The maquiladora itself is in constant evolution, as can be seen in the following comparison of the industry’s beginnings to its state at the time of the study:

*Gonzalo*: Even the venues. They dress them up a little bit, it’s not the hut it was before. Like the old maquiladoras were. [...] The basic maquiladoras [for textile, vouchers and harness processing] have emigrated. [...] Now [the maquiladoras in Chihuahua] are maquiladoras with a higher added value. I mean, now it’s about making cellphones, plane parts... [...] Clean rooms... Even the engineering for making the clean rooms, it used to be imported. Now they do everything here.

The emigration of the first, basic maquiladoras reveal that the new rules of the market apply to everyone. Once the specialization of labor turns the environment into a less profitable option for the basic maquiladoras, they move their operation to where it is more lucrative. The new demands of the maquiladoras repeat the pattern of the first ones in that by demanding certain skills and knowledge, the environment learns to produce them (locally producing the engineering for the clean rooms). But it is not only the maquiladora industry that establishes what is to be desirable. By “dressing up the venues”, they also respond to the new demands of the society in which they are embedded, making the learning process go in both directions. Nevertheless, several interviewees mentioned that in fact, the business culture of Chihuahua is yet to arrive to its second equilibrium. This can be seen in the following example, where the interviewee anticipates the day that the old guard will lose their power:

*Alberto*: From my point of view, [the business culture] hasn’t changed yet. It’s STARTING to change. [...] The type of education that is received at the universities is different. They are teaching and motivating becoming a businessman, being innovative, starting your own businesses, etc. You see little of it now. We are just getting started. Because, as I told you, the older generations are still there. The same family names, the same men... are guiding the management. I’ve said it several times, when they take the yoke off the second generations and give them the chance and the financial freedom, this WILL change.



## 5. DISCUSSION

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This study aimed to answer the question *What effect has globalization had on the cultural narratives of companies in Chihuahua, Mexico?*

By using narratives as windows into organizational life (Gabriel, 2004), it was possible to access the experience of the participants and learn about the business culture in Chihuahua. Culture is what a group learns over a period of time as it survives in an external environment and solves its problems of internal integration (Schein, 1990). Narratives provided a way to grasp this group learning process as organizations in Chihuahua adapted to the arrival of the maquiladora industry and the implementation of the NAFTA agreement.

The results of this study show that there is evidence of cultural change in the studied setting. Firstly, there is a general shift from a preference for a tragic plot, to a preference for an epic and romantic plot. There was the perception that before globalization, people were bound to the laws of fate and to an inescapable environment. Then, the environment after entering globalization resembled a quest filled with challenges, and the heroes had more freedom to create their own story than they had before. Secondly, the results show that this change did not happen in a linear way, but that there are several, different narratives overlapping and sometimes contradicting each other as the organizations make sense of the disequilibrium that was globalization. And thirdly, the identity that resulted from these changes still drags many elements of the old identity behind.

### 5.1. FROM TRAGEDY TO EPIC AND ROMANCE

As can be seen in the results, the pre-globalization cultural narratives of companies in Chihuahua appear to support the conclusions of Hofstede and Hofstede (2010) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) about the features of Mexican culture. Described in more detail in chapter 2, it could be summarized as normative, diffuse, emotionally expressive, having high power distance, showing great respect for tradition, having a positive attitude and a small propensity to prepare for the future (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). I elaborate on these similarities hereunder.

Firstly, the results show that group learning was normative and relied heavily on tradition: Things were done in the way they had always been done. The learning process happened at the top of the organizations, where the bosses and owners of the companies shared their experience downwards and relied on the employees' obedience. This behavior is also in accordance with a paternalistic policy where the people in power restrict the freedom of the subordinates in their supposed interest. Thus, the group learns to follow the leader and accept what a father-like figure wants and decides, without expecting an explanation (high power distance), even when it has negative consequences for the organization, such as in the stories about employees blindly following the decisions of the *patrón* shared by *Gonzalo* and *Héctor*.

