Once upon a time in Mexico

- A narrative approach to exploring the dynamics in Mexican family firms
Foreword

We would like to thank the foundation of Henry and Silvia Toft, for giving us the opportunity to go to Mexico City and study family firms. The foundation’s generous contributions made it possible for us to both meet business people in a different culture, but also to collect empirical data for this thesis. Our visit to Mexico City generated new experiences and perceptions that we will carry with us in the future, and that we hopefully will be able to develop further. Thus, this whole experience has given us great new insights not only as professionals, but also on a personal level.

Furthermore, we would like to thank Prof. Hans Lundberg, Linnaeus University, who lead us into the field of family firms and inspired us to write this thesis. With his broad knowledge and understanding of the Mexican culture, Lundberg has tutored us and been a great support throughout the process.

We are also very grateful for the support we have received from loved ones; family, friends and partners. During this intense period, this support has been invaluable.

Finally we would, in a most humble manner, like to thank all the companies and the people within them in Mexico City that have assisted us by showing us their companies and participating in interviews. These people are the ones that made it possible for us to write this thesis.

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Abstract
This thesis seeks to explain the relational dynamics in Mexican family firms. Based on the concept of dynamics and family, the family is central in this study of family firms. Traditional views on the Mexican family consists of hierarchy, unity, and tradition-bound values where family is always prioritized. Family firms, then, are considered a way of helping out family members and leaving a legacy by letting the company pass through several generations. The purpose of this study is therefore to develop an understanding of the dynamics behind Mexican family firms and to discuss if the above image of them – and family in general – portrayed in existing literature is actually consistent with family firms of today’s Mexico City.

By travelling to Mexico City to interview six business owners and the family members involved in the companies, this study’s empirical material was collected. Based on a qualitative approach through narration, the empirical material was then processed and analyzed, which in turn lead to the theoretical subfields of dynamics, cultural values, trust, relational aspects and socio-economic expectations. Through these theoretical concepts, we could discuss how the relational dynamics manifests in the six Mexican family firms that were the objects of this study. By adopting a narrative approach, we let our empirical material and the voices of the people interviewed in Mexico be the center of this thesis. We are hoping that by writing context-sensitive stories, we are able to bring the reader to the settings if Mexico City.

The relational dynamics in Mexican family firms is highly dependent on the main reason why family was involved in the company in the first place. The conclusion of this essay is that while family is still highly valued in the Mexican culture, formatting your company as a family firm is not an active choice. Traditional values in the Mexican culture is still prominent, but the dynamics is expressed by individual values in the company and it is not as visible in the company itself as traditions and literature would have us believe. Mexicans, and particularly the younger generation, are shifting from the allocentric and collectivistic society to a more individualistic one, where following your dreams, being independent and self-fulfillment are if not prioritized over, than at least considered as important as the traditional family values. Family firms are not created for the single purpose of helping your family, but because circumstances led to the involvement of family members.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome to Mexico City

“... I think that another good reason to have family within the company is because we have a lot of arguments going on. And I think that’s really good because...I don’t know, I once read a story in a book that there was an old man who [...] went to his backyard, with just really rocks you know. Old, black rocks and all kinds of grits...What he did, he stuffed them into a machine that he built of two cans, two cans with a band, with a strap and put them together. And he put the rocks in there and, you know, he rolled the little engine and he started to roll them, and the rocks just smashed together. And he let the machine going for all night in two days maybe. And when he stopped the machine the rocks came out as beautiful, polished rocks. And I see a lot of what we do here is like that, because we argue, we have a lots of discussions. But what came out of this is great ideas.”

Adrian puts his hands together to demonstrate the rocks being smashed, creating the same friction that he explains is needed in a family business. The old rocks come out as shiny beautiful ones, representing the great ideas that have come out of the company so far and that still remain to come out. The cans polishing the rocks, creating the friction, are of course the family members behind and involved in the company. Adrian’s way of illustrating what he thinks is a healthy dynamic in family firms, show a common feature in the Mexican society; to think and talk in terms of metaphors, analogies and multi-layered meanings. These ways of thinking and talking are rooted in various discourses drawing from Catholicism, mythology, mysticism, multi-ethnicity, the mestizo experience and many more. It illustrates that context do matter, so feel warmly welcome to Mexico City, to the magical realism of Mexico and to six Mexican family business embodying this context in their everyday life.

We are currently sitting around the desk of Adrian’s father and the owner of the company, Augusto César Gabriel García, in an office in Gustavo A. Madero, one of the 16 boroughs (‘delegaciones’) of Distrito Federal, located to north of Mexico City’s city center. The area consist of ordinary houses with identical look, except for the various bright colors they are painted in. It is quite amazing that inside one of these just ordinary houses, ISO-certified regulators for electricity are being manufactured with Mexico’s second largest bank Banamex as the biggest client. This image of Augusto’s company is similar to the image of Mexico as a country – meaning that all is not always what it seems. Though still ranked as a developing country, Mexico is today considered one of the fastest growing economies in the world and the country has made tremendous progress over the last decade in terms of improving the quality of life of its citizens, especially in the areas of education, health and jobs (OECD, 2013). Mexico is the world's 14th largest country and despite the fact that about half of the population lives in various degrees of poverty, the country is one of the 15 largest economies in the world (FN-Förbundet, 2013). The capital, Mexico City, is situated 2300 meters above sea level in an area of towering volcanoes. The country has in the past centuries had many political conflicts, which strongly influenced the country's economic stability. However, Mexico has in the recent years recovered strongly and seem to have a bright future ahead (FN-Förbundet, 2013). Typical for
developing countries and dynamic emerging economies like Mexico, is that family firms of all shapes and sizes dominate its markets. Family businesses are very important for Mexico’s economy and welfare, as they create employment and are therefore, according to Gandemo (1998), a keystone for the economy. In Mexico, 98% of all current businesses are defined as micro-, small- or medium-sized according to their number of employees and net annual revenue – and most of them are family organized. According to The Economist (2004) it is estimated that up to 95% of Mexican businesses are still wholly family-owned and run, and such a high rate of family-owned businesses is also typical for Latin American countries. Latin America has during the last century experienced big changes, both politically and economically (Martínez & Dorfman, 1998). Structural reforms have transferred Latin America’s economy from being closed and dominated by the state, to a more open and market-oriented platform. Family firms have always been very important in Latin American countries and one of the main reasons why they are as dominant is because family has a central role in the culture, and therefore also have a big influence on the way people do business (Martínez & Dorfman, 1998). The high number of small firms – many of them family owned – means that Mexico is a country full of driven entrepreneurs. From the old man on the street corner selling quesadillas, to the father and son running a law office together – this is a country where creation and innovation is everywhere.

It’s early Wednesday morning. We are leaving the center of the city, heading far south, towards Okane Queso Cubicado in Colonia Los Olivos, Delegación Tlalhuac. In the opposite lane, cars are queuing, pushing, stressing to get through the traffic jam. The sun is already starting to heat up the air, and we understand that it is going to be another warm day in La Ciudad de los Palacios (the City of Palaces, which is a common nickname for Mexico City). People have their car windows down, and here and there you can see hands sticking out, clinging on to a cigarette. Compared to the other commuters who are struggling trying to get to work, we are driving in the wrong direction – or, rather, the right direction considering where we are headed. There are cars everywhere. No rules seem to apply here, no courtesy, and no will to cooperate; everyone just wants to get through. The Swedish phrase “störst går först” (meaning the biggest goes first) come to mind and it feels very relevant in this city. The smell of cigarette smoke and car exhaust combined with warm asphalt is somehow welcoming in the way it tells us that is a city that never stands still, yet at the same time panic-inducing because of the heat and the fact that not one of the cars seem to move. Welcoming and panic-inducing. Two very different emotional state of minds in contrast to one another, much like the Mexican culture itself. You have just enough time to think “… imagine doing this twice a day, every day”, before the traffic lights switch to green and we’re off again. Maybe Mexicans just have more hours to their days than us Europeans. At the very least, they seem to have more patience.

After a while the scenery around us starts to change. Tall, modern buildings are replaced with small, scruffy houses. The further we drive, the more rough the surroundings become. In contrast with the many old lovely trees and flourishing greenery in and around the centrally located neighborhoods and boroughs, there is not much greenery here, only cactuses and fields of sand. But there is something that brightens up our journey in these desert-like surroundings. A glorious mess of people in festive coloured clothing, holding pictures and banners are moving towards us; by foot, on bikes and on decorated flatbed trucks. Everyone is happy, smiling and
some even dancing Tomorrow, on December 12, is a very special day in Mexico, as the people celebrate Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, or Our Lady of Guadalupe. This popular Catholic feast is one of the most important dates in the Mexican calendar, and celebrates the belief that a man encountered the Virgin Mary, Mexico’s Patron Saint. On this date, hundreds of thousands of the faithful to Our Lady of Guadalupe from all over Mexico make the important pilgrimage to the Basílica of Guadalupe, a Roman Catholic church in northern Mexico City, where the miraculous image of la Virgen Morena, or Virgin Mary, is kept (Herz, 2014). Although it is in the Basílica de Guadalupe where the most important rituals and celebrations of this special date take place, there are fiestas all over the country in Honor of Mexico's Patron Saint, and practically everywhere where there is an altar to the Virgin, a special celebration is held on her day (Herz, 2014). Since Mexico is a strongly religious country, with around 80% of the population being Roman Catholic (FN-förbundet, 2013), the Catholic ideology is in many ways reflected in the Mexican culture. As in many Catholic countries, Mexicans are extremely family oriented and family values are deeply rooted in the Mexican culture. Another phenomena derived from the Catholicism in the Mexican culture, is the conservative and male dominated society. The male chauvinism – or machismo – is very distinct in the everyday life and the women of Mexico are generally not prominent. The traditional patriarchal structure grants the father or oldest male relative in the family the greatest power, whereas women are expected to show submission (Gutmann, 2007). Despite being submissive in many situations, the woman – and especially the mother – is also worshiped in several others. The image of these complex relational aspects make the dynamics of the Mexican family life particularly interesting – which in turn makes the dynamics of Mexican family firms interesting. The question is, however, if these values are as prominent in today’s Mexico City, a buzzing metropolis that has been influenced by the Western world and especially the US. Are family firms in Mexico City affected by the relational and familial dynamics that existing literature and the pre-perceptions of the Mexican culture would have us believe? Perhaps there is a more liberal view in Mexico City than what is currently known from existing literature and of what is generally known. Mexico City is after all one of the world's largest cities, with incredible advances in community development on all fronts. This could have affect the traditionalism among people, it could be that - at least in some parts of Mexico City - there is a different view of society and the laws and rules that applies, than in Mexico in general.

Existing literature claim that the importance of the family can be seen and identified in many situations in the Mexican society. Days off work are normally spent with family and friends, and the value of family is often prioritized over individual or community needs (Villarreal, Blozis & Widaman, 2005). These values can according to Marín and Marín (1991) be summarized in the concept of familismo, the expression of strong loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among family members. Since family and family values are such a big, unspoken part of the culture, it is only natural that it will reflect in the way Mexicans do business. However, the concept of familismo is more prominent among Hispanics in the US (that is, Latin American origins that have immigrated to America) and many of the typical concepts that according to existing literature seem to characterize Mexicans and Latin Americans – such as familismo, simpatía, respeto etc. – is concentrated to the Hispanic population. The problem with this is that Hispanics not only are made up by Mexican immigrants, but by Spaniard, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and other Spanish-speaking populations in Latin America. The typical view of Mexican
family values and family firms therefore appears to be filtered through the Hispanic population that resides in the US. Existing research indicates that this is in fact the case, as there are several studies, such as those by Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez and Turner (2012), Shelton, Danes and Eisenman (2008), that present a view of Latino and Mexican cultural values and entrepreneurship but they tend to be focused on Mexican-Americans. This raises the question whether these concepts are in fact relevant and if they really characterize the culture in today’s Mexico City, or if the image we have of Mexican families – and therefore family firms – is too colored by Westernized perceptions.

The concept of ‘family firm’ can, according to Gandemo (1998), be defined in many different ways but as the name predicts, having family involved in a company is what differentiates the family business from other types of businesses. Family firms across the world make up some of the most successful and important business formations in terms of employment, revenue and supply, but also for socio-economic reasons. Kenyon-Rouvinez and Ward (2005) describes the concept of family firm as a business that is controlled by a family with three or more family members actively working in the business, where two or more generations of family control or if the current generation in the business is attending to pass the control to next generation in the family. It is also common that family businesses attend to stick to the founders values, visions and missions, although the founder is gone since long. In what way and how much the family is involved can vary widely depending on what part of the world is studied. Having this said, in this study we use “family owned and run” as a definition of a family firm. According to existing literature, the image of a family firms in Mexico seems to be that family members are involved in companies because they are just that – family – and you want to help and support your family in all situations. But do Mexicans in Mexico City really share this view? On the contrary, involving family in one’s business does not seem to be an active choice as much as it is a given, a matter of course, a natural way to go. Quite common for Mexicans we met in this study, is that they do not seem to reflect over the choice of involving family members in their companies, it is something that just happens. At the Family Business Center in Mexico City’s state capital Toluca, where the air is crisp and the carbon fumes and car exhaust from the buzzing city center has been replaced with tall trees and flourishing greenery, we meet Arturo Rodriguez Rodriguez and Silvia Rodriguez Morales, a married couple who together run a successful business with pallets. Will their two sons one day be involved in or perhaps even take over the business? Not necessarily. Arturo explains that if they do decide to be in the business it’s okay, but “…if they choose something else... well it’s their life and I cannot interfere with that”.

Karlsson-Stider (2000) explains that there are some general perceptions in Europe about what a family firm is, how it looks, how it works and how it is built up. For example, Karlsson-Stider (2000) mentions that the typical view on family firms is that they are usually small in size and that the people who are starting up and running them possess characteristics that are specifically adapted to running and developing a business, that these people are highly entrepreneurial. There is also a perception that family firms are highly tradition-bound, and that children are expected to take over the business from their parents. However, in Arturo and Silvia’s case there does not seem to be a plan for their sons to eventually take over the business. The couple is living in the present and has built the company for their own sake, and for them
to enjoy. Arturo and Silvia were at the beginning of the business establishment not initially familiar with how a business works, or how it should be managed to be successful – or at least work well. These contradictions indicate that the phenomenon of family firms in Latin American countries, in our case Mexico City, still is a rather unexplored area for European countries. The European, or maybe even Westernized, view of family firms therefore seem to have an overemphasis on family values and obligations that necessarily doesn’t apply in Mexico City. Firm strategy is often influenced by the strong cultural patterns originating from and maintained by the family structure, which represents the strongest social unit in Mexico (Marín & Marín, 1991), but have we taken too much for granted when it comes to the Mexican culture and the way Mexicans combine business with family? This relationship, between family and business, is truly complex and these questions indicate that more research needs to be conducted regarding the dynamics of Mexican family firms.

Dynamics has been defined as “...a force that stimulates change or progress within a system or process” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014), and in a family firm – where the system is the actual family – this means that the dynamics is the relational forces at work within the family members. Family firm dynamics is therefore the way in which a family lives and interacts within and outside the business. In order to understand these complex dynamics, one needs to be in the context, dig around in it and turn it and twist it – almost being able to feel it yourself. The stories from people behind these family firms are therefore most valuable. Contexts that have a history need to be analyzed on a deeper level, because if something is to acquire meaning, it must be situated in the life history of someone or something (Czarniawska, 1998). The narrative approach, which has been used in this study, allows us to present, describe and analyze the sensitivity and the complexity of people’s stories without diminishing the meaning and the purpose of the context.

So why should we be interested in the dynamics behind Mexican family firms? There are several possible answers to this question. First, the subfield seems to be underrepresented in English-spoken scientific literature, which indicate that there is a gap that needs to be filled. Previous research has for instance focused on the relationship between business performance and family influence (i.e. Avendano-Alcaraz, Kelly, Trevinyo-Rodríguez & Gómez, 2009; Espinoza Aguiló & Espinoza Aguiló, 2012) but still there is not much that has been said about the dynamics in Mexican family firms. Second, there seems to be a limited view on and a rather stereotypic perception of Mexican cultural and familial values that spill over in the view of Mexican entrepreneurship and the way Mexicans run a business. There are several studies that present a view of Latino and Mexican entrepreneurship but they tend to be focused on Mexican-Americans, which results in an inaccurate image of the true Mexican culture. Our study goes straight to the field, into the core of the complexity of family firms in Mexico City, where we present the stories of the family members themselves and let their voices dominate. Finally, qualitative studies in this subfield seem to be underrepresented in the literature compared to quantitative ones, and our study will therefore contribute with new data along with deeper and richer insights on the small family firms of Mexico City.

Since the Mexican culture involves a strong orientation and commitment toward the family and families have a strong foundation in unity (Avendano-Alcaraz et al., 2009), it is not surprising that 95% of Mexican businesses chose to follow a family business model when it comes to
organizing a company (The Economist, 2004). However, this raises the question whether it can be harmful for families and the relationships in them to involve close family and relatives in one’s business. Running a business, no matter what industry, is often associated with a certain amount of risk and is most likely to affect one’s personal life. In family firms, we can therefore assume that both the family and the business are facing high risks since the relationships are not easy to separate, again pointing out the complexity of this business model. Both the family and the business have their own needs, goals and structure and there are fundamental differences between family and business that can be hard to combine and overcome (Birley, Ng & Godfrey, 1999; Kenyon-Rouvinez & Ward, 2005). Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) explains that there will often be conflicts between what he calls love - the family - and what he describes as work, that is the business. This means that a family treat problems and challenges on two fronts; everything that any business faces but also the complex emotional relationships that exist between family members, which can turn out either positive or negative.

In a quirky and colorful office where the employees can take a break from their daily work tasks by watching a movie or playing a bit of Playstation, 29-year old Roberto Carrillo laughs nervously and looks down into the glass table in front of him. His new office is located on a side street in central Mexico City, a couple of blocks away from the busy Paseo de la Reforma, and through the open window we can hear the city’s traffic whizzing by. It is afternoon and the traffic rush is in full swing. A warm breeze fans through the window as Roberto continues his story:

“... And he don’t speak to me anymore, don’t talk to me anymore, not even on weekends. [... ]Yeah. And my mother got sick, uhm, three months ago [...] she was about to get to surgery and he didn’t call me.”

It is obvious that Roberto is disappointed about how it has all turned out between him and his father. It was not supposed to be this way; they should have run the company together, side by side - father and son. Yet, Roberto’s situation is not unique. Running a family firm is always connected with risks that can lead to deep conflicts between the family members. A family firms brings a complexity regarding the relationship between older and younger, man and woman, parent and child – relationships that on their own can be difficult to handle and maintain in a healthy way (Poza, 2010). So why do Mexicans, along with other Latin Americans, still put such faith in the family business model? These relational dynamics are the heart and soul of family firms, and it is the major area of interest in this study. In a country where only 40 % of the population say they trust their national government (OECD, 2013), perhaps it is not that surprising that people turn to their families when it comes to organizing a business. Perhaps family firms are all about trust – or rather, the lack of trust in any institution other than the family (The Economist, 2004). The dynamics that we speak of in this study, are therefore focused on the cultural and relational aspects that may influence Mexican family firms, such as the values of the Mexican culture, the importance of family, the relations within families and the socio-economic conditions that may affect the way Mexicans combine business with family.
1.2 Research questions
Following from the problem discussion made above, the following research questions are in focus in this study:

- How does the relational dynamics manifest in Mexican family firms?
- What similarities and differences can be revealed among Mexican family firms in terms of the relationship between family and business?

