Culture and Leadership Preferences in Slovakia and Slovenia: Comparative Study Based on the GLOBE Student Research

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Abstract:

   Authors present results of the international research GLOBE Student concerning Slovakia and Slovenia. The nine cultural dimensions, on the basis of which the comparative analysis of obtained data was realized, significantly influence various aspects of management and organizational behavior. Authors pose several research questions: How do the perceptions of Slovak and Slovenian respondents concerning the cultural practices differ? How do the cultural values of Slovak and Slovenian sample of respondents differ? Which leadership styles are preferred by the Slovak respondents? Do their preferences in this regard differ from the preferences of their Slovenian counterparts? Based on the research results, could be a cultural convergence between these two societies expected?

Keywords: *GLOBE Student project, culture, leadership styles, intercultural communication, Slovakia, Slovenia*

JEL Classification: M16

Introduction

   Professional economic and managerial communities as well as academics are for more than twenty years confronted with the results of a leading international comparative research project entitled the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research). The GLOBE project, initiated at the Wharton Business School of the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1990s, which investigates business leadership and culture worldwide, became a basis

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for developing an international GLOBE community. Many researchers have joined the GLOBE project main research objective to determine the extent to which the practices and values of business leadership are universal and the extent to which they are specific to a specific country or a cluster of countries (House et al., 2004, p. 3). They have found that cultural universal attributes as well as culturally contingent attributes exist, which enabled them to form implicit leadership theories in several cultural environments (House et al., 2004). Their research results are based on empirical surveys carried out among middle managers of 62 countries (Chhokar et al., 2008, p. 1). The research results represent a rich mosaic of new findings and knowledge, not completed yet, but still adding new colored pieces to complete it.

Our research interest is linked to the GLOBE project main research objective but we raise somehow specific questions: What is the nature of culture-related changes that could be expected in the future? More specifically, what are the perceptions of today's cultural practices as well as preferences related to cultural values of students ergo prospective managers? What are their visions of the effective and worthy to follow leadership styles? By building on the research findings of the GLOBE research, we assume that prospective managers will be recruited out of today's university students. Therefore, we started the GLOBE Student research project, which focuses on students of selected study programs, and their perception of practices and values related to certain societal cultural dimensions and leadership styles.[1]

The GLOBE Student project was initiated in the year 2008. It is organized as permanent project, which attracted researchers from seven European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany (as former Eastern Germany), Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia at the beginning. Researchers from the stated countries have already produced first research results.

Here our purpose is to contribute to the body of knowledge about cultural practices in the Slovakian and Slovenian society, in which university students as prospective managers are raised. We do not handle all culturally endorsed characteristics, but only those that contribute to a great extend to the nature of managerial practices (see table 1). We aim at investigation of cultural practices, cultural values and preferred leadership styles from the viewpoint of our respondents based on our research methodology from a specific angle. Thus we explore how the cultural practices, cultural values, and preferences of leadership styles

differ between the two countries and whether we could expect some convergence in those variables in the future. The rationale for this bicultural scope is that both countries belong to Slavic nations, and have similar history-related experience as well as current social circumstances. Both societies belonged to the socialist block of countries. They had undergone the transformation process from the socialist economy to the market economy. They gained autonomy and independence quite early after the fall of communism (in 1993 in Slovakia and in 1991 in Slovenia). They entered the European Union (in the year 2004), and both countries accepted the Euro currency as the first post-socialistic countries (in 2009 in Slovakia and in 2007 in Slovenia). In the process of new currency implementation the Slovak republic representatives draw from Slovenian experiences, and heavily cooperated with Slovenian political and economic institutions. Today both countries cooperate substantially on behalf of economic relations.

Despite of the common Slavic roots we explore whether there are any considerable differences between the two societies based on their cultural practices and values that interfere with managerial praxis. Such an in-depth comparison of Slovakian and Slovenian culture is still absent in the literature. Therefore, in this article we decided to offer fine-grained information resulting from our study on cultural and leadership-related distinctions in both countries.

The presentation of the empirical findings will be systematized by offering answers to the following research questions: 1. How do the perceptions of Slovak and Slovenian respondents concerning the cultural practices differ? 2. How do the cultural values of Slovak and Slovenian sample of respondents differ? 3. Which leadership styles are preferred by the Slovak respondents? And do their preferences in this regard differ from the preferences of their Slovenian counterparts? 4. Could a certain cultural convergence be expected between these two societies?

The article is structured in six parts. After this introduction, a concise review of the GLOBE Student research theoretical background is offered, followed by a short description of the research methodology. In the next part, we present the empirical findings of our study. In the last part of the paper research results are discussed followed by a summarizing conclusion.

