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WORK-RELATED CULTURAL VALUES OF JAPANESE AND CZECH STUDENTS

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Abstract

Companies are very often confronted with external and internal cultural diversity to which they have to respond adequately. We need a deeper understanding of whether national cultures remain divergent in countries such as Japan and the Czech Republic following the pressures of globalization. One can argue that as cultures evolve they should constantly be assessed e.g., with respect to each of Hofstede's dimensions. By collecting data from one Eastern-European culture, the Czech Republic, and one Eastern culture, Japan, this study has re-examined Hofstede's (1984; 2001) cultural dimensions in these two cultures. Results suggest interesting changes have occurred in these cultures; a trend towards convergence may be derived. Explanations as well as implications are discussed.

Keywords: Cross Cultural Studies, Cultural Values, Convergence, Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

Due to the increasing variety of customer needs in the markets, the geographical expansion of the procurement ("global sourcing") and open labour markets ("mobility"), companies are very often confronted with an external and internal diversity to which they have to respond adequately. These developments are supported by new communication technologies (the Internet) and political factors such as the emergence of supranational economic areas (e.g. the EU). Globalization and the design of work processes in teams are two significant trends in the 21st Century.

However, numerous examples of failed international mergers and acquisitions show that difficulties can occur when individuals from different cultures work together (Maugain, 2003). In addition to the compatibility of corporate cultures, cultural differences between team members are a relevant factor for the difficulties (Cseh, 2003). One of the most prominent examples is the separation of the global corporation DaimlerChrysler in 2005 seven years after the acclaimed fusion in 1998. The culturally different Germans and Americans already showed difficulties early in the collaboration (Breidenbach and Nyiri, 2001). DaimlerChrysler turned out to be equally unsuccessful with the merger with Mitsubishi in Japan in 2000. Here it took only four years, and the dream of trans-national production on the scale of Ford, General Motors (GM) and Toyota had fallen apart (Begley and Donnelly, 2011). It can be presumed that cross-cultural differences provided one reason for the failure of the mergers. Only 30 percent of international corporate collaborations fail due to technical, financial and strategic issues, yet for 70 percent of the cases, cross-cultural problems are crucial (Fuchs and Apfelthaler, 2002).

These exemplary confrontations involving culturally diverse ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour significantly illustrate the complex problems of cross-cultural cooperation. Management systems and underlying cultures' change might well have changed so slowly as to

have remained almost as divergent as ever (Whitley, 1999). Globalization, on the other hand, creates pressures for convergence. An international transfer of (mainly US-American) management concepts is primarily possible for hard i.e. technically measurable areas of management, such as controlling or investment appraisal. The applicability of the so-called soft strategies in management, i.e. personnel management, is to examine with respect to the cultural background of the host country (Welge and Holtbrügge, 1998).

We need a deeper understanding of the impact of globalization and of whether national cultures remain divergent in countries such as Japan and the Czech Republic following the pressures of globalization. The aim of this paper is to collect data from Japan and the Czech Republic in order to provide updated information on the values of these two cultures. Japan's society is thought to have retained, more than any other, a strong sense of what is native and what is foreign and has managed to preserve and emphasize its own cultural identity while engaging with, absorbing, and utilizing foreign (i.e., external) cultural influences. A nation so economically and technologically advanced has continued to maintain an archaic, Bronze Age monarchical system. Despite this retention of the archaic, Japan has engaged with modernity and has become an intensely modern society (Bellah, 2003).

The Czech Republic is located in the centre of Europe. The economy is largely privatised, important areas of business -including all major banks- are owned by foreign companies. Also related to the successful efforts of the transformation from a socialist command economy into a functioning market economy, the so-called "golden Czech hands" are often mentioned -the special skill inventiveness and improvisation which Czechs ascribe themselves. Perhaps this talent may also be explained by the fact that the territory of the Czech Republic has been heteronomous in the past centuries with the exceptions of the First Republic -1918-1938- and now after the Velvet Revolution. Because of a rather low proportion of foreigners -4.1 percent- (Cesky Rozhlas, 2014), Czech society can be referred to as a relatively homogeneous, mono-ethnic culture. However, studies have shown quite different conclusions about the value orientations of Czechs in the past.

