

overSEAS 2019

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 2019, therefore it was decorated with the School's Outstanding Thesis Award. As such it is published in the form it was submitted in **overSEAS 2019** (<http://seas3.elte.hu/overseas/2019.html>)

EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
Bölcsészettudományi Kar

ALAPSZAKOS SZAKDOLGOZAT

*Az amerikai és a magyar kultúra összehasonlítása Hofstede
modellje és Magyarországon élő amerikaiak élményei alapján*

*The comparison of American and Hungarian cultures based on
Hofstede's model and the accounts of Americans living in
Hungary*

Témavezető:

dr. Lázár Ildikó
Adjunktus

Készítette:

Seben Laura Anna
Anglisztika alapszak
Amerikanisztika
szakirány

2019

SZERZŐSÉGI NYILATKOZAT

Alulírott Seben Laura Anna, KSEXA2 ezennel kijelentem és aláírással megerősítem, hogy az ELTE BTK anglisztika alapszak amerikanisztika szakirányán írt jelen szakdolgozatom saját szellemi termékem, melyet korábban más szakon még nem nyújtottam be szakdolgozatként/záródolgozatként és amelybe mások munkáját (könyv, tanulmány, kézirat, internetes forrás, személyes közlés stb.) idézőjel és pontos hivatkozások nélkül nem építettem be.

Budapest, 2019.04.12.

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a hallgató aláírása

Abstract

The past decades have seen a rapid increase in intercultural studies, highlighting among other aspects some significant differences between certain cultures. The aim of this study is to investigate the fundamental differences between the Hungarian and American cultures based on Geert Hofstede's model of cultural organizations (Hofstede et al., 2010). The research data was collected in guided interviews with five teachers from the United States who had been teaching in Hungary for at least two years. A second data collection took place with the help of a questionnaire to complement the interview data. The study aims to answer research questions focusing on American teachers' cultural experiences of similarities and differences in school and everyday life. An additional aim is to explore how the participating American teachers correspond to Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions. The results indicate that the participants experience cultural differences in the school which in most cases seem correspondent to Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions. The two cultures seem to share values in the dimensions of individualism, power distance and masculinity but they tend to differ regarding uncertainty avoidance.

Keywords: Hofstede, cultural dimension, the United States, Hungary

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I. Introduction

The “Hungarian Sea”, thermal baths, Nobel laureates, Franz Liszt, Goulash soup, powdered pepper, drinking, pickpockets – these are the most important keywords in any tourist guidebook for an American from the United States who wishes to visit Hungary. Huge distances, skyscrapers, superficially friendly people, competition, freedom, wealth – these are among the first words that come to a Hungarian’s mind about the people of the United States. However, most of these are all elements of Culture with a capital ‘C’ – things that most people would associate with culture since these are the visible components. Nevertheless, big ‘C’ culture is only the tip of the iceberg, meaning it is only one-tenth of what we define as culture. Nine-tenth of it is hidden and cannot be easily observed by foreigners; this is what we call small ‘c’ culture. It consists of different concepts, attitudes, notions, and values, such as social interactions, physical space, the relationship between superiors and subordinates, and much more (Polyák, 2004).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist who is a pioneer in the field of (inter)cultural studies, published a book called *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (1994), in which he describes four cultural dimensions based on his extensive research at IBM. He uses the word dimension as “an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures” (Hofstede, 1994, p.14). The four cultural dimensions that he originally found are individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Two dimensions, long-term orientation and indulgence, were later added to this model thanks to Misho Minkov; however, in this thesis only the four original dimensions are analyzed.

The purpose of this study is to compare the American and Hungarian cultures based on Hofstede’s model of cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010). In this study,

American culture refers to the culture of the United States. In addition to the theoretical background, the accounts of five American teachers who have been teaching in Hungary for a period of 2-13 years are analyzed. The thesis seeks to explore the following questions: 1) What are the experiences of Americans living in Hungary regarding the similarities and differences of the two cultures? 2) How do these experiences correspond to the model of cultural dimensions?

Previous studies have been conducted to show how native English speakers view Hungary, however, little is known about whether these experiences support the model of cultural dimensions. This study is expected to offer insights for Hungarians about their own culture and it may also benefit Americans, especially teachers who wish to experience working in Hungary. The understanding of both perspectives is of key importance regarding intercultural encounters; however, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of the host country and more specifically, the host school's point of view.

