

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

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Diploma Thesis

Cross-cultural Communication

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Affirmation

I hereby declare that I have worked on my Diploma thesis titled “Cross-cultural Communication” solely and completely on my own and that I have marked all quotations in the text. The literature and other material I have used are mentioned in the Bibliography section of the Thesis. As the author of this thesis I proclaim that I haven’t violated the copyright.

Prague, 7th of April 2011

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Mikuláš Josek

Acknowledgement to the supervisor

I would like to thank doc. PhDr. Kolman CSc. for his supervision and an effort he made to make sure that this thesis fulfils its objectives. His comments, recommendations and interesting experiences were exceptionally helpful.

Komunikace mezi kulturami

Cross-cultural Communication

Souhrn

Ideovým východiskem této diplomové práce je významná teorie o interkulturní komunikaci zformulovaná Geertem Hofstedem. Ta umožňuje rozlišovat 74 světových zemí tak, že každé přiděluje jedinečný výsledek na základě pěti tzv. dimenzí kultury. Cílem práce je zkoumat platnost této teorie v praxi. Činí tak pomocí podrobné analýzy šesti rozhovorů se zástupci cizích zemí. Předpokládané rozdíly mezi kulturami vybraných států a Českou republikou jsou vyvozeny z výsledků Hofstedova výzkumu. Na podkladě individuálních rozhovorů s každým členem cizího státu pak zkoumáme, nakolik se tyto rozdíly odrážejí ve skutečné interakci těchto kultur. Výsledky jsou prezentovány pomocí citátů z rozhovorů a doplněny vysvětlením kulturního kontextu. Výpovědi jsou autentickým odrazem nasbíraných zkušeností a prožitků dotazovaných cizinců a představují tak příklady strohé teorie v praxi.

Summary

This diploma thesis deals with the major cross-cultural theory written by Geert Hofstede, which achieves to categorize 74 world countries by assigning them a unique score on 5 cultural dimensions. The aim of the thesis is to analyze the validity of this theory in practice. This is done by a detail analysis of a set of 6 interviews with representatives from foreign countries. The expected differences between each of the foreign culture and the Czech culture are deduced from the scores of Hofstede's research. Whether the assumed differences are reflected in the cross-cultural interaction is discussed separately with each of the foreign country's participant. Results are presented by actual quotes from the interviews complemented by an explanation of the cultural context. The reports personify real life experiences and as a result represent an example of the pure theory in practice.

Klíčová slova: kultura, interkulturní komunikace, dimenze kultury, Hofstede, hodnoty, individualismus, kolektivismus, vzdálenost moci, vyhýbání se nejistotě, feminita, maskulinita, dlouhodobá a krátkodobá orientace, národní kultura.

Keywords: culture, cross-cultural communication, cultural dimensions, Hofstede, values, individualism, collectivism, power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, femininity, masculinity, long-term orientation, national culture.

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	OBJECTIVES OF THESIS AND METHODOLOGY	3
2.1	Objectives.....	3
2.2	Methodology	4
3	LITERATURE OVERVIEW.....	7
3.1	Understanding culture	7
3.1.1	Culture as a broad concept	7
3.1.2	Culture as values and practices	8
3.1.3	Sources of cultural diversities and change.....	13
3.1.4	National Management Cultures.....	14
3.1.5	Cultural Relativism	15
3.2	Cross-cultural theories	17
3.2.1	Introduction: Comparing cultures	17
3.2.2	Hofstede’s dimensions of cultures	19
3.2.2.1	Individualism versus collectivism.....	20
3.2.2.2	Power Distance (from small to large)	22
3.2.2.3	Masculinity versus Femininity	24
3.2.2.4	Uncertainty Avoidance (from weak to strong).....	26
3.2.2.5	Long-term versus Short-term Orientation.....	28
3.2.3	Other cross-cultural theories	30
3.2.3.1	Schwartz Value Survey	30
3.2.3.2	Trompenaars’s Dimensions.....	30
3.2.3.3	The GLOBE Study	31
4	EMPIRICAL STUDY: CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION	33
4.1	Introduction and methodology	33
4.2	Czech Republic	34
4.3	Ghana	38
4.4	India.....	42
4.5	Netherlands	46
4.6	Portugal	49
4.7	Russia	52
4.8	United States	56
5	DISCUSSION	60
6	CONCLUSIONS.....	61
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	63
8	SUPPLEMENTS.....	65
8.1	Individualism-collectivism index values:	65
8.2	Power Distance Index values	67
8.3	Masculinity-femininity index values.....	68
8.4	Uncertainty Avoidance index values	70
8.5	Long-term orientation index values	72

1 INTRODUCTION

It seems like the differences among people around the world are infinite. Yet, few prominent theories have found their way to structure patterns in thinking, feeling and acting of different countries and identified these patterns as cultures. Each country has in fact a specific cultural pattern which can be compared with other countries. In order to start comparing and defining these cultural patterns it is essential to understand the wide range of the word “culture” and to be able to associate it with our own experience. This can be a problem because most of us are largely unaware of the culture we live in. We have been shaped by cultural socialization to be the kind of people we are; we eat certain things in certain ways, we regard our families in certain ways, we meet people in certain ways, we relate to others in certain ways, and we rarely notice these and a lot other culture-induced characteristics of what we do, because we perceive them as normal.

However, we are living in a globalized world; new communication technologies, modern ways of travelling, international affairs, multinational companies and an increasing level of world migration all cause that we hardly stay untouched by other cultures. Cross-cultural communication has become a daily practice. International student exchange programs enable young people to experience living in a different culture. Participants are exposed to a culture shock when they come up against another society’s culture. Many things for them happen so differently that they tend to blame the other culture for being wrong. This form of cultural misunderstanding takes place very often not only on the school level. Meaningless conflicts are also the reason for a boom in training programs and books that try to prepare people for this kind of interaction. They frequently present the positive sides of cultural understanding and synergy. Conversely, undergoing a culture shock is the best way to learn about a particular culture and equally about your own.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THESIS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives

The concept of culture is a broad issue which has to be firstly specified in order to understand all its consequences. The diploma thesis will examine possible ways of characterizing certain cultures, which is the main focus of major cross-cultural theories. In particular, Geert Hofstede’s extensive study on Dimensions of national cultures will be taken as a fundamental theoretical basis. However, the main aim of this thesis is analyze the validity of this theory in practice. This will be done by discussing the reliability of the theoretical results of Czech Republic by comparing these results with own research. The research is conducted as a set of interviews with foreign students on

the subject of their perceived differences between the Czech and the foreign culture. The aim of the interviews is to find out, whether the assumed theoretical differences based on Hofstede's study are visibly reflected in an authentic contact of the two cultures and whether they confirm the assumed relative position of these two countries. The additional goal is to determine, what aspects of culture play the biggest role in this intercultural encounter. This is a form of intercultural research that seeks to understand the interactions between culturally different individuals. The culture of all parties must be understood and taken into account. The main differences in the interaction of these cultures will be compared, evaluated and explained in context.

2.2 Methodology

The theoretical part of the Diploma thesis is based on the most extensive cross-cultural study written and published by Geert Hofstede. It represents a carefully chosen secondary data analysis. Although some sociologists such as McSweeney¹, Fang², or Schwartz criticize the results of Hofstede's study for its methodology or for being culturally biased, its general acceptance is to a certain degree taken as an assumption for the thesis.

In the practical part of this thesis, the theoretical assumptions about different national cultures are verified by own research. The verification process is based on in-depth narrative interviews with participants from foreign countries. Using interviews to collect data is the most common qualitative method in intercultural research. It supposes deeper understanding of a relatively small sample of respondents and aims to understand the meaning people assign to certain actions, relationships, motives or systems. The interviews are based on concepts that are meaningful for each respondent's culture and that are related to the theoretical background of cross-cultural studies. Open and mainly informal questions are asked and successive results are evaluated, verified, and presented in the thesis by actual quotes from the interviews complemented by an explanation of the cultural context.

A detailed explanation of the methodological procedure of the own research is provided in the section *4.1. Introduction and methodology* at the beginning of the practical part of the thesis.

¹ Brendan McSweeney, *Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith – a failure of analysis*. 2002 (online 14.11.2010)

² Tony Fang, *A Critique of Hofstede's Fifth National Culture Dimension*, 2003 (online 14.11.2010)

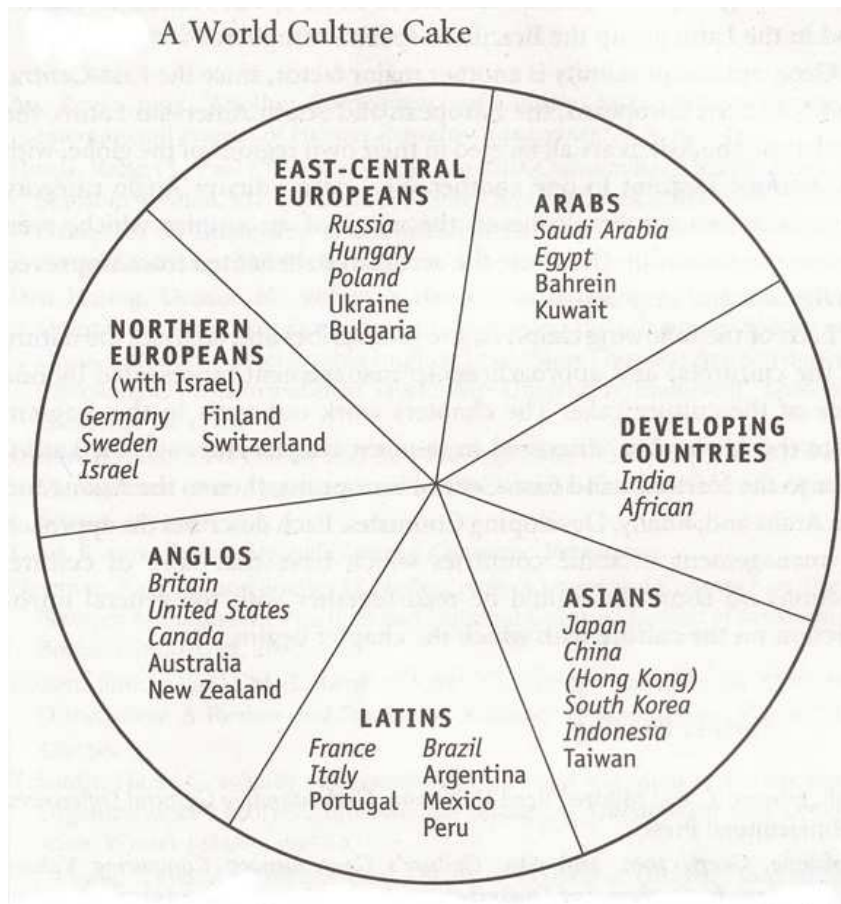
In it is essential to acknowledge that studies, which involve two or more cultures, share several common methodological issues that are not present in purely domestic research. Probably the most important issue in an intercultural research is equivalence. Respondents and the researcher may have a tendency for bias caused by cultural differences in values, attitudes, and normative behaviour. When the interviewer and respondent are culturally different, the chance of error increases. In order to avoid misconceptions, meanings of involved issues will always be clarified by the interviewer, who will thus possess a great deal of responsibility. Different cultures have a different approach to answering questions, so the interviewer has to be aware of that, understand that and keep that in mind during the interview. Characteristics of the interviewer (e.g. gender or personal appearance) can influence respondent answers, the interviewer's technique (e.g. question phrasing, tone of voice) can bias responses. However, conducting the study in the form of narrative interviews is an advantage compared to questionnaires where possible translation faults, complex item wording or culture-specific issues can occur. The interviewer as well as the participant has the opportunity to adapt flexibly and so improve the communication process. This way both sides will understand equally the concept and its relationship to other concepts in the study.

In intercultural research sampling is a rather sensitive question, because the ability to select a truly representative sample of a particular culture is difficult. However, with the limited scope of a diploma thesis and with the aim to test already conducted researches, it is sufficient to choose readily available Erasmus students that are willing to respond. This sample is chosen from only non-Czech nationality participants who lived in the Czech Republic for more than 5 months and have a similar level of education, because comparisons of countries should be based on people in the same set of occupations. Additional priority is given to students from the "Psychology of behaviour at work" course at the Czech University of Life Sciences, because these students studied some of the issues concerning this thesis and thus are preconditioned to give more relevant answers. The aim is to have a sample that would differ only in its nationality in order to emphasize cultural differences.

Participants should also belong from different countries around the world. The idea is to cover all seven "cultural slices" grouped according to cultural affinities by Ronen and Shenkar³ who were inspired by the results of Hofstede's research. See figure 1.1.

³ Ronen, Simcha and Oded Shenkar, *Clustering Countries on Attitudinal Dimensions: A Review and Synthesis*, 1985, page 435-54

Figure 1.1: Cultural Slices



Source: Hickson and Pugh, Management Worldwide, 2001, page 45

Conducting a cross-cultural research is a complex project which involves many problems and conditions. It is risky to make general assumptions about a country's culture on the basis of subjective interviews with foreigners. An attempt to come as near as possible to reality in a limited volume of a diploma thesis means risking superficiality. Further, any selection must in fact be a bias, emphasizing what is selected and diminishing what is not. The danger of stereotyping and oversimplifying is therefore taken seriously and rash conclusions are avoided. Nevertheless, the gain, even from a stereotype, is greater than the risk. This thesis takes the view that some knowledge is better than none when mutual understanding is the aim.

3 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

3.1 Understanding culture

3.1.1 Culture as a broad concept

It is difficult to specify exactly what is meant by “culture” in order to examine it closely. First, it is important to define what culture we are talking about. People tend to associate culture with objects, art, literature or architecture. This is culture in its narrow sense called “material culture”. Sociologists and anthropologists use “societal culture”, which is a broad and rather abstract concept that involves ways of greeting and meeting, ways of working together, ways of communicating, and so on.

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede, author of the most extensive study of “culture’s consequences”, has this following definition: “Culture is collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are amongst the building blocks of culture.”⁴ Hofstede in his book “*Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*” which was first published in 1991 uses the analogy with computers, which were at that time a major issue. He started calling patterns of thinking, feeling and acting “mental programs” or “software of the mind” and explains how a person’s behaviour is predetermined by his or her mental programs.

Hofstede believes that culture is learned, and not innate. That it is particular to one group and not to others. That it influences the behaviour of group members in unique and predictable ways, because it is passed down from one generation to the next. As people grow up they acquire mental programs, in other words culture, from the social environment surrounding them. At an early age it is easier for them, because they are predisposed to learning and assimilating. As they grow older they gain life experiences which are also an important source of their culture.

Life experiences can on the other hand be unique for each person and thus affect how a person reacts and interacts with others. In this sense, Hofstede classifies them as “personality” which is partly learned and partly inherited. “The personality of an individual is his or her unique personal set of mental programs that needn’t be shared with any other human being.”⁵

There are also universal features such as feelings and emotions which are totally inherited within one’s genes. The ability to feel love, anger, fear, happiness, sadness, disgust, etc. or the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it are basic

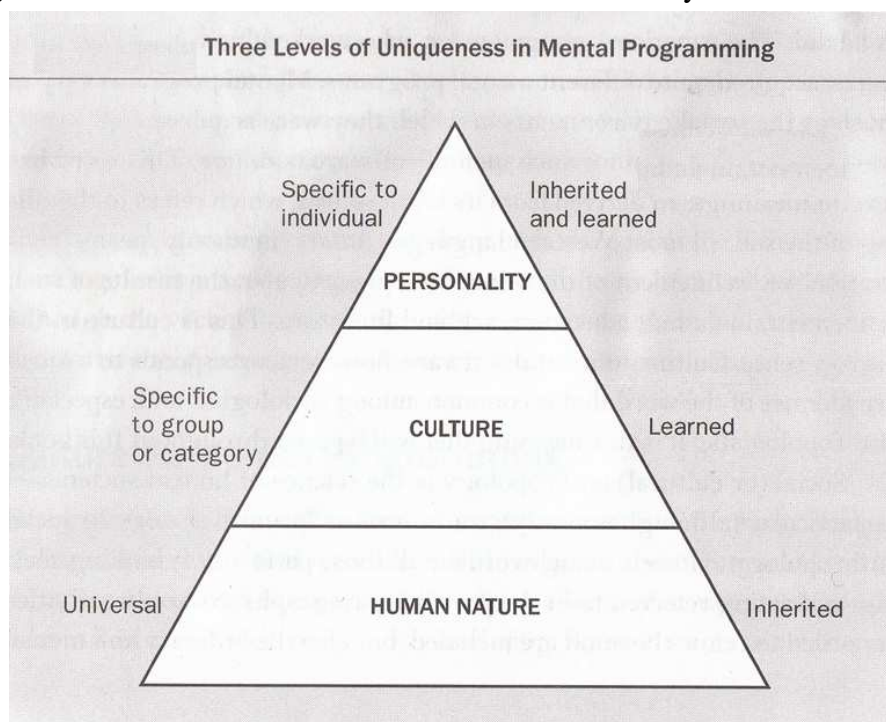
⁴ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 4-5

⁵ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 6

physical and physiological operations which are shared by all humans. Hofstede, in his analogy to computers, calls them the “operating system” of mental programming or more generally “human nature”.

The above concepts are summarised into three levels of mental programming that are represented in figure 1.2. However the borders between culture and personality or culture and human nature are blurred and still a matter of discussion among social scientists.

Figure 1.2: Culture versus Human Nature and Personality



Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 4

3.1.2 Culture as values and practices

According to Hofstede, culture includes systems of values and the programming of these values is fundamental. In other words, it is all about socialization. For example, people are programmed by a society to value the advice of older people rather than younger, to value looking forward rather than backwards, to value cultivating personal relationships rather than finishing a task, or the other way around. Values are taken as the focus of the concept of culture.

Several social science authors including Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner⁶ have represented the layers of culture as an “onion diagram”. Culture is here manifested

⁶ Trompenaars, F. and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture. Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*.