Japanese firms have established important manufacturing and even R&D facilities in the country. The Japanese presence in the Czech Republic is more intensive than in Poland, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, or Slovenia (Strach and Everett, 2006). One of the most recent foreign direct investments is a joint venture between Toyota Motor Corporation and PSA Peugeot Citroën to produce compact passenger cars for the European market which started in 2005. In 2012, cumulative production of 2 million vehicles could be celebrated (Psa-Peugeot-Citroen, 2012). Main reasons for Japanese investments in the Czech Republic are lower factor costs or markedly higher levels of political and economic stability within the CEE region, the Czech Republic offers skilled labour, high FDI absorptive capacity, a strong industrial tradition, and an increasing number of Japanese companies and expatriates. Personal communications with Japanese managers supposedly indicate greater cultural proximity between Czechs and Japanese which may be a more significant factor than economic or supply-chain linkage criteria (Strach and Everett, 2006).

The author of this paper argues that as cultures evolve they should constantly be assessed e.g. with respect to each of Hofstede's dimensions. First, there will be a short review of Hofstede's value dimensions, followed by their re-examination. This involves not only a brief discussion about divergence and convergence of national cultures, but also a replication of Hofstede's VSM (1994) and its analysis as well as conclusions from the findings.

2. A Review of Hofstede's Value Dimensions

The concept of culture is very differently understood, however, most definitions are derived from cultural anthropology, ethnology or cultural psychology. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) already mentioned 170 different definitions of culture. Geert Hofstede, a widely known Dutch researcher of culture, has defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another," (1991, p.5). The value system of a person is a key concept within the discussion of culture. A more precise definition of values is given by Hofstede (1984) by the broad trend "to prefer certain states of affairs over others"

(p.19). Like many other authors, he refers to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961 cited in Adler, 2002, p.18), who define values as being something explicitly or implicitly desirable to an individual or group, influencing the selection from available modes, means, and ends of actions. Cultural values represent the implicitly or explicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right, and desirable in a society (Schwartz, 1999). Much of theoretical discussions and empirical studies take the national culture as the basis. Basically, when it comes to the definition of culture it is not strictly about nations but about categories or groups of people. Hofstede (2001) differentiates the following layers of culture: in addition to the national, there are regional, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliations, as well as gender, generation, social class, employees of a company, practiced profession or any part of the groups in the form of subcultures. Nevertheless, the national culture has a special meaning, and it is legitimate to focus on the culture of national groups. To classify, the nationality is a useful criterion (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1999) and is therefore also used in this study.

Cross-cultural comparative research is concerned with questions such as the universal characteristics of people, the characterizing features of cultural groups, and individual uniqueness; the influence of culture on human behaviour is systematically compared and analysed. Based on the context in organizations, Adler (2002, p.11) outlines the following tasks of cross-cultural management:

- describes organizational behaviour within countries and cultures,
- compares organizational behaviour across countries and cultures,
- seeks to understand and improve the interactions of co-workers, managers, executives, clients, suppliers, and alliance partners from different countries and cultures.

The essential result of cross-cultural comparative (management) research is cultural dimensions that are universally relevant for people and specifically relevant in the organizational context. The various concepts for the description and categorization of nations serve as a better division and understanding. They categorize and simplify, but they are an analytical instrument for explaining national differences.

Hofstede is the most frequently quoted expert in the field of cross-cultural comparisons, his results often providing the starting point for many further studies, particularly quantitative. Being an organizational psychologist, he studied the influence of national culture on organizational culture. For this purpose, Hofstede asked about 117,000 employees of the IBM Group in 72 countries using standardized questionnaires with 100 single issues in the period of 1968-1972. This survey was initially intended only for internal management purposes, however, Hofstede decided to use the material as a basis for a cross-cultural comparative study. This was also supported by the contents of the retrieved items about the personal values of employees in relation to their work situation and their personal attitudes. During the analysis, there were four basic problem areas of human life found for which every culture has developed its own characteristics. From these fundamental aspects, the original four cultural dimensions emerged (see Table1):

- social inequality, including the relationship with authority;
- the relationship between the individual and the group;
- concepts of masculinity and femininity: the social implications of having been born as a boy or a girl;
- ways of dealing with uncertainty, relating to the control of aggression and the expression of emotions (Hofstede, 1997, pp.13-14).

In the 1980s, the number of dimensions increased by a fifth one with the study "Chinese Culture Connection". It was named by Michael Bond with reference to the teachings of Confucius, namely the Confucian work dynamics (Hofstede, 2001). In the 2010 edition of "Cultures and organizations", a sixth dimension has been added, based on Michael Minkov's analysis of the World Values Survey data for 93 countries: indulgence vs. restraint (see Table 1).