Secondly, the power of the top managers and owners in combination with protectionism sustained a business elite that was very much shielded from uncertainty and competition, such as in the stories about Carlos Slim, *Licenciado Pérez* and the *Pérez* family that owns *Company A*. This made it unnecessary to have a tendency towards planning and preparing for the future and change. Investing time and resources in improving processes, becoming efficient, and implementing quality controls were a privilege, and an *option* of the business elite, and considered pointless by the smaller businesses either because of their cost or because they held the businessmen of the protectionist scheme (the ones who regarded such measures as unnecessary) as their role models. As in the leader-culture relationship stated by Schein (2004), the leaders established a culture of paternalism and protectionism, and the culture developed the mechanisms to determine that one could become a leader by inheritance, favors, and illegal means. The employees, meanwhile, tried to find a stable and preferably lifelong contract. This was a safe and stable position for the employees: As long as they offered loyalty to the *patrón*, their place in the company was secure, as was mentioned by *Raúl* in the stories about *Grupo Fernández*. For the small and medium-sized businesses, it was enough to stay a “small shop” as long as the business survived, as in the stories of the older mines, and the parable of the lumberjack Mexican.

Thirdly, and similarly, internal integration was achieved through loyalty and adherence for life, as was expressed in “almost marrying the company’s owner”. Access to, and permanence in the organization could also be achieved through family relations or the right contacts, similar to a mafia, as compared by *César*. Permanence was nevertheless conditioned to obedience for most of the employees. Disagreements with the *patrón* would lead to exclusion, which in combination with loyalty to the organization would support the collectivistic and communitarian dimensions of Mexican culture according to Hofstede and Hofstede (2010) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998).

There are elements of tragedy in these narratives, such as total obedience to an authority as the main requirement for belonging to a group, as in the stories about the *patrón*’s overwhelming power. Another example is that of being forced to bribe and smuggle in order to sustain a business, as in the stories of the livestock farmers and their relationship with the government, described as that of a victim and its kidnapper, or a host and its parasite.

However, the results show change in cultural practices. The change towards an epic and romantic emplotment show evidence of adaptation to changes in the environment, supporting Ooi’s (2007) claim that values change when circumstances change. The time frame considered in the study (roughly 30 years) may be too short to show radical change, but it does show the fluid nature of culture.

Post-globalization narratives show that firstly, group learning tends towards pragmatism: Things are done in the most convenient way, and new processes and administrative practices are adopted in order to become more efficient. The stories show that the learning process turns into a group practice rather than it being a *patrón* task. It is shared by more members of the organization through discussion and regular meetings, as well as making mistakes public, which are practices introduced by the maquiladoras. The shared learning process is also visible in the

importance of official documents (stating a mission, vision, values, policies and procedures) for sharing in the future that which has been learned. Furthermore, the organizations learn the value of planning and preparing, instead of merely reacting to the environment and thus being more vulnerable to crises.

Secondly, there is an acceptance of the external environment as constantly changing, which means the environment is less controlled, paternalistic and protectionist. Although this carries growth and innovation opportunities for the companies, it also requires a constant disposition to adapt and accept risk and uncertainty, such as in the story of the safety equipment retailers. Family businesses start to change their structure into one that is more similar to large companies. They also implement more controls and practices in order to become what the storytellers call “more professional”. Thus, professionalism comes with following the rules of a globalized environment. By making these adjustments, family businesses move away from an identity of “small shops” and “*fonditas*”. And by leaving these identities behind, the businesses become “more civilized and professional” and less folkloric, more globalized and less localized, such as the stories of the mines before and after globalization, and *Restaurant E*’s new image being compared to a chain of American diners. This supports the findings in the study conducted by Subrata Chakrabarty (2009) about the influence of national culture in organizations. Chakrabarty’s results suggest that national culture has a stronger influence when there is a lack of institutional facilities, norms and regulations for a well functioning organization, and that the influence of national culture weakens as these lacks are overcome.

