

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES



Reflection on the Adaptation Process of American Missionaries in the Czech Republic

Bachelor's Thesis

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Statutory Declaration

I declare that I have written this Bachelor Diploma Paper myself and on my own. I have duly referenced and quoted all the material and sources that I used in it. This Paper has not yet been submitted to obtain any degree.

V Praze dne 25. 06. 2015 (in Prague, date)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years have passed since the Velvet Revolution took place and the communist regime fell. Twenty-first century life is obviously not the same as life during the decades of totality but it has some of its specifics. Shortly after the Iron Curtain broke, the borders of the Czech Republic opened and the Czech nation was, as many would say, set free. However, the communistic ideology, which was strongly materialistic and anti-religious, passed its legacy onto Czechs to some extent. Even though the open borders allowed for new philosophies and religions to enter Czech society, Czech Republic has gained the reputation of one of the most atheist countries.

Twenty centuries have passed since Jesus Christ, the teacher and the Christian Messiah, gave the Great Command to his disciples “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”¹ And still, three quarters of the whole population today is non-Christian. Missionaries, the warriors of the Christian world, have always fought on the front line between cultures and societies. (Stourton, 2009) They went to unreached regions of the world and have often been the way we found out about other cultures and lands, and vice versa. Historically, Christian mission was often connected with *indigenization* (also referred to as *Africanization* or *Americanization*), an anthropological term used to describe the results of what happens when local people take something from the outside cultural world and make it their own. It refers to that which is native as opposed to that which is foreign or alien.²

When we look back at the history of mission and its legacy, it represents an “equally divided mixture of cultural enrichment and colonial exploitation”. (Stourton, 2009) Many of the missionaries have been men and women of great bravery and deep conviction, willing to undergo various trials often leading even to death. Others were inspired by the Great Command but became an instrument of the Church, fearlessly striving for power.

¹ Mark 16:15 (New International Version). Contextually, this verse, also known as the Great Commission, can be found in the last chapter of Mark’s gospel. Jesus said those words when appearing and speaking to the apostles after his resurrection. Some scholars believe that the last 12 verses (16:9-20) are not part of the original text and that the ending (“The Long Ending”) was written by someone else.

² For instance, the Mennonite missionaries, influenced by the syncretistic practices of other protestant missionaries, resisted the use of local worship forms. As Paul Heibert (1989) states, “Western hymns were translated and sung to Western tunes and little emphasis was placed on the development of local hymnologies. Western styles of prayer, preaching, dress, and church architecture were introduced, and drums, dramas, dances, and bardic orations were generally rejected as pagan. Traditional wedding and funeral rites were replaced with ceremonies patterned after Western customs. Polygamy, initiation rites, ancestor veneration, and other customs were condemned, often with little understanding of the social problems created by their elimination. Only in recent years have non-Western Mennonite churches begun to reevaluate their rites and practices in the light of Scriptures and their own cultures.”

My first personal encounter with American missionaries was in my teenage years when I attended an English Summer Camp organized by Církev Bratrská³ in my hometown. As I observed the young missionaries' drive and determination to leave their family, comfort and career behind to move to a new country with completely different language and culture in order to share the Good News with local people, a desire was stirred within me to investigate their motives, lifestyle and attitude towards Czechs whom they came to evangelize.

Regarding the topic of migration, missionaries represent an exception among other migrants for they move to the Czech Republic not because of prosperous perspectives in the “worldly view” (e.g. education or job opportunities) but as a response to God's commission to share the Gospel with local people. Since their role requires them to intervene in Czech culture to a certain extent, I was interested in the degree of their adaptation process.

1.1 Existing Research

Despite the limited amount of researches dealing with the issue of American missionaries serving in the Czech Republic, there are several works which I would like to mention for they enabled me to shape my thesis into its current form. Furthermore, they provided a solid foundation for my research both theoretically and structurally.

As I sought to approach the topic both from the theological and cross-cultural perspectives, the resources I drew on were of various natures. The ones that focused on American evangelism and missionary adaptation from a biblical standpoint were primarily Van Rhenen's book *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* and Lesslie Newbigin's articles contributed to *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*. The researches that I found useful and enriching in terms of the social-anthropological aspects were undoubtedly Lucie Hrdličková's text *Pohled Američanů na českou společnost* dealing with the view of Czech society by American expatriates living in the Czech Republic as well as Jakub Šlechta's thesis on *Adaptation of American expatriates in the Czech Republic*.

In my thesis I would like to expand the issue of American expatriates⁴ in the Czech Republic with an analysis of the reflection of the adaptation process from the standpoint of American missionaries living in the Czech Republic.

³ The closest translation in English is *Free Reformed Church* or *Brethren Church*.

⁴ The term *expatriate* has its roots in Latin (“ex” – out of, “patria” – fatherland, country) meaning an individual who lives outside their native country. (Oxford Dictionary, 2015)

Although I am not a native English speaker, I chose to write my thesis in English for most of the relevant literature dealing with the issue of American missionaries is not translated into Czech. Additionally, all of the interviews were conducted in English and some of the responses could have lost its original meaning had they been translated into Czech.

1.2 Research Topic

The goal of this project was to analyze different reflections of 8 American missionaries (4 married couples) on living in the Czech Republic - their experience from the point that they decided to move to Czech, the process of actually moving to the foreign country and then the process of adapting to Czech culture and society. Another aspect I focused on was how American missionaries perceive Czech culture and in what ways they evangelize Czechs.

1.3 Missionary Organizations

According to recent statistics, there are 7 134 American expatriates currently living in the Czech Republic, 5 414 of whom have residence permits over 12 months and 1 964 are permanent residents (as to 31 December 2013). (MI CR, 2013) However, only a small number comprises missionary workers. All of the interviewed missionaries work under the auspices of one denomination - Církev Bratrská – but they serve with various mission organizations.

Two of the missionary couples work with Operation Mobilization (OM), an international organization founded in 1957 in the USA which nowadays partners with churches in over 110 countries all over the world. There are currently 15 missionaries involved in the Czech team, 5 of whom come from the United States.

One missionary family works with an organization called Josiah Venture. It exists in 14 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and there are currently about 44 American missionaries living in the Czech Republic in total.

The fourth couple works with Reach Global, which is part of the Free Evangelical Churches in America and partners with Christians in over 70 world-wide countries, including the Czech Republic.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Basic terms

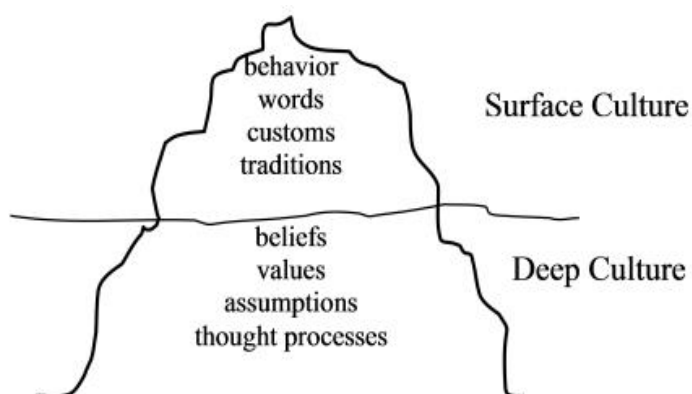
Before proceeding onto the practical part of this project, it is important to clarify and define several terms which I will be using in my work.

2.1.1 Culture

Due to the fact that I interviewed respondents who moved from one culture to another, I would like to firstly clarify the term culture itself.

The term culture is originally derived from the Latin word “cultura” which means “maintaining or tending”. Nowadays, definitions of culture are multiple and diverse. Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define and it is not an entity to be measured because it has many implications and factors that influence them. (Torres, 2006)

In order to illustrate the diversity and complexity of culture, several models are often used as a tool for a better visualization⁵. The so-called Iceberg Model provides a metaphor of different cultural layers and how aware we are of their influence in our lives. Additionally, it draws an analogy of the fact that only 10% of the cultural characteristics are visible to the observer whereas the remaining 90% are hidden and therefore more difficult to study. The visible part above the sea level can be considered *surface culture* representing the easily noticeable parts of culture, such as clothing, food, gestures, language, rituals, customs or music. The invisible part hidden below the level stands for *deep culture* - the less transparent cultural aspects, such



as beliefs, values, assumptions, worldview, thought processes or attitudes. Importantly, it is problematic to comprehend the visible cultural aspects without understanding the invisible elements from which they originate. (Nielsen & Del Galdo, 1996, p. 44)

Fig. 1: Pollock & Van Rheken, 2009, p. 42

⁵ Objective Culture versus Subjective Culture Model, The Iceberg Model, The Pyramid Model, The Onion Model

In relation to my research, it is important to bear in mind that religion - a set of beliefs, experiences and practices that seek to grasp and express the ultimate nature of life - is fundamental to any culture. (Newbiggin, 1986, p. 345)

Respecting the above mentioned model, my approach to the term culture in this thesis will be based on the definition by Kroeber and Kluckhohn for its comprehensiveness. The authors sought to present a critical review of culture definitions and they found 164 different descriptions, which they classified into seven categories. These categories were not mutually exclusive definitions, but rather reflected different aspects of the diffuse concept of culture. (Torres, 2006) Based on these various categories of culture descriptions, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1967, p. 181) suggested the following comprehensive definition: “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.”

2.1.1.2 High-context versus Low-context Cultures

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall’s (1979) theory of high and low-context culture enables us to better understand the powerful effect of culture on communication. A key factor in his theory is context that relates to the framework, background, and surrounding circumstances in which communication or an event takes place. The following summary highlights some of the problems facing low-context North Americans⁶ when they interact with people from high-context cultures (Czech Republic, along with other West Slavic cultures, is a relatively high-context country). (Wilson, 2013)

Low-context cultures have relatively short history and their communication is rather explicit. They are task-oriented and therefore discussions end with actions. Communicators are expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient in telling what kind of action is expected. In fact, they strive to use precise words and intend them to be taken literally. People from low-context cultures often expect a lot of relationships but not very intimate ones.

⁶ In this thesis I will use the term “American” as a description of a citizen of the United States of America.

On the contrary, **high-context cultures** have quite a long history resulting from layering of traditions. Such cultures are relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative. People in high-context cultures emphasize interpersonal relationships. Therefore, developing trust precedes any relationship and is an important first step. According to Hall, these cultures are collectivist, preferring group harmony and consensus to individual achievement. Words are not as important as context, which might include the speaker's tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture and even the person's family history and status. (Wilson, 2013)

2.1.2 Migration

Migration can be perceived from different perspectives. My approach to migration will be based on ethnological and socio-cultural anthropological perspectives. In this regard, every individual leaving one's home country exposes his or her own culture to a collision with the host culture he or she is emigrating to. As a result of this, every migrant goes through the process of acculturation and adaptation.

Regarding the research topic, it is necessary to consider that there are two types of migration. The first one is **permanent migration** when one moves to another country with the intentions of staying permanently in that place. The second type is **temporary migration** which includes those migrants who intend to reside in a foreign country temporarily. Such individuals, usually students, foreign workers, military observers or missionaries, are often described as "sojourners". (Horký, 2007, p. 13) As I will further describe in *chapter 4.1*, two of the interviewed missionaries can be considered permanent migrants for they came to the Czech Republic with the mindset of staying permanently, with no end in sight, and the other half of the missionaries can be defined as sojourners for they moved overseas for a definite number of years.

2.1.3 Acculturation

When migrants come to a new society, in this case to a Czech society, they go through the process of acculturation. Acculturation is a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group. Despite the fact that acculturation usually implies that minority group adopts habits and language patterns of the dominant group, acculturation can be reciprocal which means that the dominant group can also adopt patterns typical for the minority group. (Rahim, 2014, p. 360)

In relation to acculturation, migration used to be perceived as a one-way process. Nowadays, with the influence of the unstoppable development of internet communication and travel options, the migrant's position is being defined as transnational, meaning that he or she creates social networks between both cultures. As a result, such phenomenon influences the migrant's acculturative processes and he or she does not prefer one culture to another. (Szaló, 2007)

Furthermore, "assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, membership in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification." (Rahim, 2014, p. 361) Each individual or group of individuals deals with this process differently and they use various strategies, described by John W. Berry in his acculturation model.