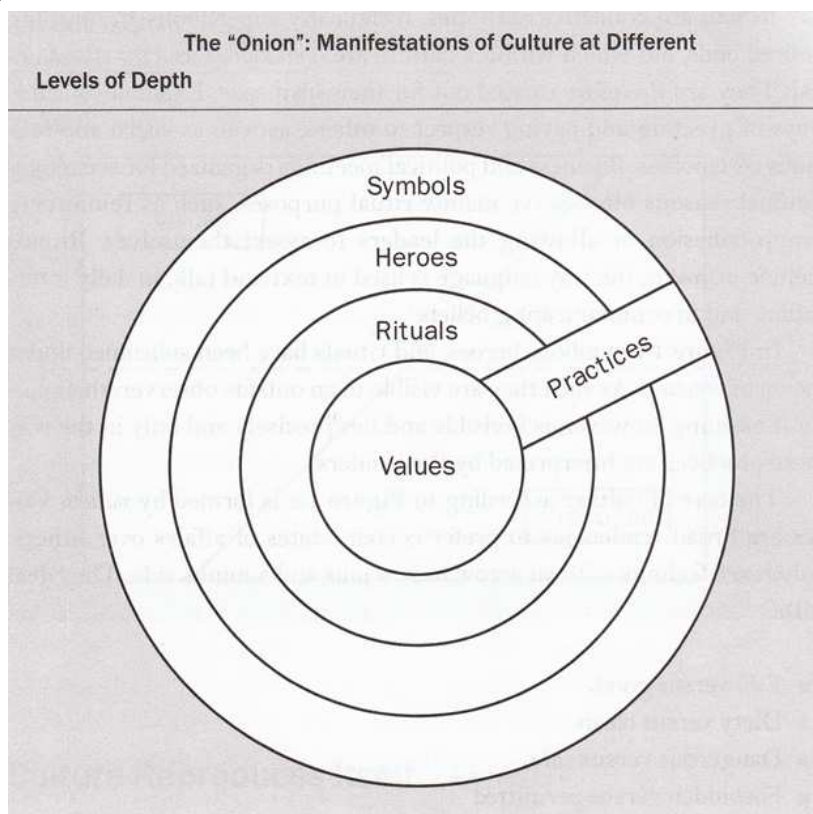
as skins of an onion at different levels of depth which explains the whole concept in a straightforward manner.

“Symbols” are the most superficial part of culture and thus are depicted as the top skin of the onion. They represent words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning which is recognizable only by those who share the culture. For example fashion, style, or way of speech are symbols which are easily developed, changed and replaced by new ones. Being most visible and superficial they are easily copied by individuals belonging to other cultures.

Culture “heroes” are those persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary that exhibit characteristics that are well respected within that culture and thus serve as models for behaviour. Obama, Che Guevara, Napoleon, or even Mickey Mouse can be examples of heroes. Jára Cimrman could be an example of a Czech hero.

“Rituals” are collective activities that are exercised by members of a culture and considered as socially essential. Examples are greetings and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies and ways in which business and other meetings are held (political discourse, demonstrations, etc).

Figure 1.3: Culture as slices of an onion



Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 7

Symbols, heroes and rituals which Hofstede calls “practices” are actually “things that you do”; how you eat, how you walk, etc. “Values” on the other hand are “things that you think”, they are not visible to an outside observer. They are the core of a culture lying deeply inside the imaginary onion. See figure 1.3. “They represent broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affair over others.”⁷ Hofstede describes them as feelings with an arrow to it: a plus and a minus sign.

- Good versus evil
- Clean versus dirty
- Beautiful versus ugly
- Safe versus dangerous
- Moral versus immoral
- Normal versus abnormal
- Rational versus irrational
- Permitted versus forbidden

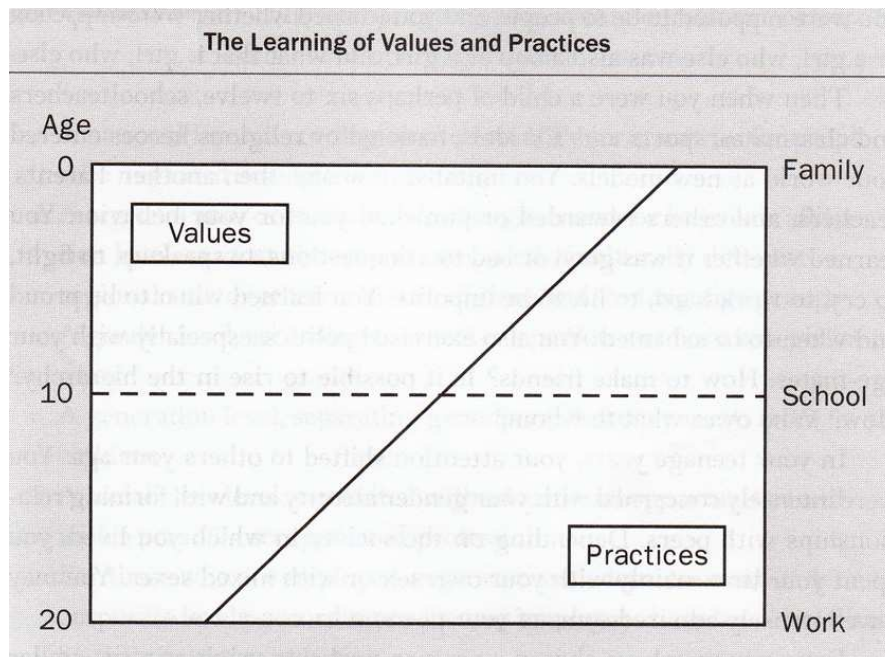
Although “clean” can, for example, have a plus sign in most cultures, there can be a big difference in the notion what clean really means, depending on the social environment. Many developmental psychologists agree that a person’s values are well established by the age of ten, after which it becomes difficult for a person to change them. Several researchers have studied the effect of the environment surrounding an individual. The effect depends on how society shapes one’s values and how he or she takes part in shaping society. Davies and Powel wrote: “People are neither deterministically controlled by their environments nor entirely self-determining. Instead they exist in a state of reciprocal determinism whereby they and their environments influence one another in a perpetual dynamic interplay”⁸.

Hofstede also writes that values are acquired early in our lives. There is a receptive period of some ten to twelve years during which children quickly and largely unconsciously absorb necessary information from the environment that surrounds them. Even though children don’t remember their first years of life, those years are the most influential. Children learn their first symbols such as their mother language. They see their parents and elder siblings as models of behaviour or, in other words, heroes. Children practice important rituals such as thanking, greeting, or going to the toilet. And most importantly children develop their basic values. After this period, people change to a different, conscious way of learning, focusing primary on new practices. The process is described by Hofstede in figure 1.4.

⁷ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 8

⁸ Davies, G.F. and W.W. Powell, *Organisation Environment Relations*. Handbook of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, 1992. p. 315-375.

Figure 1.4: Development of values and practices over time



Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 9

The process of learning from previous generations and teaching to next generation has a remarkable impact on the stability of values of a certain culture. The concept of heredity explains how traits are passed to offspring. It is the reason why core values are particularly hard to change and why the relevance of the Hofstede's study remains untouched over a long period of time. One could think that globalization is converging cultures. Thanks to technological development and easier communication the world today seems much smaller. International economics, multinational corporations or the business world in general push countries to achieve a certain level of standardization which would allow them to enjoy the benefits of world trade. Although this new development influences cultures' practices, the core values that lie deep inside the cultures rest stable.

An example of this persistence is the survival of an identifiable Jewish culture across the world, despite nineteen centuries without a Jewish State. On the other hand, the concept of heredity has been repeatedly exaggerated in pseudo-theories of race and has led to, among other things, the Holocaust organized by the Nazis during World War II. More on this topic will be written in chapter Cultural Conflict.

Thanks to the fact that values are acquired so early in our lives, many of them become unconscious to those who hold them. Therefore they cannot be discussed, directly observed by outsiders, or changed. They can only be deduced from the way people act under various circumstances. Globalization has an irrefutable effect on our lives, but according to Hofstede it influences only our practices. Even old people are capable of

learning working with a computer or operating with a mobile phone, but to change someone's values is a very slow and difficult process.

“There is no evidence that the values of present-day generations from different countries are converging.”⁹ Society's values don't differ much from the past. People still make money, impress their friends, start families and so on. Abraham Maslow's “Hierarchy of human needs” was written in 1943 and although it has many criticisms, the idea of satisfying firstly basic physiological needs and then continuing all the way up to satisfying needs of self-actualization is still quite influential in most of today's business world. The thing that differs among countries is the way needs are satisfied. For example the elementary need for survival leads to different cultural solutions when one society is from a cool climate and the other from a tropical one.

From a management perspective, values can also be the subject of desire. The enormous growth of Japanese economy after the World War II resulted in a tendency of especially Americans, who after having read books on Japanese management, wanted to do things the “Japanese way”, as if to become Japanese. It didn't work. They were not capable of becoming Japanese, because they were lacking Japanese values. Paradoxically, the Japanese have learned carefully from American management methods, adapting all they wanted without having to transform themselves into Americans. It is such adaption that is feasible, not personal metamorphosis.

It should also be mentioned that not every member of a society shares that society's principal distinguishing values to the same degree. Because all humans are individuals, they can be strongly influenced by their family, genetic transmission, age or psychology. There are also other features which influence our values. These features can either be within a national culture or transcend national borders. Regional, ethnic and religious cultures are a source of differences within a country. “Religious groups, ethnic groups but also other sub-culture community groups share their own traditional group culture.”¹⁰ They create minorities which are either more or less integrated inside the dominant culture. Gender differences are not usually assigned to culture, because within each society there is a men's culture that differs from a women's culture. Traditional sex role ideology is difficult to change. Generation differences are also common in many societies, many times due to the development of technological skills. In this sense Hofstede speaks about different layers of culture. Since people belong to a number of different groups or categories at the same time, they automatically carry different levels of culture:

⁹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 12

¹⁰ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 34

- National level
- Regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation level
- Gender level
- Generation level
- Social class level
- Organizational, departmental and/or corporate level

These various cultural levels don't always have to be in harmony. Especially in today's modern society, they can create dangerous conflicts. Strains exist between the values of the old and the young regarding religion or between gender values and organizational practices.

3.1.3 Sources of cultural diversities and change

When we look into our history, we can find important milestones of human culture. Humans (*Homo sapiens*) live on our planet over 150 000 years. They lived as hunter-gatherers, mastered fire and developed elaborate hunting tools. Further on they also developed a complex symbolic language which enabled them to communicate. "Around 100 000 years B.C. they started to migrate from Africa to central Asia and on to Europe, Australia, and finally to North and South America."¹¹ About 15 000 years ago the ice-age ended and the climate conditions allowed people to grow crops and herd animals. The invention of agriculture significantly changed the then society. People started to coexist in large societies instead of small hunter-gathering tribes. This era brought knowledge, labour specialization, power, wars and other aspects that are still present in today's world.

Chinese, Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Roman, Turkish and many other large empires have succeeded in ruling over others. Not only have many of these ancient states kept their geographical borders, but they have also passed their cultural heritage on today's nations. The managerial dilemmas of governance, of commanding armies, of controlling religions and of administering commerce are still recognized in their fundamentals. Societies have exchanged their goods as well as their "gods", new habits and technologies.

The clash of cultures has many times resulted in the adoption of new religions or in the conversion to other religions. Once a religion is embraced by a culture it can consequently change its values by making them into core elements of its teachings. "The Confucian Ethic, for example, promulgated a way of life resting on mutual loyalties and duties in a stable social order. This in some degree explains the social cohesion and thrift accompanying Asian economic progress."¹² On the other hand

¹¹ Luigi Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes, Peoples, and Languages*.

¹² D. Hickson, D. Pugh, *Management Worldwide*, 2001, page 4

religious affiliation by itself is less culturally relevant than is often assumed. For example, “The Reformation movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century initially affected all of Europe. However, in the former countries of the Roman Empire a Counter Reformation restored the authority of the Roman Church. Although today most of northern Europe is Protestant and most of southern Europe Roman Catholic, what is at the origin of the cultural difference is not this religious split but the inheritance of the Roman Empire.”¹³ The question of whether the conversion or adoption of religion by a society was a result of previously existing cultural values or a cause of cultural differences is not obvious.

A great amount of changes affect more than one society; they are truly global. The Industrial Revolution spread outwards from its origins in England and Western Europe and initiated the enormous proliferation of organizations which cover the world today. The Information Revolution followed and enabled easier and faster generation, storage and communication of all kinds of information.

The development has also led to the division of cultures in terms of national institutions. Some sociologists assign great importance to governments, legal institutions, enterprises, religious communities, school systems or family structures. These all play crucial roles in shaping the way of thinking, feeling and acting. However, whether culture is subordinated to the system or the system derived from culture is not straightforward.

3.1.4 National Management Cultures

Management can be found in the way how families function, how the school system works or how the political system affects the life of citizens. Management is thus a part of society that cannot be isolated from culture. Management is about people, because it connects managers, leaders and workers. It could be said, that each countries historical experiences reflect the way of their national management and because different societies have developed in different ways the way of management differs. Some countries, for example China, put much effort on “public interest”; the State centralizes planning and imposes flat regulations in order to raise the welfare of all. People in these countries think more collectively and strive for a common goal. In other countries, for example the US, “private interest” motivates people to decide on their own and be proactive in reaching their private goals. People here respond more to individual incentives that lead to individual benefits.

Another tension can be seen between “personal” and “impersonal” styles of management. Most of today’s Western world is in an impersonal, task-focused mode. Impersonal procedures in which appointments are made, authority is exercised, jobs are

¹³ G. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 2004, page 17

allocated, pay is arranged and rules are applied are taken for granted. What you can do matters more than who you are in the Western society. Every one is to be treated in the same way without special preference, at least in principle if not always in practice. Although this practice might seem unfriendly or distant for visitors from other societies it is simply the way the system is run – impersonally without favour. Other parts of the world for example Africa, Arabia, India or other developing countries have a much more personal, relationship-focused approach. Personal respect is earned by who someone is, what friends and relatives someone has, what age someone has etc. Obligations to friends and relatives overflow into organizations, because work life and private life aren't separated. For outside visitors a helping hand to a friend, family, ethnic group or tribe can be seen as nepotism. Widely accepted respect to seniors can be seen as hierarchical rigidity and generosity can be seen as bribery or corruption. In management, for example, the bulk of all theory has been written and taught from a Western, mainly Anglo, standpoint. However, it is an error to perceive the Western-style of management and thinking as a condition of effectiveness and success, because the successful Japanese and Chinese cultures function in an alternative way.¹⁴

When comparing different nations, there is a danger of attributing too much to societal culture. Culture is a handy catch-all for explaining everything what is found. Is the speed of an investment decision in Brazil due to a culture which values fast action, or to hyperinflation which removes financial gains unless they are repeated quickly? It is not easy to try to disentangle what is due to a society's culture with any precision and clarity. The hyperinflation, of the last example, may well be the outcome of a culture which fosters it to some degree. The world as a whole is multi-causal, with many factors acting and interacting simultaneously. Anyway, the sensitivity to the part likely to be played by societal cultures aids understanding. Although it is hard to say exactly what that part is, the notion of culture is persistently useful and its manifestations are constantly recognizable. On the other hand, as has been said, culture as an explanation can be many times overestimated. Hofstede suggests that, in any society, what may arise from societal culture might also arise from internal factors (strategy, the organizational culture, history, the individual psychology of members) or external factors (technology, markets, competition).¹⁵

3.1.5 Cultural Relativism

All humans are individuals and as such, given a set of circumstances, think, feel, and react in different ways that have evolved throughout their lifetime. Although young people are susceptible to learning and assimilating culture easily, they don't have this potential their whole life. As soon as they have already created certain patterns of

¹⁴ D. Hickson, D. Pugh, *Management Worldwide*, 2001, page 18-21

¹⁵ D. Hickson, D. Pugh, *Management Worldwide*, 2001, page 14-18

thinking, feeling and acting it is difficult to learn something different. He or she must initially unlearn these “mental programs”, as Hofstede would say, to be able to learn something else. “The process of unlearning and relearning is surely more difficult than learning for the first time.”¹⁶ It is therefore very easy to slip from perceiving something valuable, desirable or undesirable to perceiving something right and wrong for a particular society. And because cultures vary as much as the social environments in which they were acquired, everyday we come across assessing other cultures as better or worse. The media, politics or even the general public take part in picturing alien cultures as good or bad. How justifiable is this evaluation?

Different schools of anthropology have emerged throughout history and studied the concept of culture. “The evolutionary schemes of the nineteenth century represented by Morgan or Tylor were sorting societies according to their level of evolutionary development.”¹⁷ Their colonial view of “civilized” people being superior to “savage” was refuted in the early twentieth century by Boas or Malinowski, who represented diffusionism and functionalism. The schools of anthropology have thanks to their criticisms moved toward a more “relative” approach. Cultural relativism gives a more ethical approach to behavioural differences between various populations of people. “These differences are the result of cultural (sometimes societal) variation rather than anything else; and such differences as do exist deserve respect and understanding in their own terms.”¹⁸ This has put an end to the conviction that other (non-Western) societies are just lagging behind in an older stage of “development”.

Today, globalization has led us to a world where managers of multinational companies make decisions that cross cultural and geographical boundaries, where politicians of one country make decisions that affect other countries, where media all around the world comment on international issues, etc. Comparing different values and norms and judging whether they are right or wrong is a large ethical issue. “Cultural relativism is a moral philosophy that suggests that ethical standards are specific to a particular culture, and any cross-cultural comparison is meaningless.”¹⁹ “When an American manager wants to hire someone, he chooses the best person for the job regardless of class, race, religion, gender or national origin. However, an Indian manager prefers someone who he knows or who belongs to his network of friends or relatives, because he needs to trust his employees in being dependable.”²⁰ Simply speaking, what is acceptable in one country could be considered unethical in another. Considering one of these examples as wrong is according to cultural relativism a bias conclusion. One culture should not impose its own ethical or moral standards on other cultures. All these issues have to be

¹⁶ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, pages 5-10

¹⁷ A. Barnard, J. Spenser, *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*, page 236

¹⁸ A. Barnard, J. Spenser, *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*, page 721

¹⁹ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 111

²⁰ Phatak, A., & Habib, M., *How should managers treat ethics in international business?*, 1998, pages 101–117

evaluated in context which means that everyone involved should acknowledge the differences in legal, political, and cultural systems. Under cultural relativism, the world is viewed as a “moral-free zone”.