This paper has been divided into five parts. The Introduction is followed by a review of the relevant literature, regarding the key term culture, and Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions concerning the American and Hungarian cultures. The third chapter introduces the research design and methods. In the fourth chapter, I present the data collected in this research, analyze the interviews and discuss my findings. Finally, the last chapter gives a brief summary of the findings and recommended areas of further research.

II. Literature review

The framework of this study is based on the book *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) in which six cultural dimensions are introduced, out of which four are discussed in detail for the purpose of this thesis. It must be highlighted that the model has been criticized by some given its tendency to overgeneralize and demonize the foreign “Other” (Holliday, 2010). Even though the model does have limitations, which are explored below, it provides an accountable framework for intercultural communication (Holliday, 2010). In this chapter, the key concept of culture is defined.

2.1 Culture

Culture is a term that has been defined in many ways from many perspectives. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), it is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p.6). Culture can be also defined as “the way in which a group of people solve problems” (Trompenaars, cited in Polyák, 2004, p.14). Culture consists of “knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, cited in Holló). Margaret Mead focused on “the learned behavior of a society or subgroup” (cited in Holló), while Raymond Williams distinguished among the lived, the recorded, and the selective tradition cultures (Holló). Polyák (2004) attributes easily observable elements to big ‘C’ culture, and “activities, behaviours, attitudes, ideas, and ideals of groups” to small ‘c’ culture (p. 15). For the purpose of this study, all aspects of both big ‘C’ and small ‘c’ cultures will be included in the meaning of the term.

2.2 The American and Hungarian cultures in Hofstede’s model

In this section, I compare the American and Hungarian cultures using Hofstede’s original model of cultural dimensions in the following areas: individualism versus

collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010).

2.2.1 Individualism versus collectivism

Hofstede et al. define the difference between collectivist and individualist societies based on the role an individual has compared to that of a group (2010, p. 91). In the chapter *I, We and They*, it is said that in collectivist societies, the ingroup's interest prevails over the individual's interest. In contrast, individualist societies are characterized by the fact that the individual's interest comes first. While in a collectivist society people belong to a group (family, tribe, village) from birth, in an individualist society, the ties are usually loose, and everyone is responsible for their own life. This aspect can be observed in the given society's attitude towards family. In collectivist societies, belonging to a family is a fundamental and lifelong part of the identity; moreover, it is also the only source of protection against the difficulties one encounters through their lives. Whereas in individualist societies, children learn at an early age to be independent and thus they develop a strong personal identity. As a result, they are expected to move away once they can stand on their own feet. Another particular instance which clearly shows the different values is workplace behavior. In individualist societies, assertiveness, that is, to speak one's mind is considered a virtue; confrontation is believed to lead to positive results. On the other hand, people living in collectivist societies tend to avoid a clash of opinions due to believing it to be against a harmonious society (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 89-133).

The individualism of a nation can be measured by the individualism index (IDV): every nation has a score between 0 and 100; 0 meaning extreme collectivism, 100 referring to extreme individualism. The US has an IDV score of 91 and thus was ranked first in the list of 76 countries, while Hungary's IDV index is 80 and was ranked 4-6 according to Hofstede et al. (p. 95).

According to Datesman et al. (2014), there are three pairs of American values: individual freedom and self-reliance, equality of opportunity and competition, and material wealth and hard work. As can be seen, the first pair has a strong connection with the fact that the American society is highly individualist. For Americans, freedom means “the desire and the right of all individuals to control their own destiny without outside interference” (Datesman et al., 2014, p.32). They are also aware of its price, that is, the responsibility for themselves; which is also the reason why children become independent financially and emotionally as early as possible, usually by age eighteen or twenty-one (Datesman et al., 2014). Thus, individual freedom and self-reliance have always been profound American values.

According to Hofstede, Hungary also has a high IDV score; however, compared to the United States, major differences can be discovered. First of all, the role of community – family, friends or any other groups – is valued far more. Students usually choose to stay with their parents during their university studies. As Ardó (2000) said, “they are not necessarily expected to leave as soon as possible, just to prove that the parents did indeed bring them up to be sufficiently self-reliant and independent” (p. 54). Ardó also highlights the importance of personal networks, since Hungarians tend to trust their acquaintances and come to them for help (2000, p. 55).