1.3 Purpose
Following from the research questions stipulated above, the purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, through stories from family firms in Mexico City, we want to develop an understanding of the relational dynamics in Mexican family firms in terms of the relationship between the family as a group versus individual family members doing business together. Based on this, the second aim is to discuss whether the image and the perception of Mexican family firms – that there is an over-emphasis on the emotional and the tradition-bound Mexican family – is consistent with how Mexican family firms actually function in today’s Mexico City. Finally, we intend to present the similarities and differences that can be seen among the studied family firms, in terms of the relationship between and the perception of family and doing business.
2. A critical reading of the existing family business literature review within this subfield

The main concept for this study is ‘dynamics’, which we intend to discuss in this chapter. First we will go through the concept of dynamics on a more general level, and then break it down into four more specific areas; values, trust, socio-economic expectations and relational aspects (see below) and discuss these in relation to existing literature.

2.1 The dynamics of family firms

Generally, running a family business is like running any business – except for the fact that your boss might be your mother or that you might be staying and living in the same house as the other employees. A family firm needs everything that a regular business requires; the big difference is that the manager and the staff consists of people you daily live with. Family firms are at current the most dominant form of enterprise in many parts of the world, where they represent 90 % of gross domestic product in the world, and thereby also contribute to millions of jobs (Morris & Kellermannsns, 2013). Despite the fact that family firms constitute a main part of all companies, statistics by Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) shows that only three out of ten family firms survive to the second generation of owners, which Poza (2010) further states by showing only one out of ten family firms survive onto the third generation. These numbers are outrageous, considering that family firms represent such a large base of business formations – but there are various reasons for this. One of the reasons, which may be the most prominent and distinct of them, is that there - compared to a traditional company – is a strong contexture between two very different fragments in family firms; the family and the business (Poza, 2010).

Kaslow (2006) and Van Auken and Verbel (2006) argues that every family business is constructed by a specific dynamic, that is very complex and pervades both in the family and in the business. The dynamics in a family firm is made up by all social interactions – turbulent or smooth – that constantly flows through the relationships. Dynamic is therefore the force or energy between different parties – in this case the force and energy between the family members and the company – and it is revealed through the way the family members choose to react and respond in different situations that appears in the relationship between each other and in the business (Kets De Vries, Carlock & Florent-Treacy, 2007). The dynamics that occurs in family firms depends fundamentally on the family's natural structure and the level of business that is required and applied. It can also be shown through various factors that are important and foremost to the family, such as different kinds of values and the diverse relations that occur between the different family members in terms of generations and gender. The company's objectives, strategies and the competitive environment are additional factors that can affect the design of the family business dynamic (Van Auken & Verbel, 2006). Since family and business normally act as two distinct foundations, they also hold their separate norms, rules and values which can result in serious conflicts if not handled properly (Kenyon-Rouvinez & Ward, 2005). One of the biggest keys to success for family-owned firms is, according to Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007), to manage the family dynamics so it don’t damage the business. This includes to open the lines of communication, and keep talking about where both family and business are and where they are supposed to be in the future.
2.1.1 The combination of family and business

Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) explains that it is very common for family firms to experience difficulty in separating family and business. This is because you both live and consort, while at the same you work with the family. The family and the business are always close to each other, and what is being done in the business is reflected in the family, and vice versa. The dynamics behind a family firm is therefore dependent on how the dynamics within the family works. If there, within the family and between the family members, are clear boundaries and respect, while the members at the same time encourage structure, this will probably also be reflected in the company. The same applies to the opposing; if the communication between family members is weak and a diffuse structure is practiced, this will probably be translated into the business culture as well. Morris and Kellermanns (2013) argues that a family firm needs clear boundaries between what is work and what is family. It is necessary for family members to separate when it comes to business and when it comes to privacy, in order to avoid unnecessary tension within the family. Otherwise, personal conflicts between family members is created and thereby damaging the relationships that exist between the relatives, which further reflects negatively in the company. Family values and behaviors affect the company’s strategies and decisions, while the company will affect family members’ careers, relationships and finances (Kets De Vries, Carlock & Florent-Treacy 2007).

Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) describe three different perspectives and approaches in the interaction of family and business; family first-, the business first- and the family business first-perspective. Family firms that are focused on the family first-perspective strive to have the family in mind, which is shown in all the family members having a natural employment and sometimes even a high position in the company from the beginning. Salary is based on the whole family being able to survive financially and is independent of responsibility or performance, and a family member can almost never be fired. Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) state that the family members are engaged in the company only to support and assist the family, and the firm must not under any circumstances disturb the harmony and cohesion between the family members - even if it would mean that the benefit of the company is ignored. However, Chirico and Bau (2014) believe that there is a risk in involving the family philosophy too much in the family firm. They argue that it, for example, could harm the company financially, because of family members’ different opinions about their own salary, as normally people are mainly interested in their own gain, and therefore can give unreasonable demands on what they want to get out of the company in relation to job performance. Such a conflict can also affect relationships and the dynamics within the family, and it can be difficult to meet all the requirements of the different family members. According to the family first-perspective, it is more important that family members are happy and satisfied about their situation, rather than to engage in the company’s development and expanding purposes (Poza, 2010; Ward, 1997).

Business-oriented family firms, or what Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) call the business first-perspective, focuses on what primarily benefits the company. This vision includes operators such as customers, employees and owners of the company, and family members are included on the same basis as any other employee - they are assigned no special treatments or benefits because they happen to be part of the family, and they are getting the position and the salary that is merited based on performed work. The business-oriented family firm applies strict business principles and aims to develop and run the company successfully.
Furthermore, Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) explain the third perspective, the family business first-perspective, as a combination of the two previous visions of entrepreneurship. It creates a balance between satisfying the family members and to benefit the company, which may be difficult to achieve as it requires more understanding, bigger compromises and good communication between the family members. For example, all family members are welcome to apply for positions within the company, but the position is given to the person who is considered to meet the requirements best, and not because he or she happens to be the oldest child, the one who applied first or the one that is favored by the owner. In a family business first-point of view it is very important to resolve conflicts between the family and the company in a way that benefits both parts in the best manner.

2.2 The values of Mexican culture
In order to understand the dynamics behind Mexican family businesses, it is essential to understand the overall culture and the sub-cultures of the country. A culture consists of a set of values and Mexico, as all other countries, has its own way of culture reliant on their religion, traditions and attitudes. Mexicans are generally characterized as emotional, polite, traditional and religious with a relaxed, open and warm attitude. It is a country that has been described as status conscious, where male chauvinism and social hierarchies are strictly applied, and where the society and group goes over the individual (Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999).

2.2.1 Familismo
Traditionally, the Mexican culture is described as being based on the family's central role in the society, and one of the most prevalent concepts discussed in existing literature is familismo, or familism, which is manifested in many Latin American cultures put perhaps particularly among Hispanic populations (Marín & Marín, 1991; Villarreal, Blozis & Widaman, 2005; Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999). Familismo has been described as one of the core values in the Mexican culture (Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda & Yoshikawa, 2012; Marín & Marín, 1991). The concept of familismo was founded in the early 1950’s as a universal concept of “strong in-group feelings, emphasis on family goals, common property, mutual support, and the desire to pursue the perpetuation of the family” (Bardis, 1959: 340). Where the Spanish concept of familismo has its roots is however still unclear, but according to Bardis (1959) definition, the concept was not originally defined referring to Latin American cultures solely. Still, scholars define familismo as the most important cultural aspect defining the beliefs and attitudes of Latinos (Marín & Marín, 1991). Familismo stands for the importance of inherency with a family, which also is a very important part of an individual's identity. The great value of family is applied in the close relationships of the nuclear family, and involvement with members in the extended family. The extended family consist of blood relatives or close family friends, which often are given the status of relatives, and being treated like family members with high respect (Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999). Marín and Marín (1991) argues that Mexican families practice high loyalty, solidarity and reciprocity between individuals, and it is obvious to support and help each other, no matter what. According to Diaz-Loving and Draguns (1999) the family is traditionally structured, where the father is the head of the family and works to look after and feed the family, and where the mother take cares of the children and of the home. Children are brought up to respect the elderly and other authorities, and behave in good conduct and honor.
As this is such a deep-rooted and strong value in the Mexican culture, it is also reflected in Mexican family firms where the family members, according to Avendano-Alcaraz et al. (2009), feel a strong loyalty against the business and the family that is included in it.

2.2.2 Allocentrism
Allocentric societies emphasize the needs, objectives and points of views of an ingroup, as opposed to individualistic cultures that determine their social behavior primarily in terms of personal objectives, attitudes and values (Marín & Marín, 1991). Thus, the concept of allocentrism means that Mexicans place the family’s and often the society’s needs over their own personal desires and choices. Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack (1985) compare allocentrism to collectivism, by explaining that Mexicans often define themselves in terms of the group rather than individuals. The individual goals and perspectives are overlapped of the group, and the will of the group is always in first priority. The individuals see the group as an extension of themselves and also as a source of identity (Triandis et al. 1985). Therefore, allocentrism has been associated with individuals being influenced by each other, and that they are willing to sacrifice for the welfare of the group. The group consists primarily of family, relatives and close friends. Even though Mexicans strictly strive to belong to a nurturing, loving, intimate and respectful group among family and friends, they still strive for friendly relationships outside the group (Marín & Marín, 1991).

Allocentrism is, according to Hofstede (2001), the opposite to individualism – the view of people being independent individuals placing great value in self-fulfillment. Many of the Latin cultures differs in important ways from the individualistic, competitive, achievement-oriented cultures in the Western world – mainly because they are allocentric and collectivistic (Marín & Marín, 1991; Triandis, Marín, Lisansky & Betancourt, 1984). With an individualistic view on society you are valued among others by your own performance and status, and you are perceived as a unique human being standing by yourself. In the allocentric society, the members of a group are instead protected by the others in exchange for their loyalty, creating a unified feeling where you are strongest together.

2.2.3 Simpatía
Another strong value of the Mexican culture and society is simpatía, which according to Marín & Marín (1991) is probably derived from the allocentrism value. Among Hispanics and Latin Americans, simpatía is a cultural script that emphasizes the need to promote smooth and pleasant social relationships (Marín & Marín, 1991; Triandis et al., 1984). The word has no equivalent in English but according to Triandis et al. (1984) it refers to a permanent personal quality where an individual is perceived as likeable, attractive, fun to be with, and easy-going. Simpatía therefore is, according to Diaz-Loving and Draguns (1999), a matter of expectations by individuals to show a certain level of empathy for other people, which includes to behave with dignity and respect and to always strive to achieve harmony and healthy interpersonal relationships. According to Marín and Marín (1991), simpatía also promotes the willingness to compromise and to be more kindly disposed towards other, meaning that Mexicans and other Latin Americans to a greater extent try to avoid confrontation and other negative aspects of conflicting situations. It is therefore suggested that Mexicans place value in the avoidance of
negative behaviors such as open criticizing, insulting and fighting in interpersonal relationship (Triandis et al. 1984).

2.3 Trust and confidence
In countries such as Mexico and other Latin nations, where the society is built up by a holistic oriented view with focus on groups and families, the relationships, friendships and caring properties are more important than following rules – which make aspects such as trust very important to the society and the people (Hofstede, 2001). Whether it is about family, friends or business related matters, trust has proven to be a highly valued quality in Latin countries. The Economist (2004) explains that the importance of trusting people that are close to you is a result of the serious and well-known corruption issues that exist in Mexico. You can never fully trust the society and the institutions, which Fukuyama (1995) argues nurtures more corruption. Therefore, trusting “micro-entities” such as family and friends has become a fundamental core in Mexico, and people are strictly raised to trust and to be loyal to their close family network.

According to Adler (1998), societies with low levels of trust, such as Mexico, are less likely to spawn large corporations, whereas societies with high trust levels, such as the U.S., Canada and many European countries, are more capable of organizing themselves into large, private enterprises. In low-trust societies, businesses tend to be family-centered (simply because others cannot be trusted), and large enterprises often are created by the government. Family firms in Mexico then, according to The Economist (2004), are all about trust – or, rather, the lack of it in any institution other than the family. Mexican businessmen have become used to operating in an environment in which, at one time or another, almost every other institution, from the banks, to the regulators, to the police, to the government has proved to be corrupt to various degrees and in different ways. La Chapelle and Barnes (1998) explain in addition to this that it can even be hard for Mexicans to hire non-family people to the business, at least when it comes to higher positions or more complicated working positions. The non-family employees are not sharing the bond and history that the family members do, and therefore there is an idea of the non-family employees not taking the business as seriously as the family members. The risk of an “us-versus-them” situation can develop between family members and regular employees, which in turn can create more suspicion and distrust. La Chapelle and Barnes (1998) further means that the trust within the family might erode as the business grow.

2.4 Relational aspects
The structure of the Mexican family often described as hierarchal; with the father as the leader of the family and everyone are supposed to respect and admire him. The mother is loving and caring and sacrifices herself in order to take care of the family. The children are raised to obey and respect the elder, whether it is relatives or not (Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999). The family structure is often reflected in the structure of family firms, and Brannon, Wiklund and Haynie (2013) explains that there are two different types of relationships between the family members in family firms; couples sharing a household and a team based on blood relations – and there are major differences between them. Poza and Messer (2001) explain that one big difference is that if a married couple starts a business, it is more about love and working together as a team than power that attracts. The married couple also run the family business in a different way than family members attached to each other by blood. They share a workplace, but also a household,
and therefore a more adaptable way of roles and structure is possible. The relationship between blood-relatives in a family firm are often determined long before the business is created, and the structure that is in the family is probably also the structure that is applied within the company. These people are likely to share similar life-stories and experiences, which make them highly intertwined (Brannon, Wiklund & Haynie, 2013). According to Kellermanns and Eddleston (2004) it is also more likely that those with biological linkage create a company with a safer future, because the connection that are between blood-related family members are there whether one might like it or not. For example, Stets and Burke (2000) mentions that while it is possible to divorce a spouse, this does not apply to a brother or a mother. On the other hand, blood-related family firms might face intergenerational differences.

Conflicts between multiple generations are common in family firms, where difference in age, experience and the history between the family members might matter. In addition to this, values and attitudes towards work habits can be something that separates the generations, and therefore generating in conflicts, where for example parents can act reluctant in order to let their children share power by taking decisions on their own and controlling the company (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004; Miller, Steier & Le Breton-Mille, 2003). Stets and Burke (2000) explains further that roles in a family firm also can create conflicts if it is a younger sibling that has more leadership than an older sibling or even a parent. The traditional roles and structures that are in a family, where age has a great impact, is a very sensitive area to manage and can lead to big complications in the business, but also in the family. Another relationship within biological linkage, despite generations, is siblings. Just like other blood-related relationships, siblings are having a relationship and structure between themselves that has origins since birth. A well-known phenomenon between siblings are the rivalry that arises during the early years of growing up, which follows the siblings into the company and can result in conflicts that has negative influences in the company (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004).

2.4.1 Gender roles
Hofstede (2001) states that the dimension of a country’s applied masculinity and femininity in society shows how the culture is looking at gender roles. Cultures with a traditional masculine positioning are often striving to clearly separate man and woman ideals and roles, while cultures with a more feminine view is trying to bring the two genders closer to each other. For example, in a male dominated culture it is generally not common for women to choose what they want to do in their lives, they are more or less expected to be home with the children. Most Mexican families are highly traditional, with the father as the authority figure. In a more feminine oriented culture however, there are a lots of women with education and high work positions and with professional jobs (Hofstede, 2001). Mexico, like all other cultures, have defined gender associated behaviors for both men and women (Marín & Marín, 1991). The gender roles in Mexico are traditionally with a masculine orientation, which means that they are shaped as stereotypical man- and women ideal; respected fathers and loving mothers, sons that are raised to become real men and daughters whom are expected to be innocent and remain virgins until they get married (Castro, 2012). Furthermore, the assumed cultural expectations of a man in Mexico includes being strong, in control and providing for their families and demanding respect but at the same time being aggressive and challenging in interactions with other men (Howell, 1999; Marín & Marín, 1991) – a phenomenon known as machismo - while women are
submissive daughters prior to marriage and long-suffering, self-sacrificing wives and mothers afterwards. However, more recent studies have suggested that the roles of both women and men are in transition and are more complex than the one-dimensional constructs suggest (Howell, 1999).

2.4.2 Machismo – being a man in Mexico

It is commonly known that Mexican men are stereotypically described as being macho. Machismo is a phenomenon that can be traced across all Latin countries and is based on male chauvinism and that according to Gutmann (2007) can be found in all types of social classes. According to Beattie (2002), machismo shapes how Latin societies have been perceived by outsiders and how many Latin Americans describe their own society in relation to others. While Marín and Marín (1991) claim that the actual validity or prevalence of the stereotypic machismo is unknown, Gutmann (2007) confirms that it is indeed a common definition of men in stories about Mexico. According to Beattie (2002) the term has been widely adapted as a reference point for describing sometimes favorable but mostly offensive behaviors associated with male abuse of sanctioned social prerogatives. It is important to note this; that machismo can be both positive and negative; factually or perceived. Positive in the form of taking care of the family, working hard for money to support the family, and taking pride in the raising of children, and negative in the aspects of violence against women and other males, alcoholism, and having other sexual partners besides one’s wife (Villereal & Cavazos, 2005). Because of this, there is no one definition of machismo, because it is a cultural phenomenon and individuals define their culture uniquely.

Gutmann (2007), who studied the meanings of machismo and masculinity in Mexico City, explains that it is common to hear men and women of Mexico City say that there used to be a lot of macho men, but they are not as prevalent today. When asked if being macho, many men today simply respond “no, somos hombres” (“we’re men”). Gutmann (2007) also historicizes the term machismo, and explains that it only came into common use in Mexico in the 1940s and 1950s, and came to prominence as a national symbol, which resulted in that “… Mexico came to mean machismo and machismo came to mean Mexico” (Gutmann, 2007, p.224).

Even though machismo can be related to negative aspects, such as alcoholism and domestic violence, it has become a symbol of cultural values in Mexico. However, the concept of machismo seems to have a different meaning depending on who is asked. Gutmann (2007) explains that for older men, being macho often means to be an honorable man – a desirable attribute – while some younger men associate machismo with more derogatory aspects such as wife beating, male chauvinism and a coherent set of sexist ideas. Being part of a country that has gone through massive economic and socio-cultural changes which has led to corresponding shifts in male domination, many feel that they don’t want to be associated with the negative aspects of being macho or machismo. However, Beattie (2002) along with Gutmann (2007) claim that machismo, like its female counterpart marianismo, exists mainly as an exaggerated stereotype. What macho may mean and what men may do in the future are by no means apparent. What is most culturally significant today is that gender identities and gender relations in Mexico City are characterized by inconsistency, arrogance, idealism, manipulation, and discrimination opportunism and always by doses of humor. It isn’t only manliness and being macho that brand Mexican male identities, but a combination of nationalism, class, ethnicity,
generation and several other factors. Claims and images about a unitary character of Mexican masculinity, an omnipresent *macho Mexicano*, should according to Gutmann (2007) be put to rest.