2.1.3.1 Berry's Acculturation Strategies

Berry (1997) suggests that "in all plural societies, cultural groups and their individual members must deal with the issue of how to acculturate. These acculturation strategies carry different names, depending on which group (the dominant or non-dominant) is being considered." This model highlights the fact that acculturation is very diverse and that the immigrants do not necessarily have to give up their original culture in order to adapt to the new society.

1. **Assimilation.** When an individual diminishes or decreases the significance of the culture of origin and tends to identify and interact primarily with the dominant culture. (Organista, Marín, Chun, 2010, p. 110)

2. **Separation.** Whenever an individual wishes to hold on to the original culture and avoids interacting or learning about the other culture(s). When the dominant group enforces certain forms of acculturation, or constrains the choices of non-dominant groups or individuals, then the term *segregation* needs to be used. (Organista, Marín, Chun, 2010, p. 110)

3. **Marginalisation.** When an individual shows little involvement in maintaining the culture of origin and rejects the host culture(s) as well. (Organista, Marín, Chun, 2010, p. 110) Marginalisation becomes even more severe when there is a pressure to conform to the new culture, when the new culture limits an individual from full participation, when one desires to become integrated into the new culture, when one, on the other hand, desires to maintain his

or her own cultural identity or when one's own culture views returnees with suspicion. (Paige, 1990, p. 168)

4. ***Adaptation/Integration.*** When a person attempts to maintain the original culture and shows interest in learning and participating in the other culture(s). (Organista, Marín, Chun, 2010, p. 110)

The strategies for assimilation and integration imply a positive attitude toward learning and interacting with new culture. In terms of acculturative stress, Berry suggests that integration causes the lowest levels of stress while, on the other hand, marginalization implies the highest levels of stress. Furthermore, Berry argues that individuals can choose to integrate as an acculturation strategy mainly in societies that are “open and inclusive toward ethnic and cultural diversity indicated by the value placed on multiculturalism, relatively low levels of ethnic prejudice and discrimination, absence of intergroup hatred, and a generalized sense of identification with the culture of the larger society.” (Organista, Marín, Chun, 2010, p. 111)

2.1.3.2 Adaptation

The new missionary, when confronted with cultural stress, may consciously decide to adapt. Unlike the contrary responses (assimilation, separation, marginalization), “adapting is not a blind reaction to the perceived perfection of one culture and the hopeless imperfection of another.” (Van Rheenn, 1996, p. 91) The new missionary striving to adapt attempts to see culture as it really is – both with its strengths and weaknesses.

Adaptation is often described as the first phase of acculturation and the process is necessary for an individual in order to succeed in the host society. Adjustment is an important part of adaptation – it can be defined as “a process when an individual or a group of individuals reaches a state of harmony with their environment”. (Hajšman, 1984)

There are two types of adaptation – psychological and socio-cultural (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2003; in Vaňková, 2007). In this research I will be focusing on the psychological type of adaptation. It is connected with an individual's changes of behavior, attitude and values. This term is being described as a long-term result of these changes and of the entire process of acculturation (Berry et al., 2006; Castro, 2003; Ward et al., 2003; in Vaňková, 2007).

In addition to this, it is important to clarify that some authors do not use the words adaptation and acculturation but they incline to the term integration instead. Such term is approached multi-dimensionally, meaning that adaptation creates only one of multiple dimensions in the new culture. Besides the cultural dimension, there are also three other dimensions - structural, interactive and identificational ones. (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006)

Van Rheenen (1996, pp. 91-92) describes two elements, along with some basic principles, of an effective missionary adaptation.

The first element is *interpersonal identification*. Van Rheenen (p. 91) suggests that missionaries struggling to adapt should, instead of expecting the local people to identify with the missionary lifestyle, learn the language of the host culture. In relation to this, Van Rheenen (p. 91) highlights the principle of reciprocity, meaning that in order for the missionaries to be effective in their evangelism, they should first be learners of the host culture. In other words, they ought to know local people and be known by the people.

The second element of effective adaptation, described by Van Rheenen (p. 91) as *continual self-evaluation*, consists of the following features. Missionaries should be able to think critically and in the same way evaluate their reactions to the people and customs of the new culture. They should neither uncritically accept every new concept they learn nor uncritically reject every new concept they learn.

2.1.4 Culture Shock

Almost everyone, when moving to an unfamiliar cultural environment, experiences culture shock.

Oberg (1960) came with one of the earliest definitions of culture shock and pointed out that it is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. When one enters a strange culture, all or most of the cues that we are comfortable with are removed. Such cues or signs are part of our daily lives and they help us indicate what to say when we meet people, when to shake hands, when to accept and when to receive invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not to, etc. These cues may not only be words but also gestures, facial expressions, customs or beliefs. Hofstede (1991, p. 209) defines this phenomenon as “a state when the visitor in a foreign culture returns to the mental state of an infant, in which he or she has to learn the simplest things over again. This

usually leads to feelings of distress, of helplessness, and of hostility towards the new environment. Often one's physical functioning is affected.”

These unpleasant feelings resulting from a change of a cultural environment were categorized by various authors into different stages of culture shock. One of the most commonly cited perspective in the popular literature is known as the U-curve (Lysgaard, 1955 and Adler, 1975) and is often represented as a linear pattern of adjustment consisting of the following four stages. However, not everyone moves through all phases and not everyone is in the new culture long enough to pass through all four of them.

1. Honeymoon stage

All differences between the original and the host culture are perceived positively. The migrant is enthusiastic and open to new experience.

2. Frustration stage

When the honeymoon phase ends, the reality strikes and the differences between the old and the new culture are becoming more evident and as a result the enthusiasm from the previous phase is replaced by feelings of loneliness, frustration, anger and anxiety.

3. Adjustment stage

After some time, one accustoms to the routines of everyday life and adopts the new cultural norms. Less negative responses occur.

4. Mastery stage

At this phase individuals are able to fully engage with the host culture and despite the fact that they might feel like they understand their new cultural environment they still preserve some cultural traditions or traits from their own culture.

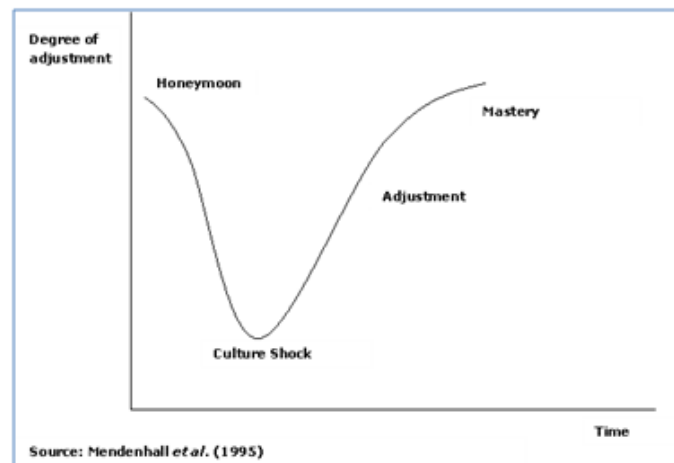


Fig.1: Stages of cultural shock

Importantly, as Bochner (2003) suggests in his **Culture-Distance Hypothesis**, the distance between the cultures of participants will have an effect on the smoothness of the interaction. In other words, the greater the cultural distance separating interacting participants, the more difficulties they will have to face in regard to culture shock. For instance, American migrants in Great Britain should experience culture shock less intensely than American migrants in the Czech Republic.

2.1.5 Minority

American missionaries are a minority in the Czech Republic. This term is not static but it reacts to the progress of the entire society and to social environment in which it is being established. During a multiethnic contact (in this case with Czech environment) there is a high possibility of cultural blending, influencing, converging as well as the transformation of the minority's cultural specifics. Every ethnic minority has a set of cultural specifics that are influenced by the intensity of contact and the length of living in the majority society. Another influential aspect is also the minority's willingness to reproduce their cultural specifics. (Bittnerová, Moravcová, 2008)

The ethnic minority I will focus on in my work will be Christian missionaries from the United States living in the Czech Republic. In this research I will analyze the reflections of *protestant* missionaries, who are part of multiple organizations.

2.1.6 Mission and Evangelism

Every missionary claims to be on mission, doing evangelism. However, both mission and evangelism are relatively broad terms that can be understood in more than only one way. Therefore, in order to clarify those terms, I followed a definition by David J. Bosh who himself was a protestant missionary in South Africa, and who provided contemporary descriptions of evangelism and missions in a way that they are being understood and practiced today.

According to Bosh (2008), there are two approaches to the relationship between the terms "mission" and "evangelism". Some regard mission and evangelism as synonyms, others believe that those two words refer to two different realities. Bosh inclines to the second approach and he aligns himself to those who regard mission as the wider and evangelism as the narrower concept. **Evangelism** is "the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin,

and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit ... it includes proclamation, translation, dialogue, service, and presence". (Bosch, 1991, pg. 10-11) **Mission**, on the other hand, is "a purely theological concept used for the origin, the motivation and the ratification of the activities referred to above." (Bosh, 2008, pg. 7)

Gailyn Van Rheenen further subdivides evangelism into three categories. The first sub-type of evangelism is that "among people who speak the same general language as the missionary and have a similar cultural heritage" (Van Rheenen 1996b, pg. 82) The second sub-type is "an intermediate category between the first and the third type of evangelism describing Christian outreach to cultures that have some type of general similarity as that of the evangelist" (Van Rheenen 1996, pg. 83) Finally, the last type of evangelism, which applies to the American missionaries in the Czech Republic, "takes place when missionaries teach those of a significantly different language and culture". (Van Rheenen 1996, pg. 83)

Another significant aspect of mission, since it can be understood as the missionaries' response to God's commission, is the motives for mission and evangelism. This topic will be further described in the analysis (*chapter 4.2.1*) in relation to the answers of each interviewed missionary.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions

American missionaries are a minority that is being exposed to another culture with which it has to deal right after the migration. Regardless of other perspectives of their stay in the Czech Republic, it is a necessary step to settling in the target country. From a theoretical standpoint American culture can be defined as low-context and Czech culture as high-context (Edward T. Hall, 1976). Due to the fact that American missionaries have been living in the Czech Republic for several years, I was interested in their reflection of the process of adaptation (to what extent they are willing to adapt) which would correspond with their contemporary relation to Czech society. I focused on how they perceived the dynamics of this process from today's perspective. For that reason I focused on the following "overarching question": *How do American missionaries perceive their process of adaptation in the Czech Republic?*

Additionally, answering the following questions enabled me to answer my main research question.

How do the missionaries' future perspectives in the Czech Republic influence their adaptation process?

How do the missionaries perceive Czechs and Czech culture?

What are the missionaries' motives for mission?

What kinds of acculturative strategies do they choose?

What are the forms and contexts of their cultural learning?

How do the missionaries' children adapt in Czech society?

3.2 Research Strategy

Regarding the theme and goal of this research, I chose to conduct a **qualitative research** method because I aimed to understand the ways in which the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how the meaning influences their behavior. I also sought to gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon and event (the missionary adaptation

process). Importantly, the purpose of a qualitative research is neither a surface description of a large population sample, nor a generalization to the entire population. (Saint-Germain, 1997)

3.3 Techniques of Data Collection

In order to collect all the data needed, I used the method of **narrative interview** (also referred to as NI) which helps create a setting that encourages and stimulates informants to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social context. The technique is derived from the Latin word *narrare* which means “to report” or “to tell a story”. It is to be considered a form of unstructured, in-depth interview that goes deeper than any other method in avoiding restructuring in the interview; in those aspects it goes beyond the ‘question and answer’ kind of interview. The NI uses a specific type of everyday communicative interaction, namely story-telling and listening, to reach this objective. (Bauer, 1996)

I chose to use the method of narrative interview in order to avoid expressing, or even hinting, my preconceived ideas and opinions on the topic studied to the interviewees. However, during the process of interviewing the missionaries, I had to be careful and pay attention to certain role requirements that this form of interview demands and that are often unrealistic. Since my aim was to obtain a complete narration of events out of every interview, which expresses one specific perspective, I had to pose as someone who knows nothing or very little about the story being told, and who has no particular interests related to it, while in fact, my actual knowledge about the topic studied was increasing from one interview to the next. As Professor Martin Bauer (1996, pg. 10) warns, “The credibility of that attitude reaches its limits and the informedness of the interviewer cannot always be hidden.”

The process of collecting the data consisted of 4 phases.

