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This thesis was submitted by its author to the School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. It was found to be among the best theses submitted in 2013, therefore it was decorated with the School's Outstanding Thesis Award. As such it is published in the form it was submitted in **overSEAS 2013** (<http://seas3.elte.hu/overseas/2013.html>)

EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM

Bölcsészettudományi Kar

ALAPSZAKOS SZAKDOLGOZAT

*Angol-francia kulturális különbségek – eltérő értékek a
mindennapi élet tükrében*

*Cultural Differences Between the English and the French – the
Discrepancy of Values as Reflected in Everyday Life*

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2013

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Aláírás

Abstract

The present thesis aims to investigate the origins and results of cultural differences. Based on the allegation that intercultural behavioural differences are rooted in deeper differences in values, Hofstede established four dimensions to measure these discrepancies: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity and individualism-collectivism. According to his research, British and French people show remarkably different characteristics on these scales. The aim of my thesis wished to further examine whether these findings are also applicable in intercultural interaction in everyday life.

In order to prove that Hofstede's research is relevant, I conducted a survey among British people living in Paris to find out to what extent they perceive the supposed discrepancies between British and French culture in real life. The questionnaire focused on contrasts of the two national sets of values; and the respondents were asked to indicate whether they observe the difference or not. The results confirmed my presumption: the British do feel the differences in the dimensions, though to a smaller extent than they are expected to according to the indices of Hofstede.

Therefore, it can be concluded that national attitudinal differences are present and visible in an intercultural environment; however, these are not as sharp as they would be in a non-intercultural environment. This supposes that acculturation takes place to mitigate the possible culture shock. In addition, behaviour greatly depends on context, and it is not only nationality that defines the values and the customs of people.

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Introduction

Nowadays, culture is more and more important in our interconnected world. People from different cultures more and more often meet each other, work or live together. Whether these interactions turn into a “Clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 2002) or a dialogue of mutual understanding greatly depends on our ability to adapt to new circumstances and understand foreign cultures.

It is particularly interesting to investigate intercultural values and attitudes that result in outstanding differences in habits and behaviour. One of the very first studies conducted on the topic was by Hofstede (1980), a pioneer in the field, whose survey aimed to measure the “immeasurable”: value discrepancies between nations.

During my research, my objective was to examine whether these cultural boundaries and variations are perceivable by people in everyday life. Being a student with an English major and a French minor, I perceived the difference between the ways of thinking of the two cultures. Therefore, I wished to gain insight into the core differences of the two countries. Based on the dimensions established by Hofstede, I attempted to compare the attitudes of the British and the French; citizens of two countries that I have been studying about during my university studies.

In order to do this, four cultural dimensions were examined closely: *power distance* (PD), *individualism vs. collectivism* (IC), *masculinity vs. femininity* (MF) and *uncertainty avoidance* (UA). These aspects, operationalized by indices from 0 to 100, demonstrate significant divergence in British and French culture. Therefore, my research is targeted at verifying whether these differences are tangible in an intercultural context. Spending a semester in Paris at Sciences Po provided a great opportunity to closely examine these issues in everyday life. To illustrate my point, a sample of British

people living in Paris was chosen. From their responses, I wished to gain further proof for the relevancy of the cultural dimensions in the everyday context.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Culture.

Whenever cultural issues are in the centre of scientific interest, it is always necessary to define what culture itself means. For the reason that there is a considerable number of definitions, all of them originating from a different approach to social science, the choice of the definition used is delicate and needs careful consideration. In the present paper, the most relevant and complex definitions are presented, without the claim of being exhaustive. As the present research concerns interaction between cultures in a social context, those interpretations will be presented that deal with the differentiation between cultural behaviour.

According to one of the most complete definitions, “[c]ulture is a set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, basic assumptions, values and worldview that characterises the behaviour of a group and the way they interpret other’s behaviour” (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 4). These characteristics enable the group to successfully live in their environment.

A more straightforward definition by Hofstede expresses the influence of cultural background on behaviour: “[C]ulture is collective brain programming, which differentiates a group of people from another.”

This aspect of differentiation is also highlighted by Holló (Holló, 2008, p. 15). In another volume, Holló (2004) claims that it is accepted in the professional literature to make a difference between “Culture” with capitals and “culture” with small letters. “Capital C-culture” means common knowledge about a given group of people including

their history, institutions and art; while “small c-culture” refers to the everyday habits, conventions and relations of its people (Holló, 2004, p. 13).

However, as Banks and McGee-Banks point out (1989, p. 8), the key for a culture “does not lie in its products, objects or any tangible material associated with it, but in the way people interpret, use and perceive these.” It is even truer today, when globalization makes products more and more similar, while attitudes of certain groups of people still seem to differ significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between the *layers of culture*.

According to Hofstede (1994) and Trompenaars (1995), culture can be divided to *layers* and *sublayers*. The inmost hidden characteristics of a culture – as can be seen in the chart below – are people’s basic assumptions, axioms, worldview and beliefs. These lead to different value systems, norms on the cognitive level; and various customs, rites on the everyday level. Also, cultural affiliation defines the cultural group’s celebrated icons, heroes and symbols.

As opposed to these invisible characteristics, the physical appearance of culture – the so-called “little c”-culture - contains the products, objects with which the group surrounds itself. However, in order to understand these external representations, it is of utmost importance to have information about the inner circle as well. It is this inner circle that has been studied by Hofstede (1994) and Trompenaars (1995), providing a scale on which cultures can be distributed according to their value system and attitudes. This study will be presented in detail later.