### 2.4.3 Marianismo – the role of Mexican women

Mexican women are traditionally described as submissive and lacking in power and influence (Marín & Marín, 1991). The stereotypical female ideals are described by Castillo and Ghosheh (2010) as *marianismo*, as parallel concept to machismo. The political scientist Evelyn P. Stevens founded the term marianismo in her essay “Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America.” Even though the term alludes to the worship of the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church, Stevens (1973) defined marianismo as a secular ideal that shapes women's behavior but lacks religious connotations. According to Stevens (1973), stereotypical marianismo implies female humility: the willingness of women to sacrifice themselves for their children and their family, and to remain submissive to their husbands. Howell (1999) further adds that women are also expected to prioritize marriage.

In the last few decades, women have started to take more responsibility outside the home, and according to Howell (1999) education contributes in particular to gender role change in Latin America, affecting attitudes toward sexuality, marriage and divorce, motherhood, and decision making within the household. Specifically, changes in their roles occur as women expand the accepted reproductive roles of wife and mother to incorporate productive roles without diminishing the importance of the former roles (wife, mother, daughter etc.). Even though it is still an important status to be married and many women prioritize marriage and family before studying and working, it is no longer the only goal in a Mexican woman’s life to proceed. In fact, Howell (1999) highlights that in today’s Mexico, many parents encourage their daughters to get an education, hoping that they one day use their education to become independent and self-sufficient. While the traditional women role is changing, it is still important that daughters are helping parents and younger siblings, even though they are studying elsewhere. This shows that women in Mexico are starting to reach for a more independent life, but at the same time they are loyal to the traditional roles and values that have been given them. In other words, they can go studying and get a good job as long as they also takes care of their traditional chores and are staying flexible with their work-life in order to be there for the rest of the family as expected by their gender role (Howell, 1999; Castro, 2012).

### 2.5 Socio-economic expectations

Mexico’s population is historically shaped by a diversity of regions, ethnic groups and economic backgrounds, which makes it a country with big socio-economic contrasts (De la Calle & Rubio, 2012). There are wide varieties in levels of health, social status and education across the country’s many regions and Mexico has always been considered a country with a high levels of poverty among its population. According to a report from Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2013), the lower-classes represents 59.1% of the country’s population, where the majority is considered living in poverty (CIA, 2012). Important to have in mind is that there are several levels of lower-class categorized people, and just because one is considered as lower class it does not automatically mean that they live in poverty. The lower classes are generally consisting of peasants and industrial workers and they are
usually living in rural areas or in the outer edge of cities (De la Calle & Rubio, 2012). At the same time, Mexicans are very status conscious and the Mexican society along with businesses are highly stratified and vertically structured (Lever, 2000). Hierarchical relationships are prominent and people respect authority while they also look to those above them for guidance and decision-making. This structure is important both in the business world and in the family life, meaning that those above you in rank - whether it is your boss or your parent - must always be treated with respect. This is also applied to the opposite direction; it is important for people with higher positions in the hierarchy to behave respectably against those who stand lower in the hierarchy (Lever, 2000).

Although the majority of the population lives in poverty, the economic situation of the country in recent time has improved (OECD, 2011). The liberalization of the economy in the 1990’s resulted, according to De la Calle and Rubio (2012), in a small group of higher-ranked people – both social and economic, which positively changed the statistics for the country. This group today is classified as the upper-class society and is according to INEGI (2013) consisting of 1.7 % of Mexico’s entire population. The report also mentions an example to prove the big difference between the social classes in Mexico by explaining that for every person in upper-class there are 49 in the lower class. The upper class is usually considered to be controlling much of Mexico’s property and wealth. The upper class has better education, better jobs and more influence in political matters (De la Calle & Rubio, 2012). But with all these benefits, there also comes expectations. Lever (2000) explains that there is a constant pressure of maintaining, or even increasing, the standard of living. In between these two very different groups there is the middle class, whose conditions have not changed much over time. The middle class makes up 39 % of Mexico’s population (INEGI, 2013), and at least half of the consisted middle class population is living in cities (De la Calle & Rubio, 2012). Often the middle class is consisting of small business owners and employees, and they can also afford and have access to educational and health care facilities.

In a study conducted by Lever (2000), it was shown that young Mexicans from higher socio-economic levels begin their professional development under pressure to maintain the standard of living to which they are accustomed, while older subjects have achieved a certain level of satisfaction as a result of their professional experience. In comparison, young subjects from lower socio-economic levels might have greater expectations than older subjects of increasing their standard of living both in economic and personal terms. This shows that depending on the social status and social stratification, Mexican youths are under pressure to live up to certain expectations within their class society. It would therefore be right to assume that in a family firm run by a family coming from higher socio-economic levels, the expectations of the younger generation to perform is much higher than if the family is of lower socio-economic level. In the study, Lever (2000) found that internal control of one’s own life, social support and feelings of personal competence are positively related to the well-being of the participating Mexicans. Factors of sociability and friends, economic well-being, personal development, recreational activities and the personal fulfillment of one’s children are more important for those from higher socio-economic levels. These findings suggest that material resources allow people to have access to greater opportunities for personal and family development – however this can almost only be applicable for Mexicans in higher economic levels.
3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, we present the study’s methodological choices and the argumentation for these choices. The trip to Mexico City in December 2013 was the starting point of the study, and during this trip we managed to collect a broad base of empirical data. The empirical data, which was gathered from six different family firms in Mexico City, was then used to develop and refine relevant research questions. The research context was therefore not clearly specified from the start of the study. Thus, this is an exploratory case study made up by six cases. In this study, where the overall methodology is operationalized in various case studies, we position away from the dominating positivistic ways of understanding case studies (Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007), and instead do thick descriptions in line with ethnographic and narrative ways of understanding case studies. This approach indicates an iterative data analysis combined with theoretical analysis (Alvesson, 2003) and therefore implies that our study is neither solely inductive nor deductive; it is a combination of both. The starting point of the narrative method is the story. Story telling is a deeply rooted human phenomenon and a natural way of sharing our knowledge, insights and feelings with others. Stories or personal experiences are especially appropriate for making complicated subjects comprehensible to others. Using exploratory case studies through a narrative approach will therefore lead to a richer output and to richer and more profound in-sights on the dynamics in Mexican family firms. In this chapter, the study’s ontological and epistemological standpoints are also discussed as inter-subjectivism. Finally, we discuss how criteria for research quality and ethical considerations of the study has been ensured.

3.1 Ontological and epistemological standpoints

In order to explore and analyze how the family dynamics is reflected in a number of family firms in Mexico City, a presumption for the study should be to gain a deeper understanding of the country’s culture as well as of the companies and families that are intended to participate. For that reason, a qualitative research approach that allows the authors to do a more thorough examination is preferable in this particular case. A quantitative strategy, which tends to be focused on quantification, objectivism and statistics (Bryman & Bell, 2007), would not have given the desirable depth to the study. Through a qualitative approach, more specifically a narrative approach, we can assume that a deeper understanding of the dynamics in Mexican family firms – and of the Mexican culture on a more general level – can be reached.

Therefore, this study is based on stories that were collected from a number of business owners in Mexico City. A story is a description of how an individual or a group of people perceive their own reality in terms of their life situation, themselves and their surroundings (Bryman & Bell, 2005) and thus the story’s main point involves an understanding of the world from the narrator’s perspective (Skott, 2004). It is important to keep in mind that what is conveyed in a story is based on what the respondent wants to convey to the interviewer, which means that the reality is a perceived reality that is true for the individual subject rather than true in some extra-personal, objective sense. More specific, such a view on truth and reality is based on the assumption that the world and the respondent are reciprocally inter-twined with each other and that the conditions for the individual’s life situation is created in the interaction between the two. Because of this, a fixed and narrow method cannot be chosen in order to interpret stories, as the striving is not to obtain an objective truth or a forever defined outcome.
(Skott, 2004). The interaction that occurred between the researchers and the respondents therefore generated knowledge of the study respondents’ life situations, which contributed to develop and deepen an understanding of what Mexican family firm dynamics looks like in real life. Thus, this study takes its starting point in a non-dualistic ontology, where man and world are not separated but rather intertwined in relationships (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Furthermore, the study’s epistemological standpoint is identified as inter-subjectivism, which by Bryman and Bell (2005) is described as a standpoint where knowledge is created through interaction between people, and that knowledge and the world is not just something that is out there. Finally, we would like to underline that the stories in this study are rendered and re-told by the authors, as external actors. Not being familiar with the Mexican culture, we may have seen, noticed and reflected over things that others – that are familiar with the culture – would not have done. This study is therefore based on what we have seen and what we have experienced as external actors, and this has been kept in mind during the whole working process.

3.2 Choosing empirical material
The framework for this thesis and the fact that we have focused on family firms, was composed by a scholarship from Henry and Silvia Toft’s Foundation. This support also enabled the actual field trip to Mexico City, Mexico. Through our tutor Prof. Hans Lundberg – who has lived and worked in Mexico City for many years – we managed to get in touch with several people who could introduce us to family firms in the city, for instance the visit to the Family Business Center in Toluca. At the Linnaeus University campus in Växjö, we managed to get in touch with Carlos Betancourt, a born and raised-Mexicano who is currently residing in Sweden. He told us of two of his friends involved in family firms in Mexico City, and through Carlos we managed to arrange meetings with both of them; Dalyan México and Desarrollos Electrónicos y Electricos S.A. De C.V.

The definition of family firms we intended to follow when choosing our empirical material, was ‘family owned and run’, meaning that at least two family members would be involved in the company. Furthermore, we only wanted to include manufacturing companies with no more than 50 employees. While having this in mind, we were aware of the fact that this might come to change during our visit to Mexico City, as we had little or no option to choose our respondents – we simply had to go with those options that were available at the time and within our reach. In Mexico City we visited six companies that according to our definition could be defined as family firms. The companies operate in different industries and out of the six companies, four are pure manufacturing. During our visits to the companies, interviews were conducted with the business owners and in some cases the children or partner of the owners participated. Except for the two companies we met with at the Toluca Family Business Center, companies we visited gave us tours at their premises. As the Mexican culture is very rich in traditions, we brought gifts with the Linnaeus University logo on them to the companies as a gesture of our appreciation.

3.3 Procedure for collecting material
As we in this study have adopted a narrative approach, we followed an exploratory case study design in order to collect the empirical material. The dominating view of understanding case studies normally entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman & Bell,
Caste studies have since long been described, mainly among positivistics, in a stereotypical way as a not entirely accurate research method within social science, as it has been alleged that the method lacks precision, objectivity and stringency (Yin, 2007). Lee, Collier and Cullen (2007) instead argues that case studies create the potential for a richer understanding of organizational phenomena than can be conveyed by statistical analysis. Still being a debated and discussed research method today, Yin (2007) puts forward a relevant reflection; if the case study holds such obvious weaknesses, why do researchers keep using it?

The need for case studies is made up by the desire to understand complex and complicated social phenomena (Yin, 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2007), case study research is concerned with the complexity of a particular case and is often associated with a location such as a workplace or an organization. Yin (2007) defines three uses for case studies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Unfortunately, the majority of these uses are best understood as poor relations to positivistic, quantitative research (Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007). In this study, we therefore want to position away from the normal positivistic ways of understanding case studies, and instead do thick descriptions in line with ethnographic, narrative and discursive ways of understanding case studies. Since the dynamics in Mexican family firms seem to be an underrepresented or perhaps even undiscovered area within business research, this is an exploratory case study. According to Lee, Collier and Cullen (2007) and Yin (2007), exploratory case studies tend to be conducted as preliminary research in advance of wide-scale surveys to map out the themes for the subsequent research. Furthermore, it is argued that it is only the explanatory case that seeks to derive a detailed understanding of a particular phenomenon (Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007). This narrow view is however something that we position away from. In this study, we wanted to do something different and because our empirical material allowed it, we have chosen present a more context-sensitive research and open up for these loose questions around family firms. We have given each respondent a voice and thereby a fuller picture of all of the data that has been collected – not to be seen as anecdotal but to prove that there is something to learn in these contexts.

The study is characterized by an iterative process, which meant that we first spent time in the field to understand the context. Then we devoted time to analyse the data collected and review relevant literature. Simultaneously, we gradually let the empirical contexts be discussed from a theoretical framework. During the company visits, the respondents got to describe their companies, their family and the family relations during semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured form was chosen due to the fact that the authors before the trip to Mexico City had very little information about the companies that would be visited. The authors therefore based the interviews on predefined themes, within which the respondents were able to steer the discussion. In Mexico, small talk is considered polite and therefore an important part of a business meeting, and during the interviews the authors spoke of personal matters just like the respondents. This was important in order to show respect and understanding, and to create a comfortable and safe environment. Because of this, the interviews were often similar to that of a regular conversation. With the given conditions, this would be the most appropriate approach as fully structured interviews would have limited the depth of the information in the interviews, and would most probably not result in a desirable outcome. Neither completely open interviews would have given the authors the desired information, as this approach cannot guarantee that the same areas and themes are discussed with all of the six companies. A certain degree of
structure was needed in order to meet the quality measurements of the study. Through semi-structured interviews, the respondents were able to talk openly and freely while the authors could steer and redirect the discussions back to those areas – family, business and dynamics – that are the keystones in this study.

The interviews with the business owners were conducted at each of the companies, except for the two interviews held at the Family Business Center in Toluca, between December 10 and December 16, 2013. Present were the two authors of the thesis and a professor from Linnaeus University who was also the tutor for the thesis. Three of the owners we interviewed did not speak English and we therefore had to bring in a translator to these interviews. We are aware that this may have had an impact on the empirical material as some of the information may have been misinterpreted or simply lost in translation. However, the translators were in these cases either friends or family members to the owners and the translators themselves where therefore familiar with the business. Each of the interviews were recorded in order to facilitate the continued interpretation and processing of the material, but also to allow the authors to engage in the conversations with the respondents. The recordings were also aimed at ensuring the quality of the material presented in the study, by allowing the authors to listen to the interviews several times and thereby enhancing the quality of the study. Additional notes were also kept during the interviews on one of the author’s computer.

The collection of the material was therefore carried out as a first step in the study, and the authors made the journey to Mexico City partly in order to develop an understanding and an impression of the research on location and let these impressions affect the approach of the thesis, and partly as an initial step to collect an empirical basis of the subfield. Before and during the journey to Mexico City, the authors had possible themes for the interviews with the companies, which were partly anchored theoretically from what could be expected among Mexican family firms, and partly based on our own perceptions of the Mexican culture. Still, the themes nonetheless remained open in order to take in the inspiration and the impressions that the actual company visits gave. This empirical material has through coding generated a relevant theoretical framework and an exploring research question. Thus, it is justified to call this an abductive process.

3.4 Approach to interpreting collected material
The authors’ choice to adopt a narrative approach to this thesis is based on a desire to bring the reader to Mexico City, to the settings and to the contexts that together built this thesis. The narrative approach – or narration – is characterized by stories and storytelling, and examines the terms of storytelling and the story’s structure and content (Skott, 2004; Czarniawska, 1998). In this thesis, the authors have therefore placed great value in thick and rich descriptions of the different company visits in Mexico City – and of the overall impression of Mexico as a country. Stories are an important part of narrative research and, as we would like to argue, for exploratory case studies as well, as they give structure, meaning and cohesion to our experiences. The chaotic becomes ordered and structured, the fragmental becomes a whole. Thus, storytelling is given a deep existential significance, both psychological, cultural and social (Johansson, 2005). We have during the creation of this thesis placed great value in writing context-sensitive and detailed descriptions of the meetings with the people in Mexico City.
While some of the ideas on how to write according to the narrative approach came from literature within this field, a lot of the text was produced purely intuitively, as giving space for narrative creativity is part of this approach. Writing like this, made the Mexicans business owners’ stories come to life while at the same time, we were able to transfer our own impressions on to a piece of paper.

As a first approach to interpret the collected material, all the interviews were transcribed from the recordings. Through this work, the authors were able to really listen, ponder and analyze over what was actually being said during the interviews. This led the authors to the setting of the conceptual frame. As a second step, the authors started marking words, sentences and expressions in the empirical material that were of particular value and importance, or that showed differences and similarities between the respondents. As the amount of empirical material was quite heavy and on the verge of overwhelming, this process helped the authors pick out the most important and useful parts of the material. By using quotes from the respondents and describing the actual settings and happenings of the interviews, we then started building this thesis’ empirical section.

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Based on a an initial inventory of the thesis’ empirical material, the approach to the theoretical framework was built on research and literature regarding the main concept dynamics, but also concerning values, trust, socio-economic expectations and relational aspects. These are areas that are linked to the empirical material and that therefore create a basis for further understanding of the material from a wider perspective. The theoretical framework for this thesis has been developed through articles found in the Linnaeus University’s database OneSearch but also through Google Scholar, and through available literature in the university library. When searching for articles and literature, the following keywords were used:

“family firm dynamics”, “business dynamics+Mexico”, “family firms+Mexico”, “cultural values+Mexico”, “values+Latin America”, “Mexico+values”, “gender roles+Mexico”, “machismo”, “machismo+Mexico”, “trust+Mexico”, “trust+Latin America”, “social status+Mexico”, “social stratification+mexico”, “family relations+Mexico”.

3.5 Quality Measurements

When it comes to traditional qualitative research, appropriate quality measures are according to Bryman and Bell (2005) reliability, validity, transferability, dependability, ability to confirm and authenticity, where the quality of the is, in large part, dependent on the establishment of measures of reliability and validity (Amis & Silk, 2008). These concepts refer to the study being credible in its account of alternative descriptions of reality, which for example can be underpinned by the validation of the respondents, where the researchers refer the material back to the respondents in order to discuss the interpretation that has been made. In order to ensure that details such as names, addresses and company names where rendered correctly, validation of the respondents were conducted.

The above concepts also focus on the researches producing detailed descriptions of cultural details which gives the reader the opportunity to assess whether the results are transferable to other settings and that he research is described in a clear in distinct way, allowing the reader to determine if the results are considered to be reliable (Bryman & Bell, 2005).
narrative research however, while these criteria are still applicable, there is need for additional criteria when it comes to the quality of the research.

According to Skott (2004), doing research around stories and storytelling means that the understanding is based on people’s mediation of their experiences. It also means that the cultural surroundings are constantly present in these stories. A striving for the compilation of this thesis has thus been as thoroughly and as accurately as possible to convey narratives and simultaneously develop a basis for further work that is circumferentially accessible and manageable. The meeting between the hermeneutic narrative research and traditional research can sometimes therefore be complicated, especially when it comes to determining the criteria for assessing the quality in narrative studies (Skott, 2004). Amis and Silk (2008) argue that quality is determined by the purpose and positioning of the research. From this perspective, issues of quality are inherently tied up in the underlying intent of the research, based on a “moral ethic” and heavily influenced by the inevitable power and politics that accompany the research process. Quality then becomes internalized within the underlying research philosophy rather than being something to be tested at the completion of the research or an outcome of the application of robust methods (Amis & Silk, 2008). In line with this, a certain degree and understanding of the Mexican culture was needed to be able to present a fair image of the country and its people. We therefore prepared ourselves, and the company visits in Mexico City, by studying Mexican business culture and general behavior, in order to secure the quality of our work in line with moral ethics already from the start. The use of power, that Amis and Silk (2008) speak of refers to the power imbalance, that is explicitly recognized by researchers, that often is shown in hierarchal terms such as researcher and research object, or interviewer and interviewee. This clearly portrays where power lies in the research process, who determines what is and what is not important, how modes of inquiry should be structured, and who should and should not be given voice. In this study, we have tried to avoid such imbalance by firstly calling all research objects by name throughout the study, and also by letting their voices, not ours, be at the center and thereby striving for balance. Johansson (2005) further names coherence as central criteria in narrative research, along with thoroughness and detailed descriptions. For a thesis or discourse to be perceived as a story and understood, its different parts must therefore be connected, coherent and rich in details. This criteria has been met by letting the stories of all individuals we met with in Mexico City “do the work” while at the same time presenting the settings of the stories in a logical sequential order.