1. On the GLOBE Student Research Theoretical Background and Previous Relevant Empirical Findings

The GLOBE researchers delineate culture as shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations (House et al., 2002, p. 5). This definition sets emphasis on the aspect of sharing within a particular community

of people, who solve problems through mutual communication, interaction, and learning, while sharing collective values, assumptions, and concepts of what is important, acceptable or moral, and on the other hand, of what is immoral, unacceptable, or trivial. On the basis of the act of sharing, otherwise differentiated group of people assigns similar meaning as well as accent to things and events, by which they are surrounded. This is the true result of culture-bound influence, which, most of the time unconsciously, affects behavior of people.[2]

The GLOBE researchers based their assessment of culture on a psychological and behavioral tradition, which assumes that shared values are incorporated in behaviors, policies and practices. Because of the empirical research needs they operationalized culture into nine cultural dimensions: (1) uncertainty avoidance, (2) power distance, (3) societal/institutional collectivism, (4) in-group/family collectivism, (5) gender egalitarianism, (6) assertiveness, (7) future orientation, (8) performance orientation, and (9) humane orientation (House et al., 2002, pp. 5 – 6).[3] Table 1 presents in brief the definitions of nine cultural dimensions:

T a b l e   1

Cultural Dimensions Studied on the GLOBE Student Research

Cultural Dimension	Definition
Power distance	The degree to which members of a society expect and agree that power in society should be unequally shared.
Uncertainty avoidance	The extent to which members of a society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms of behavior to ease the unpredictability of future events.
Societal/institutional collectivism	The degree to which members of an society encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.
In-group/family collectivism	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations and families.
Assertiveness	The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.
Gender egalitarianism	The extent to which a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination.
Future orientation	The degree to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification.
Humane orientation	The extent to which individuals encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring and kind to others.
Performance orientation	The degree to which society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

Source: Based on House, Javidan and Dorfman (2001), pp. 495 – 496.

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[2] It is important to note that the GLOBE Student research builds on the same methodology as the former GLOBE research itself. Because of the wide heterogeneity of explanations what culture is, researchers find it often difficult to measure existing cultures. The GLOBE researchers decided to use a number of cultural attributes focused on shared modal values of collectives for measurement purposes. These cultural values are expressed in response to questionnaire items in the form of judgments of »what should be«. Hence, in this research cultural values represent what is expected or hoped for in a society, not what is actually materialized. On the other hand, the measurement of modal cultural practices is based on indicators that assess »what is«, or »what are« common behaviors, institutional practices, proscriptions and prescriptions in a particular society (House et al., 2002, p. 5).

Organizational leadership is in the GLOBE project defined as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" (House et al., 2002, p. 5). The GLOBE conceptual model, so-called *Culturally endorsed leadership theory*, works on the assumption, that culture plays important role in influencing preferences of members of a given culture about what leadership traits and behaviors are effective and worthy to follow (Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck, 2004, p. 671).[4]

Researchers in the GLOBE project empirically identified six leadership styles from a large pool of theoretically defined leadership behavior patterns or leadership styles. The GLOBE Student builds on the same patterns. These are (House et al., 2004, p. 14; Steyrer et al., 2008, p. 365): (1) charismatic/value based leadership, (2) team-oriented leadership, (3) participative leadership, (4) humane-oriented leadership, (5) autonomous leadership, and (6) self-protective leadership. A charismatic/value-based leadership reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to successfully demand high performance outcomes from others, based on firmly held core values. Team-oriented leadership emphasizes effective team building and team cohesiveness, resulting in mutual support and the creation of a common purpose. Participative leadership develops a high level of involvement of subordinates in making and implementing decisions. Humane-oriented leadership is described as developing high degree to which leaders encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others. Autonomous leadership refers to independent and individualistic leadership, whereas self-protective leadership describes leadership behavior that is self-centred, status conscious, procedural and conflict inducing. GLOBE research

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[3] First three GLOBE dimensions are rooted in cultural dimensions defined originally by Hofstede (2005), however, the collectivism was in the GLOBE research differentiated into two separate dimensions: societal/institutional dimension linked with societal emphasis on collectivism disseminated by laws, societal policies, etc., and in-group/family linked with the existence of cohesive groups within the society, like family, work team, etc. Further, the masculinity dimension originally developed by Hofstede was differentiated in the GLOBE research into two dimensions: gender egalitarianism and assertiveness. Future orientation was derived from the conception of intercultural differences of Kluckholn and Strodtbeck. The performance orientation originates from the work on the achievement orientation of McClelland. Finally, the dimension of humane orientation is derived from the research of Kluckholn and Strodtbeck, the work on affiliative motives of McClelland, and Putnams' work on the nature of civil society (House et al., 2001, p. 496).