Table 1. The six dimensions of Hofstede

Dimension	Explanation
1. Hierarchy: high vs. low Power Distance	Extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally
2. Identity: Individualism vs. Collectivism	Individualism: tendency of people to look after themselves and their immediate family only; Collectivism: tendency of people to belong to groups or collectives and to look after each other in exchange for loyalty
3. Gender: Masculinity vs. Femininity	Masculinity: a culture in which the dominant social values are success, money and possessions; Femininity: a culture in which the dominate social values are caring for others and the quality of life
4. Truth: Uncertainty Avoidance	Extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid such situations
5. Virtue: long- vs. short-term Orientation	Long-term orientation: fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift; Short-term orientation: fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of 'face' and fulfilling social obligations
6. Drives: Indulgence vs. Restraint	Indulgence: relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun; Restraint: a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms

For each dimension, a country-specific score is determined between zero and one hundred so that all countries can be grouped according to their characteristics within the six dimensions. The data make it possible, first, to rank the nations on the determined scores of each dimension, and second, to cluster different national cultures into certain (cultural) groups, from which important conclusions can be derived for various parts of cross-cultural management. Table 2 shows the score found by Hofstede for five dimensions for Japan and the Czech Republic.

Table 2. Scores on five dimensions for Japan and the Czech Republic

Dimension	Japan	Czech Republic
PDI	54	57
IDV	46	58
MAS	95	57
UAI	92	74
LTO	80	13

Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com> [Accessed 19 September 2013].

Both countries, Japan and the Czech Republic are near the world average in power distance, according to Hofstede's studies (1994; 2010). However, the Czech Republic appears to be somewhat more individualistic and certainly less sensitive to uncertainty avoidance. A big difference comes in the dimension masculinity / femininity – Japan is one of the most masculine cultures in the world, whereas the Czech culture seems to be near average. Another contrast can be found for the virtue dimension: traditionally, Japan is known as a long-term oriented society; the Czech Republic appears to be very short-term oriented.

The strongest criticism of the study is the restriction on the IBM group, which possessed a strong corporate culture even in the 1960s and 1970s that greatly differed from the respective national culture. Therefore, the transfer to the respective national culture has only a limited validity; some follow-up studies very often differed from Hofstede's findings. He was further criticized for the dimensions not being exhaustive, many of the items within dimensions which

seem to be unrelated to each other or some items which seem to be related to several of the dimensions, his possible western bias which values western business ideals, estimated values for a number of countries (in particular from the former Warsaw Pact), and ignoring differences between clusters. Finally, it remains to be noted that since the implementation of the study, many years have passed and it is likely that many countries and cultures have experienced a significant cultural shift in values in this time (e.g., in the countries of the former Warsaw Pact such as the Czech Republic) (Cramer, 2007).

3. A Re-Examination of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions with Japanese and Czech Students

Hofstede (1984) proposed six areas for continued research in addition to identifying work-related cultural dimensions: (1) non-Anglo cultural dimensions; (2) additional countries; (3) cultural changes over time; (4) sub-cultures, such as regional, occupational, and organizational cultures; (5) the consequences of cultural dimensions; and (6) foreign organizational and management theories.

An issue of considerable theoretical significance is concerned with cultural changes and transformations taking place in different parts of the world (Leung *et al.* 2005). Regarding whether values within cultures change or not, there are two opposing views. Hofstede proposed that cultural programming occurs at an early age and consists of shared symbols, heroes, and rituals that provide both national identity and lasting shared values that serve to stabilize a society (Hofstede, 2001). This view is that culture is very stable within a society and when cultures change they do so independently of each other (Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997). Cultural stability helps to reduce ambiguity, and leads to more control over expected behavioural outcomes (Leana and Barry, 2000). A different view of cultural change follows the Cultural Convergence Theory [an extension of Convergence Theory or the second law of thermodynamics (Kincaid *et al.* 1983)], when different cultures experience frequent interactions, the cultures will become more similar over time (Axelrod, 1997). The premise is that culture is affected by outside influences and external changes. "It's a flat world, after all." stated Thomas L. Friedman (2005, p.33). There are relatively few theories of culture that pertain to the dynamic aspect of culture (e.g. Berry *et al.* 2002; Kitayama, 2002). These adaptive views of culture are supported by empirical evidence. For example, Fernandez *et al.* (1997) conducted a study of Hofstede's work-related cultural dimensions in order to investigate cultural changes over time. They argue that societal changes such as economic growth, education, and democracy could affect work-related cultural dimensions. Significant changes in cultural values occur as "external environmental factors shape a society" (Fernandez *et al.* 1997, p.52). Van de Vliert *et al.* (1999) findings showed that masculinity and domestic violence are higher in moderately warm countries than in countries with extreme temperatures. Some support for the convergence hypothesis is also provided by Inglehart's (Inglehart, 1990; Inglehart and Baker, 2000) survey of values in 65 countries. He identified two value orientations (materialist and postmaterialist) related to a country's wealth. As wealth increased, so did endorsement of postmaterialist values. These empirical findings support the notion that as wealth gradually increases in a country, cultural differences diminish and people become more similar. The analysis also showed that economic development is linked with changes from traditional norms and values to values increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting, and participatory. However, the data also showed that broad cultural heritage has a lasting effect on traditional values. The most recently developed theory, crossvergence advocates that the combination of socio-cultural influences and business ideology influences is the driving force that precipitates the development of new and unique value systems among individuals in a society owing to the dynamic interaction of these influences (Ralston *et al.* 1993; Ralston, 2008).