As a final step to secure the quality of this thesis, all interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to further improve the conditions of writing and compiling our empirical material, and we have treated the material with the utmost care and accuracy throughout the entire process.

3.6 Ethical considerations

After careful consideration, the companies and the people involved in them have in this study not been kept anonymous. This is primarily due to the chosen approach, as we in our study want to tell the stories of the Mexican family firms we came in contact with. In order to do this, and to be able to bring the reader to Mexico City and through that create a more vivid and thick text, we chose to call the companies and the people we interviewed by name. However, with the intention to protect the study's respondents, the companies’ physical residence will not be
reported in the study more than the different parts of Mexico City in which the companies are located. Through these initiatives, the study is considered to present enough information for the quality of the study to be considered to be trustworthy, reliable and able to prove and confirm, without the risk of bringing the informants any harm. Furthermore, the informants were at the time of the interviews made aware that the material was solely intended to be used for research at the Linnaeus University and have given their consent to participate in the study.
4. FAMILY FIRMS IN MEXICO CITY – EMPIRICAL PRESENTATION

In this chapter, we present the empirical material gathered during the meetings with the Mexican family firms. To begin with, companies will be presented by short descriptions that contain factual information about each company. This will be followed by a narrative constructed version of the interviews where each of the companies are discussed through the different theoretical concepts; dynamics, values where familismo, allocentrism and simpatía are included, trust and confidence, relational aspects and finally socio-economic expectations.

4.1 Introduction to the companies

Here we present descriptive facts about the six companies we met with in Mexico City. Our intention is to introduce the reader to the companies in order to familiarize with them, before we present our empirical data through a thematization which builds on the already discussed theoretical concepts.

Desarrollos Electrónicos y Electricos S.A. De C.V.

In the district of Gustavo A. Madero, in the northern parts of Mexico City, we visited the company of Ing. Augusto César Gabriel García (henceforth in the study known as ‘Augusto’). The company, which Augusto started in 1996 with two business partners, manufactures regulators, compensators and voltage conditioners. The aim is to produce and develop protection products for electronic systems, from simple household appliances to more sophisticated products that exist in the industry. The company consists of a factory located in one building, and an office located in another one just across the street. The company has around 50 employees in total, where 15 people work in the office and 30-35 are working in the factory. During our interview we get to meet Augusto, who is the general director, but also his two sons César and Adrian. The three of them participate in the main interview to discuss family firm dynamics. During our visit, we are also invited to take a tour of the entire company, where we get to meet several of the employees. Everyone is happy to show us what they are working with, and we learn, for example, that one lady along with one of the managers is in charge of quality, as Desarrollos Electrónicos y Electricos is an ISO 9001-certified company.

The number of family members involved in the company is four on Augusto’s side of the family, and two on Ignácio’s – one of the original business owners – side.

Okane Queso Cubicado

The second company we visited in Mexico City is Okane, a cheese making factory of smaller size in a rough area that has no building numbers on the front doors. With us in the car is Claudia Jennyfer Paniagua-Martínez, or Jenny, who will be acting as a translator during the interview. The owner of Okane is the husband to the sister of Jenny’s father. Once we manage to find the company, we are greeted by a smiling man with big moustache – this is the owner Pedro Aldo López Paniagua (henceforth in the study known as ‘Pedro’). In his factory, Pedro produces cheese that he sells to pizzerias and other fast food restaurants, and it is a cheese made from protein powder and not from milk. As we are told during the interview, milk is very expensive in Mexico and producing cheese from this powder is a much cheaper alternative. So Pedro has found his niche, and before the interview he shows us the production and tells us everything about the production technique.
The company has 12 employees in total, and two of them are related to Pedro; Aldo, Pedro’s son, is in charge of the production and then there’s Carlos, Pedro’s nephew, who works in the production. Pedro’s big passion in life is his business, or perhaps we should say the production part of his business, and he lights up each time he mentions one of his machines or the production technique. While this is all very interesting, we focus on Pedro’s view of the company as a family firm and how he sees Aldo’s future in the company. 

Dalyan México

On Thursday, we meet with Roberto Xavier Carrillo (henceforth in the study known as ‘Roberto’) who owns and runs Dalyan, a company dedicated to the marketing of fish and seafood. Roberto has just moved in to a new office, but we first get to see his old office, located just off Mexico City’s most important and beautiful avenue Paseo de la Reforma, which he shares with his two cousins who are lawyers. The office décor is masculine, classic stylish and looks just about what you would expect a legal office to look like. The new office, located a couple of blocks away, is small but definitely more personally decorated. Roberto buys fish and seafood from fishermen sailing in the Gulf of Mexico, package it in a factory, and sells it to grocery stores and big chains like Walmart. Roberto’s situation is somewhat complicated as he started the company with his father making it a family business, but because of a conflict the two do not speak to each other anymore. Still, the father owns five percent of the company. The only family member involved in Roberto’s company is therefore his father. Instead, Roberto has chosen to only hire friends to his office in Mexico City. These friends can however be seen as an extended family, as Roberto continuously speaks of the trust and the confidence he has in them. Roberto has built a successful company in a very short time, and despite only being 29 years old when we meet him, he has managed to get a Master degree, hold a management position at Walmart, study in Switzerland and work for the WTO, and now start his own company. The interview with Roberto is intense, comprehensive and often heavy and emotional as we talk a lot about Roberto’s relationship with his father.

Asesoría Logística Proyectos y Equipo S.A. de C.V.

20 km north of Mexico City, we walk into a new, modern building located behind a big electronic gate in a less modern neighbourhood. A receptionist welcomes us as we walk across the tiled floors to meet Iris Alonso (henceforth in the study known as ‘Iris’), the daughter of the company’s owner. The company, founded in 1990 by Iris’ father and a friend of his, was started as a company dedicated to the commercialization of Uninterruptible Power Systems (UPS) services, and preventative and corrective maintenance. The company has offices in ten different cities in Mexico, but these are small offices with no more than two or three people working in them. In total, the company employs around 55-60 people. The company is currently working with organizational improvements and ever since Iris started working in the company in 2007, she has been working on giving the company a structure.

The family members that are involved in the company are Iris, her brothers Benjamin (who works in marketing) and Israel (who works as a chef in the company’s canteen), Iris’ husband who is just about to leave the business to start his own company, a couple of cousins and an uncle. We get to say hello to Iris’ husband but during the interview, only Iris and her brother Benjamin participate, although Benjamin has to leave for a business matter halfway
through the interview. The interview focuses mainly on Iris’ father, his entrepreneurial spirit and the relations within the family. Since we have not yet been interviewing a woman or been getting a female perspective of family and business life in Mexico, Iris’ story is of great value to this study.

Dismac, Farmacia de Especialidades Jana & Grupos Lemnos S.A.P.I. de C.V.
The two final companies we meet with at Tecnológico de Monterrey’s Family Business Center in Toluca. Toluca is located about 60 km south-west of Mexico City, and to get to the Family Business Center we have to enter the campus of Tecnológico de Monterrey, one of the largest multi-campus universities in Latin America. The two company meetings have been organized by Jonathan Collin, Director of Business Incubador at campus. In the first meeting, we are introduced to a family of three; father Rafael Pedraza García (henceforth in the study known as ‘Rafael’), his wife Juana Maria Arredondo Felix (henceforth in the study known as ‘Juana’) and their son. This is not a typical family firm, as all three family members run their own businesses. Rafael runs a drugstore, a pawnshop and rents out shop spaces in a mall. Juana runs a restaurant where she is the director. Carlos was left an arcade hall from his grandfather, and in addition to that he is working on a business idea that his father came up with – a pill-dispenser – and a forum that connects entrepreneurs with student for work purposes. The family has used the Family Center’s services to improve the communication between each other, because even though they run separate businesses, they are still involved in and help out in each other’s companies. Carlos is not that interested in being part of a typical family business, even though he has worked in both the drugstore and restaurant. From Jonathan, we learn that the relationship between father and son is a bit tricky, as Rafael wants to develop the idea with his son and run that business with him, but Carlos wants to do it on his own.

Tarimas Mc Arthur
The second company we meet with at the Family Business Center, and the final company of our Mexico trip, is a company that was formed with the aim to provide the best supply options for industrial platforms, by buying and re-using pallets to ship different supplies. The company is owned and run by Arturo Rodriguez Rodriguez and his wife Silvia Rodriguez Morales. They started the company in 2005 when Arturo was fired from his previous job, and the couple have now managed to build a successful company even though they had no idea where to start in the beginning. Including the two of them, the company has twelve employees. Arturo and Silvia have two sons who doesn’t work in the company but participate when there are matters of technology such as updating the website. But working in their parent’s company is not their main job, as one of them is currently studying and the other one is working in a factory. During the interview, we learn that Arturo and Silvia started the company solely for themselves, so that they could live a good life. They will not be disappointed if their sons do not take over the company in the future, as this was never the intention with the company’s establishment. It is the therefore the dynamics between a married couple running a business together that is the center of this interview.
4.2 The dynamics in Mexican family firms

We listen attentively to Adrian as he tells us the story about the old rocks being smashed together and polished into beautiful shiny ones. It is a good and well-illustrated explanation of what he thinks about family dynamics in businesses. He is fully aware that running a business with family is not just a bed of roses, it is much more complex than people think. Communication seems to be very important to this family, both inside and outside the company. Cesar agrees and believes that, as Adrian illustrates through his story, there needs to be some friction to develop and to maintain competitiveness in the business.

“Sometimes they with their experience, they think they can make some things. And we say, we say; no you can’t do it. And sometimes it’s backwards. […] And that’s a good combination to create or dismiss some things.”

Augusto is sitting broad-shouldered with a proud posture at his desk in front of us in his office on the second floor of the building. Cesar is standing behind his father, while Adrian is standing a bit further away, leaning against a closed window. The office is quite small and is dominated by the enormous and bearish dark-wooded desk positioned in a corner. The three men of two different generations of the family look at us, all of them with their arms crossed. Outside the window the early afternoon heat approaches. It is a lovely, sunny and warm day, and the company is in full commerce, experiencing another day of challenges.

It took us a little bit longer than expected to find Desarrollos Electronicos y Electricos. The small and identical side streets appeared puzzling, and one thing that we fast learn is that Mexicans do not seem to be big fans of using signs. Finally, hoping that we had found the right address, we jump out of the car full of expectations and curiosity, but also a little bit of nervousness tickling in the stomach. While considering which door we should knock on, a scruffy dog in a t-shirt curiously walks by. It stops and looks at us, with the same wondrous and astonished expression we probably are giving off. The dog walks past us, heading to a man sitting on the sidewalk, also looking at us with a requesting glance. We ask him in stumbling Spanish if he knows the address we are going to, and he points at a door just next to us.

The family members gathered in the small office are talking energetically about the company. Cesar and Adrian thoroughly translate their father’s words from Spanish to English, but naturally fill in when they feel that they have anything to say about the current topic of the conversation. Even though it is clear that Augusto is the head of the company, the two brothers say that they feel involved in almost all decisions that are made – although it sometimes may lead to complications within the family. Cesar weights over from one foot to the other and says with assurance in his voice:

“You can […] speak with all the confidence. It’s not that you are with a boss that you have […] afraid to talk around, maybe with a new idea or you think you will be dismissed for a new idea. And you can talk with my brother and my dad with all the confidence. […] We are a family, and in many places you don’t have that confidence. Maybe someone who is going to fire you if you say what is wrong.”
Adrian, still leaning against the window next to us, further explains that this is one of the biggest benefits of running a family business; the confidence to talk to each other about everything, without being afraid of different kinds of negative consequences. The relaxed dynamics between the family members once again makes itself reminded when a small discussion in Spanish occurs between the three men about the recent conversation about the confidence to talk to each other and the complications that can occur. Cesar turn his attention to us.

“[…] some fights are like if we alone could make some decisions that are wrong, and maybe we make some mistakes […] we are family and we don’t keep things, we don’t need authorization and we make […] some mistakes into the company.”

The intense dynamics that are between these three individuals pervades their whole attitudes, and they seem to be very confident – not just with the magnificent and impressive work they are doing every day running and developing a great company, but also as a family, where the relationships are more intimate and complex to manage. To have an energetic dynamic is something positive for this family, it is when they question and confront each other they develop – both within the company and as a family. Adrian takes a determine step away from the window and leaves the leaning position that he until now has been standing in. With his arms still crossed, he looks at us and says in a confirmatory way:

“Yeah, and it’s important to keep in mind that this […] is our core values, to keep fighting, developing and grow every day.”

Arturo’s life changed drastically a couple of years ago when he got fired from his work as an adviser in a financial company. All his life he had been working, and suddenly he had no work to go to. While it was a scary and insecure situation, it also had its advantages. This was an important turning point in his life - for the first time he did not really know what he was supposed to do. However, he had to do something to put food on the table for his family. Since Arturo was a little child, he had this dream about being a business man – a business man that works only for himself. This dream now made itself reachable and he gathered the family to discuss the future. Jonathan listens carefully to Arturo while he explains the way he became an entrepreneur. As Arturo finishes talking, Jonathan turns to us and translates the conversation with the same intensity that Arturo was speaking with.

“[…] they decided to create a company although they didn’t have any idea of how […] it was supposed to run, they didn’t have suppliers, they didn’t know about pricing, they didn’t know about manufacturing, they didn’t know anything at all.”

With no knowledge or experience, the family agreed about Arturo starting and running his own business. He took a risk – but it took at the right place, at the right time. As we all listen with interest and fascination, Arturo continues to describe the company and what he has accomplished during the years with great passion and enthusiasm. He constantly reminds us
about the family’s part of it all; he would not have made it through if it wasn’t for the family. The sun is shining through the windows and the heat outside steps at a rough pace, despite the clear fresh mountain air. For a while, Arturo explains, he ran the company by himself, but of course with his family supporting him. The business grew, and he tells us that he came to a point where he felt that he could not continue on his own. Arturo further explains that it was only a matter of time before Silvia would be working in the company – there had always been a plan that she would be involved.

“[…] as the business start growing, he has less time to do all the paperwork, so that support from his wife was very, very important.”

Silvia is a little bit cautious and takes a short second to think of the answer when we turn our attention to her. But no, she says while shaking her head, no, she never doubted or hesitated when Arturo asked her to join him in the company. They are family, and it is important for them to be together, no matter what. They support each other, whether it is about family or about business. The married couple look at each other and smile. They seem to have a real good and caring relationship. To catch the moment, we start talking about how it works when you combine family with business. Both Arturo and Silvia lights up, the way they are being a family and at the same time run a business together is something they are proud of. When Arturo gets stuck with expressing his thoughts, Silvia takes control over the conversation with a very dedicated and avid approach. We can see why these two make a good team. Jonathan listens and then takes a second to sum it all up before he translates it.

“… they believe that […] something that has played in their favor is that they have, firstable they have worked well as a family. They have a great relationship […] So, […] she says that if they had not have this […] good relationships as married, it would have been very difficult to have a good relationship inside the business, inside the family business. […] And they have, well….they have managed to […] bring the, their marriage relationships […] dynamics into their family business, so when something goes wrong, you know, they try to calm down and talk about it in, in another time. But they do talk about it!”

It is captivating to take part of the couple’s healthy and exemplary attitude of the relationship - both as business partners and as a couple. Silvia also mentions that it is important that they are staying in their own areas of the company, because if they interfere more than necessary with one another’s space, it can create unnecessary arguments – which might be reflected negatively in the business.

The conference room smells of new furniture and cleaning products. There are still traces of the company just recently moving in to the brand new building, as we see moving boxes here and there. We are once again amazed of the striking architecture, which we repeatedly become aware of in the magnificent Mexico City. As we are offered bottles of water, Iris starts talking
about the dynamics in the company and how complicated it sometimes can be having family involved. Conflicts are bound to happen, but both Iris and her brother Benjamin agree that conflicts are not necessarily a bad thing.

“We need to fight, because we need to share different points of views. [...] I think all [...] human relations are difficult. And when you combine work and family they could turn very difficult.”

But don’t conflicts and fights jeopardize the family relations and take focus from the actual business? Our eyes shift from our notes and turn to Iris and Benjamin, our faces probably looking like question marks. Iris laughs and her bright smile lights up the room. She explains that even though they fight, they also forgive, simply because they know they have to remain a family for the benefit of the company. Forgiveness means that they can discuss and let their opinions and emotions out, but without damaging the relationships and at the same time focus on what is best for the company. She states that their family relation is one and their working relation is a completely different one. Benjamin nods in consent. Fights are important, but so is forgiveness and the family therefore always try to work things out because it’s for the benefit of both the company and the family. Benjamin explains that even though it is difficult at times, the fact that they know how to forgive is what enables them to keep discussing.

“We are very respectful with each other [...] We can discuss but [...] we don’t swear [...] Maybe we can get a little bit angry or get our voices loud and scream a little bit but... it’s okey it’s normal.”

At the end of the day, they are a family and they have to get along. Iris and Benjamin raise their eyebrows and look innocently at each other. They both start laughing. Yes, there have probably been many heated discussions within these walls and there probably are many more to come. But as Iris explains, there are many families that end up fighting and not talking to each other, even taking it as far as breaking off contact completely, and that is not how Iris and her family want things to end. They want to remain a family, even though they may not always agree on everything.

“... we can fight and in the next five minutes I can give him a hug and nothing happens. [...] It’s okay to have different opinions.”

The dynamics in Roberto’s company is somewhat different from the other family firms in this study. He started the company with his father but as employees he only chooses good friends. This makes the company perhaps not unique, but at least remarkably interesting. Roberto has just moved to a new office as he doesn’t think the old one represented him and his company. Roberto is very conscious about making the atmosphere in his company an open, fun place to be. As all his employees are his friends, he is very concerned about their well-being in work situations and wants to make sure that his office is considered a fun and relaxed place to work,
a place that almost feels like your own house. While it may seem a little excessive and on the verge of extreme, Roberto thinks that “...as long as it’s young people they will understand better than old people”. For Roberto, it is important that his employees – not only the ones in the office but also the workers in the factory and the fishermen – see him as an equal. He wants them to see him as a friend, not a boss. He believes that this creates a tighter bond within the company and that it contributes to his friends wanting to stay and develop in the company.

“They don’t see me as their boss, they see me as a friend. Yeah and, even if they ask me like ‘you’re not suited up’ or that stuff they know that if I have to work I work. If I have to plant a fishnet I will do it because [...] at some point I needed like the job done, the money, because I wanted to be independent.”