2.2.2 Power distance

Power distance is another cultural dimension defined by Hofstede. 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” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.61). It essentially tells us about the nature of dependence in a country. In a small power distance country, it is accepted that rules should be made to create order; however, everyone is under the same law, and the subordinates are not inferior to their superiors in any sense.

By contrast, large power countries consider inequalities normal and believe that bosses are also superior beings (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 61).

Taking into consideration the social classes present in a society, one can observe a country's place on the scale. Since social class determines education which determines occupations, these are the three main signs. As other dimensions, power distance also roots in the family. In a large power distance culture, children ought to be obedient and respect their parents, who, in return, take care of them and usually control their lives. In a small power distance situation, however, children are treated equally, and the aim of education is to teach children to take control of their lives. Furthermore, relationships are not dependent on status. It must be highlighted that the social class and education of parents have a significant role and that families may have their own norms (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Power distance is measured by the power distance index (PDI): the smallest power distance is 0, the largest one is 100. The United States has a power distance index (PDI) of 40, which counts as small power distance. Hungary's PDI score is 46 and therefore ranked 55 in the list (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 58). Therefore, it can be said that both cultures belong to the small power distance end of the scale, even though Hungary is considered to have slightly larger power distance.

The second pair of American core values – equality of opportunity and competition – refers to the common belief that everybody can succeed in the United States. The nobility was erased from society by the Constitution of 1787, and as a result, the country had never had the traditional social classes. The common belief of the “American Dream” manifested in immigrants coming from lower social classes being able to succeed in the United States. Equality of opportunity means that every individual has an “equal chance

for success” (Datesman et al., 2014, p.34). The price for that is competition – a pressure that is present in every American’s life from childhood until retirement.

Hungary’s PDI score is slightly higher which can be seen in certain social aspects. Class differences are far more significant in influencing the individual’s life and chances of breaking out of poverty (2011 Census). Hungarians’ attitude towards hierarchy can be also seen by observing the formal language use. Ardó (2000) advises against using the informal “te” during the first meeting, unless being older or female (p. 135).

2.2.3 Masculinity versus femininity

The third cultural dimension of Hofstede et al. concerns masculinity and femininity. The term masculinity refers to societies where gender roles are clearly defined – men should be “assertive, competitive and tough”, and women should be “concerned with taking care of their home, of the children, and of people in general” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 138). While in feminine societies, gender roles are not strict: both men and women can be described by the aforementioned adjectives. Observing a country’s traditional role distribution in a family can lead to a better understanding of that country’s degree of masculinity. If a high level of inequality can be experienced between father and mother, husband and wife, the given society is rather masculine (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The difference can also be found in schools: students from masculine societies tend to be more concerned about grades and the norm is based on the best students; in feminine societies, the norm is the average student and they do not have strong ambitions to have the best grade, a pass suffices. Moreover, in masculine societies, students are as prominent as they could be, while in feminine societies, their goals are mutual solidarity and not to appear too eager. The evaluation of teachers is also based on different criteria: academic excellence and student performance in masculine societies, friendliness, and social skills in feminine societies (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The masculinity index (MAS) of the United States is 62, which means that it is closer to the masculinity end of the scale. The fact that the United States is more masculine than feminine is easily observable when one watches a Hollywood movie: boys play football and girls are cheerleaders, and they both compete with other teams. In general, sports are the most important part of a child's life, since it is believed that everyone must learn to compete successfully. Student government is another form of competition which is also highly emphasized. Another sign is that in American culture, a large emphasis is put on strong and successful superheroes as model figures. As is the case with masculine societies, Americans put a lot of emphasis on material wealth; they have an extremely materialistic culture where success is based on money (Datesman et al., 2014).

The masculinity index (MAS) of Hungary is 88, which makes it the third most masculine culture among the 76. In a chapter called *Pseudo-glamour: machismo*, Ardó (2000) explains the way men and women behave. According to the author, men “like to come across as chivalrously macho but they can, and will, snappily change gear into hyper macho if need be” (p.83). She also mentions that Hungarian women tend to “be triggered into a demonstrative, flirtatious gender role” if a man enters the room (p. 82). Therefore, gender roles are extremely influential in both cultures.