Thirdly, in the process of internal integration, technocracy becomes the condition for integration: Bosses are expected to be more rational and less emotional, and the employees are expected to balance following instructions and being creative and independent. People’s worth is evaluated based on their merit, their skill and the type of work they do, which means connections and social obligations are no longer as binding as they were before. If someone “fits”, the relationship is kept, be it as a client, an employee or a supplier. In the globalized environment, roles are no longer bound by time or name, such as in the story of the departure of Telcel, and Luis and Marisela’s rejection of clients that do not fit their work processes. These stories are shared with less of an enemy-victim narrative and more of a narrative of having a different place and purpose in the environment. These new leaders (the technocrats) establish the new culture (a culture of reason above emotion), and the culture develops the mechanisms (job descriptions, profiles and evaluations) to determine who will or will not be a leader.

The epic and romantic elements of these narratives are more visible in the fact that the laws of fate no longer hang over the business culture, but that there is a sense of co-creation and control over one’s own destiny. An epic and romantic plot gives the characters in them not just the power to decide their path, but the responsibility and obligation to do so.

At a first glance, it appears as if the effect of globalization on the narratives had been linear: From a clear first equilibrium to a clear second equilibrium. However, the process which the organizations went through was not the same for all, nor did they arrive to the same second equilibrium. Rather, the complexity of the process created variation in the narratives, making some of them even contradictory.

## 5.2. COMPLEX NARRATIVES

For most of the 20th century, Mexico's national identity had been defined by the government's official discourse and colored by the symbols, heroes and images of the Mexican Revolution (Morales, 1997). However, after the establishment of the maquiladora industry and the subsequent implementation of NAFTA, there was no longer an official narrative to follow, and it was the task of the people to build the stories themselves. Although the retrospective stories had some variation, the elements and their arrangement were very similar. Most stories agreed in that there was a lack of job opportunities for the vulnerable sectors of the population (the single mothers, women in general, young people without access to higher education), and there was a protectionist scheme that benefitted a small group of businesses and hindered the growth of others.

But globalization was portrayed in very different ways, as the stories show, appearing as divine intervention, a temporary relief, a magical event, or even a small event without great effect. This shows that the disappearance of an official narrative allows the organizations to find their own interpretation of the events thereafter. There is also potential for multiple interpretations in the same company, or as Boje (1995) calls it, "plurivocality", as can be seen in the different interpretations of the story about the departure of Telcel, shared by *Vicky* and *César*.

In this study, I used the definition of story by Czarniawska (2004) which states a story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem. However, this definition was insufficient to describe the narratives collected in the interviews. Not only do many of them not happen in a linear fashion, but their different versions overlap and coexist in the new environment, many of them without reaching a second equilibrium. This storytelling is dialogic as it shows several meanings or interpretations that overlap, interact, and affect each other (Bakhtin, 1975/1981). For example, the stories of the livestock farmers portray globalization as the great liberator that ended the oppression of an industry, while the stories shared by *Gonzalo*, *Héctor* and *Raúl* show its darker side by mentioning the social problems caused by globalization. Similarly, *Brenda's* assumption that "technology equals coldness" coexists with the paternalistic culture of *Company A*, simultaneously a high-tech, global company and an old-fashioned family business.

Furthermore, the interviewees told many stories that were not yet petrified, in which the second equilibrium is just starting or has not yet been reached, which leaves different possibilities for the future, as was stated by *Alberto* when asserting that "This will change". These stories are closer Boje's (2008) concept of antenarrative than to the concept of story proposed by Czarniawska (2004). Boje defines antenarrative as "prospective (forward-looking) bets (antes) that an ante-story (before-story) can transform organization relationships" (p. 13). While some storytellers talk about having arrived at the second equilibrium (petrified stories), others are still waiting for it and offer their interpretations of what the second equilibrium could be like (antenarratives). This shows the different speed and degree to which there is adaptation, and the different perceptions of what the second equilibrium is. The stories show that for some companies, the second equilibrium involved overcoming the initial crisis caused by globalization in a way that would allow them to continue their operation, with a short-term

approach. While for others, the consequences extended further, displaying their tendency towards long-term thinking.