While Roberto has no problem involving friends in his company, he is more doubtful when it comes to involving family. Because of the ongoing conflict with his father, Roberto’s experience of combining family and business has not exactly been positive and in addition to that he says that his family has a long history of bad memories in family business. Roberto laughs and says that the problem between him and his father is nothing compared to what he has seen before – which, among others, includes stealing and copying entire business ideas. We smile at his ability to see bright and positive sides, despite the problems with his father that is constantly hanging over him like a shadow. There is always someone that is worse off than yourself. Roberto’s stories prove that he is not unique when it comes to dealing with conflicts within a family firm. But why do people keep risking their relationships like this? We taste the ice cold tequila that Roberto has poured for us as he tells us what he thinks of combining family and business.

“Yeah it is a good idea but it must be crystal clear from the beginning, you know like, we want this, I want this from you... even if we are partners, we are partners because I need you for this. [...] You always need someone real close to you in the business so, it will be like a dream if it’s family because you can grow together.
And not only in the business.”

A joyous burst of laughter erupts in front of us. We smile, even though we do not understand the joke expressed in Spanish. But the relaxed and happy atmosphere rubs off on anyone in the room. The family continues to laugh energetically and they lively discuss something in Spanish. Juana asks her son something between the laughter, and he turns to us and asks if we understand anything. We tell them that we can pick up and understand certain words, but that we do not understand Spanish. The family calms down, still having a little glint in their eyes while looking at each other, and direct their focus to us. They are more than willing to tell us about their companies, almost ecstatic – it is obvious that the companies are their lives. While putting out business cards on the table, Rafael tells us that according to him there is no other way to conduct business than with your family. He does not understand how it alternatively should be done.
“... he said that he doesn't know another way of life. [...] always have the same, with the family.”

The family is strongly unified and both father and son grew up in their parents' businesses. From an early age they learned to work hard for what they want, and to take responsibility over both business and family. They learned early that the business’ results heavily influence the family's standard of living, and that the family's participation is critical to business performance. Rafael pulls out a folder from his bags, and starts placing a bunch of papers on the table. Orders, bills, invoices and contracts. With big numbers. We nod as we go through them, looking at Rafael with intrigued faces. That this man is proud of what he does is an understatement – and he certainly isn’t afraid to show it. Results are clearly important to Rafael, and he says that is what he loves most about his business. A discussion in Spanish occurs between the family members, and once again it all ends up with laughter. They really seem to enjoy each other’s company. Carlos smiles and explains that it has not always been this way; they now have a much better communication than they used to.

“Because before maybe we was saying the same but with different words. And we did not understand each other. In here we learn like a different language to say it in that kind of way. So we are talking about the same thing with the same word so that make it all better fluid.”

We all nod our heads in agreement - the way people communicate with each other probably have a greater impact on business than one might think. We continue to talk about their businesses, and another wild discussion takes place between the family members. They are asking each other something and both Juana and Carlos look doubtfully at Rafael. He explains something and his wife and son change into an agreeing look and the discussion goes on. After the discussion, Carlos takes a moment to think of what have been said in the conversation with his parents, before he starts translate it into English:

“... basically we are responsible of different areas. My mum is responsible for the restaurant, and she like have all control in there. Ah...after that, well he said that the way we works and the way we are involved is that when we [...] we need to take a decision, he have...he...talk about it with us, we share opinions, we share point of views, we see good points, bad points and all that and well...then the decision is taken. [...] but after all the point of views or the options, that [...] we share, is not like enough fundamental view, if he is not convinced that we are right he takes the decision by himself. “

Rafael quickly starts to speak again to further explain that everybody in the family is involved in each other’s companies in one way or another, but he is the only one who has ownership in all companies. Even though everybody is involved in all companies, it is important that they don’t interfere too much in each other’s businesses. They can support each other with advising and giving their personal opinion in many cases, but they can never decide for another person what to do or how to do it. Carlos explains that it is one of the foundation rules in their way of
running businesses. Juana speaks up and explains that it is important to involve the family because the family members get closer to each other in that way. She looks at us with her warm brown eyes and gives us a smile. She finds it healthy for both the family and the business if the family is involved in the company. In other ways, other family members might not care about the company, and if they do not care about the company, they do not care about the family member that is running the company either. When it comes to family, there is no doubt. Juana talks rapidly and gesticulate at the same time, pointing with he whole hand on the table. Even though she is a very determined woman, she exudes warmth and much kindness.

“... for her the family is first. [...] to create and to grow things with the family. So she is... it’s better with family than with another person”.

Rafael explains that both consequences and benefits are shared, and even though it sometimes can be a hard time running a business, you always have your family supporting you. Carlos believes that it is easier to take care of crises and problems with your family than with anybody else, and also that it is much funnier to share the benefits with them. Juana quickly adds, that something else related to running the family business is that she now has to see Rafael every day. We all start laughing heartily and Rafael is looking at his wife with a big smile. Juana starts speaking again and is in the middle of a sentence, when she suddenly quiets down. It looks like she is trying to hide from something; she put her hands on her face, only with her eyes showing, but at the same time smiling. She almost blushes and mumbles something to her son and giggles. Carlos smiles at his mother and explains to us that she gets nervous when the camera is in front her, which it is in order to perpetuate the moment. We all laugh, with Juana laughing the highest, and the people sitting at the table next to us are looking at us smiling, like they also want to hear what is so funny.

4.3 Values – getting close to the core of the Mexican culture

Back in the conference room, we are listening to Iris speak of the Mexican culture in general. Her English is very good, and she is definitely not shy or afraid to talk. We are pleasantly surprised by this, as we didn’t quite know what to expect from a woman’s perspective on business and on family. Would she feel held back? Not really feeling comfortable talking about the rather sensitive subjects around family firms? Would she perhaps even be accompanied by a man? But no, Iris is confident on her own and talks and analyzes and all we have to do is listen. While family and friends remain important in one’s life, Iris explains that for many Mexicans, business is everything. And as long as you receive money, it doesn’t really matter what you do and who you do it with. She says this is a very common way of looking at business in Mexico. Softer values, such as human resource-departments that Iris herself works within, are not considered as important as the actual business-related matters – simply because they do not bring in any money.

“Yes we are more business oriented and not people oriented.”
It is a story that surprises us. Coming from a part of the world where companies are investing more and more in staff welfare and the wellbeing of their employees, you start to wonder if this is a phenomena that will start to show in Mexico in the near future. After all, they are keeping up pretty good on other aspects. Iris thinks it is starting to change. That her generation will contribute with a different point of view and a different perspective on doing business. And in her father’s company it has already started. But she says they have been doing it all in the wrong order; that most Mexican companies after a while realize that they need to change, to reorganize or – as in Iris’ father’s case – to give the company a structure. Laughing at the image of the stereotypic Mexican, Iris says that they simply don’t begin with the basics. That they never read the instructions of anything, but realize afterwards that maybe they should have. We smile and in our heads we formulate a new comparison; that maybe doing business in Mexico is kind of like assembling furniture from IKEA (because let’s be honest – who reads the instructions?). But just like Iris says, it has to do with the business-oriented attitude. Because as long as you keep getting money, people do not reflect over the need to change. And why change a winning concept?

4.3.1 Familismo, allocentrism & simpatía

Today Arturo and Silvia are running the business together, hoping for their sons to someday take over the firm. Even though Arturo and Silvia does not want to push their sons into the company, they have a silent wish that their sons finally will understand how great it is to be their own boss and the benefits that are connected to running a business on your own. Arturo is very definite when he once again mentions that it is his sons’ decision, and only theirs, if they want to be involved in the business. It is a combination of a strong will to involve the sons, but at the same time an understanding view on the sons’ privacy and own wills.

“...if the sons decide to be in the business it’s okay, but if they choose something else...well it’s their life and he cannot interfere with that.”

Arturo speaks with full respect for his sons’ thoughts and opinions about their own futures. For us, the answer is not expected. So this is a family business that is driven solely by the current owners' future in mind? We take a sip of water to conceal the astonishment caused by Arturo’s reply. He strongly believes that it is important that they do what they want in life, and if they in the end want to take over the business they first must have been working for others in order to appreciate working for themselves. It is important for both Arturo and Silvia that their sons get what they want in life, but they also have to work for it. Arturo speaks with certainty in his voice and gives Silvia a warm look. Jonathan smiles and explains:

“He said that it is very important to, to say that. What they are doing is for them, not for their sons. If it happens to, to get to their sons to some point it’s okay but they are doing what they are doing for them, just them.”
Arturo explains that the main goal of starting the company was survival. The most important thing was to be able to feed his family. After that, he says, comes the ability to travel and to buy things – the luxuries – and then to provide education for his sons. Today, Arturo and Silvia run their company for the desire to live a good life. Just for the two of them.

Pedro’s office is a simple one, frugally decorated, with no more than a computer, a printer and a few books on his desk, and a calendar and some papers put up on the turquoise walls, but that’s about it. Not that it matters to us, because we are made all the more welcome by the big smile on Pedro’s face. And the friendliness in his eyes. Eyes that reflect a humble, hardworking and passionate man. All the Mexicans we have met have had such warm, friendly eyes. Sitting by his desk in front of us, Pedro is no exception. Pedro loves to talk about his business and the machinery in it and all the production techniques. When we ask him about his family and why he chose to bring his son into his company, the answer we get is both short and somewhat unexpected. “Aldo didn’t want to study”. Apparently, involving his son wasn’t a calculated move. It wasn’t about a legacy, or wanting the company to be passed on to future generations. Aldo simply didn’t want to study and therefore, Pedro explains, he had to work. At first, Pedro didn’t want Aldo in the business because it is a very complicated industry. But he developed fine, and now Aldo is responsible for the production and Pedro is in charge of the selling. In fact, during our tour of the company Pedro wanted to show us how one of the machines worked, but he didn’t know how to start and had to call on Aldo for help. We all laugh and Pedro throws his right hand in the air in a silly gesture. Talking about the future of the company and eventually involving more family members in the business, Pedro shrugs his shoulders and responds briefly that he needs machines in his business, not people. Machines are cheaper than employees, and Pedro says that today it is not the empirical knowledge and the experience that matters – no, the technical knowledge, that’s what’s important. He is therefore happy that Aldo has managed to learn the production techniques and that he is now responsible for it. After all, the production is a crucial part of Pedro’s business.

Pedro admits that he first had other plans for Aldo though, and thought that he would be involved in the selling. Because, he explains, with the selling you get more involved with the people that you work with, such as the suppliers and the retailers, and these contacts are also extremely important for the business. But Aldo doesn’t want to be involved in the selling, so Pedro will continue to do it. Still, he thinks that Aldo will stay within the company and become the owner in the future. After all, the production is the core of the production and if Aldo knows how to run the production, he can run the company.

“Maybe my father had the idea for us to work here but we didn’t!”
Benjamin laughs as he tells us that the company was not necessarily planned to be a family firm. Both he and Iris have always liked their father’s business and they are very proud of him and the fact that he has managed to build such a big and successful company. But neither of them had expected that one day they would actually work in his company, let alone be the next owners. Iris explains that even though she never really wanted to be involved in her father’s company, she is still interested in the wellness of it because “… well it was the work of my father for all his life and […] I also work here and I think it’s part of me also.” We nod.

Understand. Even though she doesn’t say it out loud, we get the feeling that Iris feels somewhat obligated to be involved in the company. That maybe she doesn’t really want to be there, but that it is expected of her. She underlines that her father has explicitly said that he would like the company to pass to the second generation and to the third generation. That he would like the company to transcend generations.

Iris leans back in her chair. By the look on her face we can tell that she, in her mind, goes back to how it all started. She tells us that her father has always been a true workaholic. She doesn’t say it with disappointment in her voice but rather states that as an entrepreneur, he sees his business as his baby. And she remembers him always being like that; always working, never really focusing on much else. Benjamin, who is a bit more quiet and unobtrusive than his sister, remembers how their father wanted him to study electrical engineering just like he did but that Benjamin decided to study industrial engineering instead.

Their father did not understand this, until Benjamin and Iris’ mother explained to him that he never took Benjamin to his work or taught him some basics in electricity, which otherwise could have awoken an interest in Benjamin. Iris laughs at the situation, and shakes her head when she again states that her father was always working – that was his life. Iris remembers being a little girl, always wondering why her father was never around. It sounds tragic and we feel sorry for Iris and her brothers. But in the end, their father was doing it all for his family.

“… he always wanted to have the resources for his family so […] we didn’t suffer the same that he did when he was a child. And… that, that was what pushed him to […] work and work and work.”

The family has always been what has kept their father going, and when Iris tells us a heartwarming story of her being born under rather complicated circumstances, we are filled with compassion and respect for her father. During labor, Iris’ head was injured by the tools being used to deliver her and the doctors said Iris wouldn’t be able to speak, to eat or to walk. Her father then said that he was going to work day and night so he could give his daughter the medical treatment that she might need. If she needed to go to USA to get surgery then so be it, he would work and work until he had the money. Iris thinks that was the point where her father began to work so hard, thinking that he needed money in order to treat his daughter. The story reminds us that we are all fighting for something. That we all have something that keeps us going and that motivates us. In the case of Iris and Benjamin’s father, the motivating factor is the family. Even so, Iris and Benjamin speak more serious of the risks of involving family in a business just because they happen to be family. For Iris, who is now specialized in human resources, this is a subject that she is very passionate about.
Iris: [...] We used to have more family members but well now we have the policy that if you are a family member but you don’t qualify to the, to the…
Benjamin: Position.
Iris: Position, you are not hired. Because we have a lot of trouble doing favours like that.
Amanda (author): Aah. So you still need to have the knowledge, it’s not just about who you know?
Iris: Yes, to fill all the requirements for having the position. Now it’s a law, because it was very, uhm… My father, he’s a good man and he likes to help his family but it was a mistake to think like that. […] We are the family that owns this company, but just because I am the daughter of the director I am going to do whatever I want; I have to, I don’t know, to do something to get things done and well, I get paid for that. It’s a normal job like, like… I have my benefits, because I am the daughter, but I am a regular employee like everyone else. Yes. And also my brother.

Iris explains that helping each other out is always what you strive for. You want the best for your family, but when you have family involved in a company, it’s important to put some rules, she says. They can no longer hire someone just because they are family – because even though they might want to help a relative or a friend, they are running a business at the end of the day and they have to do what is best for the company. Iris thinks these rules and guidelines has contributed to the company’s success. She also tells us that the family values that were taught to her and her brothers from their parents have played a great roll in the functioning of the family business.

“Yeah, for example my mother taught us that we should forgive, that we have to be humble […] in all situations and accept that we are not perfect and that we might have mistakes and… my father for example has taught us that we have to work very hard to get what we want. […] well both of them has told us that we have to, well to be very careful with money.”

It all makes sense. The humbleness we feel from Iris and Benjamin had to come from somewhere. And it’s not just the humbleness; they both seem so calm and down to earth, despite the fact that they are part of a large company and have high positions within it. The family values that Iris speak of seem very important to her. She says they have helped them – not only as individuals but as a family, and she thinks these values are the reason why they manage to solve conflicts and keep the relationships healthy. Iris looks out the window, onto the little courtyard that belongs to the company. The area is gated. A truck backs up to deliver something to the small warehouse that is connected to the office building. Iris looks back at us, smiling, and explains that her parents are very different from each other, something that Iris can see for her and Benjamin as well.
“... he’s all business and my mother is all human. And, it’s a very useful combination.”

Iris says she is more like her mother, focusing on the human and softer aspects, while Benjamin in more business oriented like their father. But they don’t think one is better than the other. It’s the combination that makes them strong.

4.4 Trust and confidence in Mexican family firms

Cesar takes a step forward, and ends up side by side with his father. He pull his hand through his hair and look down at his feet, like he is going to say something that is bothering him. The conversation about the rough situation to find hard-working and dedicated employees to the business, is really affecting him. Both Adrian and Cesar points out that you cannot really trust a regular employee, they are not enough concerned about the company’s future and are usually not interested in or willing to grow with the business.

“We had so much bad experiences with employees [...] they ripped us of.”

Adrian shake his head and laughs indifferently while he finishes the sentence. Cesar fills in and explains that this is a good company to work for, they are tolerant with trivialities and are striving for happy and satisfied employees. Although, there is, according to Cesar and Adrian, a difficulty to motivate people in Mexico to do a good job. Cesar describes occasions where employees are on Facebook, putting on make-up or fixing the hair rather than working.

“We overlook with the little things when they do that kind of stuff, [...] But you know, once...when you get to here it’s enough - it’s enough.”

The conversation about trust and confidence in other people, while running a business, is according to both Augusto, Cesar and Adrian an important grounding keystone for success. To have the courage to trust employees, family members as non-family members, is essential for the business’ health. Cesar explains that there is a significant difference between working for them and working for some other firms. In this company the employees get paid for the work they do, not for just sitting around or do other things than they are supposed to. You have to be dedicated to and responsible for your own work. In other companies employees manage to get away with doing nothing or not even showing up from times to times and Cesar tells us that it therefore usually is safer to hire family members, than non-family members.

“But we also like this that you can trust in your family. [...] So, it’s good to have some family that you can trust. [...] And I think that’s another reason to hire family into your business.”
Family members are more dedicated to do their work with the company’s best in mind, and they often speak with more confidence between each other which results in more communication and better cooperation. At the same time, the three men understand that there can be some free-riders among family members as well. It is important to trust the people you are going to work with. Augusto speaks firmly about the matter of trusting people in the company. He sure trusts both his sons, and why should he not? They tell us that both sons decided to come and work with him in his company right after their exams, and now they are striving for taking over after their father, and also have plans to develop it abroad.

“I have studied to a mechanical engineer, and when [...] got out I [...] made my practice [...] to got my title. In here. And I started to involve more and more in the company [...] And I just stayed. Because I was just too involved, and I like it, and know I have to [...] keep the business going. [...] So that’s how I decides to stay here; to make sure that everything keeps going.”

Cesar nods, content with his choice of future plans. He looks at Adrian and passes the word to him:

“ [...] well when I finished my career my dad started to bring me and...And asked me to help him in many projects that we have. So, it just kind of happened, you know, and I started to helping with these projects, and then I decided to stay here. I think it has a lot of potential.”

Augusto has now been silent for a while, but as the sons explain their ways into the company he turns to Cesar and starts speaking Spanish. He gesticulates and talks to his two sons in a methodical and calm way. Both Cesar and Adrian is nodding, listening carefully to what their father is telling them. Cesar puts his hands together and translates:

“He said that [...] he has the confidence to [...] our knowledge that we have acquired through the years at school and experience. That he trust in our knowledge to make things right.”

This shows that there is a mutual trust between the family members; Augusto is trusting both Cesar’s and Adrian’s capability to make decisions and develop the company with the company’s best in mind, and the sons are trusting Augusto that he knows what he is doing and that he have the right experience to control the company. The trust is, according to Augusto, Cesar and Adrian, fundamental for running a successful company in Mexico, where everything else is more or less corrupt.

The afternoon sun is heating up the small Los Olivos-office. Through the window, we see an endless sea of rooftops and tall trees against the clear blue sky. A cat walks by on one of the rooftops. Representing the name of the ever so famous play by Tennessee Williams, the sight
is almost too good to be true. Jenny and Pedro are discussing in Spanish and we sharpen our hearing so that maybe we can make out a word or two. Jenny is having a hard time finding the English word that describes what Pedro values in his employees. Secrecy? The information has to be really secret, Jenny says. Ah, so confidential. Integrity and confidentiality. Pedro nods. He needs to be able to trust his employees because in the industry that he works, it is important that you don’t share information. Apparently it is an easy business to copy, so the details of it have to be maintained among the employees. And that is why Pedro needs integrity in his employees. Right about here we start to understand why Pedro chose to involve family in his business. The reason must be because you can trust family, right?