Due to the fact that the scientific study of culture is only being established, there are several models to represent these cultural layers. The most well-known of these are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Comparison of Theories on Layers of Culture

Layers	Hofstede and the onion--model	Trompenaars	Brembeck and the iceberg-model (in Holló, p.37)	Tomalin and Stempleski
Cognitive level	worldview, beliefs	1.basic assumptions, axioms, worldview, beliefs, opinions		
	basic values	norms, values	value system, attitudes	thoughts: beliefs, values, institutions, etc.
Physical level	rites, customs		text structure, customs	behaviour: traditions, food, habits, outfit, etc.
	heroes, icons, symbols	material products	material culture: art, gastronomy, rules, symbols, etc.	products: literature, music, folklore, objects

As mentioned before, what makes it challenging to compare cultures is the fact that what people from different cultural backgrounds perceive of another culture are generally the outer circles; while the inner, core circles stay hidden. For example, in case a foreigner does not understand the causes of a cultural phenomenon, it means that he or she cannot relate the circles to each other. This situation may lead to misunderstanding, and can even be aggravated to culture shock.

However, culture does not entirely account for personal behaviour. According to Hofstede (1994), human nature itself is entirely inherited; culture is entirely learnt; and personality is both inherited *and* learnt. Therefore, personal traits do *not* only depend on cultural background.

Furthermore, social affiliation also affects one's cultural behaviour. Therefore, several sublayers have to be distinguished in order to gain a complex picture on the factors that define personal culture. These socio-cultural groups are the following: national, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, generational, social and organizational. According to these layers, the focus of the present paper can be

narrowed down to the following groups: the British community in the Parisian region. As the research will be based on cultural patterns in Paris, it is necessary to narrow the focus on this region, and not on all France. Concerning the other sublayers, my attempt will be to conduct the research in a way that it represents both genders equally.

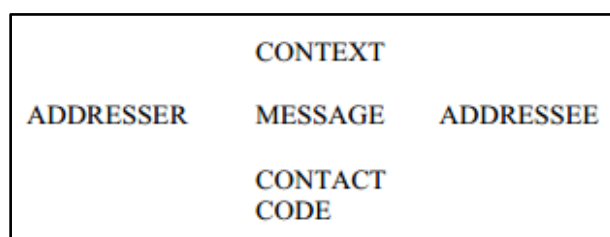
1. 2. Communication.

Communication is one of the fields of study that seems most evident. However, cross-cultural misunderstandings highlight the fact that cultural consciousness is indispensable today. For instance, the outcome and success of business negotiations is highly dependent on the implementation of intercultural competences. It becomes evident that one cannot expect the cultural adjustment of the partner; on the contrary, it is him/herself who has to accustom themselves to the partner's habits. Thus, the theoretical background of intercultural communication gains more and more importance.

Before going on to discuss Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the basic notions of *communication* will be defined. Understanding communication theory is essential in order to be able to define which element in intercultural communication causes misunderstanding in a given conflicting situation.

The most widespread model of communication is the one of Jakobson (1960/1969, p. 216). He defines the communication process the following way: the sender encodes the message which passes through the channel to the receiver, who decodes the message to obtain its meaning. The model is presented in *Table 3.* below.

Table 3. Jakobson's Constitutive Factors Model (1960)



Communication between individuals with different cultural background is called intercultural communication. In order to define intercultural communication, the following premises are established (Konczos, 2008): nations are homogenous; they differ from each other; individual behaviour is characterised by national or ethnical origin. Though these assumptions are needed in setting the foundations of the topic, one has to be aware of the overgeneralization of the premises. As it has already been discussed above (Hofstede, 1994), personal behaviour cannot be oversimplified to cultural reasons.

It is important to highlight the difference between the adjectives “inter- and multicultural”. Although these two words are often used as synonyms in literature, originally “intercultural” means the relation between several cultures; while “multicultural” refers to two cultures existing side by side (Konczos, 2008, p. 49).

These notions, culture and communication gain importance when an *intercultural incident* (Holló, 2004) or conflict occurs. Such an issue may indicate problems with the code (language), the channel of communication (context) or cultural difference between the sender and the receiver.

In order to cope with these problems, *intercultural competence* is needed. Language learners have to be aware that knowing the language is important, but not enough for successful communication (Konczos, 2008, p. 68). “Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in a variety of contexts, and it includes a number of requirements, skills and knowledge necessary for the speaker” (Gil-Martinez, 2006, p. 359). Hymes mentions four competences: grammatical, textual, sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

1. 3. Theories on Cultural Dimensions.

In order to be able to distinguish between cultural patterns in two different societies, a typology is needed, providing basic points of comparison. Such typologies have been elaborated by Hall (1976), Hofstede (1994), the GLOBE project (2002) and Trompenaars (2005). As these models overlap to some extent, but also differ in some points, they are shown in *Table 2.* for the sake of comparison.

Table 2. Comparison of Cultural Dimensions Theories

Aspects*	Hofstede (2004.)	Trompenaars (2005.)	GLOBE-project (2002.)	Hall (1976.)
Individual – group relationship	power distance*/ hierarchy	specific or diffuse	power distance*/ hierarchy	
	individualism and collectivism	person: community or self-centred	social/institutional collectivism; group-collectivism	
	masculinity and femininity (gender)	action: achievement or respect (being)-oriented	gender equality; assertiveness; achievement or human-orientation	
Role of the circumstances	uncertainty avoidance	nature: inner and outer motivation	uncertainty avoidance	context: high-strong or low-weak
	time-orientation: past/present/future, long-/short-term:	neutral and affective	future-orientation	
	indulgence and restraint	universalism and particularism		
Role of time		time: sequential and synchronic		mono- and polichronic
Other aspects		space		
		human nature: optimistic and pessimistic		

*As in Holló ((2004, p. 60.)