3.3.1 Initiation

Before proceeding to the main part, the interview itself, I asked every missionary for their permission to record the interview on tape. Then I explained to them the concept of narrative interview and I familiarized them with the title, the goal of my research and also how long the interview would last and how I would process and analyze the data gained from the interview. Consequently, they were informed of their full entitlement to withdraw from the interview at any point or not to answer any of the questions that would make them feel uncomfortable. I also gave them the option to read and comment on the final version of my work if they are interested. Every informant gave me their permission to mention their first names as well as

their city of residence in my thesis. During the analytical part, I did not mention their last names or any other identification data in order to respect their anonymity and the personal, confidential, information they had provided.

All of the above mentioned terms were stated in the *oral informed consent*. Furthermore, my aim was to create safe environment that would eventually facilitate the process of building mutual trust and respect between me (the interviewer) and the interviewees.

Most of the interviews took place in different cafés in Prague and České Budějovice and one of the missionary families even invited me to their house.

3.3.2 Narration

I asked each interviewee the following question:

„Tell me from the beginning, how did you decide to move to the Czech Republic as a missionary and how has your life subsequently been developing until now?“

As soon as the narration started, I restricted myself to active listening and non-verbal feedback (such as nodding and showing my engagement in their story) to avoid interrupting the missionary's speech. To prevent the flow of the narration from interruption, in all cases I wrote down additional questions that arose on a piece of paper for the next part of the interview.

3.3.3 Additional Questions and Discussion

After the missionaries finished their narration, I proceeded to the last part of the interview and I asked my interviewees a couple of additional questions related to the events mentioned in the talk that would help me fill in the gaps and shape the narration into an integrated story. As Bauer (1996, p. 7) notes: “This is the moment when the attentive listening bears fruits.”

3.4 The Sample

Missionary couples working with protestant churches in the Czech Republic is a very specific and small group dispersed among the Czech population and for that reason I used the method of **purposive sampling**. I chose the interviewees beforehand and I interviewed 4 married missionary couples living in the Czech Republic. As I mentioned previously, all of the missionaries are members of one Christian denomination (protestant) but they work for different mission organizations. My sample is homogenous in the following aspects: American migrants living in the Czech Republic for at least 2 years, missionaries of one

denomination and married couples with at least one child. Based on this criteria, I interviewed 4 couples (4 women, 4 men) between the age of 30 and 50. I interviewed couples with children because one of the sub-questions in the analysis focused on the way their kids adapt to Czech society and how they do or do not integrate into Czech schools.

When analyzing the interviews, I had to bear in mind that the United States is a diverse country and each state has its own cultural norms, laws and traditions. Therefore, missionaries from South California may have a different lifestyle and cultural heritage than missionaries from Colorado or Illinois. I took this fact into consideration since every missionary family came from different parts of the United States. However, neither place of origin, nor age played an important role during the sampling process regarding the small community of American missionaries in Czech. Even though married couples were interviewed, gender differences were not analyzed in detail because I assumed that the missionary couples are drawn to each other and have very similar, if not the same, experiences.

Due to the fact that American missionaries is such a specific and small sub-group in the Czech Republic, I chose the **snowball sampling method** which enabled me to gain contacts for other missionaries more easily and quickly. The very first informant I interviewed was my former English teacher. I asked him for assistance when looking for more missionary couples that I could possibly do interviews with. He gave me contact for his friends from the same organization who agreed to meet with me and after having had interviewed the second missionary couple I asked them for further assistance as well and they gave me more contacts. The method worked as a chain-referral when one couple nominated other missionaries from the same denomination but various organizations.

The advantages of the technique chosen were that it allowed me to get in contact with a population sample that would be more difficult to reach if using other methods and thereby the process of sampling was cheap, time-efficient and required little planning.

However, it is important to consider that the snowball sampling technique has its downsides as well. One of them is the possibility of so-called *sampling bias* which is caused by the fact that the initial informants tend to nominate people they know well and therefore there is a higher chance that they might share the same characteristics and traits. As a result, the sample may lack representativeness. (Explorable, 2015)

3.5 Analytical Methods

After having conducted all interviews, I transcribed them into a written form. In order for the data to be analyzed as precisely as possible, the **transcription** took place soon after the session. All interviews were conducted and transcribed in English so that the content would not lose its original meaning during the process of translation. The next step was to move from raw data to meaningful concepts and themes. Since the amount of data to be analyzed was significant, I used the method of **coding** which enabled me to highlight semantically homogeneous chunks of data (such as values, social networks or cultural rules) among which I subsequently looked for interrelatedness. After this, I proceeded to the task of **making notes** which created a foundation for later data interpretation. Furthermore, they helped me grasp and understand the codes better. (Lichtman, 2013, pp. 251-255)

Before the data analysis, I prepared 13 thematic categories for an easier and clearer orientation in the text. Additionally, those categories enabled me to focus on the research questions in more depth.

- 1) *Socio-demographics*
- 2) *Motives for mission*
- 3) *Previous experience with mission*
- 4) *Motives for choosing the Czech Republic*
- 5) *Expectations and duties before migration*
- 6) *Culture shock*
- 7) *Americans' perspective on Czech culture*
- 8) *Evangelism and Czech spirituality*
- 9) *Missionary children*
- 10) *Adaptation in the Czech Republic*
- 11) *Social circles of the missionaries*
- 12) *Contact with the native country*

4. ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

4.1 Socio-Demographics

Since one of the research questions considers whether the future perspective influences the missionary adaptation, I divided the respondents into 2 categories based on the two types of migration (permanent versus temporary).

4.1.1 Missionaries “Sojourners”

Krista and Dan

Krista and Dan have been living in the Czech Republic for 8 years. They live in Hluboká nad Vltavou with their 2 daughters who go to local International School. They work with Operation Mobilization which has its regional headquarters in České Budějovice. Dan is an English teacher at two schools. Krista teaches first to third grade students at an International School and she is a Director of a primary school. Originally, they were supposed to serve in Czech for 2 years but they decided to prolong their stay here. Even though they do not know when exactly they are going to move back to California, they intend to return one day (Krista admitted that there have been times when they felt like they should go home and even started looking for jobs in the States).

Amy and Matt

Amy and Matt come from Denver, Colorado and they have been living in the Czech Republic for 3 years. They currently live in Písek but they spent their first 18 months living in Ostrava because Josiah Venture (JV), the organization they are part of, wanted them to live closer to their headquarters in Moravia so that they could receive JV’s member care before actually moving to Písek where there are not many missionaries. Amy is 38, Matt is 39 and they have 4 children who all go to a local primary school. They stepped into their ministry with a 5 year commitment.

4.1.2 Long-term Missionaries

Brianne and Raymond

Brianne and Raymond moved from Northern California to a village in Southern Bohemia 2 years ago with their 3 children and they are missionaries with Operation Mobilization. Raymond is 34 and Brianne is 32 years old. Brianne is at home with their small children and

Raymond teaches English and is involved in the ministry at local church in České Budějovice. They moved here for an indefinite period of time and for now they have no intentions of leaving the Czech Republic. In fact, they plan on their children growing up, going to school and having their lives in Czech.

Vicky and Kurt

Vicky and Kurt are originally from Chicago, Illinois. They have been living in Prague for 8 years and they have one son, who is 14 years old and goes to a local grammar school. Kurt (52) works as a teacher at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague and Vicky (50) teaches English at the International Christian School of Prague. Similarly as Brianne and Raymond, they moved to the Czech Republic with the mindset of staying permanently.

4.2 Reflection on the Process before Moving Overseas

When the missionaries reminisced about their lives in their homes before becoming missionaries in the Czech Republic, they all described their previous life chapters as “good”. Krista even used the words “fantastic” and “American dream”. However, despite their economic security, two of the couples felt like “something was still missing”.

Raymond: *„We had a good life before becoming missionaries. We had good paying jobs as school teachers, we owned a house, had a dog, a truck, and plenty of friends. We lived pretty close to our families and had a solid church family. We had many good experiences. And every summer we would take short term mission trips. It was good. But there came a point where we knew that something was missing. We knew that God had something more for us.“*

Krista: *„I would rate our life in America before we moved to the Czech Republic as fantastic. We had jobs, a nice house, two new cars a good church and schools for the girls. The American Dream. Having said this, something was still missing. I feel that God put a longing for more in our hearts and that helped us to be willing to pack up and move.“*

4.2.1 Motives for Mission

An essential aspect related to migration is the motivation for migration. Based on the Push and Pull Motivation Theory, migrants are either pushed by their own internal forces, such as perceived mundane environment, self-exploration, relaxation or facilitation of social interaction, or pulled by external forces that attract them to a specific destination, for instance work opportunity, education or novelty. (Bogari et al., 2004, pg. 52)

All Christian missionaries view God as the source of their mission and as the one who sends them into the world. As Van Rheezen (1996, pg. 14) suggests, God had been the great

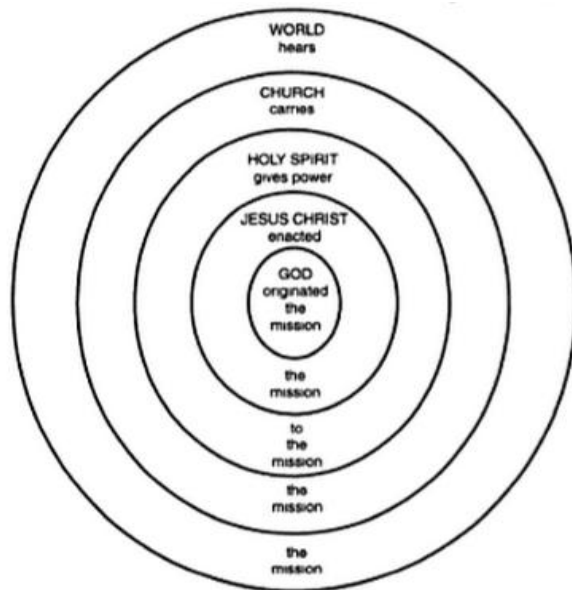


Figure 1. The Flow of the Mission of God

initiator of mission in both the Old and New Testaments.⁷ As it is illustrated in the picture on the left (Figure 1.), “the mission of God originated in the mind of God, the mission then flowed from him to Christ, who proclaimed the heavenly kingdom message and his death enacted God’s kingdom plan. Jesus then prayed that the Father would send his spirit. The Spirit empowered the church for mission. The message flowed,

then, from God to Christ to the church, who, empowered by the Spirit, carries the mission to the world”. (Van Rheezen, 1996, pg. 19)

All missionaries, when describing their process of decision making in terms of becoming missionaries in Europe, said that they moved overseas as a result of God’s call and the desire to share their belief with other people. Therefore, we can observe that God’s commission was a strong push factor for all of the interviewed missionaries. Interestingly, the pull factor can be seen in the “harvest-ready”⁸ ground for missionaries represented by the high number of non-Christians in the Czech Republic (further analyzed in *chapter 4.2.3*) which, in comparison with the usual pull factors, does not necessarily ensure them promising future in terms of financial stability or comfort.

⁷In the Old Testament, Israelites saw God’s mission in his act of delivering them from Egyptian captivity and then in his continuous interaction with them. God also sought to appoint people to carry out his mission, such as Moses, Aaron, David, the prophets, etc. (Van Rheezen, 1996) The call for mission is also central to the books of the New Testament. The core theme revolves around Jesus Christ through whom God fulfilled his mission because of his love. In the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 28:19-20, New International Version) Jesus says: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

⁸ Reference to a biblical passage from Matthew 9:37 (New International Version): “Then He (Jesus) said to His disciples: ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.’”

Matt: *“We knew that God was calling us out of ministry in Colorado and we weren’t sure where God was calling us so we were looking for possibilities and opportunities to serve in different places. ... The first step was confirming that we felt like this was where God wanted us to be.”*

Brianne: *“We had this heart of ‘Lord, send us wherever you want us to go.’ ... We wanted to make sure that was where God was directing us. We felt strongly then and we feel strongly now that this is the right spot where we are, that’s where he wants us to be.”*

Vicky: *“We were willing to go anywhere we thought God wanted us to go. Wherever we could determine God wanted us to go that’s where we wanted to go.”*

Kurt: *“I felt very strongly that the Holy Spirit was calling me to a place where there used to be so much propaganda against religion.”*

4.2.2 Previous Experience with Mission

Before moving to the Czech Republic, every missionary had some previous experience with mission, whether it was a mission trip to a foreign country or a service in their local church.