The reviews of cross-cultural studies suggest that Hofstede-inspired research is increasing exponentially (Taras *et al.* 2010); not only a few researchers duplicated Hofstede's study in order to approve his findings (e.g., Alkailani *et al.* 2012; Bergiel *et al.* 2012; Fischer and Al-Issa, 2012; Tantekin *et al.* 2011; Baron, 2008; Wu, 2006; Girlando and Anderson, 2001). The intent of this current study is to continue the trend.

3.1. Research Questions

Given the fact that Hofstede's original study was performed more than 40 years ago and the scores found are said to have not changed in his subsequent publications, there is the need for reviewing Hofstede's work concerning the Japanese culture. In addition, another question deals with a less investigated controversy that has arisen despite the popularity of Hofstede's paradigm. This involves the question of the validity of the scores of Eastern European cultures such as the Czech Republic.

3.2. Methods

For the purposes of this exploratory study, a quantitative questionnaire was used as the research instrument which measured Hofstede's (1984; 2001) five cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and Confucian work dynamics). Hofstede's VSM is by far the most widely employed instrument currently used in the investigations of intercultural differences in the managerial field, and his paradigm is applied worldwide (Sondergaard, 1994). Each of the cultural dimensions was measured by four items (in the case of LTO only two items eventually). As Hofstede *et al.* (2008) describes, country-level correlations differ from individual-level correlations, and thus a reliability test like Cronbach's alpha should not be based on individual scores but on country mean scores. The reliability results for the Japanese sample demonstrated very satisfactory reliability scores.¹ The reliability scores for the power distance cultural dimension and individualism were .79 and .92, respectively. The reliability scores for masculinity (.86), uncertainty avoidance (.92) and Confucian work dynamics (.82) were also satisfactory. As for the Czech sample, the author has chosen to test the reliability of each question separately. The reliability scores of all essential items are very satisfactory (between .90 and .99). This shows that the Czech sample can be regarded as a group which consistently expressed its preferences. In the case of the country mean scores, reliability results were satisfactory, too (PDI: .63, IDV: .84, UAI: .74, LTO: .87), except for the masculinity dimension (.07). However, because Cronbach's alpha was acceptable for all questions themselves, the latter scale will also be part of the analysis.

The VSM 94 was available in Japanese and – after some minor adjustments - in Czech. Both versions of the questionnaires appeared to match and all criteria for Brislin's (1970) rules for back-translation were met.

3.3. Data Collection and Sampling

Students from four public universities, three Japanese universities and one Czech university were surveyed in this study. The use of student samples in business-related studies to test cultural differences is somewhat controversial. Caldera *et al.* (1981) and Locke (1986) argued though that student surrogates offer homogenous, balanced, and matched samples. On the other hand, Abramson *et al.* (1996) opposed student samples on the basis that they lower external validity because students do not have work experience. Nevertheless, one should assume according to Hofstede's proposition that cultural values have been internalized since an early age.