1. 4. The Dimensions of Hofstede.

The present paper will focus on four aspects of comparison. These are the following: 1) power distance or hierarchy, 2) individualism - collectivism, 3) masculinity - femininity, and 4) uncertainty avoidance. There are two further dimensions, elaborated later on: long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint. However, the present paper focuses only on the first four original dimensions. In the following section, each aspect is discussed in detail.

1. 4. 1. Power distance. The scale of power distance (PD) demonstrates national attitude towards inequality in the society. The way Hofstede expresses this, it is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (“Dimensions of national Cultures”, para. 3). Therefore, power distance does not demonstrate the actual social distance between the wealthiest and the most deprived layer of a nation, but rather people’s expectations, standards and views on power distribution in their society. In this index, a low value means that power is expected to be distributed equally between members of the society, whereas a high value stands for accepted and even encouraged inequalities, be it in the workplace, school or everyday life (Hofstede, 1994).

Britain scores low (35) concerning power distance. This information may contrast general belief about Britain at first sight, where long-established social classes still exist in everyday life – considering the two houses of Parliament or the still existing titles and honours. However, low power distance shows that people strive against inequalities; for example, parents handle their children as equals; and teachers are only the representatives of knowledge, but are accepted to make mistakes. Moreover, in the workplace, the status of the bosses serves only practical reasons: harmonising work and distributing special roles in the organization. Also, employees are asked about their

opinion and are required to make decisions individually. In general, it is the social role and not personal respect that defines the position of a person in Great Britain. This attitude of equal rights is represented by the notion of “fair play. Similarly, it is common to call fellows on their first name, showing the casual and friendly attitude towards colleagues, even in an otherwise formal environment” (Hofstede, 1994).

In contrast, France scores high on the scale of power distance. With its 68 points, in the French society, inequalities are expected to be prevalent, according to the survey. In practice, this means that it is accepted for leaders, heads and superiors to have privileges, and teachers are more considered to be faultless. In business life, employees are required to strictly follow instructions, and are not expected to make changes in a project individually. This principle of organization is tangible in the way administration and transport services are centralized in Paris (Hofstede, 1994).

Consequently, the British are expected to experience an unusual importance of hierarchy in the Parisian life. They might be faced with the fact that the way they are treated depends on their position, and that social roles also affect people’s personal behaviour. It means that the French are more likely to treat people based on their professional position.

In order to better relate to the findings, it might be interesting to know that Hungary scores 46 on the PD scale, thus is closer to the British attitude than to the French one.

1. 4. 2. Individualism and collectivism. The scale of individualism – collectivism (IC) stands for “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members” (“Dimensions of national Culture”, para. 5). In an individualist society, therefore, the main interest is personal fulfilment and well-being, while a collectivist society appreciates those of their members who act in favour of their larger group.

Furthermore, in an individualist society, tasks are considered more important than relations, and this way conflict is a natural part of participation in group work; workplace relations are based on mutual benefits and are fixed in a contractual form; and promotion is done with consideration of personal skills and merits. Meanwhile, in a collectivist society, personal relations are considered more important than the given task; workplace relations are morally grounded and similar to family-relationships.

On the one hand, Great Britain, having 89 scores on the scale of individualism, is considered a highly individualistic country. It is notable that all the English-speaking countries, including the United States (91 points) and Australia (90 points) are similarly high-ranked on this scale. This means that in these states, people are taught to care for their immediate family and their personal goals and aims, and to find their own way in life. This attitude is closely connected to “rampant consumerism” (Hofstede, 1994).

On the other hand, in France, 71 points have been measured for the same aspect. Thus, it can be stated that similarly to people from the United Kingdom, French people are also likely to make individual decisions. Also, opinions, even if different, are taken into consideration in a debate.

This way, British expatriates living in Paris are thought to experience only a small difference in the national attitude. Possible differences include the presence of the national feeling; proudness or self-identification with national values and with one’s closer communities. Besides, it is not excluded that the French are seen as less confrontational and outspoken so as to avoid conflicts.

An interesting additional tendency is worth mentioning here, concerning individualism in other countries. Most countries of Western and Northern-Europe and North-America tend to show high scores on the scale measuring individualism. For example, Belgium scores 75, the Netherlands 80, Sweden 71, and Canada 80. In

contrast, southern countries, including Spain (51), Portugal (27) and Greece (35), generally turn out to be collectivist ones: Indonesia reaches 14 points, the Arabic states 38, Venezuela 12 and West-Africa 20. The same is true for Eastern countries, former Yugoslavia (27) and Japan (46). Interestingly, Hungary belongs to the individualistic countries, having an index of 80.

Thus, it can be concluded that though the United Kingdom scores higher than France, the main difference here is between western and eastern-southern countries.

1. 4. 3. Masculinity and femininity. The masculinity-index (MF) “indicates the relative importance in the country of the job aspects earnings, recognition, advancement, and challenge and the relative unimportance of (relation with) manager, cooperation, desirable (living) area, and employment security” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 55). In other words, masculinity could be reformulated as being career-oriented, with emphasis on achievement.