Both Vicky and Kurt had previously served in Europe. Vicky had been involved in a teaching ministry in Germany. She then participated in a mission project in Russia where she met Kurt, who was living there as a missionary. After 12 years of being married and living in Chicago, they started to consider becoming missionaries overseas again.

Brianne and Raymond had travelled as missionaries to a number of countries on different continents since 2003. They had spent 6 months in Bangladesh, 3 and half months in Slovenia and they also went on mission trips to Kenya, Mexico and Peru.

Amy and Matt had once visited the Czech Republic for 2 weeks doing youth ministry and they had also been involved in their home church in Colorado, where Matt worked as a youth pastor.

Dan worked as a businessman in California and Krista was a primary school teacher. However, both of them were actively involved in their home church which comprised members from various cultures (resulting from the fact that California is a culturally diverse place).

All missionaries moved to the Czech Republic with the advantage of having done mission work in multicultural backgrounds. As a result, such experience enabled them to become less ethnocentric and monocultural⁹. However, two of the couples who intend to stay in the Czech Republic permanently (Brienne and Raymond, Vicky and Kurt) have a rich cross-cultural experience of living in significantly different countries. When focusing on the missionaries' language, a pattern can be observed that the missionaries distinguish between "previous mission *trips*" (which generally have short duration) and "*full-time mission*" (which carries more weight and requires a long-term commitment), regardless of whether they intend on staying in the Czech Republic permanently or for a definite period of time.

4.2.3 Choosing the Czech Republic

The process of choosing specifically Czech Republic differed for each missionary couple. However, one aspect that played an important role in nearly every decision of the interviewees was that they perceived the Czech Republic as one of the least religious regions in the world.

Brienne said she and her husband researched nations with high spiritual needs before choosing a particular country. *"We spent some time in Slovenia and we continued to develop a heart for Europe because I think many would agree that it's a spiritually dark place. And so the Lord continued to develop the desire to go back to Europe. I think it was in 2006 that our organization began focusing on the least reached regions in the world and obviously the Muslim countries popped up - Muslim countries are 99% Muslim and completely unreached – but one of the countries that jumped out at us was Czech Republic because of the huge amount of atheism here so I think that was the final thing that we chose the Czech Republic."*

Vicky and Kurt went on what they called "vision trip" during which they spent a week in Prague, a week in Kiev and a week in Moscow. They set 3 criteria based on which they wanted to decide where exactly to move. *"Number one was that it needed to be post-communist because Kurt felt specifically that his story reaches post-communist, atheistic kind of countries. Another one was Slavic speaking countries (so not Romania) because Kurt had already had Russian language mastered and then we wanted to go to a place where there*

⁹ Van Rheenen (1996, p. 47) describes monoculturalism as having limited cultural experience and being unaware of the cultural diversity in the world. "Monocultural people speak only their own language and think in the conceptual categories of their own culture". According to Van Rheenen, monoculturalism is closely related to ethnocentrism.

would be a school, an international school, where I could teach English.” After the vision trip their missionary opportunities narrowed down to only one city – Prague.

Amy and Matt started to seriously consider moving to the Czech Republic after having had a conversation with their friend about ministry opportunities, which stirred a desire in them to go to the Czech Republic. Matt described their initial consideration of moving to the Czech Republic as follows. *“I was looking for possibilities and opportunities to serve in different places as a youth pastor. And then we had a friend come speak with us, he was a missionary in Russia, and we were talking about where we would serve Christ anywhere in the world so it was an open question, there were no expected answers, and I thought ‘I have heard about the Czech Republic, I have heard about Josiah Venture and I have heard our church is doing some work with English Camps and Basketball Camps,’ and I thought ‘Oh, Czech Republic sounds great.’ And that’s what started our conversation about becoming missionaries and going there.”*

Krista and Dan originally intended to move to Slovakia. However, on their way to Bratislava through Brno they stopped in České Budějovice to visit their Czech acquaintance, who was the Director of Operation Mobilization, and they enjoyed their stay so much that they decided to move to Czech instead of Slovakia. *“Krista and I somehow connected to P.Z. and on one visit, on our first trip, we stopped here in České Budějovice on our way to Brno and Bratislava and we decided we liked it here and Krista convinced me that we should move here.”* He said with laughter.

Concerning the missionaries’ previous knowledge of Czech Republic, not everyone had previously visited the Czech Republic or Europe in general - some of the missionary couples admitted that their geographical and historical knowledge of the country was rather vague.

Matt said that he and his wife knew a little about the Czech atheistic culture but they did not know where exactly the country was located in Europe and Amy thought of the Czech Republic as of “Czechoslovakia”.

Brianne mentioned that they had only visited Prague once before moving to their current home. In addition to this, Brianne described Raymond’s previous interest in the Czech Republic which originated in his childhood. She perceived his passion for the country stirred within him as a way of God’s preparation for their future ministry. *“For some odd reason, my dear husband has had a passion for the Czech Republic since he was little. It is very random -*

in 1998, during the Olympics in Nagano, he was rooting for the Czech hockey team. When he was at university, he was writing papers on the Czech Republic (the economy of the Czech Republic, etc.) and I kept wondering why he cared but the Lord has already put some desires for the Czech Republic in his heart that he did not really know about.”

4.2.4 Social Circles in the Missionaries’ Home Country

The attitude of the migrant’s friends and family towards his or her migration to a new country can often be relevant since it can impact one’s adaptation process.

Krista reflected on the initial reaction of their close friends and family members as follows: *“Almost everyone from our church and family members who are believers were very supportive. They understood the reasons for our leaving and seemed proud of us that we would take such a big step to serve God. Many others who did not share our beliefs felt that we were either doing something stupid or saw this merely as an adventure. The greatest concerns were for the health and safety for our daughters, how they would cope with the change and how much they would be missed.”*

Since Brianne and Raymond, same as Vicky and Kurt, had had relatively rich previous experience with mission trips, their family and friends were not very surprised by their decision. On the contrary, they were rather supportive. Raymond commented on his experience: *“Our family and friends had years and years to get accustomed to the idea of us leaving permanently. When we finally let people know we were moving overseas, most people were not surprised at all and most had expected it to happen much sooner. In general, people were very supportive. A few family members expressed concerns about us raising our kids away from their grandparents. Honestly, that has been the only complaint from people about us living overseas.”*

Matt and Amy’s experience was similar as the other missionaries’. *“We mostly received support from our church family. They were curious and excited. Our families were also curious and they did support us. They also were more worried and concerned about our children’s safety.”*

All of the interviewed missionaries share very similar experience in regard to the initial reaction of their close friends and family members. Their experience corresponds in two ways: they were shown support mostly from those who shared the same belief as the missionaries (their church and family members) and almost everyone expressed their concerns

in relation to the missionaries' children's safety. However, their opinions did not influence the missionaries' decision of moving overseas anyhow strongly.

Additionally, we can see that both of the "long-term missionaries" had had rich previous experience with overseas mission (in Europe, Africa and Asia), as opposed to the "sojourners" who, despite having worked in a multicultural environment, did not live in a significantly different country.

4.2.5 Expectations and Duties before Moving to the Czech Republic

Moving to a foreign country as a missionary is often connected with a lot of uncertainty. Some of the missionaries had certain expectations about Czech culture and their future life in a new environment. Krista expanded on this topic: *"We had lots of expectations and some of them were realistic, based on what we had seen and read, some of them were shockingly different. We heard that Czechs were very unfriendly and would not invite you into their houses but we found most of the time that people could be both. We also thought that learning the language wouldn't be so difficult but I was shocked at how hard it was to learn it."*

Brianne and Raymond said that they had only few expectations as they were stepping into the unknown. *"Raymond and I did not know P. and D., the Director of our missionary organization and his wife, personally, we only skyped a few times, they helped us with some paperwork but we had not met them until they picked us up at the airport."*

Naturally, moving to a different country for an indefinite period of time also demanded a number of responsibilities which the missionaries had to complete, such as selling their houses and properties, financial and prayer support-raising, cultural training and ending a chapter of their life.

Matt described the process before leaving their home in the United States as "a roller-coaster of emotions". *"We learned about Josiah Venture and the more we began to pray and talk about it, the more excited we became but also the more worried or nervous we became as well so it was very much like a roller-coaster where there were times when we were excited, dreaming about serving the Lord in a different country, in the Czech Republic, and there were times when we were scared and we thought that there was no way we can do this and that it's impossible. So that process at the very beginning was emotional because we also began to share with our kids and they were going through their emotions of having to say goodbye to their friends and leaving our family and leaving our neighborhood and friends."*

Vicky: *“We had to sell our house, we had to sell most of our stuff, we had to end our lives in a way.”*

Dan: *“We sold our house, sold our car, brought our girls and came to Hluboká.”*

Raymond: *“We planned and prepared for 6 months. Since we had been with our organization for 6 years, most of our trainings had already happened at that point so we did some specific training. We read a few books, we met with our head boss once a week and discussed things to get prepared but we didn’t go to training school and we didn’t go to any classes.”*

Amy: *“Before coming to the Czech Republic, we underwent a five-week long training called MTI (Missionary Training International) along with our kids where we were taught how to develop the skills, methods, techniques, and attitudes necessary to learn another language and we also attended spiritual, personal, interpersonal and cultural lessons.”*

Missionaries reflected on the process before moving overseas as of an end of a life chapter, which was connected with selling their houses and other properties as well as saying goodbyes to their family and friends. They also acknowledged the hardships they went through in terms of emotional fluctuations as a result of such a radical life transition.

4.3 Being “On the Field”

4.3.1 Culture Shock: Confrontation with Czech Culture

Regardless of the length of the missionaries’ preparation for moving abroad, after their arrival, each missionary had to deal with culture shock resulting from entering a new cultural environment. Culture shock leads to unpleasant feelings of distress, disorientation or other minor frustrations which may, as Van Rheenen (1996, p. 87) suggests, influence missionaries in those areas of the world where anger is regarded as a sin. Even though Christian love may allow missionaries to tolerate and respect the cultural differences in a new country, it does not exempt them from the effects of culture shock.

Since Czech language considerably differs from English, the language barrier understandably played a significant role in the missionaries’ experience of culture shock. Krista highlighted her initial communication struggles in the new country. *“I was shocked at how hard it was to learn the Czech language. I felt stupid all the time, I would try to say something and people would look at me like I was retarded and I just felt dumb all the time so that was quite a shock.”*

Vicky mentioned her motherly concerns about her son who was then 6 years old and started going to a Czech kindergarten immediately after they moved to Prague. Another difficult aspect which both Vicky and Kurt had to face was the constant company of each other in the very beginning. *“Both Kurt and I had done overseas transition before but we had never done it as a family. And so I was concerned about my child who was in the kindergarten and didn’t know what he was doing and didn’t understand what was anybody saying to him and we were together 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and we had never been like that before. So it was a very difficult adjustment because you know how much you kind of step over each other and what those routines would be like when you are together all the time as a married couple.”*

For Kurt, as well as for Vicky, the first 3 months were difficult due to the fact that that nobody made an effort to speak to them. Not knowing how to approach Czechs became relatively discouraging for them since they came to Czech to evangelize and interact with local people. *“It was difficult as we went to church. We were there 3 months before anybody would talk to us. The only people that would talk to us were the teachers of the Sunday school and that was it. I think the next person who came to talk to us was N. and H. and we really like them but their first question was kind of like ‘Why are you here? Why would you come here?’ and we get along with them but it took a long time before other people would talk to us.”*

Dan and Krista’s family experienced quite the opposite situation, which may have been caused by the small town life in comparison with Kurt and Vicky who moved to the capital. Dan mentioned that initially after their arrival to Hluboká, they were perceived as novelty by Czechs and they were constantly in the centre of attention. They earned this reputation as a result of being Americans, a minority group, in a small southern Bohemian town where local people were not used to having American neighbors. *“We were also a novelty. Americans are not common, especially in Hluboká. I think we were the only ones and so I think a lot of people were curious. Krumlovský zpravodaj, local little journal, they wanted to interview us. And especially when Krista was a teacher and when you know the parents there, because she had 215 students and a lot of them wanted private lessons for their kids to learn English better, we got to know people very quickly.”* However, Dan additionally said that over the course of time, locals eventually got used to their presence in Hluboká. *“Now we have been here for so long that no one really notices us anymore. We are just on the street and our neighbors say hi to us.”*

Another cultural shock which all the male interviewees highlighted was the lack of safety in regard to driving as well as the different driving system.