2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The last dimension defined by Hofstede in his original work concerns the avoidance of uncertainty: “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 191). In uncertainty tolerant cultures, anxiety levels are usually low, and people are expected not to show their stress. In these countries, people are usually quiet, easy-going and controlled, while in a strong uncertainty avoidance country, they are busy, emotional and aggressive. It is also true that

weak uncertainty avoidance cultures tolerate unknown situations and people better, and personal interpretation is given space. These cultures believe that “What is different is curious” (p. 203), while strong uncertainty avoidance cultures believe that “What is different is dangerous” (p. 203). (Hofstede et al., 2010).

In weak uncertainty-avoidance societies, students can question the teacher, and it is accepted if he or she does not know the answer. In strong uncertainty-avoidance countries, teachers are believed to be gurus who know everything. The amount of structure that students prefer in school also seems to be related to uncertainty avoidance according to Hofstede et al. (2010); stronger uncertainty-avoidance tend to like accuracy and only one correct answer, while students in uncertainty tolerant countries prefer open-ended situations and vague assignments and expect the assessment to be originality-focused.

The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) has a range of 0 to 100, the lowest being the weakest uncertainty avoidance (i.e. uncertainty tolerance), while the highest being the strongest uncertainty avoidance. The UAI of the United States is 46, therefore it is a rather uncertainty tolerant culture. On the other hand, Hungary has a UAI score of 82, which suggests that the Hungarian culture is rather characterized by uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 192).

Hofstede describes a situation when the American grandparents let their grandchildren freely run around even if they might fall down (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 200) – this would not be possible in a strongly uncertainty avoiding country. In schools, children can question the teacher, and it is accepted if he or she does not know the answer. Lastly, citizens strongly believe in their right to participate in local political decision-making – they are willing to protest against government actions that they do not agree with (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Hungary has a high UAI score, which means Hungarians tend to avoid uncertainty. Hofstede et al. (2010) connect strong uncertainty avoidance to language use, arguing that the languages of uncertainty avoiding nations contain different forms to address people, like “te” és “ön” in Hungarian (p. 201).

2.2.5 Criticism of Hofstede’s model

Holliday (2010) draws attention to the limitations of the various theories of culture. First of all, he describes Othering, the “demonization of a particular foreign Other” (Holliday, 2010, p. 1). By adopting a critical cosmopolitan approach, namely that the “common perceptions of culture are recognized as being ideological and constructed by political interest” (p. 2), he argues that these cultural theories originate from a Western perspective and disregard those cultural experiences that were marginalized (Holliday, 2010, p. 2). Moreover, these theories are prone to overgeneralize and oversimplify cultures (p. 3). Lastly, Holliday critiques individualism and collectivism as “basic icons of an idealized Self and a demonized Other” (2010, p. 3).

To conclude, Hofstede (1994) originally defined four cultural dimensions based on which cultures can be categorized and compared to one another. According to the author, the American culture is the most individualist among the 76 countries that were in the original study, whereas Hungarian culture is the third most individualist. Both cultures are characterized by small power distance; however, that of the United States is slightly smaller. Another relative similarity can be noted in the masculinity aspect; Hungary is the third most masculine culture, while the United States is the nineteenth. Regarding the uncertainty avoidance dimension, it can be seen that the United States is more uncertainty tolerant, whereas Hungary is towards the uncertainty avoidance end of the scale.

	Hungary	The United States
Individualism vs. collectivism	IDV 80 – slightly less strong individualism	IDV 91 – strong individualism
Power distance	PDI 55 – slightly larger power distance	PDI 40 – small power distance
Masculinity vs. femininity	MAS 88 – strong masculinity	MAS 62 – less masculine society
Uncertainty avoidance	UAI 82 – strong uncertainty avoiding	UAI 46 – uncertainty tolerant

Table 1 – The four cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1994)

2.3 Studies with a similar focus

Similar studies have been conducted about native English speaker teachers' cultural experience in Hungary. In her BA thesis, Tóth (2013) examined the cultural differences between Hungary, the United States and the United Kingdom. After the analysis of three theories of cultural dimensions by Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hall, the author compared the experiences of an American and a British teacher living in Hungary. Not only did she describe the two participants' personal experiences according to these models, but she also focused on how to achieve deeper understanding between cultures. Her findings show that Hungary is rather collectivist, more masculine, more uncertainty tolerant and has larger power distance than the United States. A limitation of her study is that she only asked one American using a written questionnaire.