The term *masculinity* originates from the observation that men score on the scale differently from women, which indicates the presence of gender roles in the society: “boys are socialized toward assertiveness and self-reliance, and girls, toward nurturance and responsibility” (Barry, Bacon, and Child, 1957, as in Hofstede, 1983, p. 55). Moreover, some countries tend to attain higher scores on the scale, meaning that employees, irrespectively of their sex, have a more “masculine” approach to work than employees of other countries. In other words, the difference is in “what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine)” (The Hofstede Centre, “National culture” section, “United Kingdom”, para. 6.). And lastly, it is also observed that in “masculine” societies, the attitude of men and women differ more, while in “feminine” societies, this difference “is reduced to zero” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 282, as cited in Hofstede, 1983).

The two specific countries in focus show a 22 point gap in this respect. On the one hand, the United Kingdom measures 66, which expresses that it is a masculine nation. Though in appearance, British might seem a nation of “modesty and understatement”, work is extremely important, and is accompanied by ambition (Ibid, para. 7).

On the other hand, the French nation, measuring 43 on the masculinity scale, is defined as a feminine one. This feature is clearly visible from the social policy of France: the strong and active labour unions achieved an outstanding policy of 35 working hours per week, 5 weeks of holidays per year, and an ardent support of social rights that is shown by frequent demonstrations in the country. Hence, what is important for the French is the quality of life, avoiding open competition and hiding conspicuous material goods from view (The Hofstede Centre, “National culture” section, “France”, para. 7).

Due to this intercultural difference, it can be supposed that a British person living in Paris observes that the French are prone to “pamper” themselves; that they are less hard-working or more open to everyday pleasures. Also, British might be surprised to find that confrontation is not supported, and is frowned upon in education or at the workplace.

1. 4. 4. *Uncertainty avoidance.* The concept of uncertainty avoidance (UA) refers to “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these” (The Hofstede Centre, “National culture” section, “United Kingdom”, para. 8). The rate is also interconnected with the usual level of anxiety felt by the member of the nation; and a conservative worldview. In the workplace, an “uncertainty avoider” aims to

maintain order by excessive paperwork and would not change his or her safe position for new experiences.

Britain scores 35 on the scale, which is regarded a low level of uncertainty avoidance. In consequence, British are seen as a flexible nation. An example to demonstrate this is the fact that the UK, by tradition, has not established a codified constitution; the legal system is based on the precedent law shaped “en route” by court judgements. Another related example is British euroscepticism, which observes “suspiciously” how European community law and common regulations “undermine” the country’s national independence. Naturally, this does not mean that there are less rules in Britain – one of them is the famous habit of lining up in the bus stops - , but these rules are intangible, unformulated and dependent on customs and habits. The last example to highlight the issue is the functioning of the Civil Service, a body that implements general regulations according to practical considerations, thus having a bigger liberty of action.

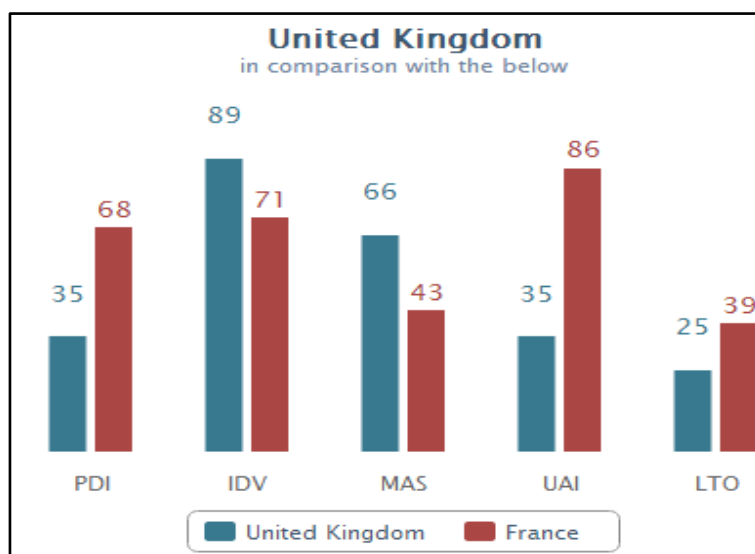
France, in contrast, attains 86 points, which is an outstandingly high score among all countries. This result brings with itself a more rigorous, detailed, rigid handling of issues and administration. Rules are regarded as essential for the functioning of the society, and cautious planning is welcomed.

This notable difference between the countries implies a possible cultural shock in British newcomers confronted with French high uncertainty avoidance. Such a discrepancy may lead to the feeling that French overcomplicate issues; that they are rigid in problem-solving and are less open to novelties.

1. 4. 5. Long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint. In addition to the four scales presented above, two further indices have been added to the survey later on. The fifth dimension, Long-Term Orientation (LTO, Hofstede and Minkov, 1991) was added based on the Chinese Value Survey (Bond, 1991), originally named “Confucian Work Dynamism” (Bond, 1987). This aspect aims to explore societies’ orientation towards future, long-term aims, benefits, and their capacity of persistence, saving, and self-adaptation to circumstantial changes (“Dimensions of national Culture”, para. 7).

The sixth dimension, indulgence versus restraint (IVR), also originates from the World Values Survey (Minkov, 1991). It stands for measuring the extent to which societies accept and promote free gratification and pleasures, as compared to other societies that expect a certain control of gratification and regulation of joy by rigid social norms (“Dimensions of national Culture”, para. 8.). Although these two additional dimensions are not going to be included in the present research, they are signs of the dynamic and changing nature of the cultural dimensions theory. The following chart summarises British and French indices.

Table 3. British and French Indices



Source: *geert-hofstede.com*

1. 5. Criticism of Hofstede's Theory.