Kurt: *“Another thing that continually frustrates me is Czech lack of safety when it comes to driving. In America there are companies and corporations that always insist on safety and so when we have a meeting, we always have to talk about safety. When it comes to driving, I think Americans have greater appreciation for the law than Czechs do. American highway system is very young and everything is engineered so that the highway is safe and so driving in 130 km/hour on a US highway is much safer than it is here in the Czech Republic but for whatever reason Czechs feel like they have to drive fast. It’s crazy to me. I hate driving in the countryside and whenever I go to country and there is the two-lane road I pray that there are no cars around.”*

Dan: *“Another strange thing to me was driving. Czechs are overall very pleasant, relaxed, friendly, calm, mellow but then they are in a car and they turn into the Incredible Hulk.”*

Raymond: *“Driving is different here, you don’t have traffic circles but roundabouts. Most Californians don’t like them because they don’t know how to use them. Marking signs are different here as well. A lot of times I find this white box full of writing in it and this is just some instruction for drivers. And our Czech is not that good and if you’re driving fast (around 60 km/hour), you’re like ‘Oh! What does it say?’ If I were a Czech it wouldn’t be a problem.”*

Both Vicky and Kurt pointed out the phenomenon of graffiti in Prague, which they find, in Vicky’s words, ‘uncared for’ and ‘dirty’.

Kurt: *“When it comes to graffiti, that’s where Americans just go ‘I don’t understand why anybody would write on an apartment building that belongs to somebody’ and art like that is fined in the States and graffiti doesn’t happen except for in the very poor parts of cities like Chicago, New York, etc. where there’s a lot of poor people.”*

Another aspect of Czech culture, that Krista and Dan found uncomfortable and shocking, especially in the beginning of their transition, was the fact that some people in the Czech Republic stare, which would be considered rude in the United States.

Krista: *“There is this staring issue. People stare here and that was really hard for me to get used to. I have a friend who stares at me and it makes me feel so uncomfortable... And in America it’s totally rude – you cannot stare. In fact, we train our children not to stare.”*

Brianne mentioned one aspect of Czech culture that she found shocking and difficult to understand. *“We were surprised by the fact that in the summertime men and women don’t wear much clothing. We’re from California where people wear bikinis but they do not work in their underwear in their garden. That’s been a shock. We live with our landlords, they live on the same property as we do, and our flat is attached to the back of their house. Our landlord is almost 80 and his wife is around 70 years old and they work in their garden in their underwear.”* Krista made a similar comment on this subject. *“In the United States, if I were gardening in my bikini, it would be considered public nudity.”*

Interestingly, a common trait could be seen in the responses of some of the missionaries who mentioned that what enabled them to deal with the initial cultural barriers more easily to a certain extent was the fact that their appearance was very similar to the Czechs.

Krista: *“We expected there to be some cultural differences but not as different as had we moved to Nepal or a place like that. We didn’t look different than anybody else.”*

Brianne: *“And even the fact that our skin color is similar, in a European sense, so we don’t scan out like we did in Kenya. Even in Mexico (California borders Mexico) it’s obvious that we are not Mexicans. And this definitely helps with adaptation here. However, it can get you in trouble because you go to a supermarket and say “nuts” in Czech and people can think ‘Maybe this person speaks Czech.’”*

All missionaries experienced the unpleasant effects of culture shock. However, the culture shock did not imply only negative experiences (such as language barrier, lack of safety, graffiti) and unusual situations (staring, different style of clothing) but also neutral realization that the missionaries had fairly similar outer appearance as Czechs (skin color) and that enabled them to blend in the culture more easily.

4.3.2 Americans’ Perspective on Czech Culture

My interviewees also provided a description of their own perspective on Czech culture, society and history based on their everyday life experience and missionary work with Czechs. The following chapter focuses on the substance of the cultural differences.

4.3.2.1 Czech Language

Every missionary mentioned during the interviews that one of their biggest struggles was the Czech language. On one hand they find the language extremely difficult to learn but on the other hand they noticed that Czech language has various functions and plays an important role in Czech society as well as in the missionaries' adaptation process.

Vicky and Kurt mentioned that at one point the process of learning Czech became very competitive for them. The main reason was that Kurt had already had a Slavic language background (he had learnt Russian) and so he was mastering the grammar quite easily. However, Vicky was skilled at understanding new words and expanding her vocabulary. *“Being in language classes together was difficult. You wouldn't expect that it would be so competitive. We weren't trying to compete with each other but we ended up being very competitive in the whole thing and it wasn't good.”*

4.3.2.1.1 Czech Language as a “Door-Opener”

Dan, Krista and Kurt see Czech language as a way to gain acceptance from the Czech side and breaking the cultural barriers through making effort and attempting to speak the language, regardless of how poor their language skills are.

Krista: *“We speak Czech but very poorly. However, we can understand everything. But I think that opens doors as foreigners immediately. When we are trying to speak Czech and making the effort it really opens doors.”*

Dan: *“If I am somewhere and I really try speaking Czech, even if it's bad, people usually say ‘Oh, poor you, that's so cute. You're trying to speak Czech!’ I think Czechs aren't used to someone who's actually trying to learn the language. I think that Czechs appreciate that we are not trying to say ‘Our language is superior!’ but rather ‘Your language is so interesting and so deep. It's almost like science and mathematics when it comes to understanding how it works.’”*

Kurt demonstrated the phenomenon of Czech language as a powerful tool to approach Czech people on a personal example when he and his wife tried to, seemingly unsuccessfully, meet new people from their church in Prague. They were involved in a singing choir along with other 15 Czechs.

“We didn’t know Czech and they didn’t know English and they were hesitant to speak to us. There was a lady in the choir who would smile and never say anything and then one day, it was maybe a year later and we had been studying Czech, I turned to her and said “Jak se máš?” and she was visibly shocked and she then said “Dobře.” And then I asked her, because she had gone on a trip to Israel, “You were in Israel! How was your trip?” and I said it in Czech and her face just lit up and she finally said “So you do speak Czech!” and then from that moment she started talking to us. But she would not talk to us before. Now she says hi to me all the time and we had even been skiing with her group.”

4.3.2.1.2 Czech Language and Czech Mentality

Matt expressed great interest in Czech language and he attends an intensive Czech course 4 times a week. His motivation is to learn the language in order to understand Czech mentality better for he sees a strong bond between the language and the mentality. When Matt was talking about various elements of Czech culture that were still difficult for him to understand he said: *“I’m still learning Czech mentality because I’m still learning the language. It’s hard to really understand what’s happening or the way Czechs are thinking without understanding the language.”*

The significance of Czech language in the lives of Czechs but also in the lives of American missionaries, as they try to approach local people and understand their mentality better, may be explained by Miroslav Hroch, Czech historian, who deals with the concept of Czech nationalism and the importance of Czech language in the process of forming the Czech national identity. Hroch highlights the fact that national identity in English is different than the identity of Czechs and other Slavic countries, due to the fact that their sense of belonging is defined, among other factors, by their unique language. (Hroch, 1999, pg. 9) English is the official language of many countries, such as United States, Australia, Northern Ireland, England or South Africa, whereas Czech is spoken only in the Czech Republic.

The impact the Czech culture has had on the missionaries could be seen even in their language. They were using random Czech words (such as mládež, školka, chata, šikana, etc.) in the middle of their English sentences.

The missionaries view Czech language as a way to approach Czechs and to understand their mentality better. Regardless of their future perspectives, both long-term missionaries and sojourner missionaries make an effort to learn Czech in order to gain more opportunities to

communicate with Czechs and to share the Gospel with them. A sign of adaptation is apparent in the way they speak for numerous Czech words have crept into their regular English sentences.

4.3.2.2 Remnants of the Communist Regime

Nearly every missionary mentioned that they noticed certain remnants of the communist regime, both negative and positive, in Czech society on different cultural and behavioral levels.

4.3.2.2.1 Fear of Oppression

Kurt, Krista and Dan, when commenting on their perception of Czech people, mentioned that they sense Czechs' fear of being oppressed by another authority. They see its roots in the communist era.

Kurt contrasted his perception of this issue, which he thinks is of spiritual nature, in comparison with American culture. *“When I go to America I do sense more spiritual freedom. I really do believe that there are spirits of principality at work and that in America there is a little bit more freedom of religious expression and here it’s almost the exact opposite. Don’t build your hopes up, that would be a waste of your time because the Russians are going to take over. And if the Russians don’t take over than the Germans will. And if the Germans don’t then the European Union will. So this is what we experienced in the Czech Republic – ‘Česko’ is always occupied by somebody.”*

Krista, when expressing her opinion on Czech atheism versus spirituality, made the following comment, saying that Czechs may feel threatened by an established religion because they may perceive it as a form of oppression. *“I think there are a lot of people that are interested in spirituality so maybe they don’t subscribe to a religion but I think that the heart is searching for that connection with their creator. And for that case, perhaps it’s not one of the most atheistic countries just because it doesn’t have a ‘religion’ label on it. Which makes sense for the Czechs we know – they just don’t want to be under another regime, whether it’s Catholicism or anything else.”*

4.3.2.2.2 Suspicion towards Outsiders

According to Dan, the fear of oppression, as well as Czech homogeneity, often results in feelings of suspicion towards outsiders (foreigners). *“Czech culture is so interesting that it’s*

so closed because it's 95% Czechs and that, I think, makes people more suspicious about outsiders. When you look at the history of Czech, always being conquered by Germans and Russia and all these other empires, they are naturally suspicious and cynical towards outsiders and that's something we have to break through."

Kurt, based on his previous experience with missionary work in Russia, mentioned that in his opinion Czechs are not as open and hospitable to foreigners in a way that Russians or even Americans are. *"I would meet Russians on the street and they would say 'Hey, you are an American, come over for dinner!' and we were invited to people's houses. ... People were interested in us. We came here to Czech Republic and no one's interested in you, no one cares. And so you could walk on the street and someone recognizes that you are a foreigner and they treat you like a typical tourist so it's like 'Alright, you are here. Nice.' So in that regard it has been difficult because even as we went to church, we were there 3 months before anybody would talk to us."*

Amy was shocked by the prejudices towards Roma people and she noticed that even her children were affected by this mindset. *"I was surprised to see how prejudiced people are towards the Gypsies. I mean that was a huge thing and we were shocked by that even when we were in Ostrava and started to experience some of that from people and then our kids really picking up on them and becoming prejudiced not even knowing who these people are. And so we tried to process that with them because we come from a place in the United States where I don't feel like we encounter much prejudice and sure people are prejudiced to some things to some extent but it's not quite as blatant as it was here."*

When looking back at the history of Roma people in Czechoslovakia during communism, Nina Pavelčíková (2013) summarizes the origin and development of Roma people's social status in Czech society between years 1945 and 1989. She describes the initial communist attempt to help assimilate Roma people into Czech society as a part of their "national politics" which soon failed in the late 1960's. Pavelčíková then adverts to the increasing intolerance of the state towards this minority in the 1970's which could be manifested, for instance, on the example that the state started dividing the Roma people into 3 categories based on their "level of social maturity". As the time was progressing, this ethnic minority was being pushed more to the edge of society by the communist state, despite a number of protests by various activist organizations and movements. According to Pavelčíková, the conscious demolition of

Romany traditions of the state during the communist era passed its legacy onto contemporary society in the form of stereotypes and prejudices.

The previously mentioned examples may suggest that Czechs feel suspicious towards minority groups, such as foreigners and ethnic minorities. Such phenomenon may result from the fact that the Czech Republic, according to Geert Hofstede, is a country with relatively high uncertainty avoidance, as opposed to the United States, which is less uncertainty avoidant. Hofstede (1991, p. 113), defines uncertainty avoidance as a cultural dimension which expresses the degree to which a person in society feels uncomfortable or threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. Based on his index (Hofstede, 2010), which provides an approximate measurement and comparison of certain value with another country, Czech Republic scored 74 and United States scored 46.

Another explanation of this issue may lie within the social-psychological approach that groups of individuals tend to make distinctions between members of their own in-group and members belonging to the out-group which results into the discrimination of “us” versus “the others”. Hroch (1999, p. 33) highlights this tendency in relation with national solidarity.