250 questionnaires were distributed to the Japanese participants in autumn 2012. Two hundred and twenty seven (90.8%) participants returned this survey. After checking the completion of the questionnaires, two hundred and six (82.4%) questionnaires were determined to be valid. One hundred and forty questionnaires were distributed to the Czech participants in September and October of 2013. One hundred and twenty two (87.1%) participants returned

¹ A commonly-accepted rule of thumb is that an alpha of 0.6-0.7 indicates acceptable reliability. The criteria generally agreed upon for scale reliability is its cut-off value 0.7 (Peterson, 1994). However, Moss *et al.* (1998) supported the view that Cronbach's alpha value above 0.6 is generally acceptable. Hair *et al.* (1998) also supported the view that in a study with a small sample size, low Cronbach's alpha scores such as 0.6 can be taken as an acceptable measure.

this survey. All of them contained sufficient data to be considered valid responses. In each university, questionnaire distribution and data collection were performed by university teachers who helped the researcher to collect data. After anonymously completing the questionnaire, respondents returned the questionnaire to the data collector in each university. Hofstede (1994) recommended that, for statistical purposes, an ideal size for a homogenous sample would be fifty; the present samples far exceeded this criterion.

The samples for this study were selected based on the criteria of accessibility, functional equivalence, and representativeness. A sampling issue that is well discussed in cross-national surveys is equivalence. According to Frey (1970), "it is essential to note that equivalence, in any ordinary sense, is not absolutely vital to cross-national comparability. What is absolutely vital is for the researcher to understand the full meaning of his operations, not for these operations to be totally equivalent even in a functional sense in all countries, and functionally equivalent samples are desirable," (pp.232-233).

In order to meet Frey's (1970) three criteria, the author tried to match the samples from these two cultures as much as possible. The samples in this study were functionally equivalent because all of the participants were undergraduate students. The data set for this study was based on 328 respondents from 4 public universities, three Japanese universities and one Czech university. In the Japanese culture, approximately 44% of participants were male; in the Czech culture, there were about 34% male respondents. The average age for both cultures was 20.1 years old (Japanese average 20.2; Czech average 20.0). The average years of formal education were approximately 17 years in the Japanese culture and about 15 years with the Czech respondents. 90% of the Japanese respondents were full-time students with no paid job. This applied to approximately 51% of the Czech students, too. While the Japanese respondents were mainly foreign-language students, approximately 69% of the Czech respondents studied international trade or tourism with a high proportion studying foreign languages, too.

Results and Discussion

A drawback of cross-cultural research is the inability to make direct comparisons. In addition, results should not be compared to published scores (Hofstede *et al.* 2008). On the other hand, Hofstede (1994) stated that scores obtained from different versions of the VSM should produce approximately the same score differences between countries.

The results of this study demonstrated that both Japan and the Czech Republic have significant differences in work-related cultural values when compared to Hofstede's (1984; 2001) study. In the following sections, the statistical results of five work-related cultural dimensions are discussed. Table 3 shows the mean scores for cultural dimensions as well as standard deviations.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for cultural dimensions

	Japan		Czech Republic	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
PDI				
good working relationship with your direct superior	1.97	0.86	2.14	0.68
being consulted by your direct superior in his, her decisions	2.87	0.92	2.95	0.78
subordinates being afraid to express disagreement with their superiors	3.05	1.03	3.34	1.01
avoiding an organization structure for certain subordinates having two bosses	3.19	0.98	2.84	0.83
IDV				
sufficient time for your personal or family life	2.01	0.88	2.04	0.79
good physical working conditions	2.34	0.87	2.29	0.75
security of employment	1.88	0.89	1.86	0.88
element of variety and adventure in the job	2.61	1.11	2.87	0.94
MAS				
work with people who cooperate well with one another	2.12	0.91	1.99	0.90
opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs	2.80	0.99	1.87	0.81
most people can be trusted	3.01	1.10	3.87	0.75
when people have failed in life it is often their own fault	2.92	1.00	3.29	1.12
UAI				
frequency of feeling nervous or tense at work	3.45	0.89	2.81	0.68
be a good manager without having precise answers to most questions from subordinates	2.91	1.00	3.08	1.06
competition between employees usually does more harm than good	3.27	0.90	3.12	1.07
company's or organization's rules should not be broken	2.65	0.96	2.98	1.07
LTO*				
thrift	2.84	0.91	2.39	0.75
respect for tradition	3.33	0.99	2.75	0.95

Notes: Scale: 1 - 5, Japanese data n = 206, Czech data n = 122. * reflects Hofstede's revised formula (Hofstede, 1994) for measuring Long Term Orientation.

Having a good relationship with one's superior seems to be very important to the Japanese sample and similarly important to the Czech sample, too. Both, Japanese and Czech students seek sufficient time for their personal or family life, and they are very interested in secure employment. Czech students largely do not agree with the statement "most people can be trusted"; however, they prefer working with people who cooperate well with each other. Whereas the opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs is important to the Czech sample, the Japanese expressed almost indifference with this aspect. The difference dealing with the frequency of feeling nervous or tense at work is somewhat smaller: the Japanese had those feelings sometimes or often, while the Czechs only sometimes. Thrift as well as respect for tradition seems to be of more importance to the Czech sample than to the Japanese one.