Hofstede's theory, as a pioneer in the field of cultural and value-related research, has come in for criticism concerning both its principles and methodology. In order to understand the shortcomings and challenges of the model established by Hofstede, in the following, an overview of these concerns will be presented.

The in-principle criticism highlights the weaknesses of the PD, IC and MF axes. To start with, PD does not include differentiation between the individual and the national level (Maznewski et al., 2002). Although there is a correlation between the PD of the two levels of analysis, further investigations would be needed to clearly separate them. As Triandis (2004) and Yamada and Singelis (1999) point it out, it is not only nationality that influences the PD index, but also other factors such as the age of the examined person, the place where they grew up and whether and where they moved away.

The second aspect criticised is the IC-scale (Moir, n.d.), based on a former research on the subject (Kelly, 1901). It points out that the proximity of the family and the fact of living alone contribute significantly to the extent of individualism. However, these preceding findings are not controversial to the ones of Hofstede, because there was a clear connection between the nationality of IBM workers and the social structure they live in.

Another additional aspect, that is not a criticism but rather a refinement of the model, is the division of independence into two sub-indicators, *independence* and *interdependence* (Markus and Kitayama, 1991); the former referring to societal roles and relationships, while the latter describing behaviour in a given context, situation. These additional divisions opened further research on bicultural people inheriting

interdependence from their family, but having independence similar to the country they live in (Yamada and Singelis, 1999).

The last in-principle criticism questions assumptions about masculinity and femininity (Moir, n.d.). Hofstede supposed that warm climate enforces masculinity, which leads to heightened violence (Hofstede, 1980). However, the presence of violence might not be the direct consequence of strong masculine characteristics, but could also come from the distributional inequalities of wealth in the given country (Moir, n.d.).

Beside the criticism coming from in-principle issues, the research was also challenged by methodological concerns. These include problems concerning the level of analysis, relevancy, lack of statistical integrity, *a priori* assumptions, simplicity and outdatedness of the survey.

First, the single level of analysis was judged to be insufficient. Group-level variables are not a priori same as individual-level ones. As Smith points it out (1998), having only group-level data, the study does not exclude the possibility of stereotyping. Therefore, it would need to be completed by both individual and national-level findings as well (Triandis, 2004).

The next issue is whether the research is relevant enough. Some critics (Schwartz, 1999.) claim that quantitative methods are not the appropriate instruments to collect data on such a “culturally sensitive and subjective” issue. McSweeney calls this approach as *functionalist* (McSweeney, 2002), as it works with realist and deterministic assumptions, stratified samples, ignores subjective interpretations, and aims to be universally applicable.

Staying at data-collection methods, the statistical integrity of the groundwork is questioned (Dorfman and Howell, 1988). The survey includes only forty countries and

26 questions; thus one answer is used to establish several scales, which enhance the probability of sample error.

In addition, McSweeney (2002) points out that Hofstede indirectly implied some basic assumptions about cultures that bias the evaluation of the results. One assumption is that national, organizational and position-related cultures are independent of each other; therefore, differences come from the nationality of the respondents (Ibid). However, IBM does not represent the whole nation, according to Søndergaard (as cited in Jones, 2009). Hofstede answers these remarks by affirming that the study aims only to compare nations, and not characterize them exhaustively (Hofstede, 1998). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) confirm the relevance of the findings with results from other organizations as well.

The second assumption is that a national culture is homogenous. Some researchers underline that ethnic groups (Nasif et al., 1991; Redpath, 1997) and communities (Dorfman and Howell, 1988, Lindell and Arvonen, 1996; and Smith, 1998) might differ significantly from average rate of a given country. Furthermore, national-level divisions may not be bound by borders (McSweeney, 2000), or may be fragmented across group and national lines (DiMaggio, 1997). Although these observations might be valid, Hofstede argues that national identities were the only analysable units available (Hofstede, 1998).

Finally, analysts indicate the need for further research in the field. For example, new dimensions could help overcome the “simplistic view” of the survey (McSweeney, 2002), an advice that Hofstede is open to take (Hofstede, 2002). Another idea would be to re-conduct the survey, which might already be outdated (Jones, 2009). Even if Hofstede made replications before 1998, the context might have internationalised since.

Taken everything into consideration, the quantity of the literature dealing with Hofstede's research – whether criticising or reinforcing it – clearly shows the importance and novelty of the theory. Yet, counter-arguments are still to be tested and if are proven to be valid, alternative models should be found. Thus, the idea of cultural dimensions gives impetus for further investigation in the field.

2. Research

2. 1. The Hypothesis.

Based on the preliminary research, I decided to examine the relevance of the four dimensions of Hofstede in everyday life: what interested me was if national differences in the four cultural dimensions were perceptible. My hypothesis was that British people living in Paris *do* experience the cultural discrepancies between the two nations. This issue is highly relevant due to the fact that people's attitudes are subject to rapid change in a changing multicultural context. Also, attitudes might be greatly affected by personal experience in cosmopolitan capitals, such as Paris.

2. 2. Sample.

The participants of the research are British citizens and British-born expatriates who have been living in Paris at least for 6 months. This is the minimum amount of time necessary for the acculturation process (Holló, 2008). Their orientations and perceptions of intercultural differences might illustrate well to what extent they could identify with French values, or preserve their original attitudes. It is important to highlight that this study does not aim to reproduce the original research of Hofstede; it presupposes the existence of cultural differences, and aims to measure the extent to which these differences are *experienced* by British in their lives.