4.3.2.2.3 Unwillingness to Change Things

Matt, as well as Amy, described Czechs as sceptics and strong critical thinkers and consequently explained that in their opinion these characteristics emerged from the communist era. Amy said that from her personal experience she thinks Czech people have tendencies to dislike changes and that they do not aspire for higher goals, especially those living in small towns, such as Písek.

Matt made a similar comment on Czech mentality when speaking about Czechs being sceptical and enjoying being comfortable where they are.

“Amy and I we read something from Václav Havel and he was describing his country, his nation, his people. And he wrote about Czechs being very happy with their gardens, their love for soil and love for growing things, love for beer and everything Czech. They have a big national pride in their beer, in their gardens. He also wrote about being so comfortable to the point when they are not seeing outside of anything else. They are just satisfied here and now and Václav Havel was thinking about how we can get Czech into the international scene and working with different countries and rebuilding their nation. But he said how hard it was for Czechs to begin to look outside their borders.” Matt continued with a smile on his face and

drew a parallel between Havel's satire and the story of hobbits from the Lord of the Rings. *"When Tolkien is describing the hobbits he writes about them not caring what's happening in the outside world as long as their gardens and their beer is satisfying and they can hunt for mushrooms. So there was this interesting connection to the beautiful things of hobbits how incredibly warm and inviting and kind and simple they are and their love for life and the things that are growing but then the downside is not having any interest in what's happening outside their borders and how when you close yourself to what's happening on the outside you lose touch with the world."*

This phenomenon may result from a cultural value further described by Tropenaars and Hampden-Turner (Beugré, 2007, p. 61). In their study they presented 7 cultural dimensions one of which is time orientation. This dimension indicates two aspects – firstly, the importance cultures give to the past, present and future and secondly, how they structure their time. According to these authors, Americans approach time linearly, suggesting points of progress towards a goal. Time in such culture is a commodity to be apportioned, exploited and conserved.

This may explain Amy's response when she was talking about Czechs living without dreaming and wanting to change things. *"Americans say 'You can do anything! You can do whatever you want however you want to do it. Just go for it.' And sometimes it's silly but sometimes it's not silly. Sometimes it opens doors to all opportunities and dreaming and thinking and that's why we are here I think. You know, we are here because we went for it and we knew there would be hard things we would come up against but we're not going to stop trying, we're just going to say that's a roadblock and we are going to try figure out a way to go around it."*

4.3.2.2.4 Willingness to Conform

Another cultural relic of communism in Czech society according to Dan is the lines. *"I think it's a remnant of the communist era. People in a shop are lined up and they are watching for the next window and they could run there. And then there are people cutting in front of me in the line without saying a pardon."*

He then compared the way people go shopping in contrast with the Americans. *"I don't understand that. When you go to a shop in the United States, typically there are two people in the line and they come to you, they take your cart and say 'come with me' and also, even*

something that would take some adjustment since we are lazy and we are used to it, when you check out and pay for the items, you give them the cart and they take everything and they put it on, they scan it, they put it in the bag, you don't have to pay for the bag, they take everything to your cart, they put it into your car. So when we first came to a shop here we were very shocked. Why aren't they taking things out of my cart? Where's the bag? Do I have to pay for the bag? Do I have to take things to my car?"

4.3.2.2.5 Need for Privacy

When talking about the reflective and pensive nature of Czechs, Amy said that, among other things, she truly appreciated and valued their ability to embrace life at a slower pace. In relation to this, she mentioned the interesting phenomenon of Czech cottages, "chatas", which were popular among the nation especially during the communist regime but which are still present in the lives of many Czechs even today. *"We (Americans) are not good at resting in general. We are busy, fully multitasking, there are things to do and I don't see Czechs doing that as much. They are much calmer and quieter and they like to go to their chatas in the summer and have a nice beer and just enjoy their garden. I love that!"*

Brian Kenety (2005), an American journalist living in Prague, commented on the subject of Czech cottages in his article for the Czech National Radio in which he mentioned that the obsession of going away to the family cottages for the weekend started to take roots in the 1920's and reached its peak in the final decades of the communist era. The "escape" to a simple cottage, often built by the family without any professional help, represented not only an escape from the busy life in concrete apartments but also, in a more metaphorical sense, an escape from the collective society.

Ladislav Holy¹⁰ (1996, p. 169) discussed the need for privacy in form of escaping to the cottage in his book *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*. In relation to this, he pointed out that in communist Czechoslovakia, a cottage in the nature represented a space created in order to withdraw from the public sphere. Moreover, this phenomenon also indicates that private ownership in Czechoslovakia, where the ideal was to own a car, flat and cottage, had a different and more modest meaning in comparison with the ownership in highly consumer Western European countries.

¹⁰Ladislav Holy was Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He emigrated from Czechoslovakia to the United Kingdom in 1968.

According to the interviewees, several remnants of the communist era are still present in contemporary Czech society. Most of the missionaries think that Czechs are afraid of being oppressed by another authority, they are suspicious towards outsiders and they also highlighted Czechs' lack of aspiration for higher goals in life, along with their need to withdraw from the public sphere in the form of cottages.

In terms of the above mentioned communist relics, the missionaries perceived them mostly negatively (with the exception of Czech cottages). Amy and Matt proposed an idea on how to improve the Czechs' reluctance to change their circumstances, drawing from their own American culture, which is known for its purpose-driven attitude.

4.3.2.3 Czech Loyalty

The interviewed missionaries also pointed out Czech loyalty which, according to them, can be evidenced in the Czechs' sense of community as well as their appreciation for close friendships.

4.3.2.3.1 Sense of Community

Matt, when describing his perception of cultural differences between Czechs and Americans, said that he personally noticed a sense of relational connection. *"Maybe it's only on the outside, I don't know how deep that goes, but there is a sense of family and community even though I think the divorce rate is about 60% or something like that – so it's very high but there is this loyalty and solidarity in the family compared to when I think of Americans being more individualistic and kind of trail-blazing and trying to find their own way."*

He then gave an example of Czech college students going home for the weekends. *"They leave and they come home for the weekend. In America we leave and we don't come home until Christmas. Most college students just go far away and try to leave their parents all together and not come back to their family until holidays. But here it's very different. College students would live at home, go to school for four days and then come back for the weekend since this is their home."*

According to Matt, the sense of community and loyalty is closely related to the connection with the place of birth. *"Those students who go home every weekend have lived in Písek for since they were born. And for me it's like I have no connections at all as an American, I have no connection to any of these places as a place or a state where I was born. I was born in*

Ohio and then moved to all these places so now I feel like Colorado is more of my place because my parents live in Michigan.”

This may suggest that Czechs are more collectivistic compared to Americans. Hofstede (1991, p. 50) defined individualism as a cultural dimension which indicates the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. His cultural index shows that American culture is highly individualistic (91) as opposed to the Czech Republic, which scored only 58 and is thus more collectivistic. Hofstede (1991, p. 51) further explained that in the United States the ties between individuals are loosely-knit and the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families only. There is also a high degree of geographical mobility across the United States.

4.3.2.3.2 Different Levels of Relationships

Nearly every missionary woman observed that the way Czechs approach friends is very different than in America.

According to Vicky, the concept of friendship is manifested even in the language itself and she pointed out that Czechs use two different words for different levels of friendships. As Vicky was reminiscing about her first few weeks in Prague, she said that it was hard for her to find close friends among the other American missionaries in Prague and she came to a realization that when Czechs say “kamarád”, they mean someone who is an acquaintance or someone they do not know too well. However, if they say “přítel”, they mean either a boyfriend or a close friend with whom they have a special bond. In English, this difference is repressed by using only one word for all types of friendships.

“Everybody was friendly but there is a difference between a friend like ‘kamarádka’ and ‘přítelkyně’. I missed having around people who knew me well enough to know that if I was upset it wasn’t a big deal because the rest of the women they would see me and say ‘Oh, I don’t know what to do with that.’ But we made some good friends here eventually.”

Even Krista observed the difference between Czech and American friendships. From her own experience, she observed that it takes some time to be friends (“přítel”) with a Czech but once the friendship is established it has depth and lasts whereas in America, she finds it easy to have many friends (“kamarád”) but the friendships can sometimes be rather shallow.

“I have learned to be a better friend because Czech friendship means something here and it stays – and now I am making big generalizations – but in the United States you meet someone for the first time and he or she is instantly your friend and you like each other but it’s very surface. Whereas here it takes a while to make a friend but once you have that friend it means something and I find that it’s a deeper relationship. And I’ve disappointed many of my Czech friends because I was treating them as I would treat an American friend.”

Brianne mentioned the same idea as Krista in relation to the closeness of Czech culture. *“Californians always say ‘Hey, how are you doing?’ - they are more open and more showing. It’s easier to become a friend in the United States whereas in Czech I think you would probably have deeper friendships but it takes longer to become a friend.”*

The phenomenon of such a distinct approach to the concept of friendship by Czechs may have its roots, as Ladislav Holy (1996, p. 22) explains, in the totalitarian era and the consequent strict discrimination between the public and the private sphere. Holy highlights that lying and deceit were unimaginable among friends. “Knowing the truth about each other’s views, opinions, and life histories, friends were in collusion against the world in which deceit and lies were strategically exploited to one’s advantage. Friendship was thus built on the utmost trust, for if this trust were betrayed the consequence might be job loss or even imprisonment. Friendship literally meant putting ones security into another’s hands.” Friendship during the communist regime was for many Czechs, in a sense, an opposition to the communist society full of suspicion and decayed morals.

The missionaries perceive Czechs also as loyal. This characteristic can be evidenced in the Czech collectivistic nature as well as their appreciation of deep friendships. In contrast with the negative perception of Czech society affected by the communist regime, the American missionaries perceive this sense of loyalty rather positively.

4.3.3 Evangelism and Czech Spirituality

When we look at the missionaries’ style of approaching, evangelizing and ministering to Czechs, it is through building relationships with them. During the interviews, many interviewees used the word “Gospel” in relation to evangelism and the religious aspect of Czech nation. Before proceeding to further analysis, I would like to firstly clarify the biblical meaning of Gospel as it is the foundation of the protestant Church and the cornerstone of evangelism.

According to the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia (1975), the central truth of the gospel lies within the fact that “God has provided a way of salvation for men through the gift of His son (Jesus Christ) to the world. He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, overcame death, and now offers a share in His triumph to all who will accept it. The gospel is good news because it is a gift of God, not something that must be earned by penance or by self-improvement.”

Since all of the missionaries work both with Czech believers and non-believers on a daily basis, I was interested in the ways they share the Gospel with local people who are not Christians as well as how they view the “church culture”, Czech spirituality and religiosity.

4.3.3.1 Czech Spirituality

Brianne, when talking about the fruitfulness of her evangelism, pointed out the fact that the needs in the Czech Republic are rather different from, for instance, Third World Countries, such as India or various regions in Africa. In her opinion, Czech Republic, along with other Central European countries, is more spiritual-needy than many developing countries that suffer from a lack of material provision but are more willing to accept and believe the Gospel.

“None person has come to the Lord yet but we shared the Gospel with many people. Well, I shared the Gospel with my 17 year-old student and she still thinks I’m crazy. And the situation in Czech is different than for example in developing countries. When we were in India we did feeding events where hundreds of people would come and they would all raise their hands that they wanted to accept Jesus. I don’t know how much authentic it was but it was totally different from here. You can never do that here. You can never do it that way. So in some ways we are discouraged that more hasn’t happened but otherwise we’re more encouraged. So we knew it was going to be slow and it has been slow.”

Statistics show that about one third of the Czech population claims to believe in a God, the rest either subscribes to no religion or does not want to be identified with a church or a religious society. Even though Czechs may appear to be mostly irreligious, the reality might not be necessarily the same. As Věra Haberlová (2003) warns, regular researches on religiosity usually consist of general questions (such as belief in God, churchmanship or frequency of church attendance) which reflect only a rough image of religiosity in society. For religiosity is a broad concept which does not include only belief in God but also other alternatives, for instance belief in “a higher entity”, “transcendence” or “spiritual and life forces”. Therefore, Haberlová (2003) suggests that the term religiosity and atheism should be

treated and used very carefully, especially when interpreting results of religiosity or spirituality surveys.

Krista sees Czech people not necessarily as atheists but she demonstrated on a personal example from her Bible study group that many of the Czechs she had encountered were interested in spirituality.