The above mentioned supports Fang's (2005) arguments about the existence of value variation within cultures, as the results show that the business culture in Chihuahua can simultaneously have an orientation towards short-term thinking, and an orientation towards long term thinking. Just as there is a simultaneous tendency towards pragmatism and tradition, and high and low power distance. By taking into consideration the social and historical context of the business culture in Chihuahua, value variation can be identified and explained, further supporting Fang's claim that in order to be meaningful and useful, "work values" must be grounded in context. This inclusive approach provides a richer perspective which, as Fang further argues, is lacking in the bipolar paradigm, since it considers culture as a "context-free and time-free abstraction" (p. 80).

Another way in which these narratives are not linear is that despite all the advantages of the rule of technocracy, such as more equality in gender roles and a more fair distribution of power and opportunity, there is a trace of tragic irony. This is because the "fire" of globalization works against the same people it has liberated by causing a series of problems. For example, people become another resource that can be acquired, managed, and disposed of when no longer necessary. This attitude is accepted as the new normality, as can be seen in the choice of words of some stories, such as "This is why I have [brave women] with me". On the same note, market rules are free but also cruel. Crises bring an inevitable downsizing of companies, where people "have" to go, as in the story shared by *Vicky* and the departure of Telcel ("... we had to let people go") and *Brenda's* story of the labs in Yverdon-les-Baines ("... because of the [2008] crisis, it had to go"). It becomes clear, then, that these sides cannot exist without the other. In order to have an environment that makes opportunities more equal, where names and connections have less influence, part of the person's unique value is lost. There is more uniformity in the way organizations handle people, but the more uniform people are, the more easily they can be controlled, which in turn increases the exercise of power (Gehmann, 2004).

The collected stories show the companies' resistance to turn into impersonal and cold structures. This can be seen in the way the organizations highlight commitment, and other features that are, so to say, the inner fire of individuals. Passion, for example, is not only good to have in the organization, but it is considered crucial to its success. Passion is said to be more important than knowledge and expertise, as commented by *César* ("I can take care of the rest"). Additionally, people are expected to "have values", preferably (but not exclusively) the ones stated in the organization's corporate philosophy.

The persistence of the paternalistic company, such as *Company A*, *Company B*, and *Company D*, can be considered another defense against the loss of the human side of organizations. A paternalistic organization would represent a safe place where members are referred to as "part of the family". In these companies, loyalty and commitment are repaid with professional, financial and personal protection. These companies attempt to adopt "the coldness of technology" and stress the importance of merit and performance, at the same time that they provide a sense of belonging as a person. Although they appear to have the best of both worlds,

it can be argued that this description is but a rationalization of something deeper. Namely, that the business culture in Chihuahua has not yet been able to leave pre-globalization practices behind, and is still dragging them along.

### 5.3. A DRAGGING IDENTITY

The collected stories show that there is a feeling of dragging an identity that is no longer convenient in the 21st century. This unwanted cultural identity includes elements of the official discourse and stereotypes, such as corruption, dishonesty, laziness, the “lumberjack Mexican”, and the “culture of non-payment” that was a by-product of the protectionist and paternalist system. The individual and the organization try to break free from this weight by expressing their rejection of it. The organization tries to shed the old identity like an old skin in order to grow a new one: One that is based on methods, procedures, norms, shared goals and means to achieve them.

Only through the realization of its inadequacy, can the organization adapt and thrive. However, this is no easy task. Realizing one’s inadequacy leads to the evaluation of the effort required to change (in resources, time, and motivation) and the gain that will come afterwards. Thus, the organization asks itself, what is the point of having a mission, a vision and values (such as *Grupo Fernández* and their failed statement of a corporate philosophy), what is the point of following the legal procedures that look more complicated than how things were done before (such as the stories shared by Luis, Marisela, and Ana, about the persistence of smuggling), and what is the point of sitting down and filing the axe (as in the lumberjack parable). This resistance prevents the organizations from taking the full leap into the global community. To use a Cinderella metaphor, the tools, technology and new management practices have the power to take the small shops, *fonditas*, and other local organizations (the Cinderellas) to the level of the royal ball (the globalized world), but the participation of the fairy godmother (globalization) only goes so far as providing the dress: It is up to the organizations to decide to wear it. However, some companies insist on wearing the new dress while keeping the old one under. The result is an ill-fitting new dress: A set of incongruent processes and identities within the business culture of Chihuahua.