“It wasn’t a reason, it was the circumstances. Accidentally I get in this business.”

The circumstances, Pedro explains, was that Aldo didn’t want to study. And if he doesn’t study, he needs to work. And Pedro, well he was running a business and needed somebody in the production. So it had nothing to do with trust, we learn, as much as it happened to be a convenient situation. It had nothing to with Pedro wanting to give his company the structure of a family firm. Of course he trusts Aldo, otherwise he wouldn’t have brought him to the company, but it wasn’t the reason Aldo started working in his father’s company. At first, Pedro and Aldo shared the responsibility in both the sales and the production part of the company, but after a while they noticed that this was not ideal. So they had to divide the responsibility and today, Aldo is in charge of the production while Pedro is in charge of the selling. This was the most optimal division of work tasks for father and son.

Arturo looks at his wife in agreement. She is right; the kind of relation that exists between those who run a business is essential to the company. It has to be a solid and trusting relationship. He leans slightly forward over the table, with a reflective facial expression, and explains that by his own experience from working in the financial company where he advised other companies, family businesses included, you really must trust the family members that you choose to involve.

“[…] because if something goes terribly wrong you are going to lose both. You are going to lose the family relationship and you are going to lose the company because you, if you divorce from your wife, aha, your wife are going to take half of the property. So it’s very very risky.”

Arturo takes the bottle of water at the table in front of him and starts unscrew the cap. He says that he has seen it happen to many family businesses. He takes a sip of water and continues explaining that this is one of the reasons why he only speaks of his wife and his sons when he ever mentions family. No other relative will ever get into his business, because that is when it gets complicated between people. He exemplifies by telling us that if he should let a brother or sister get into the business, he would risk that maybe their wife or husband, who might have their own interests in the company, think that they can interfere and in that way create arguments.
and instability – not only in the business, but also between the family members. According to Arturo and Silvia everything about running a company is about trust, in this case the trust they have in each other. They even have the office in their own home, because they think it is such an important part of the business and that it had to be held where you have people you fully trust. In fact, one of the main reasons that Silvia came along in the company, is about the trust he has in her. He simply did not want anybody else in the company.

“[…] he says that it’s very important to have somebody that you can trust because they deal with money. That they try to work with someone else but it didn’t quite work.”

However, while at the same time Arturo and Silvia are very careful with whom they involve in the business, they train their employees to run the business by themselves – without Arturo’s and Silvia’s presence. Arturo proudly explains that their employees today can manage around 70% of the businesses manufacturing commerce – all by themselves. While Jonathan translates what has been said, Arturo leans back in the chair with his arms crossed and with a satisfied smile on his lips.

“[…] and they are doing well and proof of that is that they can be here, sit here without worrying.”

Arturo explains that in Mexico it is rare that family businesses train their employees to take care of the business – the family members simply don’t trust that their employees can do as good work as themselves, and therefore the family members can never leave the company. Arturo and Silvia are thinking of retiring in a few years, and that is why they train their employees to take over the business, otherwise they cannot leave. To trust people in the company – both family members and non-family members – is essential in many ways. Being an entrepreneur and running your own business, Arturo explains, is usually associated with a freedom, that includes being your own boss and prioritizing your own time. If there is no trust between the people that are involved in the business, it is hard to receive those benefits.

It is a warm day in Mexico City, and since the month of December usually involves snow and freezing temperatures for us, we are not acclimated to the heat. We drink heavily from the water bottles that were offered to us at the beginning of the interview. We tell Iris how nice it is to see some sunshine when we know everybody back home will not see the sun for another three months or so. We laugh, and Iris continues to tell us of how the company ended up being a family firm.

“… well it was not by mistake but it wasn’t something that he planned. He never involved us into the business. He didn’t involve us, never. But… some years ago in 2007 he suffered a stroke. […] In that year, was the time that I entered the
company. Because he wasn’t able to go to the office and I knew that he was going to be, ehm, I don’t know, more relaxed if someone he trusts was in the company.”

Having her father not being able to work or even coming in to his own office, Iris realized that she needed to start being involved in the company. Her mother couldn’t do it, because somebody needed to be home with her father. And so Iris gradually became involved in the company. She never planned to stay; when her father was feeling better she would pull out of the company and do something on her own. We look at each other. Serious at first. Then we all burst out laughing. It has been over five years since Iris told this to herself, and she is still here. She says it is mostly due to her starting working with the company structure, a process she is now in the middle of. Her father didn’t see the point in this first, but Iris explained to him that because the company has now grown so much, they have to organize it better. When the results of this work started to show, he wanted her to stay and finish the structural work. Not only because the work itself needed to be completed – but because he trusts Iris in the work that she does.

“And he asked me ‘please don’t go before that happens’ because he trusts me, he trusts me a lot so I appreciate that very much because he never shows that.

Roberto only has hired and only wants to hire friends in his company. As he takes a sip from the glass of tequila placed on his desk in front of him, he explains that he cannot always be around to supervise things, and he therefore needs people that he can trust and that he knows will do a good job even when he is not around. At the same time, he explains that he also needs people that really love his business, and that he necessarily doesn’t have to trust them 100 percent. The sharp sound from the now empty glass of tequila being put down on the glass table making up Roberto’s desk is almost deafening. While we try to regain our hearing, Roberto explains why it is so important for him to have his friends involved in his company.

“Because at the end we’re friends so I... I don’t have time to supervise all the shrimp and fish and loading so I need my friends to do it, so if I don’t trust them it’s like taking some money away from the business. [...] So, that’s one of the reasons I decided to be here... me with my team, know them better, feel them better, yeah. It’s really important. And they get to know me better.”

That Roberto values trust and good relations within his business is hard to miss. He speaks of his friends – and of all his employees of that matter – as if they are family members and he genuinely seems to want the best for them. He tells us of the fishermen who sell him all the fish and seafood, and who are constantly being put under risk of drug cartels approaching them and putting them under pressure to transport drugs. The fishermen and their boats move between more complicated cities of Mexico, and in addition to that these people are very poor. Roberto explains that because of this, the fishermen also have problems with trusting people, as they do not know who they might be dealing with. Roberto, who is all about good business relations,
therefore understands that trust is a two-way street, and that it doesn’t only apply to him as a business owner.

Even though Roberto speaks of trust as a fundamental value when it comes to doing business, the situation with his father – and the bad history of family business in his family – has put things in perspective. When asked how these conflicts and experiences has affected him, he shrugs his shoulders and simply says:

“Probably I don’t trust no one. […] That’s not good, but, yeah... yeah you are always in like, defensive position not offensive but defensive all the time. Why he’s doing that, why he’s doing that... that’s why I have this group with me. [...] You have to analyze everything in your company all the time, so. In family it’s really hard because even if you know he’s lying to you, he’s your father or he’s your brother or whatever.”

“Yes, it have to be with trust and also it has to be with...ehm...bonds. Sharing experiences and knowledge. “

When running a family company it is very important to trust the people within it. Juana means that you can trust your family more than others, because you have a special bond based on shared experiences during your whole life. Rafael nods in agreement and explains in a determined way by putting his hand in a pointing position against the table, that he never has doubted his family and he believes that it is more risky not to involve the family in the company. He has never separated the business-life and the family-life. Rafael looks thoughtful and his son translates his considerations;

“He said that he...he had more child maybe it would be necessary. Or maybe if he had another wife, but that’s not the case. I’m the only child so ... they said that it’s not necessary.”

But as it is today, the way it has turned out, it is not necessary. Juana agrees and confirms that they have always been included in his businesses. He has always trusted in their capabilities and knowledge - both with their own businesses but also when he has needed their support with his.

4.5 Relational aspects

“I know finally what my father wants and what he expects.”

Iris lets out a sigh of relief. It’s like the weight of the world has just dropped from her shoulders. It hasn’t been easy being the daughter of a hardworking, entrepreneurial workaholic. She explains that her father, along with so many other entrepreneurs, have never been able to let go
of control. That he always wanted to do everything on his own, never delegating any work. This also resulted in him never really saying out loud what he expected from his family when it comes to his company. Iris says that he has just started to share more of his thoughts, and that he is trying really hard to let go of the control. But it has been difficult, and it has taken a long time to get here. When Iris speaks of her father and his inability to say what he thinks, she realizes that it has been the same with her mother. And her brothers. Her mother has owned part of the company for a long time, making her involved in many of the decision processes. Still, Iris says, she didn’t say anything about what she wanted for the company or what she wanted from her children. Today, she speaks up and says everything she thinks. And it’s the same when it comes to Iris’ brothers. She thinks she really needed to hear from them what they want and what they expect, as it was very useful for her so she would be able to perform better. The family have started speaking to a consultant, and Iris thinks this might have a lot to do with the recent changes she has started to see in the family and in the relationships. She stresses how important it is for companies – even if they are not family firms – to speak up and let others know what you expect from them. Because if you don’t, she says, there is more room for misunderstandings and disappointment. At the same time, Iris believes that there is always a struggle to achieve more than your parents have, which creates an inner motivation that pushes you to accomplish more than what may be expected from you.

“... you always think that you could have done better than your parents and your parents thought they would have done better than their parents so, it’s something that always happen. And, I think I expect that I can do better than my father did because I have his experience and have some more knowledge. And I hope my, my child for example do better than me. I think that’s something that should be normal because he’s going to have my experience, my knowledge and something else.”

Pedro’s big moustache moves as he talks. He speaks eloquently (at least from what we can tell) and tries to make himself understood in English. He gesticulates a lot. It is impossible to not like him. We talk about the relationship between him and Aldo outside of work, when they are just father and son. At work, the final word regarding the production may come from Aldo but leaving work, the roles are reversed. The relationship between them is very good, Pedro says. Outside of work, they are just a family like any other.

“We go out to the movies, to [...] the restaurants and I am the father when we go out of here.”

Jenny is smiling when her beloved relative speaks. She tells us several times how proud she is of him and what he has accomplished. When Pedro has to take a phone call, Jenny turns to us and explains that she really trusts in his work because compared to the traditional view on Mexican fathers and male business leaders that are very strong and authoritarian, no, Pedro is relaxed. Somehow, the way Jenny has just described him sounds perfectly obvious. Logical. Of course Pedro, the humble man with the smiling eyes and the big moustache, is a relaxed man.
who doesn’t represent the typical Machisto that in many ways is seen as something negative. Pedro returns, apologizes, and sits down in front of us again. We smile at him. Perhaps liking him even more now. But being relaxed hasn’t always benefited Pedro. He tells us that involving family members in a business can be risky, especially if everyone is not clear on each responsibility. Pedro says he had to learn to be more clear a couple of years ago, when he started employing friends. The friends confused the friendship with the business and the employment. While it was difficult to be that clear with someone who is close to you, it was necessary and Pedro had to learn to be in charge and give the orders. You learn with experience, Pedro continues, and what they had to learn was that “...I am your friend, but I am the boss.”

Pedro might be relaxed, but he still wants some rules in his company. That he his employees still must show him – and the company they work for – respect. Pedro doesn’t wants his employees to joke around as it could affect the quality of the final product. His business is run his way, and he doesn’t like to be disrespected. We nod. We understand. His business is his baby, his whole life. There has to be rules, for everyone. Even for family and friends. At the same time, Pedro wants to create a healthy atmosphere in his company. He therefore have meetings with all his employees once a month, something that he finds very important – because he and his employees spend more time within these walls than with their families. When we ask Pedro what he loves most about his business, he smiles with his entire face, just like he did when he first greeted us.

Pedro: I am in love with my business. Working in [...] your work, you have to love it.
Amanda (author): The passion.
Pedro: Sí, es una pasión. In my home I have to, to... I have to follow the orders and here I am the boss. But in my home, no!

At Desarrollos Electronicos y Electricos the communication between different generations are one of the main reasons to the great developing-potential of the company. Cesar explains that the older generation stands for the company’s experience and market-knowledge, and the young generation stands for the company’s development and generating ideas with new aspects. Augusto is well aware of that the young generation is innovative and that they are capable of changing both market and the company with the right knowledge available. Often there are disagreements between the older and the younger generation, but Cesar and Adrian state that this is what creates good ideas. Augusto explains that he is trying to transfer the knowledge he has to his sons all the time, and that he expects them to have enough knowledge in around five years to run the business by themselves.

“...It’s not to [...] stop doing what he loves, it’s to make a [...] product more compact...and that it could work worldwide. Maybe he let this to us, so that he can focus in another thing. Something more big.”
Augusto is striving to develop other products in many different industries and areas. Even though Cesar and Adrian are aware of their father’s plans for the future, they might not agree fully about what will happen with the company. Augusto means that the company maybe will stay in the family, while Cesar and Adrian seem to have a different plan in mind. In a determinate manner Cesar explains a possible future for the company:

“... here in Mexico, sometimes it’s hard that the company goes along to several generations. [...] What do happen is that maybe this company [...] close down, but we start another. We maybe have our own company in the same business, in the same kind of business.”

Augusto understands that it might be that way. Looking down at his desk he explains that it is not that common that companies in Mexico succeed in passing over to several generations of a family. The most common way of family businesses in Mexico are, according to Augusto, those where the children develop other companies, which still are supporting the old business, but that also strive to develop in a different way on the market. Adrian ends the discussion by stating the reason why he is working for his father’s company:

“...I think it has a lot of potential and, I don’t know, we can be one big company one day and that’s my goal here.”

The complexity of combining family and business is particularly apparent in the relationship between Roberto and his father. Because of a conflict, they have not been speaking for several weeks and the father is no longer involved in the company even though he owns five percent of it. Roberto explains, often laughing when speaking of more serious matters, that him and his father along with Roberto’s two cousins, started the company together and they thought of it as a father-son-company. Roberto explains that in order to start a company in Mexico, you have to be at least two people by law. And for him, there was no question who the other person was going to be.

“... it was me and my father. I told him about project and I, I told him I need a partner to start this [...] and I said ‘I want it to be you, and help me, advise me [...] I don’t know how involved you need to be in the company but I want you there’.”

Roberto continues his story of the company’s establishment. For him, good relations with the fishermen and the other employees has always been prioritized and through his father and his two cousins he managed to get in touch with some fishermen that he wanted to work with. Unfortunately, the relationship between him and his father did not turn out as well as with the fishermen. Roberto’s impulsive go-getter personality clashed with the father’s more structural way of doing things step by step, and while for Roberto it was always important to become
independent and do things in his own way, his father still wanted him to do things more carefully.

“... once I realized I could do it by myself [...] I start pushing them away because they wanted to control me like 'you should do this, you should do that'.”

Intrigued and at the same time noticeably affected by the sad undertone we feel is coming in Roberto’s story, we ask him what the relationship between him and his father is like today. He shakes his head as he says that they don’t speak to each other anymore. That they never see each other. That it has now been six week since they stopped talking to each other. That Roberto knows his father has lunch with his cousins almost every day, without him. That when his mother got sick and needed surgery, his father did not even call. Roberto gives us that sad, crooked smile again and lets out a questionable laughter. We look at him sympathetically. How did it come to this?

“He felt like I was taking a wrong decision and thinking that I couldn’t pull all of the money I needed for the project. [...] He wanted me to go back to Walmart, to corporate life [...] I decided then I wanted to pursue my dream, so we had everything the suppliers and the buyers and yeah. [...] So I decided to keep the project and he said ‘okay I don’t agree because there is too much risk, it’s not safe, you have to trust people’... so I push him away like completely and he never actually... he never actually wanted to fight for his position in the company, he just [...] stepped back.”

The traffic outside the window has started to increase. As Roberto shares his intimate story of a very complex and complicated family situation, you can’t help but wonder how it would feel to split with a parent like that. Not being able to call them and talk to them anymore. In Roberto’s case, the situation is made all the more complex when his father owns five percent of his company. Roberto explains that he probably will buy his father out in the future, as he is now sure he can do this by himself. Still, the conflict between them has affected Roberto deeply.

“It’s really, it’s an uncomfortable situation because at the end he is my father. He will be forever my father. [...] But probably he wanted that company, you know father and son [...] me doing business with him, going to meetings and stuff but he never... Somehow he didn’t believe in what I was doing, how I was doing.”

4.5.1 Gender roles

“Yes of course. You know... he is very machista. [...] He always thought of my brother as the director for example, never thought that I was going to be the director because I am a woman.”
Iris confirms what we already expected to hear. Of course she would want her father to say more often that he trusts her and that she is doing a good job. That he is proud of her, and that she is worthy of her position in the company. But Iris is a woman, and being a woman in a business environment trying to get to the top is not an easy thing to do in Mexico because, as Iris puts it, she has to “… work three times harder than anyone else to prove”. Iris is still smiling and laughing at times, but behind that bright smile there is a history of a struggle to gain her father’s approval that has affected her over a long period of time. She tells us how frustrating it was when she entered the company and her father didn’t know what she had been studying or what she was doing. That she constantly tried to demonstrate that she was capable, that she was doing improvements and that her work, her skills and her knowledge made her worthy of her position. Iris takes a sip of water from the bottle in front of her. She thinks long and hard when we ask her how all of this has affected her.

“… it’s not motivating knowing that your father doesn’t know what you are doing and that you are doing it well. [...] I always needed that part from my father and also if he weren’t my father it’s also the same, I need to hear from my boss [...] that I am doing it okay. But it’s difficult to get that from my father. He gives recognition if you are a sales representative, because it’s money. And I’m in the part of human resources.”

It is a difficult situation. While Iris’ father is more business oriented, she is more towards human aspects and soft values. The relationship between Iris and her father has therefore been strained, and Iris tells us that before she got married, the situation was much worse as she always spoke up to her father which he didn’t like, and he treated her a little bit distant. Compared to her brothers, she is the most apart from the father and they are not very close – even though things are much better now that she is married. Benjamin on the other hand, has a very close relationship to their father. Iris frowns, as if she is puzzled to why this is really the case, when she explains that their relationship is different. Because he is an engineer. Because he is more business oriented. Because he is a man. And all these things make the relationship between father and son much stronger than the one between father and daughter. You start to wonder why someone would put up with such a situation. But as Iris continues, we find out that she finally – after all these years – has been given some recognition from her father. He has told her, once, that she is doing a good job and that he trusts what she is doing. The sun is shining in through the big windows, reflecting in Iris’ sleek, brown hair. She is beaming with pride when she gets to this milestone in her story. She laughs again, remembering her mother telling her a few years back that her father was thinking he could give the company to Iris instead of her brother. When Iris found out she was overwhelmed, but even though it as nice to hear, she knew it was never going to happen. She doesn’t want the company to be hers – but it sure was nice to hear it from her father. Nowadays Iris doesn’t worry as much as she used to. Neither is she disappointed in or upset with her father. Now she understands it completely, she says. It’s the education, and the culture that he has and that he received from his parents. She knows now that she gives her best and that her father cares about that, and that he is thankful for what she has done. And she is pleased with that. We get a sudden whim of wanting to hug her. She is
such a strong, brave and humble woman and it is inspiring to see that despite all the setbacks and difficulties, she remains positive.