“I think that the statistics definitely show that it is one of the most atheistic countries in Europe but what we have done with our group, that comes to our house and we read the Bible, we have said ‘We acknowledge that we are spiritual beings and we are on our spiritual path together. And if you want to be on that spiritual path with us, come with us.’ And I think there are a lot of people that are interested in spirituality so maybe they don’t subscribe to a religion but I think that the heart is searching for that connection with their creator. And for that case, perhaps it’s not one of the most atheistic countries just because it doesn’t have a ‘religion’ label on it.”

Dan expressed his opinion on Czech spirituality by saying that he sees a new interest among multiple Czech generations in the spiritual aspects of life emerging in the contemporary post-communist era.

“I remember our neighbor came to us early on and she said ‘You know, I’ve never been raised in any spiritual values but I want my kids to be raised that way and I don’t know how to approach it – I don’t like the Church, I don’t like the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Churches are a little crazy here – I don’t want to go there.’ So I think that there is an interest in spiritual things now rebounding from communism. Not just in Christianity but also in the attitude that there must be something more than just working everyday...”

According to Kurt, the spiritual oppression (analyzed in *chapter 4.3.2.2.1*) is manifested in not talking about religion and God. Another aspect of Czech spirituality was expressed through Kurt’s language, particularly by the use of the word “něcisté”¹¹, indicating that many Czechs believe in “something” but not necessarily in God. In addition to this, Kurt also suggested that Czechs often think or speak about God only in relation to the future afterlife and rejecting the need of God in the present, everyday life.

¹¹*Něcovismus* („něco“ means „something“ in Czech) is a term invented by Czech Catholic theologian Tomáš Halík (2005) describing a belief in an indefinite transcendence, such as cosmic energy or human destiny. Něcista does not believe in the God of Church but rather in something that is “above the Earth”. According to Halík, it is the most widespread belief among the Czech nation.

“Czech people would be called “něcisté” - they believe in something but they don’t want to talk about religion and for me it shows kind of a sign of a spiritual oppression because why can’t you talk about religion? Czechs won’t talk about God. They will always talk about ‘Oh, the next life thing is going to be better. What does the next life has to do with God?’ So there’s kind of a spiritual oppression that we’re not going to talk about God, we’re not going to talk about Jesus Christ, we’re not going to talk about these things. Let’s just talk about ‘Oh, the things are going to be better.’ And so I would challenge any Czech instead of talking about ‘things will be better after you die’ to talk about the offer of life.”

Based on the missionaries’ responses, Czechs appear to be more spiritual and less atheistic than what the general statistics show. On the contrary, many of the interviewees suggested that Czechs could be labeled as people who are interested in spirituality and who believe in “something” that transcends them, which might not necessarily imply God.

4.3.3.2 Czech “Church Culture”

Interestingly, most of the missionaries noticed a sense of apathy and a tendency to keep one’s options open among many Czech protestant Christians.

4.3.3.2.1 Being Comfortable (“Apathy”)

Matt appreciates the critical and systematic thinking of Czechs. However, he also sees a negative aspect of such skill, especially in the Church environment, for it can lead to comfort-seeking, passive over-thinking and less faith-driven actions. As a demonstration, he stated that the favorite word among the young men he works with is “uvidíme” meaning “we’ll see what will happen”.

“At this point the church culture feels like the Czech Christians are more comfortable and satisfied with things along the route, meeting just to support and encourage one another without being on a mission as much and that’s what I think is frustrating and challenging because we (Christians) are here on a mission and also to have community because part of what identifies us as Christians is that we have to have a community, we have to be journeying together but we also need to be on a mission together. Those two things fit well together but when you have only one without the other it becomes lopsided.”

Amy commented on the attitude of Czech young believers similarly as her husband.

“Because it paralyzes opportunity, that’s what that mentality of apathy does. I think it’s sad that Czechs often feel like they can’t change the way things are. But wait, we can change it! We can do something about it! That really impacts ministry because evangelism is all about opportunity. But there is not that sense, it’s just natural and they stop trying. And I think that’s totally different in American culture and in Czech culture because Americans have that mindset of ‘You can do anything!’”

4.3.3.2.2 Keeping One’s Options Open (“Maybe”)

Raymond noticed similar trait in the attitude of the Czech believers from his church as well.

“For me with church it’s the same thing - it’s the idea that every Sunday morning or when there’s a Bible study or when there is a men’s fellowship, if something better comes up, then I’m going to do that. And so it’s the same idea with ‘We wish we were closer to that group or we want a fellowship with one another!’ You don’t often get a Christian fellowship at work, you know.”

4.3.3.2.3 Preservation (“Lack of Joy”)

According to Brianne, some characteristics of Czech people carry into the church.

“I feel like the apathy that exists in the society carries into the church. You would think that if you are a small group of believers (there are not a lot of believers in the Czech Republic) that they would be so excited about the truth that they know and that they would be close friends with other people in their church and that they would be more eager. And in our small church there are wonderful people but they are - I wouldn’t say that they are known by their joy. And that’s true all over the world with many different people but it seems to be more of the people in the Czech Republic ... Californians are more open, more showing and it’s easier to become a friend in the US whereas in Czech think there is just too much preservation, the people are so reserved to show any kind of emotion, any rawness. I think that carries over into the church.”

Most of the missionaries evaluated the attitude in their churches relatively negatively. Firstly, Amy and Matt emphasized the importance of community in a Christian’s life as well as the ability to seize opportunities. Both of them aimed for a change in that aspect of Czech church culture. Secondly, Raymond noticed that their local church members do not always prioritize various church events over other activities in their lives. Lastly, Brianne contrasted the

rigidity she senses in the Czech church environment in comparison with the churches in California, which she evaluated as more joyful and expressive.

In relation to the adaptation process, it is worth noticing that the missionaries contrasted their negative perception of the Czech church culture with their experience from the United States, which they evaluated mostly positively. This may indicate that the missionaries' role in the Czech churches is to bring about change.

4.3.4 Missionary Children

Due to the fact that I interviewed missionary couples with children, I wanted to look into their process of adaptation as well. Their parents shared their experience of being on a mission with their children and also some of the inevitable struggles they encountered during their transition as a family.

Missionary children are cross-cultural children, also called "third culture kids".

A cross-cultural child is "a person who is living or has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during childhood up to 18 years of age." (Pollock & Van Rheken, 2009, p.31)

A third culture kid (TCK) is a type of cross-cultural child, who can be defined as "a child who moved into another culture with parents due to a parent's choice." (Pollock & Van Rheken, p.31)

One of the biggest culture shocks all of the missionary children of school age had to confront was that experienced immediately after starting their attendance in local national schools. Each child handled the cultural transition and exposure to a new cultural environment differently. Pollock and Van Rheken (2009, p. 205) suggest that local national school attendance have its advantages as well as disadvantages. National schools can be beneficial in a way that they strongly expose the TCKs to the host culture, they enable them to become immersed in the culture, learn the language quickly and to develop cross-cultural friendships. Apart from that, they are also relatively low cost. However, there are some issues to take into consideration as well. The religious and philosophical values of national schools may differ radically from the TCKs' parents' and finally, various degrees of animosity to the TCK's nationality in the host culture may occur and if negative perceptions exist, a TCK might be labelled as an "outsider".

4.3.1 Krista & Dan's Family

Krista and Dan have two teenage daughters. Originally, they both went to a national school but had to be consequently moved to an international school due to cultural tension and rejection from the Czech classmates.

“My daughters went to a Czech school for 3 years and now they go to the international school. The only reason we moved our family from the Czech school to the international school was because of “šikana” (bully). Our older daughter especially was suffering greatly from that and it got to the point where we either had to leave Czech Republic or put them into a different school.”

In this case, an international school can be defined as “any school that has many students from various countries and whose primary curriculum is different from the one used by the national schools of the host country”. (Pollock and Van Rheken, 2009, p. 209)

This popular option of the TCK's parents provides a blessing in the diversity of cultural backgrounds among the students as well as the fact that international students understand what it feels like to be new in school. However, there might be an issue with the curriculum since it is usually not the same as the one in the host country and that may cause problems for the child in his or her future studies (for instance college). (Pollock and Van Rheken, 2009, p. 208)

4.3.2 Vicky & Kurt's Family

Vicky and Kurt have one 14 year-old son who has been going to a national school all the years that they have lived in the Czech Republic. Vicky described his initial struggles as he was dealing with relatively severe culture shock.

“We got here August 27th in 2007, we started language school and our son started školka (kindergarten) about 4 days later. I think that of course it affected him, you know, he's bright academically and so the academics have not been an issue but the social aspect has been difficult. He's not this 'tough little boy', he's kind of a more sensitive kid and so that was difficult for him, especially early on. He was - I wouldn't use the word bullied (in US they would use that) but I would say that he wasn't able to keep up with the culture of the rough and tumble boys all the time and that was very difficult for him.”

Additionally, Vicky reminisced about her son's cultural withdrawal in form of watching television as a way of moderating the transition stage and with a slight hint of regret she admitted that it was the only way he felt comforted.

“We figured out how to get some English speaking channel and unfortunately, I think what we did was that we went in a direction of the comfort when we wanted to relax we would watch English speaking television...and our son watched way more television than I would have been comfortable with but it was the only way he felt secure that first year he was here. And so I think it was very shocking for him that first year, it was very difficult for him to adapt. So I don't know if it was a right thing to do to let him watch more television than I was comfortable doing but it felt like it gave him some security in terms of feeling like he didn't have to confront the culture all the time every day. He was doing that in school anyway.”

However, Vicky said that her son had become fluent in Czech and that he gained the ability to exist in both American and Czech cultures. According to Pollock and Van Rheken (2009, pp. 118-120), speaking another language and having sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to think in it are not the same. When children learn languages, they understand the thinking patterns and the nuances of how people in certain culture relate to each other as opposed to adults, who often translate every word literally and miss the different implication of that word in another language. Bilingualism and multilingualism have the advantage, besides communication, of sharpening one's thinking and cross-cultural skills.

“He speaks Czech like a champion now, I mean he's fluent but he can exist in both cultures. At least at this point his mindset is 'I can handle both cultures, I like American culture...' because he still has American friends that he skypes with almost weekly and yet he has friends here that he spends the night with and of course he has a slightly different personality in Czech that he has in the States, but his likes and dislikes have not changed depending on which culture he's been in. And I think he has done pretty well.”

4.3.3 Amy & Matt's Family

Amy and Matt have four children – one girl, who is the oldest (13), and three boys, of whom the youngest is 7 years old. Similarly as Vicky and Kurt's son, all four children started attending local national school immediately after their arrival to Ostrava without any language knowledge.

“It was really hard to make that transition with our kids because they just went straight into the 2nd and 3rd grade. They just went and they didn’t know anything. It was in January and actually right now it will be their 3rd year anniversary. So 3 years ago they just went into Czech school, not knowing anybody and not understanding anything in Czech, really. And they went to a national school. And so for those first six months I would say that we survived it and that they were exhausted every day.”

Amy emphasised how difficult it was for their entire family and for that reason they decided to move their children to an international school. However, despite being surrounded by English most of the time, they still found it difficult to adjust.

“And that second year, that fall then, we ended up switching to an international school in Ostrava – a small English school which was kind of bumpy. Even though there was more English, it was very hard for them.”

Finally, Amy said that their kids managed to adapt in their current national school and they are able to maintain their American individuality as well as blend in with their Czech schoolmates.

“And then when we got to Písek, this was their third school, our kids were for sure the Americans in their school but they did speak some Czech and so they were able to kind of hold their own in conversations and in classrooms so they got to start over for their third time and they were further along and so it helped them. Now it feels like it’s part of normality for us. It’s normal for them.”

4.3.4 Brianne & Raymond’s Family

Brianne and Raymond have two little children - a girl (4) and a boy (2) and during the interview Brianne was expecting her third child. Since both of their children were too little to realize and comprehend the cultural transition when moving to the Czech Republic and they are not in the school age yet, Brianne was unable to share their experience of school attendance and education. Nevertheless, she mentioned the issue of interpersonal sensitivity which she had already come across as a mother who raises her children in a foreign country.

“One thing I’ve noticed as a mom of little kids was that Czechs are very opinionated about how you raise your children and what you do with your children. But it’s not completely true because we have friends in California that are just as blunt. It might be personality, it might

not have to do anything with Czech culture, but I would have to tell that everyone controls what you do and telling me the things I do wrong. And maybe it's because I'm new here and I don't know all the good tips but everybody has given me their opinions on what to do. I'm pretty sure they all think my children are going to die of frostbites because I don't have enough hats and socks even though my children are sweating. And we do get snow where we're from in California so we are accustomed to some cold."