Native English speakers living in Hungary can learn about the culture from guide books and from the accounts of their fellow citizens. Although these books are primarily concerned with famous sights and everyday life, they provide fundamental information to anyone who wishes to understand Hungarian culture. The different editions of the *TimeOut Budapest Guide* (1996) are unique since their authors are native English speakers who have been living in Hungary and thus can provide both the outsider's and the insider's points of view. Although the book's focus is Budapest, there are inevitable

mentions and descriptions of some basic aspects of Hungarian culture; such as language use, history, cultural activities, and even the place of minorities (women, children and homosexuals) in the city is highlighted.

Another interesting reading about Hungary's culture for native English speakers is the book *What they saw in Hungary* (Zöld&Kelecsényi, 1988), which is a collection of stories by British and American travelers. Americans may find essays about American-Hungarian relations, for instance in connection with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, or Franklin D. Roosevelt. Reading this book, one can learn that the history of the two nations have been intertwined many times in the past, among them when the Crown of St. Stephen, one of the central treasures of Hungary, was kept by the United States Army. These stories may influence an American's opinion of their personal relationship with Hungary; moreover, knowing about them might lead to a higher understanding of Hungarian culture and people.

Lastly, Zsuzsanna Ardó (2000) published a book in the *Culture shock!* series about Hungary. Those who wish to better understand Hungarian culture may find this book useful and enjoyable to read due to its humor and self-criticism regarding the author's own culture. The author herself is an authentic source since she is of Hungarian origin; in addition, she has lived in the United States and Canada. Not only does the book give a new perspective regarding the big C elements of culture (such as famous Hungarians, language, celebrations), but it also gives an insight to the hidden elements – why Hungarians behave in a certain way in situations, as well as the fundamental values, parts of Hungarians' identity and societal issues. There is a chapter on Education which might be of great importance to teachers aiming to work in Hungary.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that cultural dimensions are useful to identify the different characteristics of countries and are also a great help in comparing different cultures. Although Hofstede originally described four dimensions, there are two that were added later: long-term orientation and indulgence. Due to the character limitation of this paper, the aforementioned dimensions had to be omitted from the analysis; however, they would definitely be worth analyzing. Nevertheless, the four dimensions that were described also gave a relatively detailed image of the cultures of the United States and of Hungary. The core values of individualism, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, competition, material wealth and hard work can be translated to the cultural dimensions of high individualism, small power distance, masculinity and uncertainty tolerance in the case of the United States. In contrast, it can be stated that the Hungarian culture is less individual, the power distance is larger, more masculine and characterized by uncertainty avoidance. Although conclusions should not be drawn solely based on Hofstede's model, it can function as a solid basis on which a foreigner can build in case of preparing for an intercultural encounter.

III. Research design and methods

In this chapter the research process is described in detail. First, the research questions are listed. Then, the participants and settings are introduced. The following subsection deals with the methods of data collection, followed by the methods of data analysis. Lastly, the limitations of the study are addressed.

3.1. Research questions

From the literature review it seemed that researchers have been analyzing Western cultures for decades; moreover, recently there has been a tendency to focus on Eastern cultures as well. However, little is known about the Central- and Eastern-European cultures in comparison with Western cultures. Being a native Hungarian and an American Studies major, my personal interest also drew me to these inquiries. The questions that this study is aimed to address are the following:

- a. What are the experiences of Americans living in Hungary regarding the similarities and differences of the two cultures?
- b. How do these experiences correspond to the model of cultural dimensions?

3.2. Methods of data collection

My goal was to conduct interviews with natural-born citizens of the United States who had been working in Hungary as teachers for at least a period of 2 school years. In order to find participants, I advertised my research in social media groups for expatriates in Hungary, as well as used personal networks. The reason behind choosing teachers as participants is that they have an easy access to many aspects of culture through school life, since school culture can be compared to culture in a broader sense given the fact that both are the “results [of] conscious and unconscious perspectives, values, interactions, and practices” and are shaped by history (“School culture”, 2013).