[4] The theory behind the GLOBE research project is an integration of implicit leadership theory, value-belief theory of culture, implicit motivational theory, and structural contingency theory of organizational form and effectiveness (House et al., 2004, p. 16). This integrated theory is rooted more or less in the contemporary leadership approaches, but also includes ideas of contingency theories. Its central proposition is that "the attributes and entities that differentiate a specified culture are predictive of organizational practices and leader attributes and behaviors that are most frequently enacted and most effective in that culture" (House et al., 2004, p. 17).

findings regarding leadership styles have shown that some of them are seen as good and effective or bad and unwanted in all countries and regions, while others are more culturally contingent (Lang et al., 2008, p. 111).

2. Research Methodology

Most variables in our study are based on the GLOBE research (House et al., 2004). The relevant GLOBE Beta version questionnaire for national culture and leadership styles was used with some modifications required because of having students and not managers as respondents in our survey.[5] We used a double blind-checked translated version of the adapted questionnaire into relevant national languages. Regarding the culture-related scales used in the questionnaire the respondents were asked to express their agreement with a given statement using a seven-point Likert type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree). Answering questions related to the leadership in the second and fourth part of the questionnaire demanded from respondents to assign to the stated leadership attributes appropriate number of points from the same seven-point scale according to their assessment of the effectiveness of the stated attribute. The last part of the questionnaire collected some demographic information from respondents.

Research population was defined as business and engineering students studying at the *Comenius University in Bratislava* and *Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava* in Slovakia and at the *University of Ljubljana* in Slovenia. Business and engineering students were chosen based on the fact that both study programs are heavily present in all countries participating in the research project. Moreover, the second assumption behind this choice was that both fields of study would generate due to their pro-business orientation the prospective generation of managers. According to the common research plan for the GLOBE Student project we had to assure at least 300 respondents in each country sample, distributed as evenly as possible regarding business and engineering studies and undergraduate and graduate levels. Table 2 shows joint sample structure of our respondents, which gave us usable data.

The Slovakian respondent's population consists of 51.9% male and 48.1% female students, the Slovenian have 60.3% male and 39.7% female respondents. 44.8% of the Slovakian respondents were undergraduates and the rest were graduates. The Slovenian respondents were equally distributed on the both study degrees.[6] Surveys were carried out in the second part of the year 2008 and first half of the year 2009.

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[5] For the GLOBE Student questionnaire see Čater and Lang (2011).

T a b l e 2

Joint Respondents' Sample Structure

Country	Total number of respondents	Respondents from business studies	Respondents from engineering studies	Respondents from other related fields
Slovakia	339	182	136	21
Slovenia	300	150	150	–
Total	639	332	286	21

Source: Research results.

Our main research hypothesis was that Slovakian and Slovenian respondents do not differ significantly regarding their perceptions of current cultural practices and preferences in regard to cultural values as well as leadership styles among themselves. With respect to culture, we can assume that "the younger generation – and students are part of it – grown up and socialized in a global world of internet and MTV, may share more common and universal values, than the group of middle managers from the GLOBE study" (Lang, 2011, p. 8), and may have a more critical opinion about the existing cultural practices in their countries. Students' international mobility, radically increased in the last two decades, might contribute to a harmonization of their preferences, too.

For the calculation of the scales first the original GLOBE syntax was followed. Then Cronbach Alpha for each scale to prove if scales are reliable was calculated. In some cases we found that Cronbach Alpha could be increased if certain items were excluded or different items used. We improved the reliability of our questionnaire in this way. Hence the SELF-scales were created for the individual constructs.[7]

We processed the collected empirical data by using SPSS 18. First, a descriptive statistical analysis was carried out for each of the two countries' samples. In the second step, significant differences in mean values for cultural dimensions as practices and as values between Slovakia and Slovenia were investigated. Finally, significant differences in mean values for different leadership styles between Slovakian and Slovenian sample were identified.

3. Research Results

We classified the research results into three parts: (1) differences between Slovakian and Slovenian respondents' perceptions of current cultural practices, (2) differences between Slovakian and Slovenian respondents' preferences concerning

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[6] More detailed information on both samples could be found in Remišová and Lašáková (2011, pp. 33 – 34) and in Čater and Pučko (2011, pp. 51 – 52).

[7] Information on SELF-scales might be provided by any member of the GLOBE Student research project on a request.

cultural values, and finally (3) differences between the two samples regarding preferences of leadership styles.