It was mentioned in section 5.1 that there was a general change from using a tragic plot to using an epic and romantic one. These findings contrast with what Castañeda (2011) argued about Mexico’s main narrative being a tragic one with a perpetual fear of conflict and confrontation. In the epic and romantic stories, the interviewees talk about themselves as co-creators of their reality. Their “acceptance of challenges” and “defense from others” show that they are active characters in their own narratives. And by showing that they “can achieve much through hard work” they show their ability to change their circumstances and their fate. Similarly, when the heroes are challenged by their “enemies” and “antagonists” (such as other companies or the government), they resist the temptation of easy money, bribes, informality and illegality based on the qualities that they attribute to the heroes of the global era (as in the story shared by *Mario* about the castration of the calves). In these stories, they state that the heroes are honest, hard working, patient, sharing and considerate. Enemies, on the other hand, are attributed with

greed (such as the Union of livestock farmers), and abusive behavior (such as the bosses with absolute power).

Once the challenges are overcome and battles are won, the hero's reward in the stories is sometimes material and financial gain, which would confirm the culture as masculine according to the bipolar paradigm (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). However, many of the collected stories mention prizes of a different nature, such as learning about themselves and others, professional acknowledgement, the greater good, and recognition of their good work. This shows that there are traces of both a masculine business culture which is based on material achievement, and a feminine business culture which is based on cooperation and nurturance.

Nevertheless, the change from a tragic to an epic and romantic narrative does not leave all of the tragic elements in the past. In many of the collected stories, the characters are still divided in two groups. One of these groups is referred to as "the mortals", "the earthly people" and "the normal people", suggesting that there is "the others", usually the powerful class, who are immortal and godly. This label shows a business culture attempting a shift into meritocracy, but still dragging the oligarchy behind.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

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### 6.1. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study, cultural narratives were analyzed in order to find the effect of globalization in the business culture of Chihuahua, Mexico, and evidence of cultural change. Stories were the windows through which we could see the life of organizations and their process of adaptation to the changes in the environment that were brought by the maquiladora industry and the implementation of the NAFTA agreement.

The stories were collected through open-ended interviews and analyzed according to their plot and content. The results show that first, there is a general change in the preference of plot from tragedy to epic and romance; second, this change was not linear as the narratives show a complexity in which several different narratives overlap, interact and affect each other; and third, the stories show a pre-globalization identity that does not turn smoothly into a globalized one, but rather the old identity is dragged behind into the new environment.

Identity is challenged, rediscovered and reconstructed in a process that involves a point of reference or a comparison. This reference can be other countries, professions, or companies within the same industry or region. Globalization provided such points of reference by introducing new management practices, organizational structures, and a view into the business cultures of other regions within Mexico, and other countries. Globalization has a linear narrative in which the regions it reaches are expected to go from a state of underdevelopment into a standardized, efficient and developed one. However, complex narratives were found instead of a single linear one, and these complex narratives show a dragging of the old cultural identity into the globalized world. This leads to contradictory and incompatible practices that coexist in the work environment.

Globalization takes the role of a fairy godmother in this Cinderella story, providing the dress of standardization, norms and regulations in order to take the companies in Chihuahua from their identity as the barbarian north into the ball of the global community. However it is up to the companies themselves to decide to wear the dress and, as this study shows, there are organizations that insist on keeping the old one under, however uncomfortably it fits.