We can see that many of the TCKs reacted to cultural anxiety in form of withdrawal. According to Van Rheezen (1996, p. 89), withdrawal takes place when a missionary or a missionary child "rejects the participation in the lives of other people that is so necessary for effective communication". This phenomenon could be demonstrated on the example of Vicky and Kurt's son who found security in watching English TV programs.

However, despite various cross-cultural barriers and difficulties, all of the missionary children eventually gained the ability to exist in both American and Czech cultures. Such ability is a result of the fact that it is easier for children to adapt to a second culture than for adults because children do not have many previous culturally-learned behaviors that need to be adjusted. "Acculturating adults automatically compare their new culture to the one in which they have been enculturated and frequently project the ideas of the former into the new culture". (Van Rheezen, 1996, p. 86)

4.4 Adaptation

Many of the missionaries, when commenting on the cultural differences between Czechs and Americans, said that they adopted and got used to certain cultural behaviors which they initially considered unusual. Such attitude is most apparent in the responses of Krista and Dan, who have been living in the Czech Republic for the longest period of time.

Dan: *"We have been here relatively long so we're used to the Czech customs. When we first came I didn't understand why we had to put off our shoes. What is this strange custom? But now we can't imagine going into the house with shoes, I think it's so gross..."*

Krista: *"I think I found it unusual at first how you would go into a store and say 'Dobrý den' but no one would smile at you and it was just like 'What do you want?' but now that I got used to it, it doesn't bother me anymore."*

Dan: *“We noticed that all of our neighbors in the summer, all the wives and all the moms, they are out in the gardens in their swimsuits. When Krista saw that she said ‘That might be a good idea, I want to do that!’ and now she is out with all the moms working in the garden.”*

Raymond, along with Brianne, said that eventually they grew accustomed to Czechs’ different approach to time management and the tendency to keep their options open (discussed in chapter 4.3.3.2.2).

“...and we’ve been here over a year now, so we’re starting to get used to local habits. It’s not offensive or wrong, it’s just normal.”

Krista, towards the end of her interview, said that she had changed radically as a result of living in the Czech Republic for so long. She then listed several cultural aspects which had shaped her personality. Importantly, she embraced the change and considers it to be a gain.

“I think we’ve changed a lot being here and I know that I personally learned a lot and I am a new person because of the Czech Republic and I am thankful for it. The Czech Republic and our Czech neighbors and our Czech friends taught us a different way of life. We’re not as lazy and we have learned to live with less and be thankful for what we have. I have learned to appreciate nature more. I have learned to be a better friend.”

Some of the missionaries realized and recognized their new culturally-adopted behavioral traits after visiting and returning from the United States.

Vicky described her experience of how she started to perceive Prague and her mission more realistically when she returned back to the Czech capital after having visited her family in Chicago.

“People in an American city can be little more distant than they would be in a country. They still tend to be a little more alive facially, though. And so that kind of hit me when I got in the tram and the tram smelled. And it’s not that I’d forgotten the smell, it was a familiar smell, but it was like ‘Oh yeah, I’ve forgotten that!’ And so the whole thing hit me very differently that time in a sense that I felt like ‘Now I know why I’m here. I’m not here just because it’s an exciting adventure – now I feel like I see people maybe a little more clearly than I saw them before, you know, it’s not the romantic medieval town with all these beautiful parks and spires and all those things but really to be able to see it as a city of people who, in some ways, are the void of a spark.’ I guess the spiritual aspect of Czech Republic and the physical aspect

of Czech Republic came together from the era then and I thought 'Ok, so it's a choice that I live here.' and it gave me a different outlook on it."

Vicky subsequently added it was then that she began to feel comfortable with the bad and the good parts of living in the Czech Republic and she finally felt like she hit equilibrium at that point.

Dan shared a similar experience of a reverse culture shock and consequent realization of a changed mentality when he visited California and was confronted with American culture.

"We visited the US a year and half ago in the summer and I remember we needed to go to a shop and so we said 'Let's walk there, it's about a kilometer, which is about 15 minutes.' And we walked with our daughters, with our bags, and a car stopped - some stranger - and he said 'Why are you walking? Get in my car, I will drive you home! Is your car broken? What happened?' And we just said 'No, we just like to walk.' And he replied 'Ok, are you sure? I have a giant car, come in!' He just didn't understand that we wanted to walk."

However, adaptation does not necessarily have to imply rejection of one's own culture. Despite Matt's desire to learn Czech language, to understand and engage in local culture as well as his conscious decision to move to South Bohemia, a region with a small number of American missionaries, Matt's family still holds their own culture in their home.

"The other thing is that we have our own culture as a family so there's plenty of English and American culture in our home. I mean even if you walk into our house it doesn't feel as Czech, it feels American because we're Americans and it just happens - if we were Africans, it would just look African, you know. It's part of our family so that's kind of how it has been for us so we really wanted to explore the Czech culture and learn as much as we could so we weren't interested in coming closer to the Josiah Venture's headquarters in Moravia."

Another example could be Dan's enthusiasm for American hockey, despite his effort to respect Czechs and to blend in the culture.

"I think you have to be humble. And you can even make jokes about yourself. I am constantly making jokes about Americans. Although, this week was the first time I acted like an American. It was on Tuesday and Czechs and Americans played hockey. So my Czech friends were bothering me on facebook and they said 'Oh, prepare to go home because we're just going to destroy your team, we're so much better.' They were just making fun. And so I went

to posilovna (gym) that night and I said 'I am going to wear my US t-shirt because everyone will be watching the game there.' I had the jacket on and I went to the receptionist and I said 'Hi! How is the game going?' And she said 'Your team is doing much better.' And I opened my jacket with my US t-shirt on... And she just said 'Oh!' and the people in the gym weren't happy about it. If the game was close it would have been fine but I felt bad because the US team was winning 5:1 and just kept scoring and I was embarrassed to be in my US t-shirt."

Based on the above mentioned examples, the length of stay in the Czech Republic is an important element of the missionary adaptation. Generally, the longer a migrant resides in a foreign environment, the more he or she conforms to local values and rules – the same principle applies for my interviewees. Another important aspect which contributes to the degree of adaptation is the missionary's personality.

4.6 Social Connections in the Host Country

When living in a foreign country, missionaries may have the tendency to seek the company of other missionaries speaking the same language. However, developing strong bonds to other American missionaries in the host culture and spending more time with them than with the nationals may become an obstacle to a successful adaptation. Based on the individual responses of each missionary, they seek to connect with the nationals and they beware of spending too much time in the company of other Americans.

Brianne: It was one of our strategies here – to really focus on the Czechs, building relationships with them. And not to shut the Americans, not at all! There's one couple that we've spent more time with, you know, we enjoy being with them. They're very busy and we're very busy, you know, they live in a different city but we enjoyed spending time with them. But we certainly weren't like 'Oh no, I can't talk to you, you're American!' But we really wanted to focus from our initial beginning on not getting attached to Americans, we wanted to establish ourselves without needing American context."

Matt expressed his intentionality in spending sufficient time around Czechs in order to be exposed to local language which he views as a way to understand the Czech mentality better (discussed in *chapter 4.3.2.1.2*).

"Well for me I really want to learn the language and it's very important that I have emerging experiences so I can grow in language. If not, it's just slow. So that's one reason why I wanted to be surrounded by Czechs. And I think it was our season of life when we've been in

ministry for a very long time (17 years) before we came to the Czech Republic so we have our rhythm and we understand ministry in a sense of how we work so we didn't feel like we needed to be closer to our American culture."

However, since all of the couples work with other American teammates who live in various places in the Czech Republic, they inevitably see each other during regular team meetings and seasonal conferences (such as Thanksgiving or national conferences).

4.7 Missionaries' Contact with the United States

Another important aspect to consider in regard to adaptation is the intensity of contact maintenance with the missionary's native country and the frequency of their visits to the United States.

All of the missionaries communicate with their family and close friends who live in the United States through modern technologies, such as skype, email or phone. They also maintain contact with their home country by visiting it in person. As the only way to visit their families and friends is via plane, the frequency of visits varies individually. Vicky and Kurt's family visits the United States every summer, Krista and Dan have flown to California once but they occasionally host visitors from their hometown in the Czech Republic. Amy and Matt's family visited Colorado twice – once for Christmas and then for a 10-week assignment.

Two of the factors that influence the frequency of missionaries' visits to the United States are their responsibilities in the United States and their economic situation (since the flight tickets are relatively expensive). Another significant aspect connected to the adaptation is apparent in the way missionaries "sojourners" think of the United States. Both of the couples who intend to stay in the Czech Republic temporarily refer to their places of origin (California and Colorado) as "home". Czech Republic is considered to be rather a mission field by them.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on each chapter of the analytical part and in accordance with the research questions, this final chapter seeks to present a concluding summary of the findings which have been arrived at in the course of this thesis.

Considering that the analyzed qualitative data deals with a religious aspect of culture, which is a rather difficult concept to grasp, and with respect to the fact that the sample represented only a small number of missionaries from one denomination, I came to the following findings, bearing in mind that they are impossible to generalize to the entire missionary population.

Missionaries represent an exception among other migrants in regard to their motives for migration as well as the push and pull factors that influenced their decision-making in terms of moving to the Czech Republic. Despite their “good lives” and material security in the United States, they moved overseas as a response to God’s call for them to go to an unreached region in Central Europe (this became a strong push factor for them). The pull factor could be seen in the fertile ground for missionaries represented by the number of non-believers in the Czech Republic.

When studying the influence of the interviewees’ previous experience with mission, we can observe that those missionaries who had done mission work in a significantly different culture (for example Bangladesh, India, Africa, Russia or Germany) also decided to stay in the Czech Republic permanently. Therefore, this aspect might have influenced the missionaries’ future perspectives in the Czech Republic.

Based on one of the research sub-questions, another chapter analyzed the missionaries’ perception of Czech culture and religiosity as well as the substance of the cultural differences. The interviewees actively seek to learn the Czech language, the heart of Czech national identity, and they have already mastered Czech at a level that enables them to communicate in everyday situations. My interviewees expressed their opinions on Czech society which they view as affected by the decades of communism but also as highly collectivistic and loyal. They also commented on how they perceive Czech culture in terms of religiosity and spirituality. In this regard, they listed mostly negative aspects (such as apathy, lack of joy and keeping one’s options open). In relation to the ways in which the missionaries evangelize Czechs, they seek to first understand the nature of the Czech culture in order to effectively communicate the gospel across cultural boundaries.

Next, adaptation of the missionary children (also called “third culture kids”) was studied and contrasted with the adults’ adaptation process. While adults adapt to a second culture more complicatedly, the missionary children managed to adapt and exist both in American and Czech cultures due to the fact that they had not come to the Czech Republic with a closed enculturation.

On the contrary, all of the missionary couples migrated overseas fully enculturated to the American culture and therefore many of the values they had developed in the United States did not change markedly. Some of the interviewees still preserve their cultures of origin at their houses, others cheer for American sports teams or they celebrate American traditions, such as Thanksgiving.

However, we can observe that the missionaries do not completely reject the Czech culture. In fact, they have already adopted various Czech habits, for instance the tendency to take off one’s shoes when entering the house or the habit of gardening in bikini. Besides the cultural customs and habits which they have grown accustomed to, many of the missionaries noticed that their personalities changed as a result of their exposure to the Czech culture. The most apparent changes could be observed on the responses of Krista and Dan who have been living in the Czech Republic for the longest period of time. Importantly, all of the interviewees evaluate those changes positively.

Regarding the future perspectives of the migrant’s stay in the Czech Republic, the group of long-term missionaries has the experience of living in a radically different culture. Additionally, the sojourners picture the Czech Republic as a mission field but they still identify their place of origin as home. Some of the other significant factors that influence the missionaries’ adaptation appear to be the number of years spent in the host country, individual characteristics and the support shown by the missionaries’ family and friends.

The missionary couples approach Czech culture both with its positives and negatives. In relation to adaptation, such attitude is natural. As was foreshadowed in the theoretical part, adaptation is a relatively individual process, which implies that the migrant sees the host culture as it really is, both with its strengths and weaknesses, and he or she develops the ability to live across national borders. Therefore, we can say that the interviewed missionaries chose the acculturative strategy of adaptation.

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