Differences Regarding Cultural Practices

We assessed culture on the basis of nine constructs as cultural dimensions, each representing specific characteristics of culture as it is (current cultural practices) and computed mean scores for each construct for Slovakian and Slovenian sample. The results are shown in Table 3.

In a qualitative sense the nature of Slovak culture from the viewpoint of our prospective managers could be delineated as rather power distant, in-group collectivistic and assertive. On the other hand, the Slovenian culture is quite in-group collectivistic and power distant, and slightly gender egalitarian and assertive.

From a different angle, the quantitative one, the comparison of responses of both samples indicate that significant differences between Slovak and Slovenian cultures lie in cultural practices related to in-group/family collectivism, societal/institutional collectivism, humane orientation of both societies, power distance, and gender egalitarianism. According to results we identified five statistically significant differences[8] between the respective societies in regard to perceived cultural practices. The Slovenian sample perceives existing cultural practices linked to gender egalitarianism, humane orientation and in-group/family collectivism as present more decisively than their counterparts in Slovakia. The Slovakian respondents, based on their life experiences and perception of the nature of Slovak society, perceive the practices related to societal/institutional collectivism and power distance as present in the Slovak culture significantly more than in the Slovenian culture.

Differences Regarding Cultural Values

The same nine GLOBE's cultural dimensions were used to find out, what are the dominant cultural values shared across the two respective societies (according to preferences of our respondents). This time the methodology was altered, and the respondents were asked to consider what their societies should be like. Research outcomes indicate the significant differences in cultural values of both societies. Further, compared with results related to culture practices they indicate to certain extend the potential character of cultural changes within the two societies. The computed mean scores for nine cultural dimensions are presented in Table 4.

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[8] The computed two-tailed significance levels, shown in Table 3, prove this conclusion, as five differences are significant at $p < 0.05$ (gender egalitarianism, humane orientation, in-group/family collectivism, societal/institutional collectivism and power distance).

T a b l e 3

Mean Scores Assessed in Regard to Cultural Practices Differentiated into the Nine Cultural Dimensions in Slovakia and Slovenia

Cultural dimension	Gender egalitarianism	Performance orientation	Humane orientation	Assertiveness	In-group/ family collectivism	Societal/ Institutional collectivism	Power distance	Future orientation	Uncertainty avoidance
Slovakia	**4.04**	4.03	**3.72**	4.38	**4.77**	**4.04**	**5.27**	3.88	4.02
Slovenia	**4.24**	4.04	**3.97**	4.24	**5.22**	**3.54**	**5.03**	3.79	4.19
Difference	**–0.20**	**–0.01**	**–0.25**	0.14	**–0.45**	**0.50**	**0.24**	0.09	–0.17
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.042	1.000	0.001	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.851	0.088

Note: Mean scores with the biggest absolute differences are written in bold. Mean scores on a 7-point scale (1 means that practices related to the cultural dimension are not at all typical for the respective society. and 7 means that practices related to the cultural dimension are very much typical for the respective society).

Source: Research results.

T a b l e 4

Mean Scores Assessed in Regard to the Cultural Values Differentiated into the Nine Cultural Dimensions in Slovakia and Slovenia

Cultural dimension	Gender egalitarianism	Performance orientation	Humane orientation	Assertiveness	In-group/ family collectivism	Societal/ Institutional collectivism	Power distance	Future orientation	Uncertainty avoidance
Slovakia	5.62	5.67	5.43	3.37	**6.12**	4.75	**2.36**	5.43	5.41
Slovenia	5.50	5.78	5.27	3.45	**5.69**	4.54	**2.78**	5.17	5.53
Difference	0.12	–0.11	0.16	–0.08	**0.43**	0.21	**–0.42**	0.26	–0.12
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.901	0.411	0.193	0.983	0.000	0.084	0.000	0.082	0.655

Note: Mean scores with the biggest absolute differences are written in bold. Mean scores on a 7-point scale (1 means that values related to the cultural dimension are not at all preferred in the respective society. and 7 means that values related to the cultural dimension are very much preferred in the respective society).

Source: Research results.

Slovak results differ at first glance in four out of nine cultural dimensions from the Slovenian results. Table 4 shows that five assessed mean scores for cultural dimensions in Slovenia are in absolute terms apparently quite similar to the relevant mean scores computed for the Slovakian sample, but statistical tests discovered that mean scores of responses in both samples do differ significantly only in relation to two cultural dimensions. Results for dimensions of in-group/family collectivism and power distance are evidently statistically different between the two samples. On the other hand, we discovered that both samples prefer values related to all other cultural dimensions similarly. Hence, the differences in cultural values according to young Slovaks and Slovenians are much smaller than distinctions in cultural practices. These conclusions are based on the computed 2-tailed significance levels, shown in Table 4.