The reason behind using guided interviews was their flexibility and adaptability (Bell, 2005). Originally, I had nine questions; however, during the interviews when it seemed necessary, I reframed certain sentences and even had follow-up questions in some cases. Thus, the participants had the freedom to cover anything within the given topic.

I conducted seven interviews over the summer of 2018. Since public school teachers were in the center of my research, unfortunately I could not use one of the interviews because it turned out during our conversation that my interviewee had been teaching in the business world. Another set of data from another interview was unfortunately lost due to technical issues. Therefore, for this analysis I am going to use five interviews, out of which two were conducted face-to-face and three on Skype due to geographical obstacles.

In the winter of 2018, I sent out a questionnaire to these five participants with some further enquiries. This was necessary since during the analysis it turned out that some participants described their answers in great detail, while others omitted a few pieces of information that were significant for understanding the results. This questionnaire was filled out by four of the five interviewees. The interview questions and the questionnaire can be found in the Appendices (Appendix A, B).

3.3. Participants and settings

In order to keep the participants' identities hidden I will use pseudonyms. Alice spent two years (2011-2013) in Miskolc and taught both in a Catholic and a public school. She is originally from New York City. Anne moved to Hungary in 2016 and is now spending her third year as an English teacher in Budapest. Before coming to Hungary, she had lived in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates where she also worked as a teacher. She is from Brighton, Michigan. Emma moved to Hungary after she had finished her college studies and had done a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course in 2005

and have been living here ever since. She is from Hastings, Michigan. Jane also came to Hungary after having spent some time in the United Arab Emirates, although she is from Seattle, Washington. She worked in Gödöllő between 2013 and 2018. Winston, a history teacher who first worked here between 2012 and 2014, and then after having spent a few years in China and in the United States, he moved back in 2017. He is from Chicago, Illinois. All of them are in their thirties. The following table wishes to give an overview of these teachers:

	originally from	teaching background	teaching in Hungary	city of teaching
Alice	New York City, New York	Bachelor's degree in Education	2011-2013	Miskolc
Anne	Brighton, Michigan	previously taught in the United Arab Emirates	2016-present	Budapest
Emma	Hastings, Minnesota	minor in teaching English, TEFL	2005-present	Szolnok
Jane	Seattle, Washington	Master of Science in Education	2013-2018	Gödöllő
Winston	Chicago, Illinois	History teacher in Chicago for 6 years	2012-2014, 2017-present	Budapest

Table 2 - Participants

3.4. Methods of data analysis

The research started with selecting the relevant literature and setting my focus. The interviews were conducted over a period of three months from June to August 2018. For the analysis, I used the typed interview transcripts, looked for patterns and emerging categories, and compared my findings to the literature review.

3.5. Limitations of the study

First of all, the small number of participants were purposefully selected to take part in the research. Therefore, there is a possibility that they were naturally more open to share

their experiences than those who had more negative ones. Another limitation is that only those teachers were asked who had been working here for at least two years. Thus, those who left earlier for a variety of reasons, including potential negative experiences, were not invited to participate at all.

Secondly, the study lacks the third perspective necessary for triangulation (Bell, 2005). Besides the perspectives of the teachers and the analysis of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2010), I intended to ask an employee of the Central European Teaching Program to investigate the point of view of the host organization as well. Due to lack of response from their part, the analysis of a third viewpoint or perspective had to be omitted.

Conclusions regarding the whole of American and Hungarian cultures must not be drawn from five interviews. Since the United States in itself is a culturally diverse and enormous country, the participants came from significantly different cultural backgrounds, even though they had the same national passport.

IV. Results and discussion

The participants came from different parts of the United States, they taught in different regions in Hungary, and there were further differences regarding the type of high school where they were employed and their teaching background. Nevertheless, they mentioned similar experiences that can be attributed to the fact that their past cultural experiences in the United States must have had a lot in common. What follows is a summary of their experiences focused on the four cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010).

4.1. Individualism versus collectivism

The individualism versus collectivism dimension is easily visible in schools. First of all, Winston, the history teacher from Chicago who taught in a vocational school in Budapest mentioned that he really enjoyed the great amount of autonomy that he experienced here, he said it made the job “far more intrinsically motivating”, because he did not “feel like someone is over [his] shoulders demanding [he is] doing a great job”. His experience can be related to Hofstede’s results regarding Hungary being a highly individualist culture.