### 6.2. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The participants in this study shared the stories that they found most relevant and told them in a way that conveyed a particular message about the business culture in Chihuahua, as well as give their own organizations a particular image. These stories carry their own interpretation of events and the people they involved in their stories, and thus should be considered sensemaking mechanisms, and not historical or factual accounts.
2. As was mentioned in Chapter 3 regarding the methodology of the study, the storytelling process involves the storyteller as much as it involves the audience. My own participation in



this process affected the way in which the stories were told and the emphasis that the participants put in certain elements. Factors such as my age, background, and gender, were out of my control, and may have influenced the storytelling process. It is possible that the collected stories would have been conveyed in a different manner if the audience had been another.

3. Schein (1990) argues that the study of organizational stories and other cultural elements as valid surrogates of the cultural whole has the problem that it breaks a concept “whose primary theoretical utility is in drawing attention to the holistic aspect of group and organizational phenomena” (p. 110). Since the data collection and analysis focused on the references of culture and globalization in the organizational stories, data related to other phenomena were discarded.
4. This study sought to contribute the richness of human experience to the existing body of quantitative studies about the business culture of Mexico. The nature of the data collection makes it inapplicable to larger populations than the one studied, namely, Chihuahua.
5. The scope of this study was limited to the access and resources that were available in the time assigned for the study.

### 6.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Taking into consideration the limitations of this study and other possibilities of analysis, I make the following suggestions for further research:

1. Expanding the scope of the study to the business culture of other regions in Mexico, including those without a maquiladora industry, so that the findings can be compared and contrasted.
2. Taking an employee approach in order to complement the approach of this study, in which most of the interviewees had directive or managing positions.
3. Taking the maquiladora approach, since most of the interviewees in this study belonged to, or talked about, local and regional companies.
4. Examining more specific features of the business culture in Chihuahua more closely, for example, regarding the changes in gender roles, and generational differences.

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## 8. APPENDIX

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### A. TRANSLATION OF THE QUESTIONS IN THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How would you describe the company to someone who knows nothing about it?
- What is the history of the company?
- What is your own history in the company?
- When did the company state its corporate philosophy? How was it done?
- How is this philosophy put in practice?
- Can you tell me some examples of times when the company has been successful? (That you know of, or have participated in)
- Can you tell me some examples of difficult times that the company has been through? (That you know of, or have participated in)
- How would you describe the ideal employee for this company?
- Has this 'ideal employee' changed since the company started? In what sense?
- Has the company changed since the implementation of the NAFTA agreement or the arrival of maquiladoras to Chihuahua? If so, how?
- What benefits has the company had from the implementation of NAFTA?
- What difficulties has the company encountered since the implementation of NAFTA?
- How would you describe the way business is done Chihuahua?
- Regarding the previous question, do you think this has changed in the last 20 or 30 years? If so, how?

## B. LIST OF COMPANIES MENTIONED IN THE THESIS

The collected stories mention companies besides the ones the interviewees belonged to at the time of the study. The following table is a guide to all the companies mentioned in the results and their industry. Due to the confidentiality agreement with the interviewees, the names shown in italics are the anonymized version of the real ones.

Company's name in the thesis (italicized names have been anonymized)	Industry
<i>Company A</i>	Construction materials
<i>Company B</i>	Advertisement and graphic design
<i>Company C</i>	Hotel
<i>Company D</i>	Security and telecommunications technology
<i>Company E</i>	Industrial construction company
<i>Company F</i>	Civil construction company (which worked parallel to <i>Company E</i> )
<i>Company G, H, I, J</i>	Subsidiaries of <i>Company E</i> , all within the construction industry
<i>Company K</i>	Safety equipment retailer
<i>Company L and M</i>	Oil and gas distribution
<i>Company N</i>	Shoe retailers
<i>Grupo Fernández</i>	Real estate conglomerate
<i>Restaurants A, B, C, D, E</i>	Restaurants located in the State of Chihuahua, which are clients of <i>Company B</i>
SCI	International trade and logistics consultancy company
Telcel	Mobile phone and internet services provider (subsidiary of Grupo Carso)
Telmex (formerly Teléfonos de México)	Telecommunications company (subsidiary of Grupo Carso)
Banrural	State bank
Grupo Modelo	Brewery, owners of the Corona beer brand.