When comparing results for cultural practices and cultural values, the number of (statistically) significant differences in cultural practices and cultural values, as well as the same direction of desired changes in all nine dimensions in both countries, a conclusion may be drawn that perhaps due to intense globalization there might play a role some sort of convergence in values of the two samples. Examining our outcomes through a qualitative lens, according to young Slovaks the Slovak culture should be particularly in-group collectivistic, performance- -oriented and gender egalitarian. It shouldn't be power distant and should be less assertive than it is nowadays. Slovenians assume that Slovenian culture should be rather performance-oriented, in-group collectivistic, uncertainty avoidant, and gender egalitarian. As in the case of Slovakia, Slovenian society shouldn't be power distant and should be less assertive than it is nowadays.

Differences in Preferences Regarding Leadership Styles

The Globe research project empirically identified six leadership styles (House, 2004). We used the constructs of these six styles in our GLOBE Student research, too, but our own SELF-scales for the constructs were applied.[9] The collected empirical data enabled us to discover, which leadership styles are regarded by our prospective managers as the most outstanding and worthy to follow. We computed the mean scores for sets of attributes, which determine each construct. Results for the six constructs are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 does not show big absolute differences between mean scores for individual leadership styles. Statistical testing for relevant differences in mean scores shows that our first impression was correct. The preferences of the Slovak sample in comparison with the Slovenian sample are significantly different regarding personality traits and behaviors linked to only two leadership styles. The

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[9] For more information on the SELF-scales see the research methodology, part 2 in this article.

Slovenian respondents appreciate significantly more autonomous and self-protective leadership-related behaviors than the Slovakians. These results indicated that Slovenians are more tolerant to individualistic, independent, autonomous as well as normative, indirect, ritualistic, formal, and somehow cautious displays of leadership than Slovaks. Nevertheless, this does not mean that autonomous and self-protective leadership styles would be tolerated well in both cultures, only that Slovenian respondents accept behaviors related to these two styles better than Slovakian respondents do.

T a b l e 5

Mean Scores for Preferences Regarding Leadership Styles in Slovakia and Slovenia

	Charismatic/ value based style	Team-oriented style	Participative style	Humane- -oriented style	Self-protective style	Autonomous style
Slovakia	5.51	5.76	4.34	4.72	**2.20**	**3.82**
Slovenia	5.50	5.79	4.50	4.73	**2.61**	**4.33**
Difference	0.01	–0.03	–0.16	–0.01	**–0.41**	**–0.51**
Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	0.998	0.402	1.000	0.000	0.001

Note: Mean scores with the biggest absolute differences are written in bold. Mean scores on a 7-point scale (1 = this behavior or characteristic greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader, and 7 = this behavior or characteristic contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader).

Source: Research results.

On the other hand, both groups of respondents share nearly the same level of preference towards the charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative and humane-oriented leadership styles. The Slovaks and Slovenians assigned the highest scores to traits and behaviors associated with the team-oriented and charismatic/value-based styles, which are the two leadership styles assessed as the most appropriate by the whole Central European countries cluster's respondents, too (compare Lang, 2011, p. 103).

4. Discussion

Our empirical research results do support to a certain extent our basic hypothesis formulated in the part two of this article. We found that more significant differences exist regarding perceptions of current cultural practices than in preferences linked to cultural values. The Slovakian and Slovenian respondents seem to share to rather high degree cultural values (with significant differences discovered in only two cultural dimensions). Therefore we can argue that we identified a substantial potential for the process of harmonization of both cultures on this ground. The discovered preferences toward various leadership styles also offer a ground for a strong assumption that both groups of respondents share to a great extent the same value orientations.

The statistical testing revealed that the Slovakian and Slovenian cultural practices according to our sample of young generation of prospective managers differ in all but four cultural dimensions. Table 3 also shows that the cultural practices related to societal/institutional collectivism and power distance, which differ significantly between two countries, are more typical for the Slovakian than for the Slovenian society, while practices associated with gender egalitarianism, humane orientation and in-group/family collectivism are more characteristic for the Slovenian than for the Slovakian society.