Iris: … but, I think he’s never going to tell me again [laughs]. Only if it’s a very special moment or something happens he will tell me again but I don’t expect that he is going to give me that credit again as he did. I think it’s like just…
Hans (tutor): Once in a lifetime.
Iris: Yes but, that’s enough for me.
Amanda (author): Now at least you know.
Iris: Yes. Now at least I know.

At the table, Arturo asks his wife to spell out her name, so that we can get it correctly on tape and also written down in text. Silvia looks up and speaks her name slowly and pronouncedly, while a playful smile appears in Arturo’s face just next to her.

“She is my wife and she is my boss.”

He says it with a touch of mischievousness, but proudly. He looks at her carefully, still smiling and eagerly waiting for his wife’s reaction. Silvia looks at her husband and laughs – we all laugh. A warm and pleasant feeling occurs around the table and Silvia blushes a little bit when all the attention is directed towards here. Arturo may be the head of the family and the one who does most of the talking during our interview, but the humoristic comment made by Arturo have us believe that there might be more to Silvia than meets the eye. At first she seems to be acting withdrawn. She doesn’t speak when Arturo speaks and Silvia doesn’t actually work in the factory but at the office in their house, while Arturo does a little bit of both. But we do not think she is shy wallflower who won’t do anything without her husband’s approval. No, we think that Silvia is a sharp and influential woman, especially when it comes to doing business with her husband. Clearly – if we are to believe Arturo’s statement – Silvia plays a big role in the decision-making. Perhaps she just likes to stay in the background. When Arturo has to take a call, Silvia starts talking a lot. When her husband hangs up though, she returns to being silent and keeping a low profile.

4.6 Socio-economic expectations

“... most entrepreneurs here in Mexico are entrepreneurs because they have something that kick them, that push them, that make them move, [...] maybe they suffered a lot from economical reasons in their childhood that was also something that my father had, this economical suffering and also for example [...] if you get fired from your work it’s another thing that makes people I don’t know like, have the courage to finally start a new business. That’s something that happens a lot
Looking around the brand new office it is impossible to tell that this whole business was built by a man who started out with nothing. Iris’ father decided long ago that he was going to work as hard as he possibly could in order to put food on the family’s table each night. He succeeded, and has now been able to put all his children through university. Iris’, who is now a parent herself, wants the same thing for her children. Still, Iris and her brothers were taught from a young age that nothing comes for free, and that they have to fight very hard to get what they want. Their father may have worked hard in order to support his family, but he wasn’t going to let them just drift through life without having to fight and work hard for what they wanted.

Pedro isn’t trying to sugarcoat the truth. Nor is he trying to hide it. He produces cheap cheese, and sells it to people who cannot afford to buy quality cheese that is made from milk. The cheese that he makes is based on the demand from people that don’t have a lot of money. His final consumer, Pedro explains, will always be the small producers of tacos, quesadillas and pizza. Bigger chains, like Domino’s Pizza, have rules and standards that they have to follow and because of that, Pedro cannot supply them. While would want to be a supplier to the bigger chains, he has somewhat accepted that he has a niche product, and he wants to continuously improve and even expand to other countries. Pedro’s company doesn’t target the upper class in Mexico; he is making a product that is cheap to produce and that is cheap to sell. But it is not a business where you get rich. For the first time, Pedro’s face changes from smiling and uplifting to more serious. He explains how frustrating it is when the retailers get more money than the producers. And when he tells us that he hasn’t taken out any salary for over a year, we realize just how much this man must really love his business. Because why else would he still do it?

While we talk about the social status of Pedro’s costumers – how diverse the demand is between the different social classes in Mexico – Jenny lifts her own reflection on Mexican youths and what is expected of them today. Speaking of Carlos and his future in the company, Pedro’s says, without oddities, he doesn’t really have a future in the company.

“I think Carlos go out of the company, because he is studying. [...] Because, you have to work or study.”

Jenny is humming, trying to find the right words to explain her point of view in the subject. She re-adjusts herself on the chair, crosses her legs, as if preparing for takeoff for the upcoming description. She thinks that in Mexico, many family firms are created or continued because of the children’s wish to study or not. Aldo, she exemplifies, is in his father’s company because he wanted to get out of school, because he didn’t want to study anymore. Mexican youths, Jenny explains, have to either work or study. There is nothing in between; it is one or the other. Carlos is now studying but he is working at the same time, but Jenny says that once he is finished in school he will continue doing what he learned in school, based on the subjects that he could.
Once a Mexican has a degree, he or she should follow that career path. If that means having to leave the family business, then so be it.

We don’t talk about it and we don’t ask, simply because it is not polite and it is definitely not politically correct. But we get the feeling that Roberto is not the typical middle class Mexican, but that he instead seems to come from a rather wealthy family. He wears nice suits, drives a big BMW SUV, and when he offers to drive us from the old office to the new one, we note that he keeps a set of golf clubs in the car. Because sometimes you just want to go golfing you know, he says. We don’t know. But we can imagine.

It is easy to be jealous of the lifestyle. It is easy to let your mind think that this guy, he has a good life. But fame and money rarely comes without trouble. And as Roberto proudly shows us some of the shrimp he sells – and tells us that he will have one of his chef friends cook them for us later – he explains that he can no longer go to the factory as he wants. It is not a safe place for him to be. We look at him, bewildered.

“Yeah all of my suppliers have been kidnapped and their sons to and that stuff so. [...] Yeah, so. So now I am somehow not allowed to go to the factory.”

We had heard about it before coming to Mexico, but we didn’t think it was that big of a problem in today’s Mexico. But Roberto confirms that kidnapping is indeed still happening in many parts of the company. He says it was his decision to stop going to the factory, because of his own safety. Roberto looks sad. He says he loves the connection to factory workers and the fishermen. Not being able to see them and speak to them on a regular basis upsets him. But he knows that he is a target for kidnapping, much because of his social status. He says he goes sometimes, but that he has to change his car if he does. Despite these concerns, Roberto seems genuinely happy with his business. He is doing something on his own, something that nobody thought he could do. And while Roberto may be living the good life now, it hasn’t always been like that. Roberto tells us that his father wanted him to learn the value of money and therefore sent him off to work for a minimum wage at the age of 17. It was a good lesson, and Roberto is thankful that his father really made him work.

Roberto has risked a lot – he still does – but he has also been given so much in return. The puzzle is almost complete. The one piece missing is the broken relationship with his father. We note that there seems to be a struggle within Roberto between wanting to please his father and make him proud, but at the same time be independent and prove to his father that he can be trusted and that he can do things on his own. There is a long pause when we ask Roberto if he thinks the conflict will subside and that the two of them will find their way back to each other. Yes, he finally answers, but not for now. It is still too fresh. And Roberto wants to show his father that he actually can do this, before they can mend their relationship.
5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Dynamics

Even though family firms has been proven to be one of the world-wide dominant forms of running a business (Morris & Kellermanns, 2013), it seems to be hard to succeed in transferring companies into next generations (Kets De Vries, Carlock & Florent-Treacy, 2007). In Mexico City, most of the companies that we met with don’t have a predetermined succession-plan – it’s almost like they have not thought that much about it at all. The only one that clearly mentions the transfer to second and third generation of the family is Iris’ father, who according to Iris have a desire that through further generations of family within the company be remembered and respected as the founder of the firm. This is a clear statement, which seems to be very important to Iris’ father. He has built the company from scratch into a successful business with ten different offices in Mexico, and throughout the interview, Iris talks about her father’s dedication and hard work. When his children got involved in the company, Iris’ father decided that he wanted them take over the company in the future, and they already have divided the company’s owner share between the siblings – even though the children from the beginning were not expected to be involved in the business at all. This also demonstrates one side of the existing complexities of running a family business - it might not be as one thought and it all can turn out quite different from the original plan when dealing with family members and business combined (Poza, 2010; Kaslow, 2006; Van Auken & Verbel, 2006).

Aside from this single company that seems to have thought through the future of the company, the other company have taken another approach to the idea of transferring the companies within future generations of the families. Within the firm of Arturo and Silvia, there is a wish that their sons one day will be interested in taking over the business, but it is not a stated and official plan in the current situation. It is up to the sons to make the final decision whether to be involved in the company or not, and Arturo and Silvia established their company with their own well-being and future in mind. Pedro, the cheese producer, wants his son Aldo to take over the company in the future, but also in this situation it is a desire and wish from Pedro rather than an established fact. This can be perceived as a different approach than expected, as Mexicans generally are considered to be tradition-bound (Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Marín & Marín, 1991; Villarreal, Blozis & Widaman, 2005) and that it therefore is expected that the children should be taking over their parents’ businesses. In Arturo and Silvia and Pedros cases, there seems to be a different approach to the succession of the companies, where a more modern view – maybe inspired from the western culture – is applied. The children are free to do what they want with their lives, as long as they are doing something sensible and, for them, meaningful.

Cesar and Adrian are also talking about taking over their fathers company, but in a different way than the others. At first, it is mentioned that Augusto is transferring his great knowledge and experience about the industry, and that both Cesar and Adrian then are supposed to take Augusto’s current position in the company. They are also discussing that the sons are going to take over the company by starting their own companies and use them to work with Augusto’s company. During the interview, Cesar and Arian explain that this is a quite common way of transferring companies to next generations within the family, and are also confirming Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) statement regarding the difficulties about it.
When it comes to separating the family and the business, there are different views between the family firms in Mexico City. According to Morris and Kellermannsns (2013), families need clear boundaries between what is work and what is family. In contrast to this theory, Rafael is talking about family and business as one unit and that the two are unnecessary to separate, and he does not want to do business in another way than with the family. The family gives Rafael the support and creativity he needs to run successful companies and the whole family are living with their companies in main focus. They remain the same people and maintain the same relations to each other whether they are working or just being a family. This is the opposite of Iris’ statement about family being one relation and business a completely different one, something that also Pedro states by saying that he is the boss within the company walls but outside, he is just a father. In Iris’ family, the relationships changes depending on if they are in the company doing business or at home with the family. While she states that these are two separate things, she also says that it is important that the family make sure that they resolve problems and work out things between them because if they don’t it will affect the company. This could prove that even though Iris means that the company and the family are separated from each other, they remain interrelated in one way or another. Since the people that you work with are colleagues and at the same time family, the relationship might be too hard to discern because it is difficult to differentiate individuals because of varying contexts. According to these three different companies, there is either an aspect of not finding it necessary to separate and on the other hand a wish that it should be possible to do. However, it seems like a difficult task to achieve because family and business seems to be more intertwined than one might think, just as Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) explain.

Morris and Kellermannsns (2013) further argues that clear boundaries between the two is important in order to separate what is business and what is privacy, because otherwise there is the risk of complications and conflicts between the family members that can be hard to solve. The literature is thereby presenting conflicts as something negative, while both Cesar and Adrian, along with Iris and even Roberto mean that conflicts and disagreements are what pushes both the company and the family members to develop and grow. Iris means that it is okay to have different opinions, as long as you can discuss them appropriately and calmly with each other. To handle a family business – to work with people that are so intimately close to you – demands a certain level of respect between the family members. Despite different opinions, they have to remain family – for the benefit of the company. Both Augusto, Cesar and Adrian agrees by stating that there needs to be some friction to nurture the development of the company. This shows that conflicts might not always be negatively related to the family firm. On the contrary, it might actually be a positive thing to argue and to challenge each other – if it is done in a manner where the family members show respect and handle the situation well.

The reason to start a family firm can vary depending on who is asked, and they can be constructed with different aspects in mind, with specific goals and aspirations (Poza, 2010; Ward, 1997). Iris’ father is striving for growth and development within his company. Her father is a real business man and always has the company’s best in mind. The family members that are involved have earned their positions in the company, even though they are related to the owner. Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) call this a ‘company first-perspective’, a company which mainly focuses on what benefits the business. Although the company more and more is
concentrating on doing better in human resource-aspects, Iris’ father is still doing it primarily with the company’s best in mind, where he probably wants to increase revenue by making employees feel better at work and thereby performing better – even though Iris herself might do it primarily for the health and well-being of the employees. This aspect is also similar to the way Pedro is looking at his company. When listening to Pedro, he talks a lot about the factory, the machines and how he can make the production more innovative and efficient. He also mentions that he, at work, is the boss and not a friend. This is important to Pedro, he demands respect and dedicated employees in his company. He strives to develop the company through new machines and fewer employees - everything to modernize and simplify the company. This also agrees with the ‘company first-perspective’, and it is interesting that two very different men run businesses in such a similar way – Iris’ father that is a pure business man described as strict, in control and a typical machisto, always busy with handling the development of the company and with no (or at least not many) thoughts about dealing with employees and more softer values, and Pedro who really wants to see results but who on the other hand is showing a warm and caring personality towards the employees and is described as a relaxed man.

Poza (2010) and Ward (1997) also mention the ‘family business first-perspective’, which Roberto, Arturo and Silvia, Rafael and Juana, and Augusto, Cesar and Adrian seem to fit into. These companies are all striving for continuous development and to achieve financial gains, but are also acting very caring and nurturing towards their employees and the family members involved in the companies. Dalyan is a successful and rapidly developing company, but at the same time Roberto only hires friends and don’t want them to see him as their boss as much as a friend. The employees also can watch movies and play videogames in working time, as long as they are doing what is expected from them. Arturo and Silvia are sharp business people with a productive and well-structured firm, handling the employees as family members. They are training the employees to at some point take over the company and run it by themselves, and loves the fact that they, through their employees, can benefit the employees’ families. At the same time, they have a deep respect for each other and know that their personal relationship affects their working relationship and vice versa. The same can be said for Rafael and Juana, and for the dynamics between Augusto, Cesar and Adrian. They all strive for a balance between satisfying the family members and to benefit the company (Poza, 2010; Ward, 1997).

There is also a perspective that mainly focuses on the family, that a company is created only to benefit the family members within it (Poza, 2010; Ward, 1997). Interestingly, none of the family firms that we met with in Mexico City fits under this description. This is an exciting and valuable insight, since there is a common perception of Mexicans being extremely family-oriented, prioritizing the family over everything and sacrificing themselves for the family (Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda & Yoshikawa, 2012; Diaz-Loving & Drugon, 1999; Gallardo & Paoliello, 2008; Marín & Marín, 1991 Villarreal, Blozis & Widaman, 2005). It would therefore be natural to assume that most family firms in Mexico are created to employ and to secure the financial aspects of the future for family members. According to these findings though, this might be a misunderstanding as none of the family firms in this study are reasoning in a similar way. These six family firms prove that it might take more than biological connections to be part of a Mexican family firm – which can be seen as something positive from the company’s perspective. In addition to this, there seems to be some gender divisions between the different perspectives; it seems like most of the men – Pedro, Rafael, Augusto and Iris’s father – are
more business oriented and fits in under the ‘business first-perspective’, while Iris, Juana, and Arturo and Silvia are more family oriented and can be sorted into the ‘family business first-perspective’. It could be a coincidence, or it could be related to the Mexican culture where men are supposed to be strong and masculine and the women are expected to be more sensitive and feminine (Castro, 2012; Howell, 1999; Lewis, 1960; Marín & Marín, 1991). Mainly, the women seem to be handling the employees and administrational parts of the firms, while the men seem to stand for doing business and taking decisions for the company’s future.

5.2 Values

5.2.1 Familismo and allocentrism

Based on the empirical material and the opinions, thoughts and arguments of the respondents, it is clear that the family, as Diaz-Loving and Drigon (1999), Marín and Marín (1991) and Villarreal, Blozis and Widaman (2005) mention, is highly valued in both the Mexican culture and society. It is very important to support and care about the family members, and individuals sacrifice themselves for the best of the group (Triandis et al., 1985). This assertion, however, is something that not entirely made sense with the family firms included in this study. In an allocentric society, that both Marín and Marín (1991) and Triandis, Marín, Lisansky and Betancourt (1984) claim that Mexico is, individuals place the family’s and often the society’s needs over their own personal desires and choices. But this does not seem apply to many of the individuals in this study. Especially the younger generation within the family firms seem to be more likely to create something for themselves, considering independence and self-fulfillment to be important aspects of their lives. Roberto is doing his own thing, despite his father’s advises not to. It seems to be really important for Roberto to show his father that he – all by himself – is fully capable of running his own business in his own particular way. Cesar and Adrian are talking about leaving Augusto’s family firm and starting their own companies. They are really excited about doing something on their own, to create something only for them and in their own way. The same can be said about Iris’ future. At the current situation she is the future owner of the company along with her brothers, and they will own equal shares of the family firm. At the same time, Iris speaks about selling her part of the firm to her brothers, so that she can do something she is more interested in. What she means is that, even though she cares a lot about her father and all the work he has put into company, she strives to do something else – something on her own, which according to Howells (1999) and Castro (2012) is something that nowadays occurs more often among Mexican women. When her work with the structural reorganization is done, she has other plans for her future. This indicates a new paradigm of individualism that is emerging among the younger generation of Mexicans. Personal goals and the importance of being independent seem to be a more and more important part of people in Mexico. Even though it seems to mainly be the younger generation that are striving for independence, Arturo and Silvia indicate that they are thinking in the same direction about both themselves and their sons. Since Arturo and Silvia mention that they are running the firm with only themselves benefiting from it, one might argue that these people have adopted a more individualistic view of life. This view is also reflected in the couples’ sons, as they are trying to find their own paths in life – a path that doesn’t necessarily go through their parent’s company. The discrepancy between the theoretical suggestions and this study’s empirical findings could however be due to the fact that each of the companies are located in Mexico City.
- one of the world's largest cities - and that the mentality may differ between cities, suburbs and rural areas. Another possible reason could be that influences from the West, and maybe especially the U.S., have affected the mentality of Mexicans, with a society focusing more on individualism and self-fulfillment.

5.2.2 Simpatía
The people of Mexico are known for their openness, generosity and simple way of being towards each other. When interacting with others, they strive for healthy relationships, where for example showing respect and avoiding conflicts are characteristics of the behavior (Diaz-Loving & Draguns, 1999; Marín & Marín, 1991 and Triandis et al., 1984). This might be a manner that permeates the Mexican culture, but among some of the family firms included in this study, arguing and creating conflicts seems to be something positive for both the family and the firm. Both Iris and Cesar and Adrian mention that conflicts between family members are important in a family firm, because they contribute to the development of the company and of the individuals within it. Cesar and Adrian say that conflicts are what makes the company grow, as they are three people coming from two different generations. When these different minds are arguing about new ideas, thoughts or opinions is when things can be seriously developed. Cesar, Adrian and Iris’s statements are therefore in direct contrast to Marín and Marín’s (1991) claim that Mexicans as far as possible avoid all kind of conflicts. Arturo on the other hand, explains that he is very careful with whom he involves in his company, because if the wrong kind of people get involved, the conflicts and arguing will increase and thereby create instability in the firm. This shows that the occurrence of conflicts can be viewed in in two ways; either as a positive thing by development, or as a negative aspect that might worsen the relationships between family members which in turn risks the well-being of the company. One example of this is the conflict between Roberto and his father. They had disagreements about how the company was supposed to be run, and today they are not talking to each other. Roberto is obviously not afraid of conflicts, at least not when it comes to his father. On the other hand, one could say that he acts in line with the description of simpatía when it comes to other relationships related to his company. It is clear that he strives for good and healthy relationships with the employees and the fishermen that he collaborates with. For Roberto, good relationships equals good business. In order to create good relationships he offers a pleasant and fun workplace, he only hires friends and wants them to see him as a friend instead of a boss. The question is if he has always had this attitude towards running a business, or if it is a direct result of the conflict with his father, as a way of revolting against him?