The sample was taken from a community of about five hundred people; the survey was filled in by members of various website forums, such as *Britishexpats.com*,

*The Paris Brit Meetup Group*¹ and a Facebook group called *British Expats in Paris*². Therefore, the respondents are active Internet users and those who participate in online networks. Members of the groups mentioned above were given an online link to the survey. Though the survey does not aim to be representative, as it summons only 22 answers; the results illustrate the tendency of the issue in a multicultural environment.

2. 3. Methods.

Concerning the methodology, the collection of the data was done by a survey of twenty-four statements, six for each dimension. These statements are based on Hofstede's questions of his 2008 survey and aspects of comparison in Hofstede (2005); and they are mixed in a way that two statements for the same dimension never follow each other. Every sentence was to be completed by one of the following five items: *much more, more, the same / equally, less, and much less*, indicating the extent to which French and British values are different. Thus, the answers concerning discrepancies in values are measured on an ordinal level.

In order to avoid suggestive statements, I formulated the sentences so that for every section, the expected answers for three statements are *more* or *much more*, and for 3 statements, *less* or *much less*. These two types of statements follow each other irregularly.

Afterwards, the data was analysed by summoning average rates for each question. For this, first, I defined for each question whether the answer (1) or (5) corresponds to the pre-established expectations. The answer in harmony with these presuppositions got the highest point (5), and the least expected answer received the less point (1). The survey finishes with five multiple choice questions about personal information on the respondents.

¹ http://www.meetup.com/ParisBrits/?a=mm1_16

² <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/ParisBritsandFriends/>

At the end, averages were calculated for each dimension. For this, answers for each section were summoned; all the points for the answers were added up, and were divided by the number of questions and respondents. The result is on a scale between 1 and 5. Between 5 and 3, the rate is in favour of my hypothesis; and between 2,49 and 1, the rate means that British perceive the opposite of what is expected based on the Hofstede study. The point system is summarised in *Table 3*. below.

Table 3. Point System for Measuring Survey Answers

Expectations / answers	Expected response: <i>(much) more</i>	Expected response: <i>(much) less</i>
<i>much more</i>	5 points	1 point
<i>more</i>	4 points	2 points
<i>the same / equally</i>	3 points	3 points
<i>less</i>	2 points	4 points
<i>much less</i>	1 point	5 points

The survey is cross-sectional: it was conducted in March and April 2013. Thus, several following surveys would be needed to assure the reliability of the research.

2. 4. Results.

Having collected answers during the time available, from 24 to 31 March, 22 answers were summoned. Examining the answers, it could be claimed that the research was successful: all answers were valid. In general, two tendencies can be concluded. On the one hand, every score of the four sections is above 3 points, showing that the dimensions are perceivable between the two cultures. On the other hand, however, differences range between 3,02 and 3,51, not reaching point 2 or 4, which indicates that differences are not as significant as they are supposed to be.

First of all, the dimension with the biggest expected discrepancy – 86 points for the French as opposed to 35 points for the British - was *uncertainty avoidance*. However, the survey resulted in the rate of 3,19 on the scale from 1 to 5; it means that

British do not really experience that French had the tendency to avoid uncertainty. The subpoints for this dimension are between 2,63 and 3,72; it shows that, according to British, it is dependent on the given context whether French want to avoid uncertainty or not.

The second largest difference between the nations was in *power distance* – 68 French points versus 35 British points. This difference is shown well in the research as well: the score is 3,52 points, with points from 3,09 to 4,18 points for each question. The fact that all the six questions received higher points than the neutral 3 points represents that this is a dimension that is remarkable for the British is everyday life in Paris. In general, they feel that hierarchy, position and status symbols are accepted and desired. In addition, despite the strong welfare-system, social equality seems less important for French people than for the British. Such an attitude might affect in a negative way the integration of expatriates. Moreover, the discrepancy in attitude might worsen the chance of success of British businessmen negotiating with French partners. Therefore, this dimension should be highlighted in intercultural training.

Thirdly, *masculinity* is a dimension with 43 French and 66 British points; supposing British people might experience French society as more “feminine”. However, it is not the case: with 3,04 points, the respondents are of the opinion that there is no significant difference between the behaviour of the two nations. The subscores, from 2,81 to 3,72 show that the French living in Paris seem just as much career- and performance-centred as are the British themselves. Supposing that French people that the British contact most frequently are in the same professional position as the British, it can be concluded that attitude towards work nowadays is defined more by social status and occupation than by nationality. Perhaps that is why the British

respondents are not at home, but in Paris; and the French are in a multicultural environment.

Finally, the *individualism-collectivism index*, 71 for France and 89 for Britain, reached 3,21 points in the survey, ranging from 2,82 to 3,86. Such a result is unexpected, as the difference in Hofstede's research is not that significant. Thus, British people are likely to perceive the French as more collectivists when it comes to family relations or national ties. In addition, the British see themselves as more outspoken, straightforward and confrontational than French people. In case an expatriate is unconscious of this remarkable difference, he or she may get into uncomfortable situations during negotiations and business meetings. And last but not least, an intercultural relationship or marriage might also be endangered by different expectations and views of social roles of the two parties. Hence, developing intercultural skills is of utmost importance to be able to cope with the different levels of individualism in the two societies.

In summary, the findings prove two aspects. On the one hand, as all of the values are above 3 points, it can be concluded that Hofstede's dimensions give a well-working scheme when trying to depict everyday situations with the help of general knowledge on the values of a given society.