According to the identified cultural values and their comparison with cultural practices, cultural changes could be expected in both countries evolving in the same direction within all nine cultural dimensions. Yet, it is challenging to explain, why statistically significant differences regarding in-group/family collectivism and power distance were identified in both practices and values. Most probably, both cultural traits play an important role in both societies. As Bakacsi et al. (2002) stated in their research results interpretation, societies with power distant practices experience a "pendulum effect" causing extreme desire to relieve this pressure, ending in value orientation characterized by extremely low affinity to power distance. This assumption could be applied also to Slovakian and Slovenian case. The Slovakian respondents assessed the level of power distance in cultural practices as higher than the Slovenians in our survey did. Both groups of our respondents assume that the level of power distance should be lower, but on the other hand the Slovakian respondents would like to have it significantly lower (their mean score being of 2.36 in comparison with the Slovenian students' mean score of 2.78). Bakacsi et al. (2002, p. 76) got in their research the assessed level of power distance in cultural practices in Slovenia described by the mean score of 5.33 and in cultural values described by the mean score of 2.57. Their respondents were middle managers, but the assessed levels of power distance as "it is" and as "it should be" do not differ radically from our findings, which are based on the responses of prospective managers. It is a pity that we can't compare our relevant research results for power distance with those of Bakacsi et al. (2002) for Slovakia, because they didn't include this country in their sample.

On the other hand, cultural practices linked to the dimension of in-group/family collectivism, as the most typical feature of Slovenian culture, and the second most typical characteristic of Slovakian culture, remain to be considerably preferred not only on the level practices but also on the level of values. Our results confirm in concordance with many previous research papers (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005; Bakacsi et al., 2002; House et al., 2004) that collectivism is a persistent and pertinent cultural characteristic in the Central and Eastern European region. Moreover, the relevant mean score of 6.12 found for in-group/family

collectivism for values in Slovakia, is above the average mean score (it amounts to 5.61 points) of the seven countries participating in the GLOBE Student project (Catana et al., 2011, p. 8). Bakacsi et al. (2002, p. 76) while researching value orientations in Central and Eastern Europe (sample of middle managers, Slovakia was not included in their research) got the highest mean score for in-group/family collectivism for Russia (it amounts to 5.80 points), but it is still lower than the Slovakian mean score in our research.

If we compare our research results with the results of the perhaps most well--known research stream related to intercultural management studies, that is with Hofstede's research results (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), we reveal some interesting outcomes, too. Hofstede discovered through his well-known empirical survey carried out among the employees of the IBM's subsidiaries in 1971 in many countries the characteristics of national cultural dimensions (a cultural dimension is defined as set of cultural attributes identified in empirical research). His research left out Slovakia at first, but Slovenia as a part of Yugoslavia at that time was indirectly included.[10] He was able to present research findings for Slovenia for only four of his five dimensions, i.e. power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. He had not enough data for the fifth dimension, i.e. long-term orientation (Hofstede, 2002, p. 100). Later Hofstede carried out his study for Slovakia, too. His research findings confirm to a great extent our research outcomes. According to Hofstede's data, Slovakia is indexed higher on power distance and masculinity, and lower on collectivism and uncertainty avoidance than Slovenia.[11] Our results are in concordance with these findings, too. The cultural dimension of power distance and collectivism (i. e. in--group/family collectivism) was already discussed. Next, the masculinity dimension was in the GLOBE Student research differentiated into two separate dimensions, assertiveness and gender egalitarianism. According to theoretical propositions set in the Hofstede's research (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005) and in the House et al. GLOBE research (House et al., 2002; House et al., 2004) the higher the assertiveness in culture, the higher the masculinity, and the higher the gender egalitarianism the lower the masculinity index should be. Slovak culture in the GLOBE Student research was proved to be more assertive and less gender egalitarian than Slovenian culture. Finally, the same congruence between our and Hofstede's results applies also for the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, the mean score being for Slovenia 4.19 and for Slovakia 4.02. Although different

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[10] Hofstede collected data for his famous IBM study from the Yugoslav agent of IBM in 1971. In 1993 he went back to these data and split them into Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia; while the IBM did not have sufficient employees in the other Yugoslav federal republics (Hofstede, 2002, p. 100).

[11] For the exact indexes in the four cultural dimensions for Slovakia and Slovenia visit <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php>.

methodologies were applied in both researches, results seem to be to a great extent consistent.