To explore the research questions, the Japanese and Czech student scores were compared to Hofstede's (1984; 2001) original findings for Japan and the Czech Republic. Such a comparison of scores obtained from different versions of the VSM has been held questionable by some scholars (e.g., McSweeney, 2002). As stated above, Hofstede (1994) argued in favour of similar scores obtained from different versions of the VSM. For the purposes of this study the scores were additionally classified as falling within a "high," "medium," or "low" range (Hofstede, 1993). The comparison of Japanese and Czech scores from this study's sample to the scores as described in Hofstede's original work does not seem to uphold the stability of their respective national cultures. On the contrary, in almost all dimensions both countries' scores shifted significantly (Tables 4 and 5). This result is in line with a number of other studies dealing with the Czech culture (e.g., Svetlik, 2003; Kolman, 2001).

Table 4. Japan and the Czech Republic: Present study

Dimension	Japan	Czech Republic
PDI	24	35
IDV	72	62
MAS	27	29
UAI	61	51
LTO*	50	47

Notes: Japanese data n=206, Czech data n=122. * score reflects Hofstede's revised formula (Hofstede, 1994) for measuring Long Term Orientation.

Table 5. Japan and the Czech Republic: Hofstede (1984) and present study

Dimension	Japan		Czech Republic	
	Hofstede	present study	Hofstede	present study
PDI	medium (54)	low (24)	medium, high (57)	low (35)
IDV	medium (46)	high (72)	medium, high (58)	high, medium (62)
MAS	high (95)	low (27)	medium, high (57)	low (29)
UAI	high (92)	high, medium (61)	high (74)	medium (51)
LTO*	high (80)	medium (50)	low (13)	medium (47)

Notes: * scores reflect Hofstede's revised formula (Hofstede, 1994) for measuring Long Term Orientation.

In general, the number of mergers and acquisitions (M&As) in Japan has increased since the end of the 1990s because the conditions of M&As improved significantly (Jackson and Miyajima, 2007). Foreign companies now can implement M&As in Japan more easily than before, and domestic companies also are more optimistic toward M&As expanding their markets, especially in the Asian-Pacific areas (Yoshitomi, 2011 cited in Mujtaba and Isomura, 2012). Olcott (2009) suggests that Japanese companies can change when they are taken over by foreigners. This is likely to be true also for the Czech Republic, one of the most successful transition economies in terms of attracting foreign direct investment. The introduction of investment incentives in 1998 has stimulated a massive inflow of FDI into both greenfield and brownfield projects and since 1993 almost EUR 84 billion in FDI has been recorded (Czech Invest, 2013).

3.3.1. Power Distance

According to Hofstede's (1984; 2001) study, Japan was a medium power distance culture, whereas the Czech Republic was a medium, high power distance culture. The results of this current study are different from Hofstede's (1984) study. Both cultures have a lower power distance cultural value compared to the previous study. The shifts in power distance from medium to low for both the Japanese and Czech student samples were not surprising. In discussing trends over time Hofstede (1984) predicted that power distance would decrease as a nation's wealth increased and, more generally, he expected decreasing levels in power distance worldwide. Notably, both countries shifted one level in the same direction, quite maintaining their relative difference in power distance. This finding coincides with Hofstede's (2001) discussion of future power distance differences between countries: "Impressionistically at least it seems that dependence on the power of others in a large part of our world has been reduced over the past two generations [...] we have seen that Power Distance scores within countries decrease with increased education level. This does not mean, however, that the differences between countries [...] should necessarily have changed. Countries could all have moved to lower Power Distance levels without changes in their mutual ranking," (Hofstede, 2001, p.121).

According to Hofstede's studies (1980; 1994; 2010), Japan is near the world average in power distance. However, recent trends suggest that the Japanese are beginning to question those in power more frequently. This change occurred dramatically in the political arena, where there have been no fewer than 14 prime ministers in the last 20 years (Economist, 2010). The same evidence applies to the Czech culture. After a succession of coalition and caretaker governments and internationally recognised corruption, Czechs are worried about their elected leadership (Brunet-Thornton and Bures, 2012). At the workplace, decision-making is still predominantly centralised; however, subordinates continue to seek a greater role (Clark and Soulsby, 1999).