As already written, not all behaviour should be attributed to cultural norms. For cultural relativism to work, we would have to accept child labour in China, discrimination of women in Japan or any other unfair behaviour, because it is not objectively wrong. “Wrong” can be defined only by the particular culture. “Although most societies desire to act right instead of wrong, it is important to distinguish between the *desirable* and the *desired*: how people think the world ought to be versus what people want for themselves. The desirable differs from the desired in the nature of the norms involved. *Norms* are standards for behaviour that exist within a group or category of people. In the case of desirable the norm is absolute, pertaining to what is ethically right. In the case of desired the norm is statistical: it indicates the choices made by the majority. Therefore, the desirable relates more to ideology and the desired to practical matters.”²¹ The point is that although citizens of a country might claim that they are for example against discrimination, when it comes to practical matters, they might not want to hire an old person, a woman or someone from a different culture. On the international level, some acts are considered as wrong by most societies and human rights are collectively protected. “This gives rise to so-called “hyper-norms”, which reflect principles so fundamental to human existence that they transcend religious, philosophical, or cultural differences.”²²

3.2 Cross-cultural theories

3.2.1 Introduction: Comparing cultures

A useful way of describing a certain country is simply comparing it with another one. When we put two countries in contrast we can imagine more easily their remarkable differences. However, we have to be sensitive in defining the country because not all citizens of a particular country share the same culture. “Because of sub-cultural variation within countries, any sample selected from a specific geographic region does not necessarily represent the country.”²³ There are numerous examples of where national borders separating two countries don’t comply with cultural or ethnical differences. What determines the borders in these cases are not cultural dividing lines of the local populations but historical consequences. *Nations* as political units were invented in order to serve the systematic way of separating people into boxes. Every person is supposed to own a passport which identifies his nationality. The nation state

²¹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 21

²² David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 112

²³ Richard W. Brislin, *Cross-cultural research methods*, 1973, page 85

system is a result of the colonial system from the late 15th to 20th century, when advanced European nation states established and divided among themselves colonies on other continents and created artificial borders between local countries. These borders corresponded more to the systematic division of power rather than to cultural differences and even today the borders between the former colonial nations reflect the colonial legacy.

Therefore, nations do not equal societies, because they don't necessarily have to share a common culture. Although nations can consist of different groups which are less integrated in the society, they can still represent a historically developed whole. Many of these nations aim to integrate the minorities by supporting a dominant national language, common mass media, a national education system, a national army, a national political system, a national representation in sports events with a strong symbolic and emotional appeal, and a national market for certain skills, products, and services. All these factors aim to increase the commitment of citizens to perceive their state as a unified whole.

As already mentioned, studying values is fundamental for understanding cultural variations. Different social groups share different values because they have developed a different way of dealing with problems. "In the first half of the 20th century, social anthropology developed the conviction that all societies, modern or traditional, face the same problems – only the answers differ."²⁴ Since there are a limited number of "answers" (ways in which a society can manage problems) it is possible to develop a system that categorizes and compares societies on this basis. "By studying the choice that social groups make to solve a certain problem it is possible to deduce the preferences for solving certain issues. This provides the ability to categorize a social group according to these shared assumptions about the way things ought to be or the ways one should behave."²⁵ The logical next step was the development of cross-cultural theories.

On the one hand, hardly any nations are culturally homogeneous. A lot of them include minorities, which are peoples with differing cultures. On the other hand, all nations have a predominant culture with which they are identified. The point is that the cultural theories should represent a foundation for deeper understanding of the great complexity, because they deal mainly with the predominant cultures. It must be acknowledged that although some individuals might possess the characteristics described, no individual will have them all to the same degree. To avoid becoming tiresome the words "comparatively" and "relatively" are not repeated endlessly throughout the text, but they are always implicitly there. The point is to emphasize how things are done in one society only because by comparison they differ in another society.

²⁴ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 22

²⁵ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 47

This chapter will review major cross-cultural theories that have been devised as a framework to categorize and compare cultures. Although these theories use different methods, they have identified some very similar sets of cultural dimensions.

3.2.2 Hofstede's dimensions of cultures

A framework that has received a great deal of research attention is Hofstede's study of work values from the year 1980. Geert Hofstede got the opportunity to study data from attitude surveys of 117 000 employees from more than 50 countries around the world who all worked for a large U.S. multinational corporation later identified as IBM. The IBM employees represented a valuable sample for this kind of study, because they were more or less similar in all aspects except of nationality. This fact allowed the nationality differences to stand out. Later, more or less the same differences were found in populations outside IBM, which proves that they reflect the different national cultures in which people grew up.²⁶

The IBM study confirmed that answers on work-related values were not universal. They revealed common problems, but different solutions from country to country in four main areas. Combining these four main areas which were already predicted by Inkeles and Levinson²⁷ twenty years ago and Hofstede's empirical findings gave the rise to four dimensions of cultures. "*Dimension* is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures."²⁸ The dimensions will be described individually in further subchapters, they are: *individualism-collectivism*, *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance* and *masculinity-femininity*. Together they form a four-dimensional model that characterizes differences between national cultures by giving each country a specific score. "The scores represent *relative*, not absolute, positions of countries; they are measures of differences only."²⁹ Every one of the four dimensions is described by two opposite extremes as pure types. In most real cases the countries score in between the extremes. Each dimension is explained in detail in further subchapters.

²⁶ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 42

²⁷ Inkeles, A. & Levinson, D.J. *National character*, 1969

²⁸ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 23

²⁹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 42

3.2.2.1 Individualism versus collectivism

Hofstede defines it as follows: “*Individualism* pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look for himself or herself and his or her immediate family. *Collectivism* as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.”³⁰

The difference between more individualist countries and more collectivist countries is easily explained by family relationships. Collectivist countries worship the so-called *extended* family. Children grow up and live along with their parents, other children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. They learn to relate themselves with the in-group and identify themselves as “we”. Mutual dependence, long-term loyalty and a sense of security develop among members of collectivist families. In an individualist country the family is called *nuclear*, because it is composed of only the core family members. Children learn to identify themselves as “I” and develop individual characteristics. Their personal growth is expected more than good family relationships. Neither practically nor psychologically is the healthy person in this type of society supposed to be dependent on a group.

On the international scale, individualist countries tend to be rich and collectivist countries poor. So it is not surprising that majority of people live in societies in which group interest overcomes individual interest. This dimension is reflected in many aspects of a country’s society such as the state, school, workplace, etc. The crucial differences between the two opposite extremes are explained in Figure 1.5. Please acknowledge that in this context the word *collectivist* has no political connotations, it does not refer to the power of the state over the individual.

Future of Individualism and Collectivism

IDV is the least criticized dimension. From the trend in historical consequences, Individualism has been closely connected with modernization, which can be seen on the correlation with the countries’ IDV index and countries’ wealth (measured in GNP per capita). “Countries having achieved fast economic development have experienced a shift towards individualism.”³¹ Since most countries today are economically developing, there could be a convergence among national cultures on this dimension. However, “When cultures shift, they shift together, so that their relative positions remain intact, and there is no reason why differences between them should disappear. These differences continue to play a big role in international affairs and to be a source of many misunderstandings in intercultural encounters.”³²

³⁰ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 76

³¹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 114

³² Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 114

Figure 1.5: Key Differences between Collectivist and Individualist Societies: General Norm, Ideas, State, Family, School and the Workplace

COLLECTIVIST	INDIVIDUALIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended families protect their members in exchange for long-term loyalty. • Children learn to think in terms of “we”. • Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided. • Resources should be shared with relatives. • High-context communication prevails. • Opinions are predetermined by group membership. • Collective interests prevail. • The state holds a dominant role in the economic system. • Private life is invaded by group(s). • Per capita GNP tends to be lower. • Students only speak up in class when sanctioned by the group. • The purpose of education is learning how to do. • Diplomas provide entry into higher status groups. • Employees are members of in-groups who will pursue their in-groups interest.. • Hiring and promotion decisions take an employee’s in-group into account. • Management is management of groups. • Direct appraisal of subordinates spoils harmony. • In-group customers get preferential treatment (particularism). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone grows up to look after himself or herself and hi or her core (nuclear) family. • Children learn to think in terms of “I”. • Speaking one’s mind is a characteristic of an honest person. • Individual ownership of resources, even for children. • Low-context communication prevails. • Everyone is expected to have a private opinion. • Individual interest prevails. • The role of the state in the economic system is restrained. • Everyone has a right for privacy. • Per capita GNP tends to be higher. • Students are expected to individually speak up in class. • The purpose of education is learning how to learn. • Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self respect. • Employees are ‘economic men’ who will pursue the employer’s interest if it coincides with their self interest. • Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only. • Management of individuals. • Management training teaches the honest sharing of feelings. • Every customer should get the same treatment (universalism).

Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005

3.2.2.2 Power Distance (from small to large)

Power distance is explained as a way a society handles *inequality* or respects *hierarchy*. Inequality can evolve as a difference in physical and intellectual capacities, power, wealth, status or respect. The two extreme poles between societies is one: inequality is socially accepted (large PDI) or two: inequality is a problem (small PDI).

Hofstede explains power distance on the *dependence* in relationships between subordinates and their boss.

In small-power-distance countries this dependence is limited, which means that employees tend to prefer a boss that consults with subordinates before reaching a decision. The employees are not seen as being afraid of their bosses. They rather easily approach and contradict their bosses.

In large-power distance countries, the dependence of subordinates on bosses is substantial. Employees either prefer such dependence, which means they tend to accept bosses with an autocratic or paternalistic style, or they reject dependence entirely. In both cases they rarely approach and contradict their bosses directly.

“Power distance can therefore be defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Institutions are the basic elements of society, such as the family, school, and the community; organizations are the places where people work.”³³

It can be argued that a different social class, educational level or occupation produces a different level of PDI and that autocratic and paternalistic styles of management are present even in low-power-distance countries, mostly among manual workers. However, this does not harm the results of Hofstede’s study, because the country differences were based on samples of people with equal jobs and equal levels of education.

The most important differences among countries will be pictured by the two extreme poles of this dimension (viz. Figure 1.6). However, the reality is most likely in between these opposites. Countries score somewhere along the continuum.

³³ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 46

Figure 1.6: Key Differences between Small and Large Power distance Societies: General Norm, Family, School, Workplace and State

SMALL POWER DISTANCE	LARGE POWER DISTANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequalities among people should be minimized. • Social relationships should be handled with care. • There should be and there is to some extent, interdependence between less and more powerful people. • Parents treat children as equals. • Children treat parents and older relatives as equals. • Children play no role in old-age security of parents. • Students treat teachers as equals even inside of class. • Teachers expect initiative from students in class. • Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths. • Quality of learning depends on two-way communication and excellence of students. • Less educated persons hold more authoritarian values than more educated persons. • Educational policy focuses on secondary schools. • Hierarchy in organizations means an inequality of roles, established for convenience. • Decentralization is popular • There are fewer supervisory personnel. • There is less perceived corruption; scandals end political careers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequalities among people are expected and desired. • Social status should be balanced with restraint. • Less powerful people should be dependent; they are polarized between dependence and counter-dependence. • Parents teach children obedience. • Respect for parents and older relatives is a basic and life-long virtue. • Children are a source of old age security for parents. • Students give teachers respect even outside of class. • Teachers should take all initiative in class. • Teachers are guru's who transfer personal wisdom. • Quality of teaching depends on excellence of teacher (usually one way communication). • Both more and less educated persons show equally authoritarian values. • Educational policy focuses on universities. • Hierarchy in organizations reflects existential inequality between higher and lower levels. • Centralization is popular • There are more supervisory personnel. • There is more perceived corruption; scandals are usually covered up.

Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005

3.2.2.3 Masculinity versus Femininity

“Masculinity-femininity is the extent to which traditional male orientations of ambition and achievement are emphasized over traditional female orientations of nurturance and interpersonal harmony.”³⁴

This dimension isn't about average differences between men and women regarding height, strength or other biological differences (although biological predispositions did partly determine gender roles in our society). It is about the fact, that every society labels certain behaviour as more suitable to females or more suitable to males. However, which behaviours belong to either gender differs from one society to another. The differences between societies related to this dimension are social, but even more emotional.

Countries are marked by Hofstede as *masculine* or *feminine*. The terms are relative not absolute; a man can behave in a “feminine” way and a woman in a “masculine” way (this would only mean they deviate from certain conventions in their society).

“A society is called *masculine* when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

A society is called *feminine* when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.”³⁵

This dimension is out of the 5 dimensions the most controversial. Firstly, because of its name that could rather be masculinity-equality. Secondly, because it is hard to recognize the differences on the value issues related to this dimension which distinguishes countries. Thirdly, unlike individualism and power-distance, masculinity is unrelated to a country's degree of economic development.

Again, differences are pictured by the two extremes in figure 1.7. These examples are proven by numerous minor studies referenced in Hofstede's work.

³⁴ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 50

³⁵ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 120

Figure 1.7: Key Differences between Feminine and Masculine Societies: General Norm, Family, Education, Workplace and Sex.

FEMININE	MASCULINE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships and quality of life are important. • Both men and women should be modest. • Both men and women can be tender and focus on relationships. • In the family both fathers and mothers deal with feelings. • There is no difference in the reason why boys and girls play games. • Average student is the norm; praise for weak students. • Failing in school is a minor incident. • Competitive sports are extracurricular. • Students underrate their own performance: ego-effacement. • Friendliness of teachers is appreciated. • Resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation. • Rewards are based on equality. • Preference for smaller organizations. • People work in order to live. • More leisure time is preferred over more money. • Careers are optional for both genders. • There is a higher share of working women in professional jobs. • Same norm for showing female and male nudity. • Homosexuality is considered a fact of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge, earnings, recognition, and advancement are important. • Men should be assertive, ambitious, and tough. • Women are supposed to be tender and take care of relationships. • In the family fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings. • Boys play to compete, girls to be together. • Best student is the norm; praise for excellent students. • Failing in school is a disaster. • Competitive sports are part of the curriculum. • Students over-estimate their own performance: ego-boosting. • Brilliance of teachers is appreciated. • Resolution of conflicts by letting the strongest win. • Rewards are based on equity. • Preference of larger organizations. • People live in order to work. • More money is preferred over leisure time. • Careers are compulsory for men, optional for women. • There is a lower share of working women in professional jobs. • Stronger taboo on showing male than female nudity. • Homosexuality is considered a threat to society.

Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 4

3.2.2.4 Uncertainty Avoidance (from weak to strong)

Uncertainty can be explained as a situation in which anything can happen. All human beings have to face the fact that we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Ways of handling uncertainty, ambiguity or unpredictability differ around the world; mostly they encompass technology, law and religion. In spite of globalization, all these tools continue to differ among societies. Although uncertainty can be based on a subjective experience, a feeling, it may also be partly shared with other members of one's society. Like other values, as explained in chapter 3.1.2., feelings of uncertainty, are acquired and learned.

*“Uncertainty avoidance can therefore be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. This feeling is, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and a need for written and unwritten rules.”*³⁶

UAI is connected to a psychological term “anxiety”, which is a “state of being uneasy or worried about what may happen”.³⁷ Anxious cultures are pictured as expressive ones, as places where people frequently use body language, raise their voice and show emotions. In the eyes of people from weak UAI cultures they come across as: noisy, emotional, aggressive, nervous, suspicious, and busy. In weak UAI cultures (low level of anxiety), people who behave noisily or emotionally are socially disapproved of. To people from strong UAI cultures they seem dull, quiet, easygoing, indolent, and lazy. Figure 1.8 summarizes the key differences related to important aspects of culture. Again most real situations will be somewhere in between.

³⁶ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 167

³⁷ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 170

Figure 1.8: Key Differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Societies: General Norm, Family, Education, Workplace, and the State.

WEAK UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty is a normal feature of life, and each day is accepted as it comes. • Low stress and low anxiety. • Aggression and emotions should not be shown. • High scores on agreeableness in personality tests. • Comfortable in ambiguous situations and with unfamiliar risks. • More flexible social rules; the world is benevolent. • “What is different is curious.” Experiencing novel situations is encouraged. • Lenient rules for children on what is dirty and taboo. • Similar modes of address for different others. (e.g. “you” in English). • Family is relaxed. • Students are comfortable with open-ended learning situations and concerned with good discussions. • Teachers may say, “I don’t know.” • Results are attributed to a person’s own ability. • Few or general laws or unwritten rules. • If laws cannot be respected, they should be changed. • Citizens trust politicians, civil servants, and the legal system. • Positive attitude toward young people. Tolerance, even of extreme ideas. • Positive or neutral attitude toward foreigners; more ethnic tolerance. • Refugees should be admitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The uncertainty inherent in life is a continuous threat that must be fought. • High stress and high anxiety. • Aggression and emotion may at proper times and places be ventilated. • High scores on neuroticism in personality tests. • Fear of ambiguous situations and of unfamiliar risks. • Tighter system of social rules and norms. • “What is different is dangerous.” Novel situations are avoided. • Firm rules for children on what is dirty and taboo. • Different modes of address for different others (e.g. “ty” and “vy” in Czech). • Family is stressful. • Students are comfortable in structured learning situations and concerned with the right answers. • Teachers are supposed to have all the answers. • Results are attributed to circumstances and luck. • Many and precise laws or unwritten rules. • Laws are necessary, even if they cannot be respected. • Citizens are negative toward politicians, civil servants, and the legal system. • Negative attitude toward young people. Extremism and repression of extremism. • Xenophobia; more ethnic prejudice. • Immigrants should be sent back.

Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005

3.2.2.5 Long-term versus Short-term Orientation

In an attempt to examine whether Hofstede's study (1980) doesn't contain a cultural bias, because it was developed in the West, a group of researchers conducted a subsequent study based on Chinese values. They designed a new questionnaire and conducted the Chinese Value Survey (CVS) in 23 countries in a way similar to Hofstede's original study. The results of both studies were compared. The CVS yielded again four dimensions, from which three significantly correlated with the IBM survey (IDV, PDI, MAS). However, the fourth CVS dimension was not correlated with the fourth IBM dimension: *uncertainty avoidance* had no equivalent in the CVS. The fourth CVS dimension "Confucian work dynamism" combined values opposing an orientation on the future to an orientation on the past. It was based on the teachings of Confucius. Hofstede called it *long-term and short-term orientation* and added it as a fifth universal dimension to his study (1991).

"Long-term orientation (LTO) stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations."³⁸

LTO is closely connected with Confucian teaching which is not a religion but rather a philosophy of life, a set of pragmatic rules. Many Asian cultures, which scored high on the LTO index, identify it as their fundamentals. In the Asian context, family and work life is not separated. Asian values (hard work and persistence, respect for learning, honesty, openness to new ideas, accountability, thrift, self-discipline and self-reliance)³⁹ support entrepreneurial activity. Asian managers are interested in "10 year's profit" from now and tend to invest in building up strong market positions, at the expense of immediate results. By contrast, in short-term oriented cultures, managers are concerned with recent results (profit in the last quarter) because their rewards are based them. Frequently, they are judged and punished for performance which is actually the outcome of decisions made by their predecessors years ago. It is not surprising that the economic growth of countries after World War II was correlated with this dimension; it helps to explain the success of Asian Dragons. Basically, the Eastern way of thinking is focused on wholes; it is synthetic. This takes us back to the issue of American managers trying to adopt Japanese values in order to achieve the same progress as discussed in chapter 3.1.2. Western thinkers had a predisposition to invent scientific discoveries; their way of thinking is analytical. However, management is based on the art of pragmatic synthesis which is conversely the predisposition of East Asian cultures. Technologies and other inventions can be adopted by other cultures, but values not.

³⁸ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 210

³⁹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 219

Figure 1.9: Key Differences between Long and Short Term Orientation Societies: General Norm, Family, Education, Workplace, Economics, and Ways of Thinking.

SHORT-TERM ORIENTATION	LONG-TERM ORIENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts should produce quick results. • Social pressure towards spending. • Respect for traditions. • Concern with personal stability. • Concern with social and status obligation. • Concern for “face”. • Marriage is a moral arrangement. • Old age is an unhappy period but it starts late. • Children get gifts for fun and love. • Children should learn tolerance and respect for others. • Students attribute success and failure to luck. • Main work values: freedom, rights, achievement, and thinking for oneself. • Leisure time is important. • Focus on bottom line (this year’s profit). • Managers and workers are psychologically in two camps. • Personal loyalties vary with business needs. • There was slow or no economic growth between 1970 and 2000. • There are universal guidelines (truths) about what is good and evil. • If A is true, its opposite B must be false. • Priority given to rationality. • Analytical thinking (focused on elements, e.g. science). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance, sustained efforts toward slow results. • Thrift, being sparing with resources. • Respect for circumstances. • Concern with personal adaptiveness. • Willingness to subordinate oneself for a purpose. • Having a sense of shame (humility). • Marriage is a pragmatic arrangement. • Old age is a happy period and it starts early. • Children get gifts for education and development. • Children should learn how to be thrifty. • Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort. • Main work values: learning, honesty, adaptiveness, accountability, and self-discipline. • Leisure time is not important. • Focus on market position and strategy (future profit). • Owner-manager and workers share the same aspirations. • Investment in long-life personal networks, guanxi. • There was fast economic growth between 1970 and 2000. • What is good and what is evil depends upon circumstances. • If A is true, its opposite B can also be true. • Priority given to common sense. • Synthetic thinking (focused on wholes e.g. management, government).

Source: Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005

3.2.3 Other cross-cultural theories

Since Hofstede's *Culture's consequences* (1980) several large-scale surveys of values have been conducted in order to classify national cultures. Some additional information on the understanding of cultural differences has been offered.

3.2.3.1 Schwartz Value Survey

Shalom Schwartz and his colleagues conducted a series of studies on the content and structure of human values. The content of values refers to the criteria people use to evaluate events and select courses of action. Structure is the organization of these values based on their similarities and differences. Firstly, he derived 56 values that were supposed to be shared by all societies. Then, sampled respondents (from about 60 countries) were asked the extent to which each value was a guiding principle in their lives. The results of each country were mapped according to a statistical procedure called smallest space analysis (cluster analysis). The results of his work strongly suggest that there is a similar relationship between values in all cultures. Moreover, his analysis yielded seven value types:⁴⁰

- **Egalitarianism:** recognition of people as moral equals
- **Harmony:** fitting in with the environment
- **Embeddedness:** people as embedded in the collective
- **Hierarchy:** legitimation of unequal distribution of power
- **Mastery:** exploitation of the natural or social environment
- **Affective autonomy:** pursuit of positive experiences
- **Intellectual autonomy:** independent pursuit of own ideas
-

Hofstede writes about his work that it is “the most elaborate and best researched classification”. However, based on country data published by Schwartz in 1994, there are significant correlations between his country scores and the IBM scores.⁴¹

3.2.3.2 Trompenaars's Dimensions

Fons Trompenaars administered a value questionnaire to more than 15 000 managers in 28 countries. He published his results in his 1993 book *Riding the Waves of Culture*, for which he became well known in the business world. However, his seven value

⁴⁰ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 55

⁴¹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 32

dimensions were derived primarily from the prior work of North American sociologists and anthropologists (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951).⁴²

- **Universalism–particularism:** Universalism is a belief that what is true and good can be discovered and applied universally, whereas particularism is a belief that unique circumstances determine what is right or good.
- **Individualism–collectivism:** Similar to Hofstede’s definition, this dimension concerns the extent to which people plan their actions with reference to individual benefits versus those of the group.
- **Neutral–affective:** In neutral cultures, emotion should be held in check, and maintaining an appearance of self-control is important, whereas in affective cultures, it is natural to express emotions.
- **Specific–diffuse:** This dimension refers to the extent to which individuals allow access to their inner selves to others. In specific cultures, people separate the private part of their lives from the public, whereas in diffuse cultures, these aspects of the individual overlap.
- **Achievement–ascription:** This dimension is about how status and power are determined in a society. In an ascription society, status is based on who a person is, whereas in an achievement society, status is based on what a person does.
- **Time:** This dimension is about past versus future orientations and about the extent to which time is viewed as linear versus holistic and integrative with past and present together with future possibilities.
- **Environment:** This dimension is the extent to which people feel that they themselves are the primary influence on their lives. Alternatively, the environment is seen as more powerful than they are, and people should strive to achieve harmony with it.

“Trompenaars database was analysed by British psychologists P. Smith and S. Dugan, who found only two independent dimensions in the data, one correlated with Hofstede’s IDV and the other primarily with PDI. Trompenaars questionnaire did not cover other aspects of national cultures.”⁴³

3.2.3.3 The GLOBE Study

A recent study of cultural differences in value orientations has been commenced by a U.S. management professor Robert J. House; it is called the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) program. It focuses on the relationships between societal culture, organizational culture, and leadership. GLOBE

⁴² David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 59

⁴³ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 32

involved 170 researchers working in 62 different societies and collected data from approximately 17,000 middle managers in 951 organizations. The GLOBE research constructed nine dimensions of cultural variations, from which the first four are described as direct extensions of Hofstede's work.⁴⁴

- **Institutional collectivism:** The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action
- **In-group collectivism:** The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families
- **Power distance:** The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** The extent to which a society, organization, or groups relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events
- **Gender egalitarianism:** The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality
- **Assertiveness:** The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others
- **Humane orientation:** The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards people for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others
- **Future orientation:** The extent to which people engage in future-oriented behaviours such as delayed gratification, planning, and investing in the future
- **Performance orientation:** The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

At present, the GLOBE study may best be viewed as complementary to Hofstede's (1980, 2001) work, its most closely linked predecessor.⁴⁵ Overall, the results of major cross-cultural studies have some remarkable similarity, in spite of the fact that they were conducted in different times, with different samples and with the use of different methods. This contributes to the validity of describing cross-cultural variation. Since dimensions individualism-collectivism and power-distance appear in some form in all of the studies, they are not only the least controversial but perhaps also the most important in understanding cultural differences. Unfortunately, borders diminish, people migrate and form minorities or integrate, multinationals gain power and spread their corporate cultures to other countries affecting their economic development more than the country's inherited culture. In a result, to develop a cross-cultural theory that will be able to classify all cultures will become more and more complicated.

⁴⁴ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 60

⁴⁵ David C. Thomas, *Cross-Cultural Management: Essential Concepts*, 2008, page 62

4 EMPIRICAL STUDY: CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

4.1 Introduction and methodology

As it was described in the theoretical part of this thesis, each Hofstede's cultural dimension is defined by its two extreme poles. It is thus clear that the more a certain culture is extreme, the more straightforward will the explanation of that culture be. The way of how the theory is outlined simply influences the application of the results.

In the first part of the empirical study, Czech Republic's culture will be explained according to the theory of Hofstede's study in order to see potential conflict points in advance of the own research.

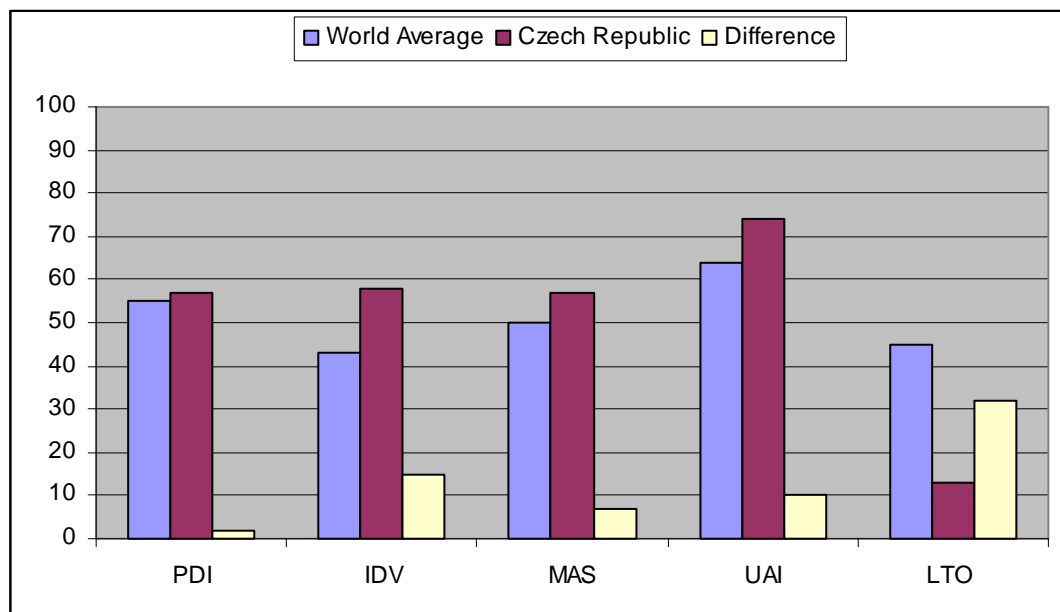
In the second and major part of the empirical study, results of six interviews with participants from foreign countries will be presented. In order to understand cultural consequences, each participant's country will be firstly briefly introduced. The introductions will involve a basic description and a characteristic of the culture based on the scores of Hofstede's research. Afterwards, the most remarkable differences between the two countries' scores will be identified. They will be presented as a graphical expression of the difference in scores and the relative position of the Czech Republic to the foreign country. Evaluation of score differences should indicate possible key differences. The practical part is composed of a review of the expected differences, which are either confirmed or disproved by actual quotes from interviews. The quotes are explained and discussed in context.

The interviews were conducted with the knowledge of the key differences. However, they were not explicitly questioned. Respondents were mostly asked about their opinions on Czechs, about their specific experiences, and about their perception of the biggest differences between the two cultures. The interviewer let them talk about these issues and tried to keep the discussion in the realm of the thesis. Originally the intention was to cover each member of the cultural cake represented by figure 1.1. However, the group of Arabs is unfortunately omitted due to the absence of a potential participant in the needed time of the research. In stead, a representative of India was chosen to compensate for the group of Asians and Arabs.

4.2 Czech Republic

As described in chapter 3.1.2., values are long lasting believes about particular issues that influence our ways of thinking. Values were created centuries ago and were passed on from generation to generation. The history of Czech Republic is quite short in this sense, giving us only about 20 years of independent existence. To what extend have our values been shaped by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Nazis or the Soviet Union is not straightforward. The results from the IBM study for Czech Republic are pictured in figure 2.1 with comparison to the World average.

Figure 2.1: Comparing cultural dimensions between World average and Czech Republic



World Average	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	55	PDI	57	2
IDV	43	IDV	58	15
MAS	50	MAS	57	7
UAI	64	UAI	74	10
LTO*	45	LTO	13	-32

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

*Results out of 39 countries (the rest out of 74 countries)

Up to now, there was no attempt to explain Czech Republic's culture according to Hofstede's scores. As it is apparent from the graph, that four out of five of the scores are somewhat in the middle. An explanation that the CR's culture is similar to the world "average" doesn't tell us much information nor does it picture the culture in an imaginable way.

However, given the theoretical background of the Hofstede's study for the overall world situation, a possible explanation will be presented in the following paragraphs, starting by the two main "extreme" of the Czech culture.

Long-term versus short-term orientation

The biggest deviation from the World's average is apparent on the LTO dimension. The Czech Republic is by an imaginary difference of 32 below the world average. Nearly all East Asian countries, with China in the lead, occupy high positions. Most of the European countries scored in the middle and most of the Anglo countries ended short-term oriented. Czech Republic stands out among European countries as the "shortest thinker" and is the second lowest long-term thinker of all surveyed countries.

An equally low score on this dimension received Sub-Saharan African countries. However, the roots for their short-term orientation are somewhere else. As explained by Hofstede, Africans value "traditional wisdom". Wisdom in Africa is considered as a gift that comes from experience and time, and because of that, it cannot be obtained through performance. Wisdom is taken as more important than knowledge or education. This in fact discourages investing today to receive future benefits. Although tradition is respected in some parts of the Czech Republic, wisdom is not the explanation for a general short-term orientation.

Pakistan is a country that received an even lower score on this dimension (0). The reason for Pakistan being extremely short-term oriented is religious fundamentalism. "Decisions are not based on what works today but on an interpretation of what has been written in the old holy books."⁴⁶ Fundamentalisms are against innovation, they consider it as heresy. Fundamentalism is the enemy of long-term thinking and progress because it doesn't deal with modern problems pragmatically but seeks for past solutions that might have worked better. Again, religious fundamentalism isn't the answer to Czech Republic's low LTO. Although Catholicism is the dominant religion in Czech Republic, it suffered a loss during the era of Communism. Today, about 60 percent of our population are nonbelievers and from the remaining 30 percent of believers (about 10% did not state)⁴⁷, none or a negligible amount could be considered as fundamental.

Czechs, analogously to other Western and European cultures, don't have values for long-term thinking. The future is by definition a long-term problem. A good government should be future directed. In the Czech way of governance, many short-term aspects are clearly visible. Although democracy is relatively stable with fair elections taking place regularly, long-term plans are rarely fulfilled. People and politicians are concerned with current issues that need urgent solving. Politicians feel social obligations related to the time of their governance. For them, an attempt to invest in future benefits while sacrificing present success means a threat to their current power status. If they take the risk (which is not probable due to high UAI) and focus on a

⁴⁶ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 233

⁴⁷ Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), Religious beliefs (1.3.2011)

future plan, they will be negatively judged by people and opposing political parties for lack of current success and probably rewarded by a dismissal. New politicians in power, with a sense of obligation to voters, usually stop the ongoing plan and appoint their own party's personnel. Instead of giving answers to future questions, these politicians criticize past actions of their political rivals. These politicians focus on quick fixes, because starting a future plan has no future. Myopic decisions based on private interest result in no or slow economic development. Although it seems rational to evaluate politicians according to their recent performance, it is a pre-rational choice affected by culture.

Individualism

The second biggest difference is on the dimension of Individualism-Collectivism. However, as the score difference is only 15 points above the world average, it does not present a significant distinction. On a global level, this dimension strongly correlated with the wealth of countries (measured in GNP per capita) and their geographical latitude. Nearly all rich countries score high on IDV while all poor countries score low. Similarly, countries closer to the equator are associated with lower IDV and vice versa.⁴⁸ (see supplement 8.1) Although this is only a statistical relationship, it can support the guesswork.

However, neither one of these relationships are significant regarding Czech Republic and thus don't present a reliable condition for evaluating CR's culture. What is possible to read from this difference is that Czech Republic is relatively to the majority of the world (which is collectivistic) in the group of rather individualistic countries.

Uncertainty Avoidance

UAI received the third biggest difference, or in other words, the third smallest difference, compare to the world average. However, since CR's score is 74, it is getting closer to the strong UAI pole, which gives an opportunity the picture Czech Republic's culture regarding some aspects of UAI in the world context.

Based on the theory, similarly to most other central European countries, the CR's score on UAI is relatively high. Some of the reasons connected to this dimension are values learned in child age, when a person from a particular category is labeled as "dirty and dangerous". Children, through fear, learn to avoid these people. As a consequence, minorities, immigrants or citizens of other countries are perceived by people in a way that is affected by their upbringing. To what extent is the influence negative or positive is derived from culture and differs among countries. Although UAI isn't only about tolerance or intolerance of other cultures, it is an interesting concept linked to the current issues dealt in Czech Republic and represents a good starting point for understanding certain cross-cultural conflict issues.

⁴⁸ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 111

“The opinion that immigrants should be sent back was strongly correlated with uncertainty avoidance.”⁴⁹ In this sense, Hofstede also speaks about the combination of high UAI and Masculinity which is the case of Japan, Germany, Hungary, Italy and partly also the CR. This combination is said to represent a fertile ground for xenophobic and nationalistic tendencies.