Secondly, the students’ level of English also caused shock. The problem for Winston was that although he was promised high level groups, he realized that the students’ level varied from “completely fluent to couldn’t put five words together”, which was due to the fact that groups were separated on the basis of the students’ final exam focus. Two other participants, Emma and Jane also mentioned the varying language skills of students that made teaching more challenging. Therefore, it can be stated that the students’ individual abilities were not the sole basis of group formation; other aspects besides English knowledge determined a student’s place in a group.

Thirdly, Winston mentioned a few other things that no one else did, such as that American students are “more focused on the end product” and “not interested in learning anything”, which according to him roots in the American core value of competition which is not typical of Hungary. Competition is together with individualism in the core value pairs that were enumerated by Datesman et al. (2014). Winston also connected this core value to bullying being “not even comparable” to the situation in the United States, which was “the single biggest difference” he found regarding the two school cultures. He also talked about American students being more confident and self-reliant which resulted in them being better at presenting and public speaking. He again connected it to the American core value of individualism. He argued that students in the United States “were taught to stand on their own feet”, and also mentioned that “everything can become a potential confrontation in the school”.

4.2. Power distance

According to the respondents, one of the most essential differences between the two school cultures is connected to the power distance dimension. It can be best illustrated with the contrast between the teacher-centered education process in Hungary and the student-centeredness of the United States. Emma mentioned that in Hungary, the policy is “to do what I say”, while in the United States, the teacher “is a guide, and not the source of knowledge”. In Jane’s words, “teachers were gods” and “students were nothing” in Hungarian schools. In connection with teachers having more power in Hungary, she explained that students were “afraid to speak honestly because they thought if the teacher did not agree, they would get a bad mark”. She also mentioned marking as being essentially different in the United States and in Hungary: she said that giving no justification for the marks “would absolutely never work in the US” while in Hungary, in her experience, teachers could randomly distribute marks based on them liking or disliking

certain students. Another sign of the teacher-centeredness, which was mentioned by Jane, was that in Hungary students could have several different tests on the same day without any previous announcement, whereas in American schools, students had to have a test schedule at the beginning of the school year, thus teachers had to plan everything a year in advance. All of these experiences support that the power distance is larger at schools in Hungary than in the United States.

Another aspect of the power distance dimension appeared as well: taboos in connection with the relationship between teachers and students. Winston talked about his first “szalagavató” (prom) afterparty. At the beginning he was shocked by the fact that teachers attended an event which was clearly about often underage students drinking and having fun after their formal prom. With his words, he felt that he was “one Instagram photo away of never working again”. But to his shock, nothing of that sort happened and eventually he realized he liked this way because it made teaching easier since “the wall between students and teachers is not insurmountable”. Anne talked about laws being less stringent in Hungary, drawing a parallel between one of her relatives’ and her own experience. Her relative was teaching in the United States and got in trouble because of giving personalized handshakes to students every morning, which was not authorized and thus, illegal. She found it surprising that in Hungary, it was normal to invite a class to one’s family cottage for the weekend or have coffee or go to the cinema with students. She found that there was a “legal fear” in the United States which did not exist in Hungary, and “people are not as worried about teachers abusing their powers” in Hungary as in the US. Jane, however, said that the relationship between teachers and students was much more formal and rigid in Hungary because of the fear students felt. The fact that their accounts are in contrast indicates that there are individual circumstances that have to be considered. Jane taught in a small town, and while both Winston and Anne taught in the

capital city, Winston was in a vocational school, whereas Anne was in a prestigious elite high school.

4.3. Masculinity versus femininity

In masculine societies, people are ambitious and competitive. Students in masculine societies are also more concerned with their grades. Jane's experience with grading can be used as an illustration for this dimension as well. Winston also talked about grading and shared a similar story: to his surprise, in Hungary he had the right to give any mark he wanted; however, in the United States, students would approach him to change their marks and if he chose not to, they could even sue him. He considers American culture to be more competitive than Hungarian, which is in opposition of the two cultures values defined by Hofstede. This can be a sign of the fact that competitiveness can fit into more than one cultural dimension.