3.3.2. Individualism – Collectivism

According to the results of Hofstede's (1984; 2001) study, Japan was a medium collectivistic culture, whereas the Czech Republic was a more individualistic culture. The results of this current study are somewhat different from that. In this study, the Japanese participants have a higher score on individualism; the Czech participants also have a slightly higher score on individualism. It is noteworthy that both countries shifted again in the same direction.

Hofstede stated that individualist countries tend to be wealthier. If such is the case, both Japan and the Czech Republic rank highly in GDP per capita. Wealth (GNI per capita at the time of the IBM surveys) explained no less than 71 percent of the differences in IDV scores for the original fifty IBM countries. On the other hand, this correlation decreased from 71 percent to 52 percent (Hofstede *et al.* 2010, p.132). Therefore, the link between a country's wealth and its IDV score is not fully satisfactory.

In previous studies, Japan tended to be slightly more collectivistic than individualistic. Historically, a major factor of Japan's collectivism was its ability to provide full employment to its citizens. More recently however, there are signs that this close relationship between employer and employee is becoming strained (Bergiel *et al.* 2012). With globalization young business workers in Asia are blending traditionally collectivist practices with more individualistic beliefs (Bhasin and Negi, 2007). Originally, the pay system in Japan was thought to be seniority-based, however, according to the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2005), the pay system has shifted from a seniority-based system to a performance-based system. The wage determination system is more complex than before, since firms are now considering a large number of factors (Morishima, 2002; Pudielko, 2010). Moreover, Japan's employee-based corporate governance seems to be in transition, and the influence of shareholders is rising (Abe and Shimizutani, 2005). Because of that, there is a possibility that Japanese behavioural tendencies have been more performance-oriented (Jackson and Tomioka, 2004), thus more individualistic. Drnakova (2006) reports that with the continual transition, the Czech Republic shows general tendencies toward self-direction, hedonism, universalism, and achievement are on the rise. There are low levels of participation in both parties as well as voluntary associations (Mansfeldova, 2008). The omnipresent 'we' so prevalent in past generations is replaced by 'me' (Brunet-Thornton and Bures, 2012).

3.3.3. Masculinity – Femininity

According to Hofstede's (1984) study, Japan is one of the most masculine countries in the world, whereas the Czech Republic was a medium, high masculinity culture. The result of this current study contradicts Hofstede's findings. In the present study, the Japanese participants have a low score on masculinity; just as the Czech participants do.

It seems to be becoming much more acceptable in both countries for women and men to perform the same tasks. Therefore, very recently, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe brought five women into the cabinet in a reshuffle, so there are now seven women in the cabinet, equalling the previous high set by one of his predecessors in 2001 (BBC, 2014). In Japan, one reason already occurred in 1986, when the equal-employment-opportunity legislation removed many legal barriers to women in the workplace (Bergiel *et al.* 2012). This shift in culture is tempered by the fact that 62 percent of women quit work after their first child (Wei-Hsin,

2005). Although Japanese are still strongly relationship-oriented, Mujtaba and Isomura (2012) demonstrated that task orientation scores of younger and older respondents were significantly different. Similarly, Japanese males were more task-oriented than their female colleagues in their study. Given the communist past in the Czech Republic, gender roles continue to be fluid outside the newly created management and business sectors. Women are making strides in leadership roles. The Globe Gender Gap Report 2010 indicates that females are better educated and live longer, but earn approximately 60 percent less than their male counterparts (Brunet-Thornton and Bures, 2012). Causes of poverty in the Czech Republic are mostly ascribed to socio-economic injustice (51.4%), rather than to individual failure (Mansfeldova, 2008).

3.3.4. Uncertainty Avoidance

Hofstede's (1984) study demonstrated that both, Japan and the Czech Republic were high uncertainty avoidance cultures. The results of this current study are somewhat different from Hofstede's (1984) study; both cultures reported a shift in the same direction toward less but still high, medium and medium uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Japanese tend to avoid uncertainty, but the current and future work environments may be affecting their tolerance for uncertainty. Japan has experienced a long recession since the collapse of the bubble economy so that Japanese companies are facing changes in their approach to management. For example, the stability of employment is not necessarily secure because the rate of non-regular staff and the rate of unemployment have been increasing steadily (Mujtaba and Isomura, 2012). One can say that the stability of employment is not necessarily secured and that lifetime employment is facing a turning point (Kato, 2001). Another possible cause of being less wary of uncertainty is the limited job opportunities domestically and a decrease in the numbers of employees that are loyal to a firm (Bergiel *et al.* 2012). As for the Czech Republic, avoiding risks signifies a return to what is Czech, what is comfortable, and what is known (Brunet-Thornton and Bures, 2012). On the other hand, Rehakova (2005) demonstrates that openness to change and tolerance is frequent in the Czech culture among ages up to 24, whereupon it decreases with other age groups. Novy and Schroll-Machl (2003) stated that Czechs are sceptical toward structures. Instead, they love to improvise.