Another combination, this time UAI and Individualism, clusters countries according to the way they deal with intergroup conflict (presence of minorities inside the country). Malaysia is an example of a country formed by many minorities which has an overall collectivistic score and weak UAI, which helps the groups to tolerate and complement themselves. Countries with strong collectivist values but a high UAI either deny an intergroup conflict or try to assimilate or repress the minorities totally (Arab countries, Turkey or Serbia). Countries having both IDV and UAI at a high level often express hostility to ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities, but the element of IDV tries to assure that everyone’s rights are respected (Belgium, France, and partly CR). To what degree does this theoretical example suit the attitude of Czech citizens to the Roma minorities living in the CR is a sensitive issue and will not be discussed. //The Netherlands along with other Scandinavian countries are examples of high IDV but weak UAI which should allow immigrants to integrate into the society.⁵⁰ However, the “melting pot” of USA which also fits this definition, was struck by an unpleasant experience of the 9.11 terrorist attacks, which puts this theory to a tough test.

Masculinity and Power Distance

The position of Czech Republic on the scales of these dimensions is closely above the world average, which suggests that CR doesn’t stand-out in any of the issues connected with these dimensions. It would be possible to summarize the overall world situation according to each of the two dimensions as has been made in the previous three paragraphs. However, this wouldn’t significantly contribute to the understanding of Czech Republic’s culture, since it was not found to differ notably in any of the dimensions in the world context. Thus, an attempt to make conclusions or explanations would loose in its importance. On the contrary, the following chapters will move from a world point of view to a more specific country-to-country point of view.

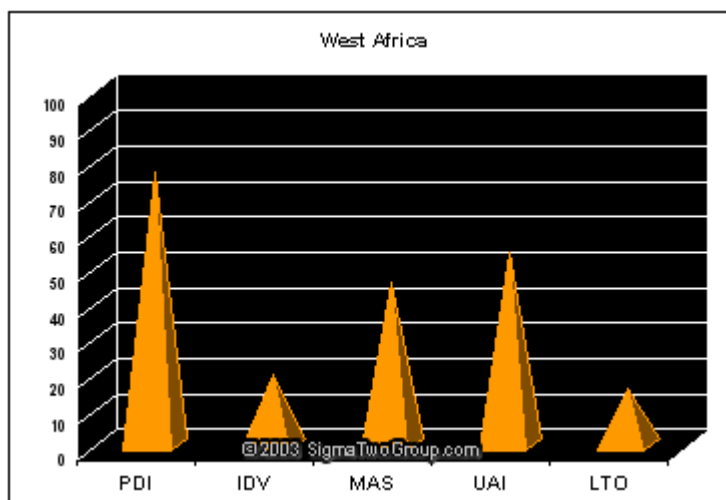
⁴⁹ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 196

⁵⁰ Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 195-197

4.3 Ghana

Ghana belongs to the developing countries of West Africa. These countries (Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) have a common result in the Hofstede's research (viz. figure 2.2). Ghana is a relatively young sub-Saharan state, having been created in 1957. Like many other poor African countries, Ghana deals with major issues such as widespread contagion of AIDS or other epidemics, weak infrastructure, low industrialization, low economic development and a rapidly increasing population. Similar characteristics accompany most of these post-colonial West African state governments: they are many times perceived as corrupt, they are single-party, often military or militarily supported and unstable. According to Hickson and Pugh and Hofstede, these West African countries show following features on the 5 dimensions.

Figure 2.2: West Africa's cultural dimensions.



Source: Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions website (12.10.2010)

PDI (77):

West African countries have the highest score in this dimension. Typically, these countries work beneath a centralized and hierarchical authority system, the common pattern of managing authority in developing countries. There is a gap between more and less powerful people but this inequality is culturally accepted. The chain of command is sustained by downward instructions and communication. Social status plays a crucial role; the high position of military enables soldiers to ignore regulations that everyone else must comply with. The authoritarian inheritance and tendency for centralization comes from colonial days.

IDV (20):

Ghana is a collectivist country with strong personal relations. People are closely linked by ethnicity, tribe, family, language and religion. Loyalty to particular in-groups is reflected in an instrumental view of work; they see work as a way of showing what they

can do for family and friends. The giving and receiving of favours and gifts is more a social obligation than bribery.

MAS (46):

An average score on this dimension indicates that West Africans are not as competitive or eager to stand out among their peers as are more individually assertive nations.

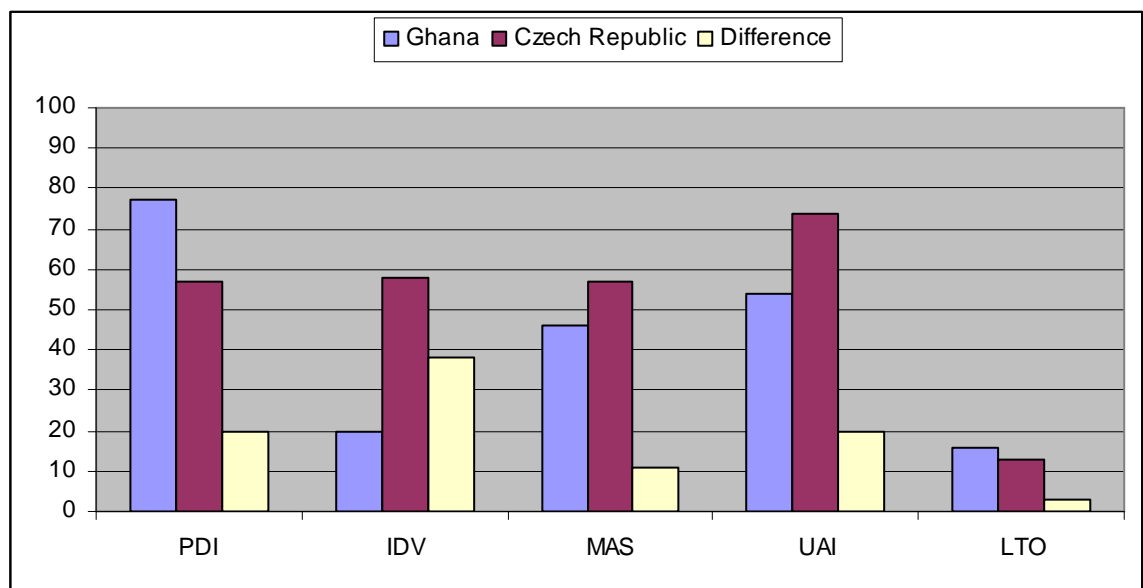
UAI (54):

Even an average score on this index means that following rules is preferred over taking initiative, because the latter increases uncertainty of making a mistake and of bringing upon you the displeasure of superiors.

LTO (16):

Short-term orientation is common in all Africa. According to Hofstede it is attributed to respecting of traditions and traditional wisdom. The view of time is more flexible and fluid. People are rather relaxed than punctual.

Figure 2.3: Comparing cultural dimensions between Ghana and Czech Republic



West Africa (Ghana)	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	77	PDI	57	-20
IDV	20	IDV	58	38
MAS	46	MAS	57	11
UAI	54	UAI	74	20
LTO	16	LTO	13	-3

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

The difference between these two nations should be mostly visible on the dimension of Individualism-Collectivism which has an imaginary difference of 38. A question regarding differences in family relationships between West-African countries and Czech Republic revealed some authentic explanations. Participant from Ghana:

“We value the extended family. You can see your family and your wife’s family all living in the same house. There is a high dependency among members of the family. They believe we have to help each other. So I see that as a very big difference from here. Here as young a person can be, you see him trying to survive on his own. He can even decide to live in his own flat and things like that. In my place, you can be as old as 30 and you will still be living with your parents, which is kind of normal. I see that here the people are more independent. They want to live on their own.”

In this extract from the interview, it is possible to identify some key collectivistic aspects; the extended family and its explanation, dependence among group members, mutual trust and loyalty. A person from Ghana with this background can see the Czech Republic as an individualist country. The participant gives examples of a Czech person wanting to survive on his own. Participant compares his family living together despite the age of the members to a Czech person living on his own in his own apartment. The participant perceives Czech people as more independent than his home country.

A question regarding religion also revealed connections to the IDV index.

“I know that some people here go to church when they are children, but because of the independent kind of life they lead afterwards, in their own apartments, their parents loose control over them. So in my case, when you live with your family until you are about 28 years, the family still puts some pressure on you to go to church. One of the reasons why I think the Czechs refuse to attach importance to religious activities is that they think they have to do everything by themselves. They believe they can do everything by themselves. They don’t need anybody to help them. They don’t have to rely on any supernatural force.”

Also in this quote it is remarkable that the participant from Ghana sees Czechs as individualists who can do everything by themselves and don’t have to rely on or be dependent on the help of an in-group. He also speaks about the pressure that his family puts on him to go to church. They actually hamper his possibility to make an individual decision. Both answers given by the participant from Ghana confirm the relative position of these two countries and the significant difference regarding this dimension.

The second biggest difference should be seen on dimensions of Power-Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance which both have an imaginary difference of 20.

An open question on his perception of differences among these two countries supported the above anticipation.

“In my culture, we classify people according to their age. We relate and behave to them in this sense. I have noticed here, that regardless of your age, you act and speak to anybody fluently. Even if he is your lecturer, even if he is older than you or has a

doctorate degree...whatever, you always relate to him as equal. In my place we are more respectful. Also, regardless of your position you use the metro like any other ordinary person. A manager of a company is normally using the metro. But in my country you hardly see these people, for example a top manager using public transport. They go by their own car. So it is very easy to identify people who have authority in Ghana than people here. Because here they all go through the normal life process; taking public transport, going to the same restaurants and etc.”

Respect to seniors, respect to social position or status and respect to hierarchy are typical indicators of a high PDI country. Compared to that, the Czech Republic is in the eyes of this participant from Ghana a more “equal” place. He gives examples of status symbols being used differently in each of the two countries. He describes how and where it is possible to see the gap between “powerful” people of Ghana and normal citizens and how, conversely, is this difference blurred in the Czech Republic. According to these aspects, Ghana has a larger power distance than the Czech Republic.

A higher index of Uncertainty Avoidance in the Czech Republic than in Ghana could be related to questions from the interview regarding communication and interaction of Czechs with foreigners.

“Most of the times I approached people to direct me to find a place. But what I encountered was that most of the people I asked told me: “I don’t speak English”. But I noticed one thing it wasn’t all of them, who couldn’t speak English. Some could speak, but I think they weren’t interested in speaking with me. I’m not the only person who has this experience. My other black friend had the same experience when questioning people. They told him: “I don’t understand English”, but meanwhile they understood pretty well. You could tell. They just refused to. So I thought that maybe they are a bit racist, because we are black people. And they said they are not interested in speaking with me.”

Although it could seem to be a matter of language skills, the interview suggests that that’s not the case. Countries with a higher UAI tend to avoid unstructured situations, which might be the example of foreign interaction. According to the interview, Czechs are not really friendly to foreigners. In this specific case it may lead to a harsh conclusion that Czechs are racists. However, interviews with participants from other nations suggest, that racism isn’t the key source of the negative approach to foreigners. It is about avoiding the risk of undergoing an unknown situation that is different from an everyday procedure. This idea is supported by another quote from the interview:

“Most people who have travelled abroad have a totally different relationship with foreigners than typical Czech people who have never travelled abroad.”

This is an interesting idea that is confirmed in other interviews as well. People who travelled abroad got familiar with cross-cultural interaction so their fear of uncertainty has dropped. Consequently their approach to foreigners has changed to better.

The close link between uncertainty avoidance and avoiding foreign communication stands out in many of the interviews and is definitely connected with the high score received by Czech Republic in Hofstede's study. However, it is influenced by the subjective experience of the participants undergoing a culture shock in a different country. Strong UAI of the Czech Republic is linked with many other realities and therefore cannot be explained only by this particular feature. Anyway, by comparing the two countries on this dimension, it is evident that Czech Republic is perceived as a more uncertainty avoiding country by the participant from Ghana.

A small difference of scores in the dimension of Masculinity and Femininity didn't evoke any expectations of differences among these two nations. Both countries have a mean score on this index claiming that none of these cultures are significantly masculine or feminine. Supporting this expectation, the interview didn't bring any clear examples of one country being more masculine than the other or vice versa regarding feminine.

Even closer scores on the LTO dimension, where both countries resulted significantly short-term minded, would suggest similar characteristics regarding the perception of time. Yet, the explanations for being short-term oriented are quite different as discussed in detail in chapter 4.2. (LTO in Czech Republic).

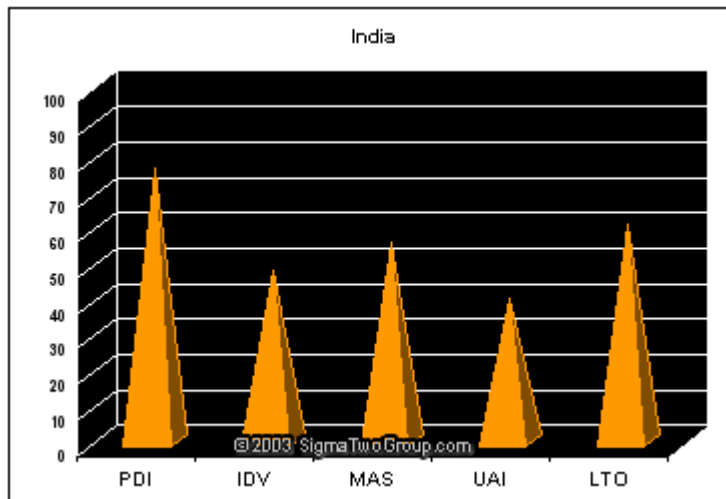
The value scores do not imply that all Africans and all Czechs are short-term thinkers. They do mean that these ways of thinking are so common that they affect the behaviour patterns and the structure and functioning or malfunctioning of national institutions. This applies to all the dimensions.

4.4 India

India is clustered with Africa among developing countries. However, its characteristics are quite different than African, mainly due to the fact of being 200 years controlled by a single colonial power (Britain) rather than divided among several. India declared its independence in 1947 and since then maintained a framework of a liberal democracy. Although it was for a long time dominated by the Congress Party, India has been able to change the party in power without force. Today, India is the second most populous State with almost 1.3 billion people. People speak numerous languages, but English is officially used in administration. India has its own ancient religion; more than 80% of the population are Hindu. "Recent economic success accentuates the contrast between those who benefit from industry and commerce and the bulk of the population who continue poverty-stricken."⁵¹ Hofstede's study revealed the following scores and characteristics:

⁵¹ D. Hickson, D. Pugh, *Management Worldwide*, 2001, Penguin Books, page 265

Figure 2.4: India's cultural dimensions.



Source: Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions website (03.11.2010)

PDI (77):

India has Power Distance as the highest Hofstede Dimension for the culture, with a ranking of 77. This Power Distance score for India indicates a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. This condition is not necessarily subverted upon the population, but rather accepted by the population as a cultural norm. Indians tend to be fearful of people in positions of power. Bosses incline to maintain tight control at the top, minimize delegation and centralize business activities. Subordinates are conversely ill-educated, often illiterate and possibly even submissive. They wait upon direct, personal instructions from higher levels. However, the self-image of an Indian manager is caring and considerate, so his authoritarian and patronizing style is from his view justified. A high PDI is also connected with the traditional cast system.

IDV (48):

India has an average score on this dimension. Indians respect the extended family and the cast system to which each individual belongs (though it is formally illegal to discriminate on grounds of caste)

MAS (56):

Families in India are led by males, who bear ultimate responsibility for everyone in the extended family. The higher the country ranks in this Dimension, the greater the gap between values of men and women. It may also generate a more competitive and assertive female population, although still less than the male population.

UAI (40):

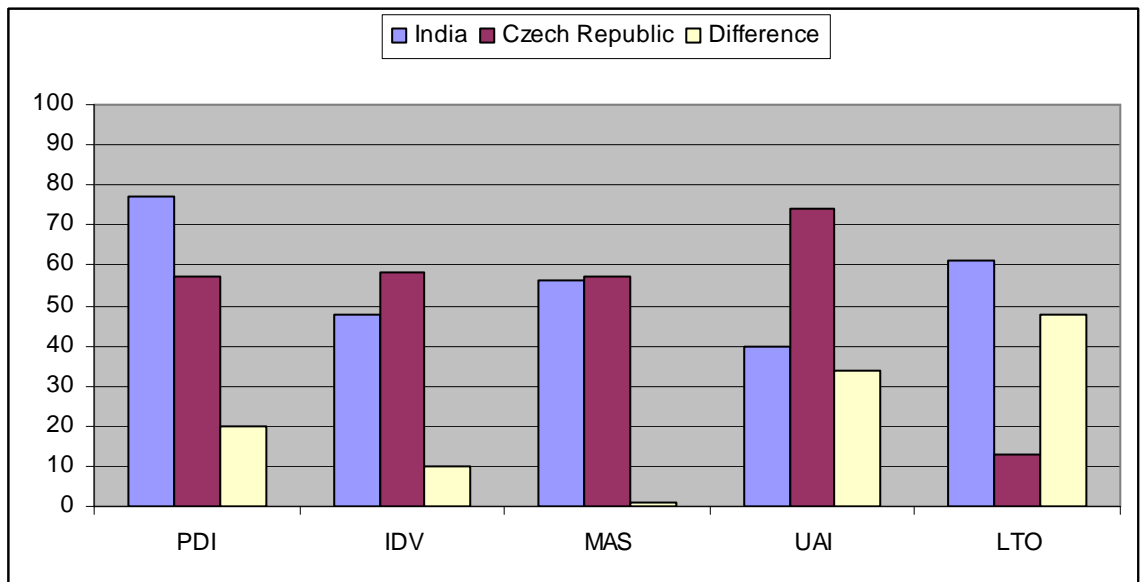
India's lowest ranking Dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance at 40. On the lower end of this ranking, the culture may be more open to unstructured ideas and situations. The population may have fewer rules and regulations with which to attempt control of every

unknown and unexpected event or situation, as is the case in high Uncertainty Avoidance countries.

LTO (61):

India scored quite high on the LTO dimension. Although India is a non-Confucian country, Hinduism also has long-term features. Hinduism as an Eastern religion has a remarkable difference in philosophy compare to Western religions. It provides many opportunities of how a person can improve throughout his/her life. It is not based on immediate believing in a higher Truth written in an ancient book, but on rituals, meditations and ways of living. A higher LTO score indicates a culture that is perseverant and parsimonious.