On the other hand, however, it could be seen from the moderated values of the scores - 3,04, 3,18, 3,21 and 3,52 - that British citizens living in Paris do not seem to face radical differences between their home culture and the values of the host country. Therefore, culture shock is not much likely to happen. Also, the survey reveals that attitudes may differ depending on the given situation, and that everyday behaviour cannot always be predicted with certainty from a set of pre-established values.

Conclusion

Whenever several cultures meet or coexist, there is a likelihood of misunderstanding that may lead to miscommunication, unfruitful negotiations or even culture shock. In addition, these international, transnational encounters happen more and more in our interconnected world. This challenge may lead to two scenarios: intercultural tension coming from the uneasiness of an unknown set of rules that belongs to another culture; but it can also foster the development of intercultural skills, understanding and cosmopolitanism.

In this context, Hofstede was one of those scholars who understood the significance of underlying cultural attitudes, which, even if hidden from the surface, may result in discrepancies in contact with others. In order to better understand, analyse, and use this “hidden dimension”, Hofstede elaborated an objective evaluation system to measure the immeasurable – culture. But how do this theory function in real life, and are differences perceivable, even today, even in a multicultural melting pot, such as Paris?

My aim with the present research was to find out to what extent these pre-established categories function with everyday people. The result of the survey has shown that there exists a perceivable attitudinal difference between British and French people, and that this difference corresponds to what one may expect based on the four dimensions. According to the British, the French respect more power distance, are more collectivists, and live in a less masculine society. It has also proved that the discrepancy is not as remarkable as in the original study, due to the assimilation of a society living and working together, or due to developed intercultural skills.

In consequence, it would be highly interesting to further investigate the issue of cross-cultural assimilation, communication and to catch the most recent phenomena that

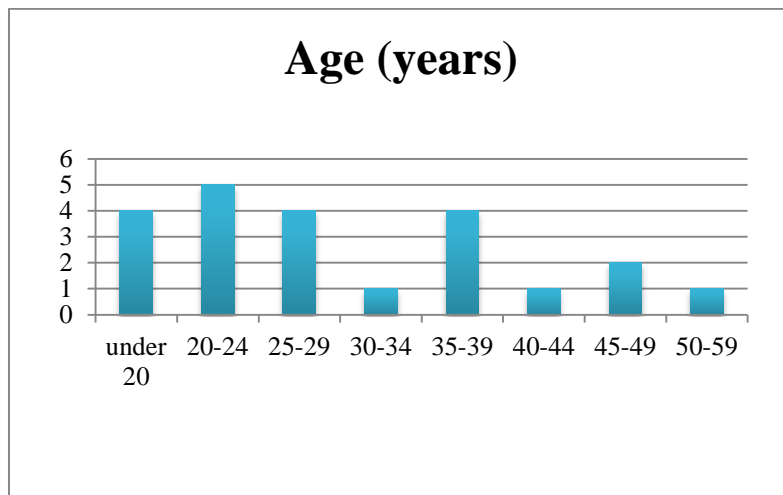
create a new urban society. After all, whatever people do, it is related to their culture, and whether intercultural understanding brings peace or new tensions is greatly dependent on the interaction or lack of interaction of our values, beliefs, habits and experiences. And that is what our future depends on.

Appendices

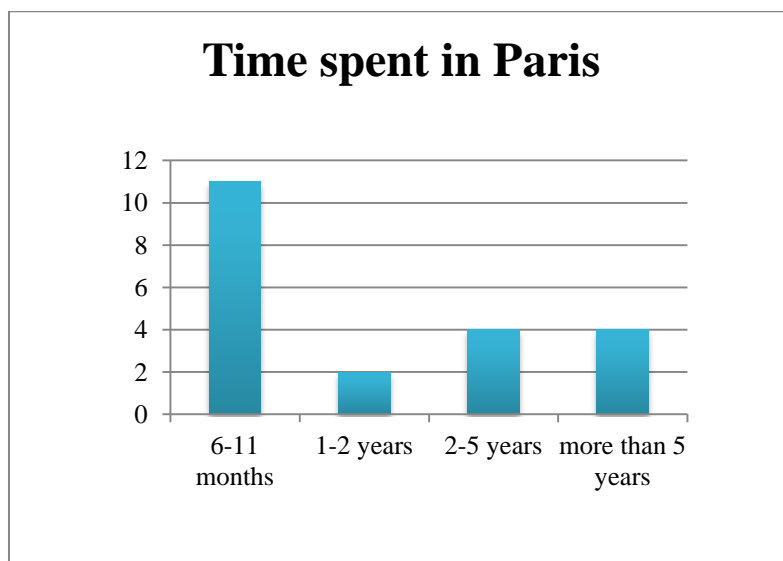
Appendix 1. Subscores for each question, averages and dispersion

Dimension	Masculinity		Uncertainty Avoidance		Power Distance		Individualism	
Question number and score	1.	2,82	2.	3,64	3.	3,45	7.	2,32
	4.	3,05	6.	2,68	5.	3,4	11.	3,32
	14.	3,72	9.	3,36	8.	3,81	15.	3,82
	17.	3,05	10.	3,68	12.	4,18	18.	3,86
	20.	2,64	13.	3,63	19.	3,18	21.	3,14
	22.	2,95	16.	2,14	23.	3,09	24.	2,82
Average	3,04		3,19		3,52		3,21	
Dispersion	0,37		0,64		0,41		0,59	