Academic excellence has an influential role in masculine societies. Alice believed that in the United States, students are under more pressure to go to college, while in Hungary, it is not so mandatory. It must be considered that she compared her experiences in a high school in Miskolc with that in New York.

4.4. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance in schools is visible in the way students expect their teachers to know all the answers (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 205). Winston said that American students are "far more willing to challenge their educators" on the material and on the results as well. Moreover, they are not trying to avoid confrontations, unlike Hungarian students. Jane's experience in connection with critical thinking shows the same. She described her struggles as her being unable to "get students to understand the importance of critical thinking", because they were "hesitant to do creative projects that

did not involve memorizing something and making a Power Point of it”. She believed that “ultimately [her] efforts to help them think creatively was a failure”.

People seem to be less stressed in uncertainty tolerant cultures according to Hofstede et al. (2010). However, the interviewees experienced less stress in Hungary than in the United States. Winston believed people were under a “much healthier amount” of stress than in the US. Jane and Anne both mentioned exact numbers illustrating how much work they had; Jane said that before arriving she was promised 18 lessons per week but ended up having 26. Her initial shock was due to the fact that she taught 7 groups, which meant more than 300 students. Anne compared her 20 hours of teaching per week to her cousin, who is a teacher in the United States, who has 7 classes per day. She also said that while there are maximum 18 students in her groups, her cousin has 20-30 children in each class. Anne believes that in the United States, the teaching conditions are so difficult that “unless you are in a really good school, you will be out of teaching within 10 years”. She was certain she would never teach in public education in the United States. While she enjoys teaching in Hungary, she also thinks that the salary is “super-super low for the work we do”, and American teachers are paid more in her opinion. She also talked about how diverse the American system is compared to the Hungarian and how they depend on local taxes and regulations, which is likely to be the reason why it is more stressful to be a teacher in the United States than in Hungary.

V. Conclusion

The aims of this research were first to compare the cultures of the United States and of Hungary based on four of Hofstede's dimensions (2010), and second to provide insights into the cultural experiences of American teachers working in Hungary. The literature review showed that the two cultures have similar values in certain cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede et al. (2010); namely individualism, power distance and masculinity. On the other hand, they differ regarding uncertainty avoidance.

The research revealed that Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2010) are not enough to compare the two cultures. Even though the participants shared the majority of the experiences, there were serious contradictions between some of the accounts. Individual circumstances such as their teaching background, place of origin or the type of school in which they taught all influenced their experiences. Based on their accounts, both cultures are individualists, however, the United States is more so. In their opinion, the power distance between teachers and students is typically smaller in Hungary than in the United States. Judging by the participants' accounts of competitiveness and grading, it can be shown that the United States is slightly more masculine. Uncertainty avoidance is more typical of Hungary as reflected by the students' unwillingness to question their teachers; however, the amount of stress is perceived to be less in Hungary than in the United States, which seems to contradict Hofstede's theory about the correlation between uncertainty avoidance and stress.

The limitations of the study also need to be summarized. A major limitation is that the research is only based on five accounts out of the many Americans who choose to teach in Hungary. Therefore, overarching conclusions regarding the two countries' cooperation in schools cannot be drawn. It is, however, possible to see the positive

tendency that American teachers continue to choose Hungary and they are sufficiently supported during their time in the country.

Further research is needed to investigate the host organizations' role in this process. Another interesting area would be to examine how teachers and students in the host schools relate to working with American teachers.

Hopefully, this study was able to show some of the similarities and differences between the two educational cultures and can prove useful to the readers, should they be scholars, teachers or students, either from the United States or from Hungary.

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Appendix A – Interview questions

1. How did it occur to you to come to teach in Hungary?
2. Can you describe the whole process from the decision until your first workday?
3. How does your acculturation graph look like?
4. How did you prepare before your arrival? Did you get any help?
5. What kind of support did you receive in Hungary?
6. What did you miss? Is there anything you wish you had known?
7. How would you describe the differences between the American and the Hungarian values?
8. What was the most difficult to adjust to?
9. What are your current feelings toward Hungary?

Appendix B - Questionnaire

1. First name
2. Age
3. Where are you from? (City, state)
4. Your teaching qualifications
5. Your previous teaching experiences