Figure 2.5: Comparing cultural dimensions between India and Czech Republic:



India	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	77	PDI	57	-20
IDV	48	IDV	58	10
MAS	56	MAS	57	1
UAI	40	UAI	74	34
LTO	61	LTO	13	-48

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

The difference between these two countries should be most visible on the dimension of Long-term orientation, which has an imaginary difference of 48. Although the participant is not Hindu, which is many times related to LTO, some general long-term values have been detected. A general question about different characteristics of both nations showed some features of the difference in LTO. Participant from India:

“People from India are polite, respectful, and hardworking. They put much effort into achieving what they want. I was surprised that people here don’t have these values. They don’t really care about what is happening and what will happen. They are not very concerned with building relationships with other people, customers or foreigners.”

The second biggest difference (34) should be, according to the scores, seen in the approach to avoid uncertainty. India is more an uncertainty accepting country compare to Czech Republic, which has a high score on this dimension.

Participant from India: *“At first, people at school avoided contact with me. I needed help with my studies, because I didn’t speak Czech despite having the whole course in Czech language. ... I didn’t have any friends at that time.”*

Interviewer: *“But you managed to learn Czech pretty good. How did the situation change?”*

Participant from India: *“Today, when I go to a shop and ask for something in Czech language, people are helpful to me. They admire my effort to learn Czech. They know it’s hard for foreigners.”*

As in some of the other interviews, it is possible to see the negative approach to foreigners from Czechs. However, the participant from India managed to overcome the biggest barrier between these countries by learning the language. The participant then speaks about the positive impacts of his new knowledge. Czechs were no longer uncertain in the communication.

The question regarding religion also touches this issue:

Participant from India: *“It was a shock for me that most of the people here don’t believe in any God. I kept asking my student colleagues: “Who do you pray to when you go for the exam?” And they said, they don’t pray.”*

Interviewer: *“And why do you think you have to pray? I think it’s better to study...”*

Participant from India: *“Before the exam I think to myself: “I know I did my best in learning the subject, now it is up to God how I will end up.” Because anything can happen; maybe the teacher will have a bad mood.”*

The participant from India is not Hindu, as the majority of the participant’s culture, but Catholic. Although all religions represent a way in which humankind avoids anxiety, Catholic countries score generally higher than Hindu countries. As mentioned in chapter 3.1.3., religious conversion does not cause a total change in cultural values. In this case the participant is not only accepting uncertainty, but actually anticipating it.

A lower score on this index is also a sign of higher tolerance of different attitudes.

When asking a question: *“Did the interaction in a different country change you in any sense?”*

The respondent answered: *“No, I feel I’m just in the position of an observer in a different country. I take and accept everything as it is.”*

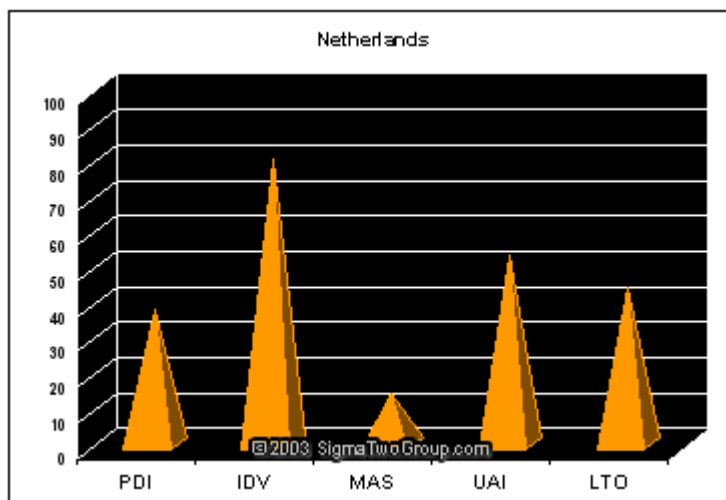
The third highest difference (20) is on the dimension of PDI. Most of the explanations overlap with the ones already presented in the case of Ghana, which reflects a relatively close characteristic of the countries regarding issues of this dimension.

Differences on other dimensions (IDV, MAS) were quite minor and the interview didn't disclose any significant differences. However, the respondent admitted a potential deviation from the conventions of his society which was caused by a strong personal experience that affected the rest of the respondent's life.

4.5 Netherlands

Netherlands similarly to other Northern Europe countries has a well established economy with a high standard of living. Already centuries ago the country provided safe haven for ethnic minorities fleeing from discrimination, migrants from former Dutch colonies or guest workers from the Mediterranean. People from the Netherlands are known for their multi-cultural approach and general tolerance of differences. The country itself is culturally diverse. However, the scores on Hofstede's dimensions are for Netherlands as a whole and are very similar to that of Scandinavian countries.

Figure 2.6: Netherland's cultural dimensions.



Source: Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions website (08.02.2011)

IDV (80):

The high Individualism (IDV) ranking for the Netherlands is indicative of a society with more individualistic attitudes and relatively loose bonds with others. The populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members, but they wish to keep their personal and family life private. Privacy is considered the cultural norm and attempts at personal ingratiation may meet with rebuff. Due to the importance of the individual within the society, individual pride and respect are highly held values and degrading a person is not well received, accepted, or appreciated.

UAI (53):

The second highest Hofstede Dimension for the Netherlands is Uncertainty Avoidance. A moderate UAI score may indicate a cultural tendency to minimize or reduce the level of uncertainty within the population by enacting rules, laws, policies, and regulations to cover most any and all situations or circumstances.

PDI (38):

Netherlands is on the lower end of the PDI scale. No authority has such a power that its word would be accepted without question. Important decisions are expected to be consulted in advance. If someone feels justified or qualified enough to express disagreement he does so. The “social distance” between levels of authority is simply smaller than in for example Latin cultures.

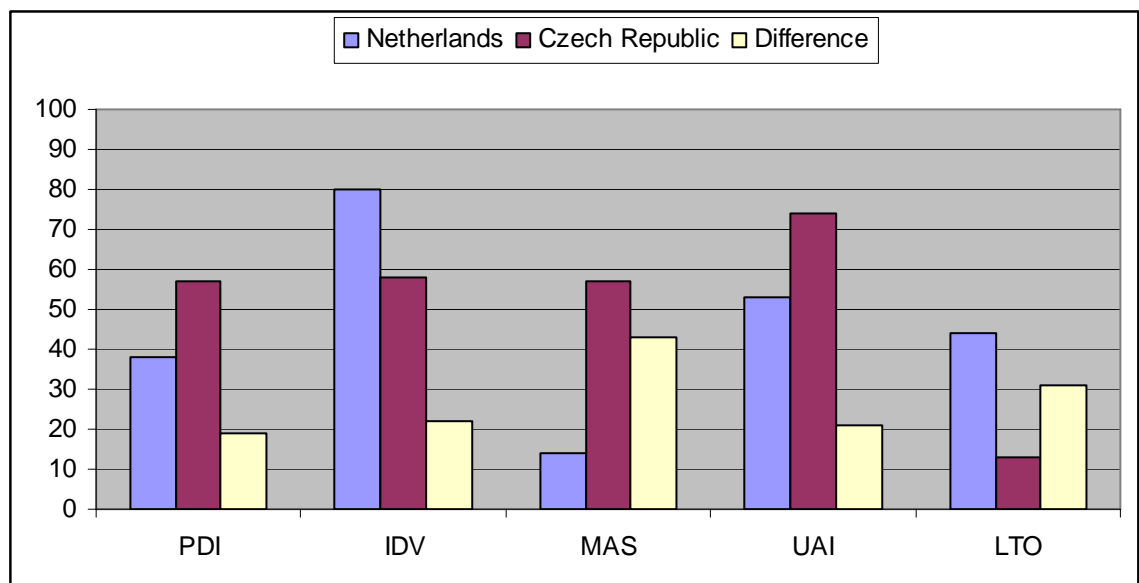
MAS (14):

The lowest Hofstede Dimension for the Netherlands is Masculinity. This relatively low MAS Index value may be indicative of a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In this culture, females are treated more equally to males in all aspects of society. This low Masculinity ranking may also be displayed as a more openly nurturing society that is aiming to an equal environment.

LTO (44):

The ambitious improve their skills by education and training to be able to make individual decisions in the future (also related to high IDV, because loyalty to a particular group is not demanded).

Figure 2.7: Comparing cultural dimensions between Netherlands and Czech Republic:



Netherlands	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	38	PDI	57	19
IDV	80	IDV	58	-22
MAS	14	MAS	57	43
UAI	53	UAI	74	21
LTO	44	LTO	13	-31

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

By looking at the differences in scores and ranks we can predict a great dissimilarity in the dimension of Masculinity-feminity (difference of 43). This dimension touches many issues which were considered as private by the participant in the interview. This reaction in its very essence could be an aspect of culture (an attribute of high IDV). Similarly, these and many other issues discussed in the interview were taken more emotionally compare to other participants (an attribute of low MAS and low UAI). Regarding these dimensions, the participant said that he regularly encounters Czechs resolving minor conflicts through violent behaviour. He gave many examples:

Participant from Netherlands: *“When I go to a bar and want to order a drink, they automatically act rude, because I don’t speak Czech. When they finally bring me the drink, they smash it on the table. This happens all the time.”*... *“I was a witness of many scenes, where people reacted overly aggressive; bartenders, shop assistants, policemen...”* A lot of the interviewees provide such experiences. However, the combination of the differences in both dimensions (UAI and MAS) between Czech Republic and Netherlands emphasizes this culture gap.

Many features of Netherland’s culture overlapped during the interview. The subject of education was no exception in this sense. A combination of low PDI and low MAS clearly pictures the attitude of Netherland’s culture to education. Participant from Netherlands: *“Professors are here to help you learn something, you should ask questions and they should respond. It is about interaction.”* The two-way communication is essential for the participant. Its lack represents the conflict between the two cultures in education. The experience with Czech professors was following: *“I could see that some professors here don’t have the intention to discuss issues openly. They want to be perceived as the only people knowing the truth. They don’t encourage other opinions.”* The participant felt the atmosphere in school was boring due to the fact that teachers block the open discussions and insisted on us (the students) to try to change the situation. However, to a question whether only teachers are responsible for this, the participant said: *“It’s not just the teacher’s fault. You, the students, must want a change in order for the change to come.”* *If you all would really disagree with the approach, you could make a change.”* The participant went on by suggesting that studying abroad, following the Anglo approach in politics and learning more English in order to open to the world will bring that change in some years. The participant also

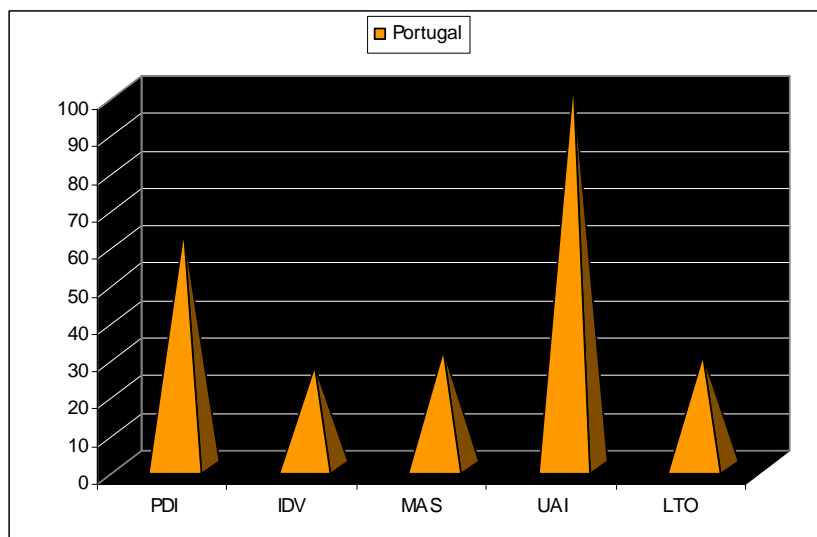
mentioned that the development in these terms is slowed down by our communist history and raised other issues regarding the difference in the LTO dimension (e.g. viewing education as an important asset for future life).

In relation to the topic of Czechs being “closed” to the world due to poor English skills, the participant compared his experiences from other European countries by saying: *“During my visits in Southern European countries I was annoyed by people shouting in the stores and markets, touching you, and trying to sell you everything. Here in the shops, people don’t urge on you to buy something, they don’t care and just leave you alone.”* Compare to other interviewees, this participant actually saw a benefit in the attitude of Czechs to foreigners mainly thanks to issues regarding privacy and impersonal behaviour (high IDV). The tolerant and respectful view is apparent throughout the whole interview.

4.6 Portugal

Portugal belongs to the Latin nations with predominantly Latin characteristics. These nations of today’s Southern Europe have a common historical denominator – the Roman Empire. Hierarchical order, strong emperors, similar language and Christian religion are common features that arose from those times and still show strong influence on today’s nations. The successive Spanish and Portuguese empires carried Latin rule to Central and South America.

Figure 2.8: Portugal’s cultural dimensions.



Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede’s research)

UAI (104):

Portugal, similarly as all Latin cultures, received a high score on this dimension. The Portuguese society has a high level of anxiety, which lowers trust in politics, organizations and the future. People don't readily accept change and try to avoid taking risks. The natural feedback is exerting control. This is reflected in the implementation of strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations that reduce and minimize the level of uncertainty.

IDV (27):

The apparent amount of laws, due to high UAI, could lead to largely bureaucratized procedures. In order to balance out this potential inflexibility, the Latins have a comparatively personal approach to authority and relationships, which makes the system work. The personal touch of Latins comes from collectivist values. Long-term loyalty to extended family and to extended relationships helps to override or circumvent the strict rules. Many times, family and organization overlaps.

PDI (63):

The way of dealing with authority is similar across all Latin countries. There is a tendency to be authority conscious. Bosses generally wield their authority and subordinates generally look for a strong lead, which reinforces the centralized hierarchies. In Portugal, again due to high UAI, precise distribution of responsibility helps to maintain order.

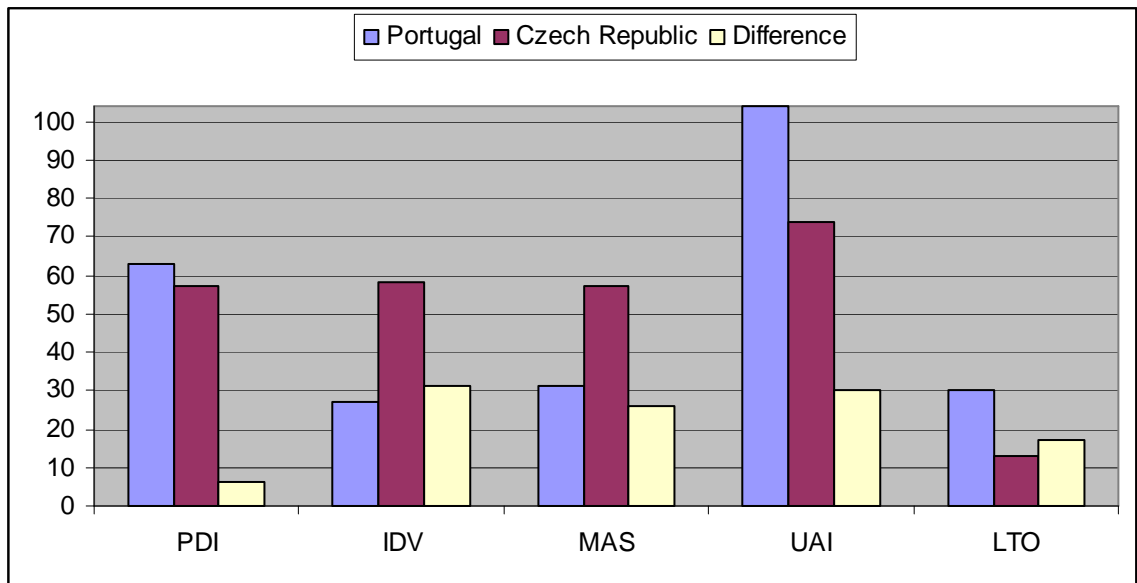
MAS (31):

Most Latin nations show a high level of assertiveness (Italians stand out in a competitive strive for achievement and domination). However, the Portuguese are the least "macho" of the European Latins. They are more nurturing and considerate.

LTO (30):

Like other Latins, the Portuguese are very flexible in their approach to time. They don't have problems with leaving arrangements to the last minute or changing long-agreed plans.

Figure 2.9: Comparing cultural dimensions between Portugal and Czech Republic:



Portugal	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	63	PDI	57	-6
IDV	27	IDV	58	31
MAS	31	MAS	57	26
UAI	104	UAI	74	-30
LTO	30	LTO	13	-17

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

Arranging an appointment for the interview with a participant from Portugal went well. However, at the actual time of meeting the participant showed up with three Portuguese friends who all wanted to participate. This coincidence made the interview distinct from the others, making it a “collectivistic” interview. It also added extra relevance to the interview, since all the members had the chance to agree on the discussed issues and provide a more statistically significant answer.

As expected, most of the characteristics of uncertainty avoiding cultures were revealed quite easily. When discussing the differences between school systems and the way of teaching, the component of UAI regarding rules emerged. Portuguese participants agreed that: *“The teachers here are much more benevolent. If you have a problem with a subject, you can always work it out somehow. You can agree on some extra work or postpone the deadline. That would never work in Portugal. Teachers there are strict. They want to kick you out of school whenever you give them a chance. ... And also you can make your own schedule, you can choose. In Portugal, everything is set.”* This shows that they see our system more flexible (lower UAI) and less authoritarian (lower PDI).