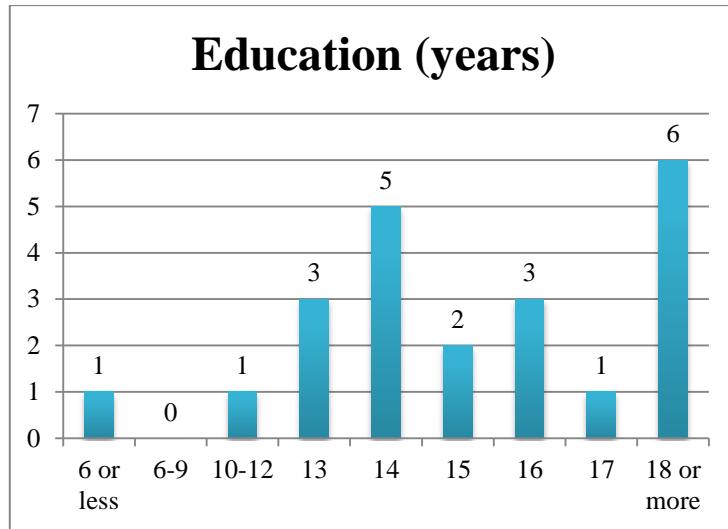
Appendix 2. Age of the Sample Group



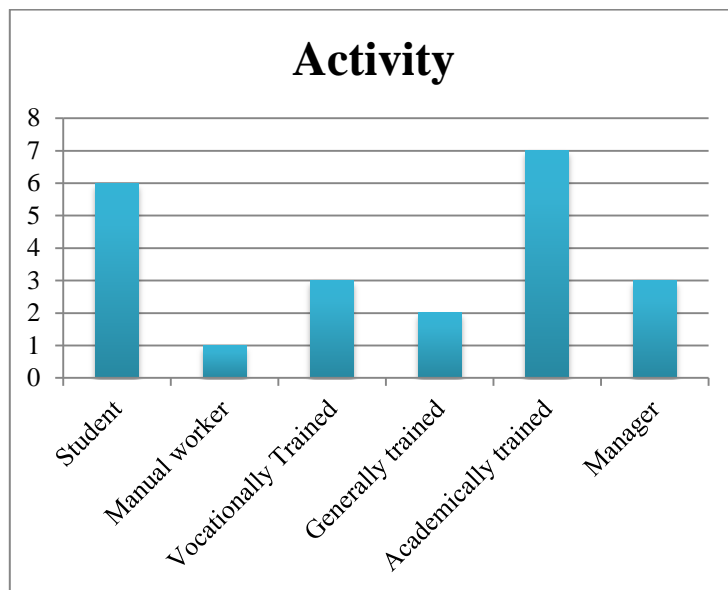
Appendix 3. Time spent in Paris



Appendix 4. Total Number of Years in Education



Appendix 5. Activity and profession



Appendix 6. Sample Questionnaire

British experiences about French people

This questionnaire is for British people who have been living in Paris for at least 6 months. For my thesis on intercultural differences, I would like to know more about your experiences concerning the differences that you perceive between French and British people. Please, fill in this form attentively.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

1/5. Workplace or school experiences

In your personal opinion, which answer is true? Choose from the options to fill in the (...) part.

	Much less	Less	The same / Equally	More	Much more
French people care (...) about career and success than British do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people are (...) rigid in the workplace or university than British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French bosses/teachers build (...) on the opinion of the employees/students than in Britain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance seems (...) important for French people than for British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees/students in France respect (...) their bosses/teachers than in Britain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. 2/5. Experiences on Attitudes and Ways of Thinking

In your personal opinion, which answer is true? Choose from the options to fill in the (...) part.

	Much less	Less	The same / Equally	More	Much more
British people worry (...) than French people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
British people speak their mind (...) often than French people do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Privileges and status symbols are (...) accepted in France than in Britain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For French people, it is (...) important to abide by rules, and keep formalities than for British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people seem to take (...) risks than British would take in similar situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people care (...) about what other people think of them than British do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For French people, hierarchy is (...) important than for British.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people are (...) conservative than British.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Much less	Less	The same / Equally	More	Much more
French people care (...) about having an agreeable lifestyle than British.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people accept new things with (...) ease than British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people are (...) confrontational than British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. 3/5. Experiences about Family Life

In your personal opinion, which answer is true? Choose from the options to fill in the (...) part.

	Much less	Less	The same / Equally	More	Much more
British men participate (...) in family life in than French men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people keep (...) contact with their bigger family than British people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
British children are taught to be (...) respectful with their parents than French children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French women have (...) chance in their professional life than British.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. 4/5. Experiences about Society in General

In your personal opinion, which answer is true? Choose from the options to fill in the (...) part.

	Much less	Less	The Same / Equally	More	Much more
British people are (...) proud to belong to their nation than French people do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
British people care (...) about social equality and solidarity than French people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French people strive (...) to balance social inequalities than British.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a personal sphere is (...) important for French (in the workplace, on the street, in restaurants).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. 5/5. Some Information about Yourself

This section is for statistical purposes.

You are a...

- Male
- Female

How old are you?

- Under 20
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34

- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-59
- 60 or over

How long have you been staying in France?

- 0-5 months
- 6-11 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- more than 5 years

How many years of formal school education (or their equivalent) did you complete (starting with primary school)?

- 6 years or less
- 6-8 years
- 8-10 years
- 10-12 years
- 13 years
- 14 years
- 15 years
- 16 years
- 17 years
- 18 or more years

What is your activity?

You are a...

- Student
- Manual worker
- Generally trained office worker or secretary
- Vocationally trained craftsperson, technician, IT-specialist, nurse, artist or equivalent.
- Academically trained professional or equivalent
- Manager.

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