The couples Arturo and Silvia plus Rafael and Juana talk about the importance of setting boundaries between people’s responsibilities, all in order to maintain a healthy atmosphere in the companies. If someone interferes a little too much in someone else’s area it can create conflicts which perhaps should not have occurred at all if not for that. This indicates that younger people such as Iris, Cesar and Adrian have a more positive view on conflicts within a family firm – it is not so bad to have a fight or to mess around a little bit with each other, it might actually be beneficial – and that the older generation have a more skeptical and critical view on conflicts. Or maybe there is a difference between fighting with a sibling and fighting with a husband or wife. Maybe it is more complicated to argue with a person that is not a blood-relative; someone that might leave you if the conflicts gets too complex or tough.
Simpatía is also about compromising with other people, and Iris is talking about the strength and importance of forgiveness between the family members. Being willing to compromise is a keystone within the concept of simpatía (Marín and Marín, 1991), and to Iris and her family it is significant to learn how to forgive each other, otherwise they can never move on and focus on what is really important in their lives or in the business. Everybody are allowed to discuss and let their emotions out – and forgiveness makes it possible to speak their minds without damaging the relationships between the family members. Sometimes it can be tough having different opinions, but Iris means that the family members must have the ability to forgive and understand each other in order to make it up. Something that also might indicate the simpatía’s influence among Mexican people is the fact that both Roberto and Iris several times during the interviews are laughing while talking about more serious and personal matters. Maybe this is an illustration of how they are trying to create healthy, easy going relationships with us, as external actors, by avoiding uncomfortable conversations and topics and thereby also avoiding confrontation.

One thing we noticed during the interviews with Iris and Roberto is that they both laugh a lot when speaking of more serious and personal matters. Could this be a way of not wanting to show themselves vulnerable, and trying to laugh off the uncomfortable? It could also be the simpatía showing, where Iris and Roberto are striving for smooth relationships with no conflicts and no inconveniences (Marín & Marín, 1991) – and that they simply did not want to end up in an uncomfortable situation with us interviewers.

5.3 Trust and confidence
Both according to the literature and the family firms interviewed in this study, trust in family and friends is something very important to the Mexican people (Hofstede, 1980; The Economist, 2004). It is part of growing up to learn to trust and to be loyal against family and people with close relationships to the family (Fukuyama, 1995), which is obvious among all of the family firms studied. It is a common perception that Mexico is a land of corruption, which is confirmed by both The Economist (2004) and Adler (1998), who explain that corruption is one reason why Mexicans rather put their trust in their families and friends than in the government and the society. For example, Roberto tells us of the fishermen that are being put under pressure to smuggle drugs and Roberto himself is also a victim of the unreliable society by being risked of kidnapping. This further underlines the importance to surround yourself with a loyal family and close friends that you can trust. Iris is also mentioning that it is all about money in Mexico, which could further indicate that it can be a quite an uncertain and insecure environment to work in. Family and friends are therefore considered as a secure unit to lean against, basically because others cannot be trusted. In low-trust societies, businesses tend to be family-centered (Adler, 1998) and all six companies talk about the importance of trust, to be able to trust their employees and family members involved in the companies. However in most cases (four out of six), trust has not been the reason why family was involved in the companies, as much as it has been a contributing factor. In Pedro’s case for example, while stating that he needs to be able to trust his employees, bringing Aldo into the company was not because as a family member he would be reliable, but because he didn’t want to study and he then had to work. Only Iris and Arturo state that trust was the main reason the companies became family firms. Iris was brought in when her father suffered a stroke and he needed somebody in the
company that he could trust, and Arturo chose to involve Silvia because he trusts her, and he needed somebody he could trust. In addition, Arturo and Silvia are the only ones who says out loud that they actually trust their employees, and that they feel comfortable leaving the business to them when they cannot be around. Other respondents, like Cesar and Adrian, are more focused on the risks of not being able to trust an employee and the difficulty of finding hardworking employees in Mexico. Rafael and Juana, who believe that involving family in your company is the only way of doing business, also speak of trust and confidence among their employees, and for them it is important that there is a shared bond between the people involved in the companies, which as La Chapelle and Barnes (1998) explain is quite common in Mexico. That combination is something that the couple highly value, which can be argued to be the reason of their attitude and strong beliefs towards involving family in their companies.

Even though Roberto several times during the interview speaks of the trust he has in his group of friends that are his employees, he contradictory says that he is constantly defensive. Because of a bad history of doing business with family among his relatives, Roberto says this had led to him not fully trusting anyone, which leaves him in a defensive position. According to our findings, trust therefore is still considered an important part of the family business dynamics – but just because someone is a family member, doesn’t necessarily mean they are automatically trustworthy. Still, the trust and confidence expressed among the different companies show that the importance of trust remains as strong as it always has been in the Mexican culture (Adler, 1998; The Economist, 2004).

5.4 The relational aspects of Mexican family firms
Arturo and Silvia, just like Rafael and Juana, are a married couple who run a company together. They work together because of their love for each other, and they see each other as equals – even though one might hold more ownership than the other. This kind of family company is what David, Wiklund and Haynie (2013) describe as a family firm without consanguinity. They are claimed to run a company with the love for each other, the joy of working together as a team and that they therefore are running the business in another way than biologically connected family members (Poza & Messer, 2010). In the case of Arturo and Silvia and Rafael and Juana, this seems to be the case. It is obvious that they are having fun running their companies together, and Arturo and Silvia also mention that they have brought their marriage dynamics into the company to make it work even better. Rafael and Juana are joking about that they nowadays have to see each other every single day and the relationship is not as hierarchal as they, according to the stereotypes in the Mexican culture, could be if they not were a couple. On the opposite side we have Iris, who is involved in her father’s company working with her two brothers, and Augusto, Cesar and Adrian who also share blood relations. It is interesting that there seems to be quite a big difference by running a family firm with blood relatives and as a married couple. In both Iris’, Roberto’s, Cesar’s and Adrian’s case a hierarchal relationship structure between the family members can be identified. It is clear that Iris’ father are the head of both family and the firm. Her mother is her father’s right hand and the siblings are in equal positions within the company, which Kellermanns and Eddleston (2004) argues is a common way to build up a family firm based on blood relatives. This is also shows when Iris tells us that her father has more interest in her two brothers than in her in the family firm. He always has, ever since they were kids, and now it is brought into the company.
The conflict between Roberto and his father is based on the fact that the father wanted to control Roberto in the company, and that father and son are different in the way they approach things and the way they do business. The way Roberto does business may seem extreme in the eyes of a traditional and conservative person – which it seems like Roberto’s father is. Perhaps Roberto’s father only meant well when he tried to hold him back, being a more structured and careful man – as opposed to Roberto. But the fact that they are so different has led them on to separate paths instead. Perhaps the conflict and Roberto’s father pulling out is based on him feeling that he is the father and Roberto – who is the son – is supposed to listen more to his advice than he actually did? Roberto claims that his father never fought for a position in the company, but maybe he did not feel sufficiently respected and that Roberto overlooked his opinions and advice. Could Roberto’s way of running his company be a rebellious act against his father; revolting as if to prove that he in fact can do this on his own? Roberto’s and Iris’ stories indicate that maybe family firms with blood relatives are more complicated to run. It seems, according to the family firms involved in this study, like the family members with biological connections are more limited within the family firm because of their innate roles within the family. Although, Arturo points out that in his opinion, a family firm with relationships such as father, mother, sister and brother is a safer way to conduct business, because when you run a company with your wife or husband and getting into conflicts, you risk losing everything – both the company and the family. This can be related to the relationship between Roberto and his father, where Roberto says that his father will forever be his father, and further confirm Stets and Burke’s (2000) argument that you cannot divorce your biological family.

Different generations, experience and history between the family members has also proven to influence the family firm dynamics in this study. Usually these factors are brought into the company, which indicate that the current family dynamics are influenced by the way a family firm is constructed and how it is run (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004; Miller, Steier & Le Breton-Mille, 2003). Aside from Roberto and how his attitude towards doing business differs from his father’s, Cesar and Adrian also mention the difference in thoughts and opinions between different generations, meaning that different kinds of knowledge and experiences that comes with different generations, can sometimes create conflicts and discussions in the company. Even though people in different generations may have disagreements, they think that it is something – more often than not – is a positive thing for the company.

One might think that it in family firms could be hard not to confuse friendship with employment, that the employees think that the friendly relationship might remain in the working place. Pedro has experienced this part of running a family firm, and he had to set clear boundaries and rules about the difference in friendship and employment, which Kets De Vries, Carlock and Florent-Treacy (2007) mention as something very important within a family firm. He wants his employments and family members to know that he is their friend, but at work he is the boss and he wants to be respected as one. Rules is something that Iris speaks of as well, as a necessity when involving family in your company. Just because you are family, it doesn’t mean that you can behave however you want. One need to act professional in the family firm, and it is therefore necessary for family members to separate when it comes to business and when it comes to privacy (Morris and Kellermannsns, 2013).
5.4.1 Gender roles

Mexico is known for its culture and the values within it – especially when it comes to the gender stereotypes where the man is considered as masculine, strong and authoritarian, while the woman is seen as subordinated the man and lacking in power and influence (Gutmann, 2007; Marín & Marín, 1991). Even though the literature want to make us believe that these stereotypical gender roles are strongly pronounced and characteristic to Mexicans, many of the family firms in this study indicate something else. Only one of the companies actually speak of gender roles and the occurrence of machismo. Iris describes her father as a typical machista, which is shown in him wanting all the control, being business-oriented and only focusing on bringing in the money, and the fact that he cannot think of Iris as the sole future owner of his company because she is a woman. She has always been struggling more than her brothers to get her father’s attention, even as an adult while working in his company. Even though the relationship between Iris and her father is better today, she still feels that her brothers are much closer to the father than she is. What is particularly interesting in this part of Iris’ story is when she tells us that the relationship became slightly better between her and her father after she got married. Was this because she lived up to the expectations of marriage being an important status and the main goal for the women of Mexico (Howell, 1999), and that this in her father’s eyes made Iris more accepted? Even though the woman’s role is changing in the Mexican society, in Iris’ case these conservative norms might actually be relevant. It is therefore only in Iris’ case where the stereotypic gender roles are portrayed this strongly.

In the other family firms, the women seem to have more equal positions towards the men. Both Pedro, Rafael and Arturo talk about their wives as their bosses, even though it might have been with a slightly humorous tone. But it became quite obvious that these men adore their wives and the wives themselves may have much more influence on their husbands than one might think. Juana was never careful or never hesitated to interrupt her husband as he was talking, and he listened to her when she did. She talked as much as Rafael and Carlos and did not hesitate to make her thoughts and opinion heard. Silvia was a little bit more withdrawn than Juana during the interview, but she had a respectable appearance and Arturo discussed a lot with his wife before answering some questions. This is in direct contrast to role of marianismo (Howell, 1999; Marín & Marín, 1991) and might therefore indicate another perspective of gender roles in Mexico, one where the woman is more respected and appreciated than what the literature says. Although, it is interesting that the majority of the men are joking about their wives being their bosses outside the companies. Does it have something to do with the culture where the wife and mother are worshiped but the woman in general is subordinated the man? Another explanation might be that Pedro, Arturo and Rafael run their companies with their wives, and therefore there are no biological connections between them. This might give Silvia and Juana a different status because there was no pre-selected structure between the couples – as, if we compare, it is in Iris’ case where she is involved in a company with blood-relatives.

Gutmann (2007) and Howell (1999) mentions, as we also can discern from the family firms involved in this study, that the stereotypical gender roles in Mexico are changing, and that women are reaching for a more independent life. Today, machismo is in many ways considered as something negative and is nothing that men are striving to emulate. Jenny, Pedro’s relative, describes him as a relaxed and kind man, and she insists that he is certainly not a machismo – implying that this is not a desirable attribute. At the same time, Iris talks about her father as a
machismo and describes him as a conservative, business-oriented and with a stereotypical view on women. Both Jenny and Iris also seem to think that machismo is a negative concept to be referred to in Mexico of today. This indicates that the stereotypical gender roles mentioned in the literature are obsolete, and the role of women and men in Mexico might be much different than we are told to – and maybe it has been like that for a longer time than we might think. The women included in this study seem to have good and high educations, like Iris, and they also seem to have been working for a long time before the start-ups of the family firms, just like Silvia and Juana – not just being a housewife assigned to do household chores and raise children.

5.5 Socio-economic expectations

Mexico is characterized by a status-fixated culture where hierarchy is important, and there are major differences in both well-fare, income and influence between the different social classes (De la Calle & Rubio, 2012). It is said that different social status involved different expectations, but in this study, it seems like the family firms and the people involved in them have had to fight hard and struggle for their success, no matter what social class they belong to. This might indicate that the engagement in running a family firm is the same regardless of social class. Therefore Roberto, who we assume belongs to a reasonably wealthy family, gives a new aspect and perception of the upper class of Mexico – which according to the literature is presented as something that is disliked by the lower and middle class (Lever, 2000). Despite Roberto’s favorable background, it seems like he has been working real hard to achieve what he has today. He has learned the value of money the hard way, something that was done by his father having him work for a minimum wage. In addition to this he has a high education, he has been working his way up to a high position in Wall-Mart and now he is running his own business successfully. Although he has probably always had money available and a huge support from his family and friends, he does not seem too been getting everything he wants and needs without working hard for it. This gives the upper-class of Mexico City a new face. According to the literature, people of the upper-class levels of the Mexican society have big expectations of the surroundings to succeed and continue to live wealthy by earning much money and to become something within high positions. While talking to Roberto, it is clear that he is thinks a lot about money and that he strives for living a good and wealthy life. He proudly shows us the both offices of his that are placed along the Paseo de la Reforma, he keeps golf clubs in his expensive car and he dresses well. This attitude towards money and wealth might come from the expectations that he probably senses from his environment. For example, his father is a business-man, his sister is a well-known architect who has designed several famous buildings and his cousins are lawyers. Since the rest of the family seems to do very well for themselves, maybe there are expectations within the family that Roberto feels he needs to live up to.

Pedro is the complete opposite of Roberto, producing cheap cheese that he sells to people who cannot afford to buy real cheese made from milk. This customer base should be rather big though, considering the middle- and lower-class make up most of Mexico’s population. Unlike Roberto, Pedro doesn’t do it for the money either, but because he loves it – the production and the selling. He hasn’t taken out salary for himself for over a year and yet he keeps going. What Roberto and Pedro do have in common though, is that they work hard every day in order to
continuously improve their businesses. Working hard, no matter what social class one might belong to, seems to be a recurring aspect among the family firms in this study. Iris and her brothers, Roberto, Cesar and Adrian, Arturo and Silvia when speaking of their sons – they all have been taught to fight and work hard in order to get where they want in life. People of the upper-class may be under greater pressure to perform well and succeed (Lever, 2000) but lower-class citizens seem to be under the same pressure and fight just as hard in order to get a better life, which is also consistent with what Lever (2000) speaks of.

Furthermore, the importance of education is another aspect that we have found among many of the family firms. Iris and her brothers, Roberto, Cesar and Adrian, Arturo and Silvia´ sons, Augusto, Iris’ father, Rafael and Juana’s son Carlos, Pedro’s relative – they all have university degrees, which indicates that the economic situation of the country is indeed improving (OECD, 2011). However, we again must note that our findings are concentrated to Mexico City and may therefore not apply in more rural parts of the country.

5.6 Summarizing thoughts
Through the above discussion, it seems like Iris’ story and the dynamics in her father’s company is the one that stands out the most in terms of being more traditional in the perception of Mexican family firms. That is where there is a plan that the family firm will pass through several generations, where the all children are involved in the company and where there is a certain expectation that they will be involved and in the future take over, and where the father is clearly the head of the family and has all control. Could this be due to Iris’ father being machisto, conservative, a bit old fashioned and authoritarian? The members of the five other family firms seem to have a more liberal view on doing business with your family, and the dynamics in these companies can therefore be argued to be different and not as dramatic, as it is kept on a more stable and pleasant level.
6. CONCLUSION

In this section, we present the conclusion of the thesis. The research questions are answered in order to achieve the purpose of the study. Finally, a brief reflection on implications for further research is presented.

How the relational dynamics in Mexican family firms manifests is highly dependent on the main reason why family was involved in the company in the first place. It is also a matter of the connection between the family members and whether they are relatives by blood or not. The two companies that are run by married couples had completely different dynamics compared to the firms that were run by blood-relatives; the individuals were equals and there was no distinct hierarchal order. The conclusion of this essay is that while family is still highly valued in the Mexican culture, formatting your company as a family firm is not an active choice. Family has only been brought in to the companies because of temporary circumstances. Still, five out of the six companies in this study claim that trust is one of the contributing factors to why family was involved in the companies in the first place. Trust is therefore still a dominating value in the Mexican culture. Traditional values in the Mexican culture are therefore still prominent, but the dynamics are expressed by individual values in the company and it is not as visible in the companies themselves as traditions and literature would have us believe. Mexicans, and particularly the younger generation, are shifting from the allocentric and collectivistic society towards a more individualistic one, where following your dreams, being independent and self-fulfillment are if not prioritized over, than at least considered as important as the traditional family values. The image of Mexico described in literature is therefore not coherent with what we have seen in the family firms of Mexico City. Surely, it has been true once upon a time – in some cases we can see that it still lingers – and while family remains one of the most important cornerstones in the Mexican culture, neither of the family firms in this study put family first in the firm. Family firms are no longer created for the single purpose of helping your family and creating something that will pass on to several generations – it is a matter of survival and simply bringing in employees who happen to be available at the time. The stereotypical roles of Mexicans are also changing, as parents are sending their children out in the world, letting them learn and fend for themselves in order to become independent individuals, women are expanding their traditional roles as wives and mothers, becoming educated and independent, and men are stepping further away from the attributes of being machisto. These stereotypical roles have proven to be just that – stereotypic, and are not at all that common in today’s Mexico City.

Only in two of the six companies there is a clear desire of the company moving on to future generations. In the other companies, it is not opposed – but it certainly isn’t planned either, and there are no pronounced expectations of the children taking over. These companies were not established in order to be passed on to several generations and thereby leaving a legacy; they are a result of entrepreneurs wanting to create something for themselves and their own survival. In four of the six companies, it is additionally about doing something that one really loves – which shows the true dynamics behind Mexican family firms. These Mexicans are running their companies simply because they love them, and involving family makes them even more lovable. The relationship between family and business in these Mexican family firms is therefore not something forced, but rather something that naturally occurs if the circumstances open up to it.
This subfield could in the future be researched more thoroughly and with more depth. This by examining a larger sample of family firms with a greater regional spread in the country to create further understanding of the dynamics in Mexican family firms – and not just in Mexico City. The different concepts and areas, such as gender roles, trust, and the importance of family, all seem to be changing in today’s Mexico and these areas could therefore be researched further. This study has given us a hint of a shift taking place in the mentality and the values of the people of Mexico City, and it would be interesting to conduct deeper research around this.
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**Articles**


Electronic sources