In a discussion about the biggest differences between the two cultures one of the participants stated: *“Portuguese culture is a Latin culture, which is more like “party”, talking, happy people... We are friendly, warm and more open. We are like that, it’s our culture. But the people here and other northern countries are more... colder. Maybe that’s why you can look at us and think that we are just having parties, making noise, yelling on the street or getting drunk. But we are just normal. And people here don’t accept us. We feel like they don’t want us here, like they don’t like us. We feel like total strangers.”* The participant gave a personal perception of the intercultural encounter. Although he used his way of explanation he basically supported the theoretical background of how a person from a high UAI country sees a person from a lower UAI and vice versa. However, according to Hofstede’s study, the Czechs also have a higher than average UAI, which affects their tolerance of foreigner behaviour.

By going deeper in this issue, the participants gave me their authentic personal experiences: *“When I go to a store here, there are two ways of how people look at me. They are either rude at me and they don’t care if I will buy something at all, or they look at me as if I am going to steal something. That’s what I feel.”* The participants jointly criticized the negative approach to tourists, by giving examples of how perfectly things work in Portugal. They mainly emphasized collectivist issues such as building relationships with tourists, creating loyal customers or working towards a common goal. Generally, they weren’t able to accept that Czechs behave differently, which is another component of the high UAI.

The interview itself revealed other important aspects of intercultural encounters; the difference in going abroad alone versus going abroad in a group. Hofstede mentions that group encounters provoke group feelings, which surprisingly harms mutual understanding. It tends to confirm each group with its own identity and generalize the other group into a stereotype. Stereotypes affect the perception of actual events.⁵² This applies even more in collectivist groups like the one from Portugal. Tight in-group relations also support the tendency to idealize memories of how things work in the domestic culture.

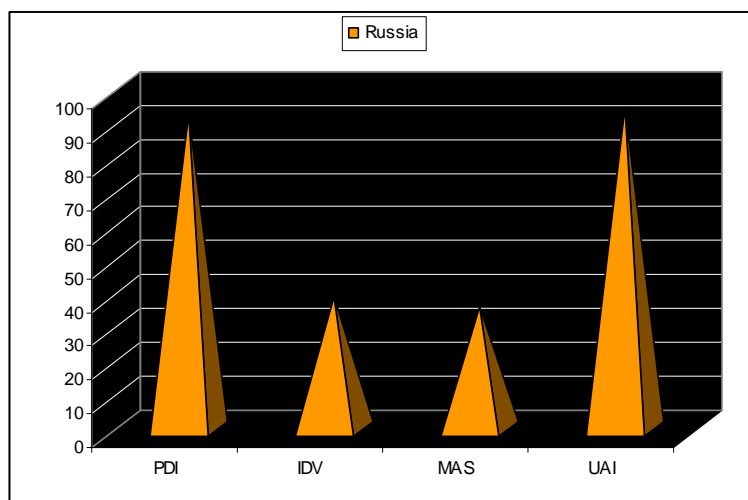
4.7 Russia

Since values reach far back into history, the Mongol rule that dominated Russia in the thirteenth century, could have started the cultural acceptance of absolutist authorities. The overwhelming of Russian tsars that followed even strengthened this assumption. The power of a tsar was later replaced by the authority of the Communist party. Although communists had a modern bureaucratic system, the overall centrally planned

⁵² Hofstede, G., *Cultures and Organisations - Software of the Mind*. 2005, page 326

philosophy was present even before. History had once again the main role in the division of countries into the Eastern European “cultural slice”. The communist controlled Soviet Union drew a line between the East and the West after the Second World War. The way of thinking was affected by the communist administration. The “people’s” democracies that were supposed to assure an egalitarian society were in reality under the control of a single-party government that proclaimed a Marxist ideology and restricted private ownership. Moscow’s domination lasted about 40 years until it was thrown down along with the communist rule itself. The transition phase that took place mostly after the year 1989 involved an economic, social and cultural change.

Figure 2.10: Russia’s cultural dimensions.



Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede’s research)

PDI (93):

As the historical development suggests, Russia has a very high PDI. The sixth highest world score. On this dimension, it could be compared with many developing countries. A strictly top-down authority is balanced by a collectivist approach to managing relationships.

IDV (39):

Historically the necessity to work together for survival established the base for mutual loyalty and a common effort. The Russian Orthodox Church also suits the cultural pattern. Its statement “Let us love one another” actually enabled an easy adoption of atheistic communism, which maintained the traditional precedence of collective duties over individual rights in the service of Mother Russia. Because Russians like to manage relationships in a warm, open and emotionally expressive manner, they developed collective folk humour to balance the impersonal communist rule. Due to system failures after the transition, the importance of networking even more extended. However, strong personal contacts and lack of system control support “mafia” practices.

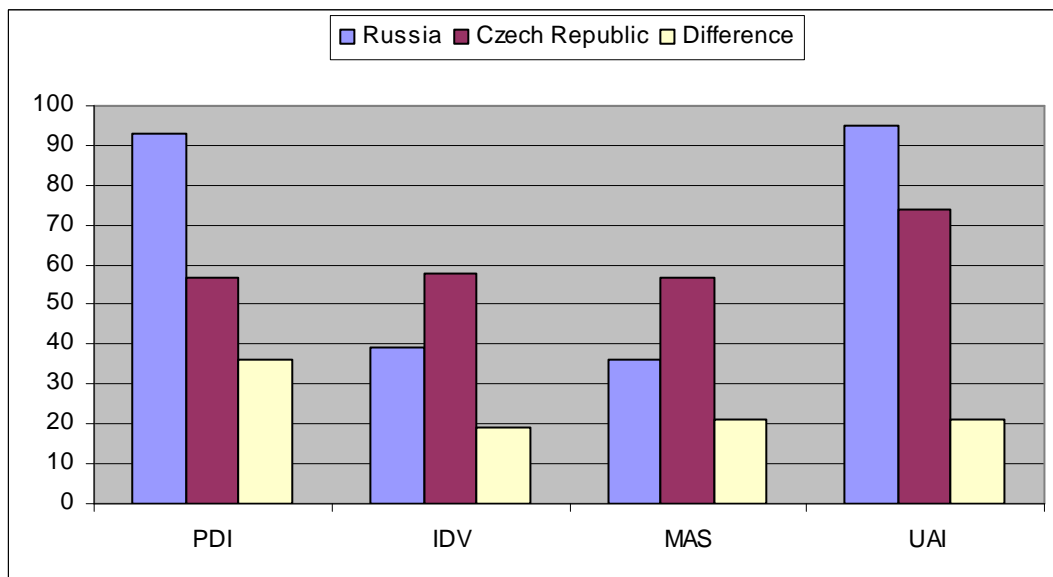
UAI (95):

Again, given the historical and geographical facts, strict rules with tight control had to be established to maintain order. A strong uncertainty avoiding culture was ruled by large bureaucratic administration. Russia’s system of a centrally planned economy speaks for itself. The transition to a market economy removed the central governmental plans and managers now plan themselves. Since uncertainty persisted in the environment, the market system is unfortunately inefficient. Control or security measures are now taken by governmental agencies such as the police, ex-governmental agents who have become private operators and illegal “mafia” groups who extort money for “protection”. The distinctions between the three types are not always clear.

MAS (36):

The more feminine side of Russia is apparent in the preference for good relationships with colleagues rather than high achievements and in the equal roles of genders. In Russia women are as important as men. Also the idea of mutual help, which is long present in Russia’s culture, is an aspect of femininity.

Figure 2.11: Comparing cultural dimensions between Russia and Czech Republic:



Russia	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	93	PDI	57	-36
IDV	39	IDV	58	19
MAS	36	MAS	57	21
UAI	95	UAI	74	-21

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede’s research)

In the interview, the major differences in the two educational systems confirmed the assumption that Russia has very high PDI and UAI compare to Czech Republic. The participant described the two like this: *“Here it is better, because you may choose what is important for you, how long you want to study and what specialization. In Russia, everything is set by the State. There are many rules, all lectures and seminars are obligatory, and the teachers are rather strict. Here the teachers are more kind. You can come late. We have to always come in time and always stand up when the teacher enters the class, especially in universities.”*

Regarding the way of teaching, the participant said: *“Every time it’s the same, in lectures, the teachers just read information and you need to write and in the seminars, you answer questions and write tests. Here, there are many projects for home, which you can discuss with your colleagues and search for additional information. That is more practical compare to Russia, where it’s mostly theory.”* The participant saw the Czech educational system as much better. *“My definition of a good teacher changed after studying in CR, because I have a comparison”*; the participant emphasized the importance of applying theory in practice in order to understand it, encouraging different opinions and organizing discussions. The participant regretted that this isn’t the case of Russia.

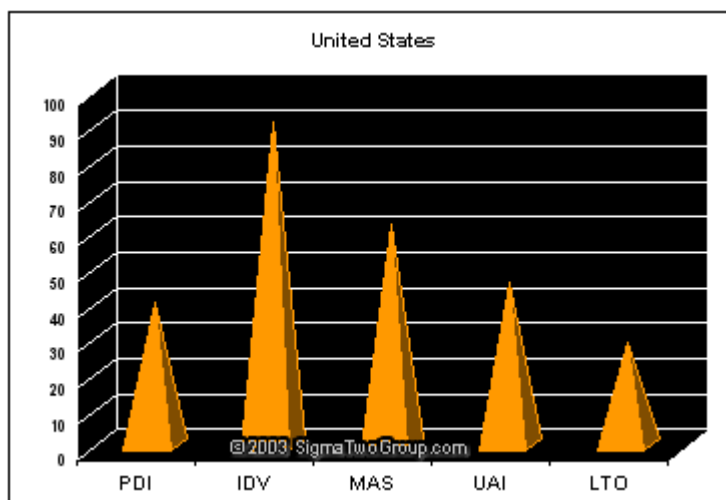
The school issue has brought us to an interesting phenomenon; the creation of in-groups inside a different culture, which is specific for collectivist countries (low IDV). *“I know about 20 Russians that are here on Erasmus. They help each other to find a job, a boyfriend or anything. In Russia, when you have a friend in the government, he can help you to find a better job. If you have a lot of high-society friends, you are very lucky. So it’s important to be in the Russian community. At school, we as also like to find a group of Russians when we need to do a team project, because it’s easier for all of us.”* Maintaining good relationships with the whole community is also an aspect of lower MAS. The participant also perceived Czechs as being friendly to Russians: *“I also have some Russian friends studying PHD here and they have very good experiences with the Czechs, who help them with Czech language, with school work, with Visa, with everything. You are friendly people.”* If we omit the negative experiences connected with the visa administration process, which are present in most of the interviews, the participant gave only one example of a negative personal experience: *“Just one time a lady in a bus told us to go “home”, but we were a big crowd of people and we were shouting a lot.”*

As in some of the other interviews, this participant also attributed cultural differences to differences regarding clothes, the style of dress and even hair: *“For example some girls here have dreadlocks, which I cannot understand. I don’t know anyone with dreadlocks in my country. Most of the people would not accept it; they would think she is a strange person. We want to be good looking.”* This example underpins the high UAI in Russia, which is connected to low acceptance of differences (even lower than in the Czech Republic).

4.8 United States

USA doesn't need to be introduced in detail. Culturally it belongs to the group of Anglo nations, which have a similarly distinctive culture in spite of their wide geographical distribution caused by the enormous British Empire. The wide spread of colonies along with the low-context form of language enabled English to become the world's most international language. United States declared independence not before 1776, which gives the "new world" a relatively short history. A written and explicit constitution gives equal rights to the liberal and self-reliant citizens. Impersonal organizations run by competitive managers were crucial for the economic success. Even though it is a federation of more than 50 states, it has, according to Hofstede, a common cultural result:

Figure 2.12: United States' cultural dimensions.



Source: Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions website (19.02.2011)

IDV (91):

USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada all resulted in the Hofstede's research with IDV as their highest dimension. This underpins their sharp distinction from all other societies. High IDV indicates a society with a more individualistic attitude and relatively loose bonds with others. The populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members. Generally, the impersonal environment of companies supports the phenomenon of frequently changing occupations. It is also improper to ask private questions, because work life and private life are taken as separated.

MAS (62):

Higher MAS indicates the country experiences a higher degree of gender differentiation of roles. The male dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure. This situation generates a female population that becomes more assertive and

competitive, with women shifting toward the male role model and away from their female role. The overall level of assertiveness and competitiveness accompanies the drive for achievement and success.

LTO (29):

Although LTO is the lowest dimension for the US, Americans are known for being optimistically future-oriented. The “American dream” (anything can be possible if people set-up goals and try) is connected with high MAS and enables high achievements. On the other hand the low LTO ranking is indicative of the societies' belief in meeting its obligations (e.g. over-concern with immediate financial results; “time is money”) and tends to reflect an appreciation for cultural traditions.

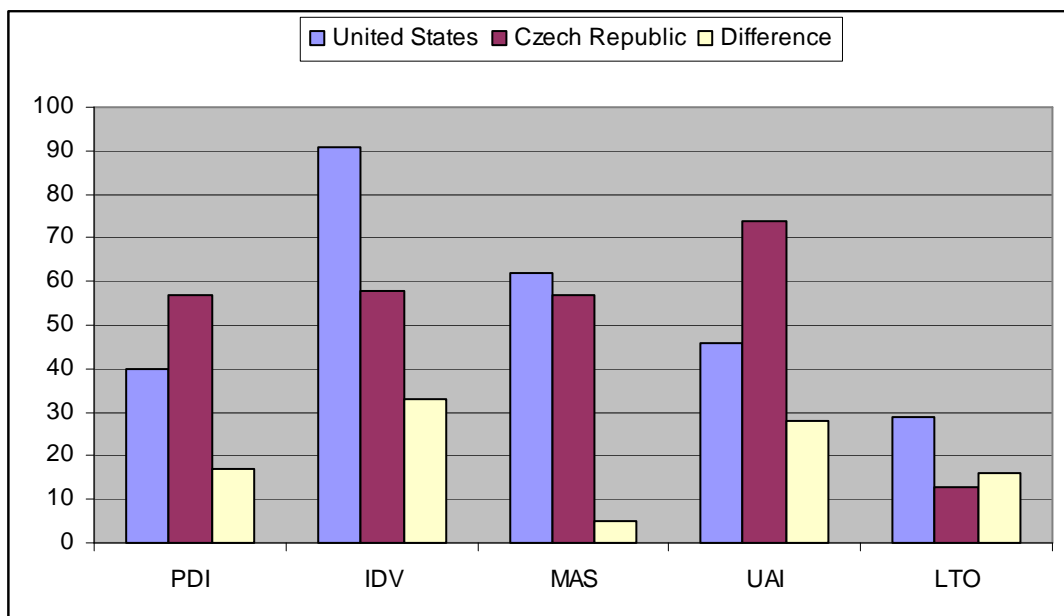
PDI (40):

Lower PDI is indicative of a greater equality between societal levels, including government, organizations, and even within families. This orientation reinforces a cooperative interaction across power levels and creates a more stable cultural environment. The attitude to authorities is much more relaxed, because the people in power see themselves as undertaking responsibilities rather than just exercising authority.

UAI (46):

A low ranking in the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension is indicative of a society that has fewer rules and does not attempt to control all outcomes and results. It also has a greater level of tolerance for a variety of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs.

Figure 2.13 Comparing cultural dimensions between United States and Czech Republic:



United States	Score	Czech Republic	Score	Difference in scores
PDI	40	PDI	57	17
IDV	91	IDV	58	-33
MAS	62	MAS	57	-5
UAI	46	UAI	74	28
LTO	29	LTO	13	-16

Source: Own input (based on results of Hofstede's research)

During the interview with the participant from the United States major differences stood out concerning the US's most distinctive dimension; IDV. The participant works in the Czech Republic as an English teacher and gave several examples of the Czechs being more collectivist. The overall difference was formulated as this: *"People here seem to be a lot less individualistic. In the US people think like: "What goals do I have, how can I achieve them and what is the quickest ride?" Here people think rather like: "Ok, I work in this system, together with these people and we work on this group goal" They work inside a system instead of striving to achieve their own system."*

When additional specific examples were questioned, the participant transformed his idea into: *"In school, you are placed in a class and you go with that core group for at least the first six years if not longer. In the US, every year I had different classmates. Which is entirely different, you immediately realize: "Ok, I am an individual". I have to meet new people, I have to do new things, I don't have this group of people around me. And also the teachers, we get a new teacher every year. And we don't see that teacher again. While you very often have the same teacher for years, she is almost like a mother figure. Especially if you are spending more time with her, during your formative years, than you are with your own mother. This all leads to a more communal concept."*

These examples underline the core difference in the IDV dimension, which would be very hard to track down if there would be no cross-cultural interactions.

Going more deeply in the educational system further differences regarding this dimension evolved. They were mostly concerning the issue of privacy, relationships and separation of work life and family life: *"Here I was working as an English teacher at an elementary school and I had students and their parents bringing me gifts and flowers, like I was some part of the community. They were inviting me to things that were absolutely outside the realm of teacher-parent-student kind of things, at least for my realm of what would be appropriate. But what is appropriate here is totally different. I was really surprised. In the States you can't get that close to them, even with the fellow employees, co-workers or students. To go out with them for a beer you could end up being penalized or losing the job."*

The strong US's individual attitude is obviously reflected consequently in the topic of work: *"You stay at a job as long as there is no one who will pay you more or give you a higher position. I have a friend who negotiates a new job every 8 months, because he is a top salesman. I don't think people change jobs here that often. In the US, there is a lot*

less personal and communal loyalty.” This is actually an example of why personal incentives such as raising sales commission increase the motivation of workers in countries with high IDV.

Although the dimension of UAI is has the second biggest difference in scores, suggesting that Czechs are less uncertainty accepting. There were not many direct examples of this cultural gap due to a certain degree of preparation. The participant formulated it as following: *“I was told initially that the Czech people were a little less friendly or open, little less likely to smile and things like that. So I was prepared for that and I took that into account for every encounter I had. Because I had this preparation I excluded those things from what I was concerned about. I knew you were going to do certain things, so I ignored them. I focused on learning a bit of the language and found everybody to be very helpful.”* This is an example of how a simple form of preparation can influence the authentic experience of the culture by reducing the culture shock.