3.3.5. Long-Term Orientation

Both the Japanese participants as well as the Czech sample have a medium score on Confucian work dynamics. This is in contrast to Hofstede's findings (1984), in which Japan was a long-term oriented culture and the Czech Republic was a very short-term oriented one.

Traditionally a long-term oriented society, Japan is facing the aging of society. Japan's working-age population has been in decline for almost 15 years (DESA, 2007). Fewer working individuals will be taking care of an increasing number of elderly citizens. Therefore, it is likely that retirement benefits will decrease, which may lead to the fact that younger workers may begin to focus on life in the short-term as the long-term becomes less attractive (Bergiel *et al.* 2012). There are also some trends to introduce a fast selection and promotion system for employees, especially in large companies; according to the Japan Productivity Centre (2010 cited in Mujtaba and Isomura, 2012), about 76.7 percent of large companies (those with more than 500 employees) are adopting a fast selection and promotion system. Recently, the selective education of candidates for leadership roles was recently introduced (Sanro Research Institute, 2005 cited in Mujtaba and Isomura, 2012). Brunet-Thornton and Bures (2012) claim there is a generational divide in Czech society: Youth are better prepared in adapting to societal circumstances and changing conditions; they are better educated and travelled. As in many Western countries, the elderly show more respect for tradition and comfort. Simultaneity is common in all generations. Czechs love to do many things parallel and switch between activities according to their current priorities (Novy and Schroll-Machl, 2003).

4. Concluding Comments

It is believed that this study makes a significant contribution to cross-cultural research; however, it is not without limitations. The greatest limitation of this study is the inability to make direct comparisons with the studies of Hofstede (1984; 2001). While this is a problem commonly associated with cross-cultural research, it does not prevent the ability to distinguish possible shifts in culture. Second, university students compose the current sample. Possible reasons for the variances within the dimensions are education level, occupation and gender as well as age. It might be argued that when they (really) enter the work place the values of the sample of young people may change. One may refer to the GLOBE project, where values are expressed in response to questionnaire items in the form of judgments of "What Should Be" based on an anthropological tradition of culture assessment (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). Another measure of culture, modal practices, is measured by assessing "What Is / What Are", i.e. common behaviours, institutional practises, proscriptions, and prescriptions. "This approach to the assessment of culture grows out of a psychological, behavioural tradition, in which it is assumed that shared values are enacted in behaviours, politics, and practices," (House *et al.* 2002, p.3). With regard to this, one may argue that the results of both samples rather refer to values reported in terms of what "Should Be" than to institutional practices reported "As Is". In addition, Hofstede (1984) claims that the values acquired prior to entering the work place are relatively stable. Moreover, while the current sample size met the requirements established by Hofstede, a larger and more universal sample would enhance validity.

Overall, the Czech Republic and Japan have displayed some signs of changing as a result of globalization. The findings indicate a significant convergence of values of the Japanese and Czech cultures. These results are significant because they demonstrate that cultural values can change over time. People's cultural values can change when the political, societal, and economic environments change. Therefore, many cultural theories should be updated and re-examined periodically.

For instance, the changes in power distance will cause changes in accepted leadership styles in a culture. In discussing trends over time, Hofstede predicted that power distance would decrease as a nation's wealth increased, and he expected decreasing levels in power distance worldwide. Notably, both countries shifted one level in the same direction; this finding coincides with Hofstede (2001): "Countries could all have moved to lower power distance levels without changes in their mutual rankings," (p.121). The question whether or not the mutual rankings have changed remains open. Another factor is qualification, as all respondents have received more than 14 years of formal schooling. All participants are undertaking professional qualification in universities. These factors support Hofstede's conclusion that power distance between less educated and non-managerial employees and their superiors tended to be larger than between more educated and managerial employees and their superiors (Hofstede, 2001).

In light of the growing consensus that "culture matters and makes a difference" (Sondergaard, 1994) and the increasing number of applications of Hofstede's paradigm, replications are needed to advance our knowledge of cultural differences and to warrant application of his work. Also, exploratory studies such as the current one are needed to guide future work.

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