The next interesting result of our research relates to the discovered high level of commonalities in cultural values between the two societies that points to the existence of similar preferences towards different leadership styles in these two countries. The existence of the relationship between the cultural values and the most preferred leadership styles is an accepted thesis in the literature (see for instance House et al., 2002; Musek, 2003; Kopelman et al., 1990). The GLOBE leadership model, which is utilized also in our study, is based on the assumption, that "leadership is a social label given to individuals if either a) their personality, attributes, and behaviors sufficiently match the observer's beliefs about leader or b) the observer attributes group success or failure to the activities of perceived leaders" (Lord and Mahler, 1991 according to Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck, 2004, p. 670). This assumption derives from in leadership theory known as the *Implicit leadership theory*, which the GLOBE conceptual model extended to *Culturally endorsed leadership theory*. This model works on the assumption, that culture plays an important role in influencing perceptions of the members of a given culture about what leadership attributes and behaviors are desirable and effective (Dorfman, Hanges, Brodbeck. 2004, p. 671). In an extension of these findings Remišová and Lašáková (2011, p. 44) analyzed the relationships between the cultural values and leadership styles on the basis of the Slovak sample. They found that out of fifty-two correlation coefficients thirty-seven were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Čater and Pučko (2011, pp. 61 – 62) studied the same relationships on the basis of the Slovenian sample, but took only three differently defined leadership styles (i.e. task-oriented, people-oriented and authoritarian). They found that twenty-four out of twenty-seven correlation coefficients were significant ($p < 0.05$).

The methodological approach to the study of cultural values and leadership styles in GLOBE Student project implies both to be the desired end-states. Our empirical results for the both constructs are internally consistent. The self-protective leadership style is typical for a leader who is rather self-interested, loner, normative, indirect, ritualistic, and formal. Leader with this style is particularly power distant, too. In Slovakian as well as in Slovenian sample this style was least preferred, and the same applies to the values related to power distance as a cultural dimension.

The autonomous leadership style that was the second less preferred leadership style according to the results from both samples goes hand in hand with individualistic, independent, self-sufficient, and self-governing type of leadership behavior. This style was rejected by our respondents as less effective than other

styles. It can be assumed that the lower preference for this particular style is linked to higher preference of in-group/family collectivistic values in both samples.

As for the most preferred leaders' personality traits and behaviors, those associated with the team-oriented and charismatic/value based leadership styles are apparently the most appreciated among Slovakian and Slovenian prospective managers (see mean scores in Table 5). Charismatic/value based style builds on inspiration, motivation, and high performance requirements as well as on core values. Leader should be anticipatory and prepared, intellectually stimulating, planning ahead, inspirational, risk-taker, convincing, just, trustworthy, confidence builder, dynamic, and optimistic personality. The team-oriented leader is group--oriented, collaborative, fraternal, communicative, diplomatic, effective bargainer, orderly, organized, etc.[12] These two leadership styles got the highest mean scores among all researched styles also in the GLOBE study based on Slovenian managerial sample (Bakacsi et al., 2002, p. 77). Slovenian middle managers' assessments produced a mean score of 5.69 for the charismatic/value based style and of 5.91 for the team-oriented style while the Slovenian students as respondents in our survey assigned a slightly lower scores, with mean being it 5.50 for the charismatic/value based and of 5.79 points for the team-oriented leadership style.

As for the level of congruence of findings regarding student and managerial samples in various research studies, there was only one empirical research published as far as we are aware that tested potential differences in perceptions of managers and students (i.e. prospective managers). Keating et al. (2002) investigated whether managers and students of Ireland and Austria share the same perceptions of cultural practices using the GLOBE questionnaire. Their findings were in favor of the conclusion that in Ireland and Austria no significant differences exist between managers and students from individual country regarding their perceptions of cultural practices. On the other hand they found quite significant differences of perceptions regarding cultural practices between the two countries. The differences found in preferences regarding cultural values were much smaller between all four groups of respondents. These research results suggest that having students as respondents we should not expect cardinal differences between managers and students perceptions of existing cultural practices in our two countries and values held by all groups, i.e. middle managers and students in Slovakia and middle managers and students in Slovenia. According to the research results produced by Catana and Catana (2012) we should be cautious in accepting such thesis, because their research results do not support fully this thesis for the Romanian environment.

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[12] These traits of the charismatic/value based and team-oriented leaders are adapted from the GLOBE Student questionnaire.

Conclusions and Limitations

Our article contributes with new knowledge on behalf of two societies of the CEE region obtained by the means of a specific comparative approach developed within the GLOBE Student research stream. Research findings offer detailed answers on the research questions, which were posed in the introductory part as well as regarding the basic hypothesis that was developed in part two of this article. We discovered that:

1. The Slovakian respondents perceive cultural practices in their environment rather differently from their counterparts from Slovenia. Slovak and Slovenian responses differ significantly in perception of cultural practices regarding the societal/institutional collectivism, in-group/family collectivism, humane orientation, power distance, and gender egalitarianism; Slovak respondents being less humane oriented, less gender egalitarian and less in-group collectivistic, and more power distant and institutional collectivistic than the Slovenian sample.