The third biggest difference was expected to occur on the dimension of PDI. Czechs were assumed to be more concerned with power and wealth opposed to the US, where the society should be more equal. The participant in the discussion around the topic of cross-cultural conflicts spoke about a conflict that arose when he was teaching at a private school a class of students who were from wealthy families. *“Their concentration wasn’t on education but on status. These children were not well behaved and they were allowed that, because their parents were very wealthy and powerful. They could do whatever they wanted.”* He spoke about having a hard time there, because: *“In the US, it is more about what you can achieve than who your parents are”*.

Achievement is an English word that is, in its own essence, very hard to translate to the Czech and many other languages. It is connected to both MAS and LTO which are higher in the US compared to CR. Here are two extracts of the interview comparing these two countries in regard to these two dimensions. (LTO): *“It’s a lot more relaxed here. Czechs aren’t typically entrepreneurial. Everybody just does what they do. In NY it’s more like: “What’s the next scheme? What’s the next way I can make money? What’s the next company I’m going to create?” Everybody wants something from you. They approach to you like: “What can you give me? What can I achieve thanks to you?” That is typical for NY and LA.”*

(MAS): *“In the US women look for men with status, money, power and aggression. Men don’t have to be attractive, but women do. Women are in to fashion, looking pretty, etc, men into sports. Both genders try to fit the one particular role, it is very polar. Men and women here seem to be lot more similar. Their interests are mixed. They both do a lot of sports, play musical instruments, etc.”* He went on by comparing the outward appearance of “fat and lazy” Americans to “extraordinary fit” young Czechs. According to this description, the differences seem quite large. However the score differences aren’t that remarkable.

5 DISCUSSION

The first part of the empirical study, regarding the comparison of Czech Republic and the whole world, pictured CR as being the most distinctive in the cultural dimension of long-term orientation. CR received one of the lowest scores and was defined by Hofstede as extremely short-term oriented. The analysis of close proximity countries in terms of extreme short-term orientation did not provide relevant answers to this unique feature of CR's culture, so a possible explanation inspired by theoretical assumptions was offered.

Dimensions of individualism and uncertainty avoidance were found to be only partly distinctive. Therefore, only a simple illustration of the world context with the position of Czech Republic was given. The last two dimensions, power-distance and masculinity, didn't meet the requirements for explaining CR's culture at all, because they were nearly the same as the world average.

Overall, the position of Czech Republic on four out of five scales of the dimensions is close to the average, which suggests that CR doesn't notably differ in any of these dimensions in the world context. As a result, it is not possible to disprove, confirm or exactly determine the correct position of Czech Republic relative to all of the world's countries on the scales of the five cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede. Given the broad concept of culture and the number of all countries, this would require a much larger study than the volume of the diploma thesis allows.

As it was described in the theoretical part of this thesis, each Hofstede's cultural dimension is defined by its two extreme poles. It is thus clear that the more a certain culture is extreme, the more straightforward will the explanation of that culture be. The way of how the theory is outlined simply influences the application of the results.

However, the position of Czech Republic represents an opportunity to experience both of the extreme poles on four out of five dimensions. Given the different positions of countries on the five scales, approximately half of the world should see CR as more individualistic and the second half as more collectivistic. This should also apply to the dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity. Long-term orientation is the only dimension where the majority of the world should see us as short-term thinkers. It is therefore quite useful to define the Czech culture in the world context, but it also gives an enormous potential for studying different cross-cultural encounters.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The major part of the empirical study presented results of six interviews with participants from different countries. The results predominantly confirmed the assumed relative position of Czech Republic to each of the studied country separately. The degree of consensus with the theory depended on how distinctive the foreign country's culture was. The more distinctive it was the more remarkable and conceivable were the observed differences. Since countries with a distinctive culture were purposely chosen, specific examples of actual differences in all of the five dimensions were acquired.

The complexity of culture was observed when different nationalities perceived Czech culture differently depending on their cultural background. The position of CR in the close proximity to the world average enabled different countries to see the Czech culture differently. For example, a representative of a collectivist country (Ghana) recognized the Czech culture as individualistic. Vice versa, a representative of an individualistic country (USA) saw the Czechs as collectivistic. Similar contradictions were obtained on four out five dimensions. Although the interviewees did confirm the relative positions of the countries, the thesis does not claim to verify the whole theory. It does not conclude that it applies to every citizen of the two countries. The core of the results lies in the real life examples of these cross-cultural differences told by each of the participants.

It was interesting to see the reflection of the theory in their experiences with the Czech culture. Usually their first impressions were connected with seeing mostly superficial aspects of culture such as differences in clothes, food, buildings, etc. These "symbols" as Hofstede describes them don't play such an important role in culture oppose to values. Although language is also considered to be only a "symbol" of culture, it was usually the biggest barrier of communication for most of the participants and negatively influenced their experience in the Czech Republic. However, usually when the first phase of the culture shock receded, participants were able to recognize the differences from a more detached perspective. These differences are discussed in detail separately according to each of the participant's country. Generalized conclusions would harm the message of this thesis, which is to see cultural differences in appropriate context and to use authentic experiences to explain them.

Overall, the attempt wasn't to define Czech culture by a bulk of six interviews, but to contrast the theory with practice. Generally, the actual score results of the theory loses importance in the explanation of the culture when Czech Republic was compared to an intangible world average. However, once a particular country is pictured relative to another country, a clearer picture of both countries arises. Their relative position enables to explain the important differences that might lead to cultural misunderstandings in their mutual interaction. In the thesis, these differences were estimated, confirmed, and explained by an actual participant of each country. Even a subjective experience can

thus be used as a tool for explaining the objective and mostly intangible theories. In the Czech Republic, where four out of five dimensions are hard to picture, an authentic example of a real cross-cultural encounter personifies the plain theory.

Additionally, the method of qualitative interviews used in this thesis proved to be able to verify the relative positions of countries given by Hofstede's scores on cultural dimensions. The method has also achieved to bring concrete examples compare to hard data and correlations with statistical averages which Hofstede uses to support his work. On the other hand, expectations based on Hofstede's results were justified and should be taken into account in a cross-cultural encounter. The true message of all cross-cultural theories is promoting the approach to view people's actions and behaviours in context. By understanding cultural consequences we are able to make decisions while seeing the big picture and that is what the today's world calls for.

Given the increasing trend to globalization, people in the Czech Republic will gradually interact with other cultures more and more. These cross-cultural encounters must be supported by higher communication skills, willingness to communicate, tolerance and understanding of cultural differences. When values are hard to change, education must be the way to increase communication and improve the perception of Czech Republic in the eyes of foreigners. Again, the best way to obtain such education is a subjective experience of living in a foreign country. According to the interviews, the difference in the approach to foreigners between Czechs that have experienced living abroad and Czechs that have never lived in another country are an indicator of this conclusion.

Cross-cultural researches always represent a potential for further studies. Regarding this thesis, theoretical assumptions can be applied to further countries in a greater amount of participants and over a longer period of time. Using the same methodology, this could provide an interesting guidebook for expatriate managers, multinational companies, study abroad programs, tourists or any other target group depending on the focus of the research.

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Figures:

Figure 1.1: Cultural Slices	6
Figure 1.2: Culture versus Human Nature and Personality.....	8
Figure 1.3: Culture as slices of an onion.....	9
Figure 1.4: Development of values and practices over time.....	11
Figure 1.5: Key Differences between Collectivist and Individualist Societies.....	21
Figure 1.6: Key Differences between Small and Large Power distance Societies	23
Figure 1.7: Key Differences between Feminine and Masculine Societies:	25
Figure 1.8: Key Differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance S..	27
Figure 1.9: Key Differences between Long and Short Term Orientation Societies.	29
Figure 2.1: Comparing cultural dimensions between World and CR	34
Figure 2.2: West Africa's cultural dimensions.	38
Figure 2.3: Comparing cultural dimensions between Ghana and CR.....	39
Figure 2.4: India's cultural dimensions.....	43
Figure 2.5: Comparing cultural dimensions between India and CR	44
Figure 2.6: Netherland's cultural dimensions.	46
Figure 2.7: Comparing cultural dimensions between Netherlands and CR.....	47
Figure 2.8: Portugal's cultural dimensions.	49
Figure 2.9: Comparing cultural dimensions between Portugal and CR.....	51
Figure 2.10: Russia's cultural dimensions.	53
Figure 2.11: Comparing cultural dimensions between Russia and CR.....	54
Figure 2.12: United States' cultural dimensions.	56
Figure 2.13 Comparing cultural dimensions between United States and CR:.....	57

8 SUPPLEMENTS

8.1 Individualism-collectivism index values:

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
United States	91	1	Finland	63	21
Australia	90	2	Estonia	60	22-24
Great Britain	89	3	Luxembourg	60	22-24
Canada total	80	4-6	Poland	60	22-24
Hungary	80	4-6	Malta	59	25
Netherlands	80	4-6	Czech Republic	58	26
New Zealand	79	7	Austria	55	27
Belgium Flemish	78	8	Israel	54	28
Italy	76	9	Slovakia	52	29
Denmark	74	10	Spain	51	30
Canada Quebec	73	11	India	48	31
Belgium Walloon	72	12	Suriname	47	32
France	71	13-14	Argentina	46	33-35
Sweden	71	13-14	Japan	46	33-35
Ireland	70	15	Morocco	46	33-35
Norway	69	16-17	Iran	41	36
Switzerland German	69	16-17	Jamaica	39	37-38
Germany	67	18	Russia	39	37-38
South Africa ¹	65	19	Arab countries	38	39-40
Switzerland French	64	20	Brazil	38	39-40

continued

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Turkey	37	41	Singapore	20	56-61
Uruguay	36	42	Thailand	20	56-61
Greece	35	43	Vietnam	20	56-61
Croatia	33	44	West Africa	20	56-61
Philippines	32	45	Salvador	19	62
Bulgaria	30	46-48	Korea (South)	18	63
Mexico	30	46-48	Taiwan	17	64
Romania	30	46-48	Peru	16	65-66
East Africa	27	49-51	Trinidad	16	65-66
Portugal	27	49-51	Costa Rica	15	67
Slovenia	27	49-51	Indonesia	14	68-69
Malaysia	26	52	Pakistan	14	68-69
Hong Kong	25	53-54	Colombia	13	70
Serbia	25	53-54	Venezuela	12	71
Chile	23	55	Panama	11	72
Bangladesh	20	56-61	Ecuador	8	73
China	20	56-61	Guatemala	6	74

Scores for countries or regions in **bold type** were calculated from the IBM database. Scores for other countries or regions were based on replications or estimates.

1 The data were from whites only.

8.2 Power Distance Index values

Power Distance Index (PDI) Values for 74 Countries and Regions					
COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Malaysia	104	1-2	Colombia	67	30-31
Slovakia	104	1-2	Salvador	66	32-33
Guatemala	95	3-4	Turkey	66	32-33
Panama	95	3-4	East Africa	64	34-36
Philippines	94	5	Peru	64	34-36
Russia	93	6	Thailand	64	34-36
Romania	90	7	Chile	63	37-38
Serbia	86	8	Portugal	63	37-38
Suriname	85	9	Belgium Flemish	61	39-40
Mexico	81	10-11	Uruguay	61	39-40
Venezuela	81	10-11	Greece	60	41-42
Arab countries	80	12-14	Korea (South)	60	41-42
Bangladesh	80	12-14	Iran	58	43-44
China	80	12-14	Taiwan	58	43-44
Ecuador	78	15-16	Czech Republic	57	45-46
Indonesia	78	15-16	Spain	57	45-46
India	77	17-18	Malta	56	47
West Africa	77	17-18	Pakistan	55	48
Singapore	74	19	Canada Québec	54	49-50
Croatia	73	20	Japan	54	49-50
Slovenia	71	21	Italy	50	51
Bulgaria	70	22-25	Argentina	49	52-53
Morocco	70	22-25	South Africa¹	49	52-53
Switzerland			Trinidad	47	54
French	70	22-25	Hungary	46	55
Vietnam	70	22-25	Jamaica	45	56
Brazil	69	26	Estonia	40	57-59
France	68	27-29	Luxembourg	40	57-59
Hong Kong	68	27-29	United States	40	57-59
Poland	68	27-29	Canada total	39	60
Belgium Walloon	67	30-31	Netherlands	38	61

continued

continued

Power Distance Index (PDI) Values for 74 Countries and Regions

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Australia	36	62	Ireland	28	69
Costa Rica	35	63-65	Switzerland		
Germany	35	63-65	German	26	70
Great Britain	35	63-65	New Zealand	22	71
Finland	33	66	Denmark	18	72
Norway	31	67-68	Israel	13	73
Sweden	31	67-68	Austria	11	74

Scores for countries or regions given in **bold type** were calculated from the IBM database. Scores for other countries were based on replications or estimates.

¹ The data were from whites only.

8.3 Masculinity-femininity index values

Masculinity Index (MAS) Values for 74 Countries and Regions

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Slovakia	110	1	Italy	70	7
Japan	95	2	Mexico	69	8
Hungary	88	3	Ireland	68	9-10
Austria	79	4	Jamaica	68	9-10
Venezuela	73	5	China	66	11-13
Switzerland German	72	6	Germany	66	11-13

continued

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Great Britain	66	11-13	Taiwan	45	43-45
Colombia	64	14-16	Turkey	45	43-45
Philippines	64	14-16	Panama	44	46
Poland	64	14-16	Belgium Flemish	43	47-50
South Africa ¹	63	17-18	France	43	47-50
Ecuador	63	17-18	Iran	43	47-50
United States	62	19	Serbia	43	47-50
Australia	61	20	Peru	42	51-53
Belgium Walloon	60	21	Romania	42	51-53
New Zealand	58	22-24	Spain	42	51-53
Switzerland French	58	22-24	East Africa	41	54
Trinidad	58	22-24	Bulgaria	40	55-58
Czech Republic	57	25-27	Croatia	40	55-58
Greece	57	25-27	Salvador	40	55-58
Hong Kong	57	25-27	Vietnam	40	55-58
Argentina	56	28-29	Korea (South)	39	59
India	56	28-29	Uruguay	38	60
Bangladesh	55	30	Guatemala	37	61-62
Arab countries	53	31-32	Suriname	37	61-62
Morocco	53	31-32	Russia	36	63
Canada total	52	33	Thailand	34	64
Luxembourg	50	34-36	Portugal	31	65
Malaysia	50	34-36	Estonia	30	66
Pakistan	50	34-36	Chile	28	67
Brazil	49	37	Finland	26	68
Singapore	48	38	Costa Rica	21	69
Israel	47	39-40	Slovenia	19	70
Malta	47	39-40	Denmark	16	71
Indonesia	46	41-42	Netherlands	14	72
West Africa	46	41-42	Norway	8	73
Canada Quebec	45	43-45	Sweden	5	74

Scores for countries or regions in **bold type** were calculated from the IBM database. Scores for other countries or regions were based on replications or estimates.

1 The data were from whites only.

8.4 Uncertainty Avoidance index values

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) Values for 74 Countries and Regions

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Greece	112	1	Chile	86	17-22
Portugal	104	2	Costa Rica	86	17-22
Guatemala	101	3	France	86	17-22
Uruguay	100	4	Panama	86	17-22
Belgium Flemish	97	5	Spain	86	17-22
Malta	96	6	Bulgaria	85	23-25
Russia	95	7	Korea (South)	85	23-25
Salvador	94	8	Turkey	85	23-25
Belgium Walloon	93	9-10	Hungary	82	26-27
Poland	93	9-10	Mexico	82	26-27
Japan	92	11-13	Israel	81	28
Serbia	92	11-13	Colombia	80	29-30
Suriname	92	11-13	Croatia	80	29-30
Romania	90	14	Brazil	76	31-32
Slovenia	88	15	Venezuela	76	31-32
Peru	87	16	Italy	75	33
Argentina	86	17-22	Czech Republic	74	34

continued

COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
Austria	70	35-38	Australia	51	55-56
Luxembourg	70	35-38	Slovakia	51	55-56
Pakistan	70	35-38	Norway	50	57
Switzerland French	70	35-38	New Zealand	49	58-59
Taiwan	69	39	South Africa¹	49	58-59
Arab countries	68	40-41	Canada total	48	60-61
Morocco	68	40-41	Indonesia	48	60-61
Ecuador	67	42	United States	46	62
Germany	65	43	Philippines	44	63
Thailand	64	44	India	40	64
Bangladesh	60	45-47	Malaysia	36	65
Canada Quebec	60	45-47	Great Britain	35	66-67
Estonia	60	45-47	Ireland	35	66-67
Finland	59	48-49	China	30	68-69
Iran	59	48-49	Vietnam	30	68-69
Switzerland German	56	50	Hong Kong	29	70-71
Trinidad	55	51	Sweden	29	70-71
West Africa	54	52	Denmark	23	72
Netherlands	53	53	Jamaica	13	73
East Africa	52	54	Singapore	8	74

Scores for countries or regions in **bold type** were calculated from the IBM database. Scores for other countries or regions were based on replications or estimates.

1. The data were from whites only.

8.5 Long-term orientation index values

Long-Term Orientation Index (LTO) Values for 39 Countries and Regions					
COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK	COUNTRY/REGION	SCORE	RANK
China	118	1	Slovakia	38	20–21
Hong Kong	96	2	Italy	34	22
Taiwan	87	3	Sweden	33	23
Japan	80	4–5	Poland	32	24
Vietnam	80	4–5	Austria	31	25–27
Korea (South)	75	6	Australia	31	25–27
Brazil	65	7	Germany	31	25–27
India	61	8	Canada Quebec	30	28–30
Thailand	56	9	New Zealand	30	28–30
Hungary	50	10	Portugal	30	28–30
Singapore	48	11	United States	29	31
Denmark	46	12	Great Britain	25	32–33
Netherlands	44	13–14	Zimbabwe	25	32–33
Norway	44	13–14	Canada	23	34
Ireland	43	15	Philippines	19	35–36
Finland	41	16	Spain	19	35–36
Bangladesh	40	17–18	Nigeria	16	37
Switzerland	40	17–18	Czech Republic	13	38
France	39	19	Pakistan	0	39
Belgium total	38	20–21			

Scores for countries or regions in **bold type** were calculated from the original Chinese Value Survey database. Scores for other countries or regions were based on replications.