2. In relation to the cultural values in Slovakian and Slovenian society, there are many more similarities than in the current cultural practices. Statistically significant differences were found in not more than two out of nine cultural dimensions, namely in power distance and in-group/family collectivism.

3. The Slovakian respondents have significantly different preferences only towards two leadership styles out of six studied in comparison with their counterparts in Slovenia, but those differences seem to be more quantitative than qualitative. Considering our results, Slovaks would accept, in comparison to Slovenians, significantly less autonomous and self-protective behavior of leaders. Regarding this finding, we would like to stress also the fact that the majority of students have encountered real-life leadership, having it personally experienced during their university praxis. Hence, their leadership preferences are influenced by praxis, considering they are able to reflect the business reality as "how it is". Profile of trustworthy and worthy to follow leader as seen by the students represents an ideal or idealized leader mirroring the, often negative, familiarity with real leadership.

4. The prospective managers in both countries appreciate the most those personality traits and behaviors that are related to team-oriented and charismatic/value-based and humane-oriented leadership styles. They appreciate the least traits and behaviors associated with self-protective and autonomous styles. Such commonalities in preferences might contribute positively to a more productive mutual economic cooperation and higher level of a regional internationalization.

5. Our basic hypothesis was that the Slovakian and Slovenian respondents have, according to their socio-demographic background, very similar perceptions of current cultural practices as well as cultural values and leadership styles. This

assumption has been confirmed to a certain degree. Cultural values of the Slovakian and Slovenian respondents are highly corresponding. Hence, on behalf of our findings it can be assumed that Slovak and Slovenian cultures have a substantial potential to become harmonized over the forthcoming decades. Although preferences of people how their society should be like might change over time, our conclusion is supported strongly by empirical research findings in a qualitative (the tendencies of the desired shifts from practices, i. e. "society as it is", toward preferences, i.e. "society as it should be", were the same in all nine cultural dimensions in both groups of respondents) as well as in a quantitative sense (only two significant differences have been found in dimensions associated with cultural values in comparison to five significant differences found in dimensions related to cultural practices). Also in regard to the leadership-related preferences responses of both samples indicated a rather high level of congruence (with only two significant differences identified).

Our research findings have at least a few serious limitations. We are aware that assuming that business and engineering students will form the core of the prospective managers' population in the Slovakia and Slovenia is risky. We are not aware of any statistical data on educational background of current managerial professionals that would either confirming or disconfirm this assumption. The two study programs were selected due to the large international scope of the GLOBE Student project. In order to obtain comparable data our methodology had to respect the wide diapason of countries, and inter-country differences regarding student population. Another limitation is rooted in the structure of our samples, especially the university background, which was limited to two Slovakian and one Slovenian university. Given the fact that all three universities attract students from all over the two countries we assume our results reflect on potential influence of any regional differences within the two societies.

Further limitations of our study go on behalf of lower possibilities for comparisons with research findings related to our research object. Comparison with results, which other researchers produced, based on different research instruments, samples and in different periods might be problematic. Our assumption on the potential convergence of Slovak and Slovenian cultures lacks sufficient empirical confirmation. The identified presumed trends regarding cultural changes in both societies cannot be, at least nowadays, compared to other empirical results due to the lack of thus oriented longitudinal research projects.

Our negligence of any deeper search for explanatory variables is certainly a serious limitation of our present study. We are aware that values and related preferences of people might change over time, and age of our respondents is an intervening variable. Hence to draw consequences for future managerial practices

might be not entirely correct. However, in spite of these limitations, we still believe that our research findings offer valuable insights into the relevant issues. These insights might be especially useful for executives in business. They can understand better differences in managerial behaviors in the two studied countries as well as be able to formulate leadership decisions more efficiently having such knowledge.

Further research efforts should focus on a wider confrontation of our research findings with the research results of the whole sample of CEE countries. This could be fruitful for better explanations of our empirical findings. We hope that our research group will achieve that in not so distant future. Later systematic research verifications how recent predictions would be fulfilled in our two countries and the whole CEE region will be needed, too.

Dissemination of our research findings among the acting managers in both countries (and even wider) can contribute to a more efficient management practices in the region. Although both studied societies belong to the Slavic nations, our conclusions clearly indicate that the Slovakian and Slovenian cultures differ from our respondents' point of view significantly in some practices related to the assessed nine cultural dimensions. As all nine cultural dimensions have an impact on management practices, results of our study could be utilized in cross-cultural management trainings delivering up-to-date and specific information to managers who wish to be effective leaders during their international assignments in Slovakia or Slovenia. Results of our comparative analysis could be worthy especially for Slovak managers planning to make business in Slovenia, and vice versa.

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